When the Sun Came Up (You Were Looking at Me)

by orphan_account

Summary

Azazel isn't a demon, the Winchesters don't hunt, and when Sam is taken to Cold Oak, he's turned into an omega. Dean is his alpha.

Notes

HEYYYYY! Can you believe how big this thing is already?? I do not write fan fiction this long I'm TELLIN YOU and it isn't even done. Part 2 is underway, but I think this is gonna be three parter. I am just thirsty for praise so I'm posting it here i'm not going to tell you guys any lies about that. The title is from Out of the Woods which is the best fucking song of ALL TIME. ANYWAYS this is betaed more than I usually beta anything anndddd more in depth notes about dub-con, hate speech, and violence will be in the notes at the end if you are concerned :) okay hope you enjoy!

See the end of the work for more notes.
Boerne, 2009

Annie Waters tries to be an honest business woman. Texas was hit hard by the drought, hit harder by the storms, and Azazel’s boys did the rest of the work. Before, Annie had run a restaurant with her husband and her son.

Azazel’s boys had killed her husband—Annie was up north in Austin visiting her mother—and as for her son. Annie tells herself, tells everyone, that they must have killed her son, too.

They took him in all the important ways, dead or not.

Her husband had loved their restaurant. When Annie finally made it back, after the blockades had gone down, after the news reports quieted, she did what she could to make him proud.

Getting the blood out of the wood was easy, but on the hot days, Annie thinks she can still smell it.

A mid-priced seafood restaurant wasn’t a place that brought in much clientele afterwards, so Annie adapted.

She kept the bar, kept the liquor, got rid of everything else. The people she attracts now are different than her old customers. Everything is different.

She has her regulars, though. She wonders if any place in this town doesn’t have its regulars, size that it is now.

Andrew and Tom come in most days around noon, sling back shots of whatever cheap shit she brought down for the day. They’re drunks, but not in a way that gets Annie’s hand itching for the space under the counter.

Billy, Joseph, and Mike cycle in pretty regularly, angry at the whole fucking world but not ever moving past drinking and fighting one another, then coming back again the next day to play pool. Annie doesn’t mind them. They still think “ma’am” and “please” has a place in the world, however slurred it is.

And sometimes they’ll bring their wives, daughters, sons. Annie has even started letting dogs in. She did it for Tom mostly, when noticed how nervous he got and saw shadows of her own boy.

They aren’t like the folks from before, but Annie doesn’t mind them. They always pay or they stack up a tab that Annie can use for food or work around her house.

Annie likes that despite the fights and the small collection of teeth she has gathered from the bar, she never approaches anything like fear around her customers. She can’t tell if that’s because it all got used up, or if her customers are as harmless as she suspects.

New faces upset this. That’s why Annie’s on edge the moment the two boys walk into the bar. The back of her spine shivers like electricity is shooting through it, and Annie calms herself because of course new faces would make her nervous. That’s all this is about.

They aren’t even anything to be scared of. The tall, broad one seems to almost cower as the heads of the regulars turn to size them up. The other one—well. Annie figures the war made everyone a little rough around the edges.
Annie tells herself to calm down. She hopes Billy doesn’t give them a hard time.

The shorter man leads his friend over to the bar, sits down next to Mike.

“What can I get you boys?” Just doing good business.

“Get me a beer,” the guy turns to his companion, eyes him more carefully than most of the bar had when they first came in.

“Get my boy a water.”

Annie swallows the lump that’s risen in her throat, turns to start working on it.

“Haven’t seen y’all around before,” Mike says as she slides them their drinks. Annie wishes Mike had learned at some point to keep his mouth shut.

“Haven’t you?” The guy takes a long pull of his drink, doesn’t pay Mike any more attention.

“No, I haven’t,” Mike says, louder. Annie knows he’s been in here since two, and it’s getting close to dusk. She looks across the bar. Everyone is pretending not to watch. Andrew’s dog is circling a table.

“I think you understand the circumstances we’re in,” Mike is leaning closer. The guy doesn’t seem to even notice, would be a statue if not for the glance he directs toward his partner.

“Would you mind letting us know who you are?”

The man finishes his drink. His companion is starring at his water.

“Not sure I’d mind as much as you would.” Mike scoffs, stands to join Billy and Joseph at the other end of the bar. They’re talking together, eyes trained on the new faces, nodding and chugging their drinks.

Annie’s customers aren’t the same type as they were before, but they’re still good people. Annie tells herself this often. She grips the glass she’s drying so hard her fingers go white.

“Not likely, friend. Only thing I’d mind is a pair of Azazel’s kind in here. Or one of them fucking freaks.” Billy says.

“Let’s all be polite,” the man’s voice is soft and smooth. Annie wishes Billy was a smarter man. She wishes these strangers had never come into her bar. She had a routine.

“Think I might close up early,” she says. She doesn’t think anyone hears her. Billy’s laugh rings out across the bar, harsh and false, “What? You a sympathizer? Didn’t peg you as the type to side with a bunch of freaks.”

The man’s smile turns down in the corners, eyes shape themselves like slits. His companion touches his arm, “Dean, it’s okay.”

“The fuck it is,”

“What? Tender spot?” Billy walks to meet Dean’s approaching figure. He’s broad and stocky, but next to Dean, Annie thinks he looks small.

“What was it? A friend? Sister? Faggy little boyfriend?” Billy brings his mouth close to the man’s face, “We’ve all had people taken to the camps. They ain’t our people anymore.”
Annie knows this. It’s what she learned, after her son was captured and the reports started the surface. What they did to him during the changes—he wasn’t natural, not anymore. He was a liability. It sounds ugly coming out of Billy’s mouth, but Annie can’t help but agree. Since Azazel came, the world was suddenly a lot more black and white, and those who got changed, morphed in the gray area, well. They certainly weren’t on the same side as the humans anymore.

“I’m going to give you the chance to apologize,” Dean says, voice still calm, but his hand has gone to the inside of his pocket.

“Fuck you,” Billy spits, “You siding with omega bitches over your own people?”

“You aren’t my people,” Dean says, pulls out a gun.

“Dean!”

Annie already has the gun out, and as soon as she hears that, she’s pointing it at the guy at the bar.

Even though Dean has his gun hand steady, pointed right between Billy’s eyes, his head is turned to stare at his partner. His hands might be steady, but his eyes are panicked.

“Put the gun down,” Annie says quietly.

Dean’s mouth twitches, “You first.”

Annie shakes her head, “I don’t think for one second Billy is as important to me as this fellow is to you.”

Billy makes an irritated noise, “Sorry, Billy,” Annie says, “I just want you two outta my bar.”

“How do I know you’re gonna let him go?”

The man she’s pointing the gun at meets Annie’s eyes, “She will, Dean,” he says softly.

Annie understands then, clarity slotting into place. Her hand tightens around the gun. She didn’t know that’s what it would feel like. It didn’t hurt at all.

“Don’t try anything,” Dean warns Billy, lowers the gun slowly. Annie’s hand drops so fast she bangs it against the side of the counter.

Dean lurches towards his partner, barks “Careful,” when he realizes there’s no danger. He straightens himself.


Dean nods, turns and socks Billy in the eye, one quick movement. Annie barely registers it before he’s halfway across the bar, partner in tow behind him.

“Yeah,” Billy yells after their backs, “Get outta here you freak fucker.”

Billy throws his can. He’s aiming at Dean’s head, but he hits the partner. The omega. Annie flinches.

Dean growls, pushes his partner behind him. The gun that had been tucked back into his jacket is pointed at Billy so fast that all Annie can do is stare. Her pulse speeds up her neck. She doesn’t know how she’s still breathing.

Just as fast, the omega grabs Dean’s arm, and the shot goes off. Billy screams—screams like a child
—and falls to the floor.

Blood spreads across the wood floor fast. Annie’s finger goes for the trigger. She whips the gun towards the alpha, presses down. And then a soft haze enters her mind, as gentle as a breath, makes her fingers go numb.

*I’m sorry.*

The voice echoes in her mind. Annie blinks, nods, lowers the gun.

*So sorry.*

In front of her, the alpha grabs his omega. He kicks Billy’s ribs as he pulls him out behind him. The whole time, the omega doesn’t break contact with Annie. Annie knows she should be doing something. The door of the bar swings open and then closed and Annie wrenches away from the position she had been frozen in.

The bar is silent except for Billy. He’s laying on the floor, cursing and bleeding and shouting at someone to go after the fucking freaks.

Everyone else is silent. Annie guesses they’re terrified. Her hands are shaking as she places the gun back under the counter.

“Don’t just fucking stand there!” Billy shouts from the floor.

“Shut up, Billy,” Annie mutters, “Someone go get Leslie. Tell her Billy finally got himself shot.”

Mike bolts from his place at the bar, takes the back exit to avoid their visitors. In the mean time, Annie gets a rag for Billy to press down on his leg.

“Why didn’t you shoot them?” Billy says accusingly as Annie puts pressure on the wound, “Always fucking knew you were a sympathizer.”

Annie thinks of her son. She thinks of the soft sound of the omega’s voice, the way it soothed the tension always just edging in her thoughts. She hears murmurs around the bar. She wasn’t a sympathizer. Couldn’t risk it even if she was.

She scoffs, “Sympathizer my ass, Billy. He was a fucking omega.”

“Omega,” Billy spits, “World went to shit the moment they came around.”

Annie doesn’t know if she agrees. She puts more pressure on the bullet wound, watches as red soaks through the rag. She tries to shake the lingering memory of the omega’s voice. She hadn’t felt that way in years. But it was dangerous to linger on. Instead, Annie tries to think if she has enough bleach left. She wonders if she can get to cleaning fast enough to keep the blood from making stains.

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Boerne, 2009

Dean pushes Sam into his side of the car.

“Fucking town,” He growls as he gets into the driver’s side. He starts the car. His body is too tense, his voice is a little thin.

Sam angles his body toward Dean. He takes Dean’s right hand, guides it to press down on Sam’s
Dean strokes Sam’s neck gently, more concentration on that than on the road. They get out of town fast, even so, and Dean doesn’t take his hand off Sam for miles. They’re twenty minutes down the road, and Sam takes Dean’s hand from his neck, rubs his nose against Dean’s palm. Sam tells himself it’s for Dean, can’t help but be guilty when he shivers at how good the touch feels, how much calmer it’s making him. He pushes Dean’s hand away.

Dean has relaxed. Sam can tell by the way Dean’s breathing has evened out, how the worry and tension have stopped rolling off him.

“Dean,” he finally says.

Dean turns to look at him, shrugs, “He shouldn’t have said it.”

“I know,” Sam says, “Trust me, Dean. He was a fucking asshole. But we have to stop—“

“I’m trying, Sammy,” Dean says, and Sam knows he is. This is hard for Dean. Harder than it is for Sam. Sam swallows and wishes for the millionth time that he had just fucking died back in the lab at Cold Oak.

Dean likes to have his hands on Sam most of the time, when they’re on the road. When they’re not being watched, and it wouldn’t be obvious, Dean has a compulsion to be in contact with Sam. Sam doesn’t mind. Sam doesn’t mind at all. He wants to make this as easy as he can for Dean.

Sam wonders how much of the touching is up to Dean—the real Dean. Thoughts like that make him sick, make his chest tighten uncomfortably, and get Dean on alert. Mostly Sam tries to keep them as background noise, loud enough that Sam doesn’t get greedy, doesn’t get comfortable. Quiet enough that Dean doesn’t have to pick up on it.

They slide down the black tar, the car just another kind of animal making it’s way north. The sun beats off the paint mercilessly. The air conditioning quit almost a year ago, and the sweat drips off Sam’s upper lip. His stomach churns nervously. He would be dozing if he weren’t still so on edge. Using his—Sam hesitates to call them powers, because Dean usually laughs, says, “It’s a bird, it’s a plane, no, it’s a giant fucking dork”. And calling them modifications makes Dean upset. Whatever they are, they leave Sam completely drained.

“We have to be more careful,” Sam says quietly.

Dean sighs, “I know. I just can’t fucking help it, Sam. I knew it was stupid as shit as I was doing it but I couldn’t fucking stop.”

The scenery has changed very little for the past hundred miles, but the car crosses some sort of invisible line, and outside the window, Sam can see wildflowers begin to dot across the sparse patches of grass lining the road.

“Well he was an asshole,” Sam says finally. Dean makes a pleased noise.

“He was lucky I didn’t shoot him in that ugly mug.”

Sam frowns out the window. Dean strokes a thumb over Sam’s wrist. It could have been worse, Sam thinks. It will be worse, eventually. That’s what he worries about. Not this time, but eventually, and whenever Dean comes back to himself he’s never going to forgive Sam. He’s never going to forgive Sam for a lot of shit.

Dean must smell it on him. Sam still has trouble getting used to that.
“I’ll try harder,” Dean says after a pause, “I’m sorry.”

Sam’s heart lurches, “Dean, don’t.”

“You’re upset.”

Sam doesn’t know how Dean can have all this extra information on Sam, and still not have a single goddamn clue. He hates that Dean thinks this is his fault. He hates that even though he and Dean are more fucking entangled than ever, he still can’t help Dean out. Not in any way that matters. Not the way Dean helps him. Sam does the best that he can. That’s what he repeats on his good days. He forces a laugh, turns to face his brother.

“Yeah, but only because that beer was so shitty.”

Dean lets it go. Still doing Sam a favor, Sam thinks.

“Hell, that’s a good enough reason. It tasted like piss.”

“Having to drink that for the rest of his life is punishment enough.”

“Yeah, well. Putting a hole in his leg didn’t fucking hurt.”

“I think it probably hurt a hell of a lot.”

Dean laughs, tips his head back. Something about seeing Dean’s throat arched back like that, sun beating off the sweat, triggers something in Sam. Sam’s body flushes as he takes in Dean in the sunlight. His pulse thrums excitedly. Sam tries to push back the need he feels beginning to scratch at the base of his spine. It makes him want to scream.

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**Santa Fe, 2001**

Sam was eighteen and in love. Dean was his entire fucking world. In the early days, the rest of the world didn’t have a fucking clue about Azazel and his growing army. The rest of the world was as peaceful as a windless, sunny day. John told Sam and Dean, though. He pointed at the sky and he told them about the wreckage that was mounting to break the calm.

Sam was scared of what was coming. He was scared of waking up in the morning, he was scared every afternoon they spent in the car; scared of where the car would stop. John never seemed scared, staring at the horizon with grim determinism.

Dean didn’t seem scared often. Sam was fooled by it for a while, but sometimes, Dean let it slip.

They sat in a car. John told them to stay put before he’d entered house a half a block down. He’s casing someone he thinks knows something about Azazel’s movements.

He tells them to come in if he gives the signal. Sam wonders if he’ll even be able to move.

Dean must be able to tell. He seems to know Sam up and down, in a way that makes Sam itchy to be seen.

“You’d kick fucking ass, Sammy,” Dean tells him and Sam flushes.
“If I even made it out of the car.”

Dean doesn’t respond. He clicks his tongue like he does when he’s stalling for time. Sam sees him look out the window, eyes flickering down the quiet street.

It’s a sunny day. The light streams in, and Sam watches the dust moats move in and out of the paths of light. Dean’s eyes look so green with the sun in them. Sam has trouble swallowing.

Dean blinks. Sam can’t take his eyes off him, the way his eyelashes cast shadows on his cheeks. Sam is fucking fascinated. He almost forgets to be afraid.

“You remember when dad was gone, what, a month ago?”

“Yeah,” Sam says.

“Well, you were sleeping, but some drunk guy tried to get into our room. I almost shit myself.”

Sam rolls his eyes, “You have a fucking gun, Dean.”

“I know. But I just woke up to the sound of the door handle rattling and I was fucking terrified.”

Sam doesn’t know if it’s true or not, but he smiles, understands what Dean’s saying doesn’t need to be true. Dean just doesn’t want Sam to be alone.

“Well, you’d have done something.”

“So will you.”

Sam meets Dean’s steady gaze, and Dean’s eyes are soft and genuine. Nothing mocking in them at all.

Sam wants to reach across the small space of the passenger seat. At that moment, there’s not room for anything in him but Dean and Sam has to wonder why he ever allows room for anything else. Sweat is sticky under his shirt, and Sam wants so badly that his body is shaky with it. This is worse than fear, he thinks. Sam figures fear would stop him from doing a thing. He’s worried how he feels about Dean would make him do just about anything.

Sam swallows and drags his eyes over Dean’s features, back to his own window. The house John went into was pretty and small. Sam tries to make out figures through the windowpanes covered by thin curtains. Nothing but a faint glow of a lamp shines through.

“You think he’s going to be long?” Dean says.

“Probably,” Sam says.

“You got a book or some shit?”

Sam risks another glance in Dean’s direction. He’s still smiling at Sam faintly, eyes creased just a little, “Yeah,” Sam says quietly.

“You want to read? I’ll keep watch.”

“Nah,” Sam says, chest thudding at the offer, ever-present anxiety heavy in his stomach throbbing out into a deep warmth, “Got to keep you from slacking.”

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Rapid City, 2007

It had been a dangerous job. It’d started out that way. There was a group of Azazel’s boys camped out in South Dakota, planning something big. More of the biological warfare Azazel had already released in Dallas—bigger, badder, more effective—John had gotten word of it. He’d needed all the help he could get. Otherwise, he told Sam in clipped tones, handing him a gun, a knife, letting Dean collect his own—otherwise, he wouldn’t have troubled Sam.

Sam frowns, eyes his dad as he situates his own weapons, turns to speak quietly to Dean.

He tells them the plan three times, like repetition was going to get them out of this okay. The building is big and old, and Sam can’t make out any light from the outside. John tells Sam to watch Dean’s back.

Dean protests. That’s not what they’re used to. Dean wants to make sure Sam doesn’t get himself into anything stupid. There has to be a better way to go about this.

Dad cuts Dean a look.

“I need my best guy in the action,” John says and Dean quiets. Sam is sick to his stomach. He doesn’t want to be there. More than that, he doesn’t want Dean to be there. It’s so clear to Sam that Dean’s not himself, that he’s on edge. Sam wishes that he was good enough that Dean could watch his back, like he wants to.

He wishes that they weren’t here at all. That dad was going this alone. That, he thinks so quietly that he doesn’t even recognize it in himself.

Dad repeats the plan back to them again. The basement is where they’re headed; the path diverges on the way down. John is going to turn down the right side, Dean and Sam are going to take the other way.

It’s already dangerous. Sam tries to talk to Dean on the way in and Dean tells him to shut up, voice tight and clipped. Sam doesn’t want Dean going in there. He walks as close to Dean as he can as they head in.

Something’s off. Sam can tell the minute they enter the building. It’s quiet. The lights are on. Dean turns and meets Sam’s eyes and Sam tries to talk to their dad. Dean can’t do it, Sam knows that, and the fact that under all that bravado, Dean still doesn’t want to disappoint their father makes Sam’s heart swell.

John tells him that spur of the moment observation isn’t reliable. “You afraid of a light, Sam?” He says and his voice is teasing. Dean tells Dad to stop, leave him alone, Jesus, and Sam loves him loves him loves him.

John tells them they’re going through with the plan. They take the stairs down, and in the basement, John tells Sam to watch out for his brother.

Sam doesn’t need to be told, but he nods. He grips his gun firmly, finger away from the trigger, just like he was taught.

It goes well for a while. Their side of the house is quiet, mostly. There are only supposed to be a few men. Sam let’s himself hope, for a moment, that the men all ended up on John’s path.

The end of the hall has a room. Dean’s supposed to be checking the room over for leads, information, plans. Sam is supposed to keep watch, make sure Dean isn’t caught unaware. Make
sure they get out of there unharmed—or at the very least, that they don’t get captured. They can get killed, but they better not let themselves get caught.

John told them again and again that death kept them safe. When John was gone, Dean would tell Sam that death was not a fucking option for him.

Sam would nod, repeat the words back to himself. Tack on the fact that it was only a non-option as long as Dean was still around. He didn’t like the think about any reason Dean wouldn’t be around.

The room is completely empty. There’s a desk light on, over a stack of papers. Sam circles the room with Dean standing in the center, notes a door near the back. Sam didn’t expect two points of entry. He situates himself centered between the two of them, angles his body to block Dean’s.

Dean tells Sam he doesn’t fucking like it and Sam smiles, tells Dean that it’s fine. They’re getting out of this one easy. He doesn’t even know what Dad was so worked up about.

The back door cracks open as Dean’s working his way through the desk drawers. Dean’s already got a stack of paper in his backpack, and his USB is copying files. Sam turns toward the noise quickly, gun raised. At first, Sam thinks it’s only one guy coming through, but then there’s a muttered shit and the door slams open quickly and Sam takes in four, five men. He can’t spot any guns, but two men hold out Taser’s.

“Dean, we got to go,” Sam yells, but he knows that it’s all but useless at that point.

He doesn’t know how he didn’t hear anything. He doesn’t have time to think about it.

Dean curses, yanks his bag over his shoulder and tells Sam to get ahead of him. Sam shakes his head, turns to block the back door, gun held out in warning. The men seem to be unsure of what to do, but Sam can count them all now and—seven to two, with Dean’s gun not even drawn—it’s not great odds.

“Run,” Sam tells Dean.

“Fuck,” Dean mutters anxiously as he takes in the situation. One of the men edges closer, and Dean repeats it, moves in one quick, fluid motion and tips the desk toward the men. It clangs as it hits the floor, makes the men jump back and Dean’s already running toward the stairs, “Get a move on, Sammy.”

Sam turns to follow his brother, body moving on instinct and adrenaline. He trips a little getting out the door, and Sam knows that any time Dean’s bought them isn’t going to account for that.

Dean is a few seconds in front of Sam, pushing the door to the room open frantically, looking back over his shoulder. Sam can tell that the men are close to them now. Behind him, the sound of footsteps almost silences the sound of a gun cocking. Dean is pounding up the stairs in front of Sam, taking two at a time. Sam is right behind him but one of the guys has a gun and how did Sam not notice it? They’re after Dean. Dean has the papers. They’re so close Sam doesn’t know why they aren’t grabbing him.

Dean reaches the top of the stairs, slams the heavy metal door open.

“Fuck, fuck, fuck” Dean repeats frantically, almost through the door. Sam feels an arm grip the back of his shirt. He stumbles on the stairs. Dean’s through the door, turns to see what’s happened to Sam and his eyes go wide.

“Sam—”
Dean’s going to come back down for him. Sam has a pulse-pounding moment of clarity. Sam’s—Sam’s knew hopelessness of the situation the minute the men slammed into the room. He fucked it up. He didn’t pay attention. And the only way Sam could make this worse is if he didn’t let Dean get out of there safe.

“Dean?”

John is running toward them now, coming from the front of the house. Sam can tell Dean is about to come down, ruin fucking everything. Sam realizes this in a second that pulls long and painful.

Sam feels the hand on his shirt tightening, pulling backwards, pulling himself out of reach of doing anything.

Sam lurches forward, gets his hands on the heavy door, and slams his body against it.

“Sam!” Dean yells as the door closes. Sam figures John’s got him now. Dean’s going to be safe. The hands pull him back down the stairs. Sam hits the ground hard, knees scraping across the steps.

Sam closes his eyes.

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Cold Oak, 2007

Sam got knocked out, must’ve, because the next time he’s conscious he’s in a cell. Sam knows that Dean will come for him. He knows it like he knows the earth still orbits the sun. It's the thought that keeps him dutifully working his way through each meal placed in his cell, chewing and swallowing past the nausea that the most recent medication gave him.

It's the thought that gives him nightmares, too, when his dreams aren't filled with replayed images of the days beforehand. Dean will come for him. Who knows if they'll shoot Dean point blank the moment he enters the facility. If he'll end up in the cell right next to Sam, bars too wide and close for them to touch.

In Sam's worst dream, the ones that don't end with Dean's head split open, body cold across the facility floor, Dean makes it. Dad and him figure out a plan, and this time, it goes perfectly and Dean gets to Sam. And he takes in what Sam is now, he looks him up and down and he turns to John and he says "He isn't ours anymore" and John raises a gun. Sometimes Sam dies in the dream, sometimes he just jolts awake, terrified and wide-eyed in the darkness.

Because Sam barely feels human some days. His skin is always itchy, sweaty, aching like he's sick. Sam isn’t sure what they’re doing to him. He's only heard snatches of rumors, pieces of a horror story. It doesn't hurt, not much. The operations are clean and quiet affairs. Sam doesn't fight them. Saw another girl try it his second day there, and they methodically prepared a syringe, regarded her calmly as they injected it into her IV, watched as her vitals flat lined.

Sam thought about it, wondered if he was selfish for not trying it. Part of what's happening to him is his fault. He knows this. He thinks John will know, too, as soon as they break in and take the whole scene in.

It’s what makes the nights after the procedures even longer. It's not the procedures that hurt, it's what happens after. Sam doesn't even know what kind of hurt to qualify it as.

During jobs, if Sam got hurt, Dean would grab his neck, force him to make eye contact, and rate the
pain on a scale of one to ten. It was to see if Sam could keep going. Most of the scale, they needed to get somewhere where Dean could stitch him up, pop a shoulder back into place. If Sam needed a hospital, if he could barely even speak, that was a ten.

Whatever's happening to Sam now, he's not sure where it falls. The pain isn't terrible. Most of the visible injuries he inflicts on himself. He can't help it, it's the only way he knows how to stabilize himself when his body stops feeling like his own.

It's usually an itch under his skin, a strange discomfort edging up his bones. It only builds from there. Stacks up in need for something Sam doesn't understand, shivers and jolts of pain up his spine that leave him curled in on himself, sweaty and disoriented. Sam spends nights on the floor of his cell, pressing as much skin as he can to the cool concrete floor, anything to soothe whatever is boiling under his skin. The headaches start about two weeks in, after long hours on the operating table. It seems all pain Sam had been avoiding so far concentrated in the space behind his eyes.

Sam knows Dean's coming, he just doesn't think he's going to be in time.

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When Dean does come, Sam is asleep. He doesn't wake till he hears the sound of gunfire, and when he does he sits upright in his bed, alert and on edge because some new, animal part of himself can sense this is important. The sounds of yelling, gunfire, heavy thuds and crashing continues for sixty-two deep breaths in. Sam has to count to stay under control. His pulse is thrumming almost painfully up his neck. Then the doors to the holding area opens, and Sam sees him. Illuminated from the blue glow of the lab, Dean begins to move quickly down the aisle. Sam breathes out deeply, stumbles to the front of the bars.

"Dean," he whispers through the dark.

Dean’s figure turns in the dark. The gun goes off again.

“Sammy,” Dean replies, and his voice is steady and clear. His steps toward Sam are strong. He isn’t hurt. Sam’s breathes out—it’s like he’s really breathing for the first time in—god, he doesn’t know.

Dean gets to him quickly. He has keys, unlocks Sam’s cell quickly. Sam wonders how Dean did it, can’t believe that it could be that easy for him, that Dean came to get him and they’re making it out alive and whole.

As soon as the cell door swings open, Dean gets his hands on Sam. They press down his body quickly, efficiently, checking for wounds.

“I’m okay, Dean,” Sam says.

“Okay,” Dean says quietly, hands still searching up Sam’s sides, lingering, “Okay.”

He keeps a hand on Sam’s back, herds him out the cell. Sam wonders if Dean thinks he’s going to collapse. He’s not too sure himself.

“We’re getting out of here,” Dean says, mouth close to Sam’s ear.

“Yeah, alright.”

Dean slides a gun out of his jacket with his free hand, gives it to Sam.

“I got your back this time, Sammy.” Dean says, “And I know you got mine.”
Sam nods shakily, grips the gun even though his fingers are numb.

Dean takes him out through the lab. It’s mostly dark, only the blue emergency lights illuminate the room. Sam can tell, though, it’s a fucking blood bath. He and Dean navigate the room quickly. Sam steps in sticky puddles of the gore, can’t bring himself to care. Dean keeps a strong arm around him, tightens it when Sam stumbles over a body on the ground.

“How’d you do it?” Sam says when they’re near the exit.

Dean uses his body weight to open the door in front of them, doesn’t have to let go of Sam or his gun.

“Easy,” Dean says, voice all confidence and bravado and it sounds like going home, “Worst part was finding you. These guys? Bunch of fucking pushovers.”

Sam laughs, sharp and still panicky with adrenaline and Dean squeezes his side.

He slams another door open, at the end of the hall, and they emerge into the cool night air.

Sam breathes in deeply. It smells like gasoline and rain outside and Sam wants to hide his face because it’s such a fucking change from the smell of bleach and chemicals and his own sweat. He doesn’t want Dean to see the way his face is crumpling, how his eyes are wet and wide.

Dean must see anyway, of course he must, because he guides Sam to the Impala, opens the passenger door for him. He slides Sam in gently, and then he wipes at Sam’s eyes, so quickly that Sam wonders if he imagined it.

“I’m sorry I didn’t get to you quicker, Sammy,” he says. Sam chokes on his absolution, can’t get the words up because he knows all that’ll come out if he opens his mouth now is a sob.

Dean closes the door behind him, walks around and gets in the drivers side.

“I’m sorry,” he says again. He gets the keys in the ignition, the engine turns over. Sam takes in his brother, the chill of the car from hours left out in the cold, the vibrations of the car beneath his seat.

He closes his eyes. He falls asleep as easily as that.

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Hastings, 2007

Sam wakes to the sound of Dean’s voice. He blinks through the light streaming harshly into the car, focuses on Dean. He’s on the phone.

“Found him in the Cold Oak facility,” he says, looks over at Sam and notices he’s awake, smiles a little.

“Yeah, we’re fine. He’s fine.”

Whoever Dean’s talking to speaks for a little bit. Dean nods, “Yeah. I know. Trust me. This isn’t something I can afford to fuck up.”

Dean moves a hand from the steering wheel to pinch the bridge of his nose. It bothers Sam,

“Alright, Jim. We’ll head in your direction.”

Sam vaguely remembers a Jim from his childhood. Years and years ago, when John was still on
good terms with him, they had spent a couple weeks with him. He was a pastor. Sam had liked going to his services. Sam thinks his dad and Jim had a falling out, was too young to really understand it. The sharpness of the memories surprises him.

Dean hangs up the phone.

“Pastor Jim?” Sam asks.

Dean nods, “Didn’t know if you’d remember him.”

Sam shrugs a little. He can picture the man’s face, remember how gentle he’d been with Sam, who was still afraid of crowds and loud sounds. When Sam cried, Jim went to get Dean—just knew that Dean could calm whatever had set Sam on edge.

Still, Sam’s a little confused. He presses his lips together, wonders if asking will be a problem. Dean hasn’t mentioned it. Sam can guess at an answer.

“Where’s dad?”

The sky outside is blue and cloudless. Beside him, Dean is silent for a long stretch of the road. Sam presses his forehead against the glass, but it isn’t any cooler than the stifling air inside the car.

“Never mind. I don’t want to know.”

“Shit, Sam.” Dean mutters. The car slows a little as they hit a curve in the road. Dean takes it carefully.

“Is he dead?”

“No,” Dean says and his voice sounds angry and cautious, like the time he found Sam after a fight in a bar, broken bottle still in hand. Afraid to set Sam off again with a man still pinned against the wall, worried about the blood pouring out of Sam’s nose, “He’s not.” Sam sighs, “That’s what I thought.”

“He’s a piece of shit.” Dean says, and it makes Sam’s throat go tight and trembling because Dean loves their dad. Sam loves him, too. He doesn’t know if he mourns the loss of that in Dean, or the thought of what his dad must think of him—what he must have said about Sam to illicit that kind of reaction. Where he was when Dean was trying to find him.

“Bobby?”

“He’d tell John. Omegas—well. I guess you haven’t seen the news.”

Sam hasn’t. Sam has only heard rumors. The word omega isn’t even one he immediately recognizes. Dean does, though. Another attack had come while Sam was captured. Omegas emerged in small numbers after the fight, faces of family members presumed dead come back to haunt mourning families. They were obedient and strong and people were terrified.

Sam swallows hard. He feels like himself now, has since he’s been back with Dean. But if that’s coming for him, if he’s changed now. Changed into someone that would willingly stand and leave Dean, leave him without a thought, fight him without flinching—Sam doesn’t want to turn into that. If he could ever hurt Dean, there’s not an inch of his soul left. They’d have taken it. Sam would rather look down the barrel of Dean’s gun, put it in his mouth, than let that happen.

“We don’t know I’m an omega,” Sam says quietly, and his voice sounds so weakly hopeful that it
makes Dean turn to look at him, eyes soft.

“Sam. I got you back now. I don’t care in what condition.”

It irritates Sam—of course Dean doesn’t care. Sam could be dangerous, Sam could kill him, and Dean would let it happen. How was Sam supposed to live in a world like that?

“But we don’t know,” Dean repeats, tries to give Sam a reassuring look.

Sam nods unevenly, breathes out, “Okay.”

“Jim’s gonna help us out.”

“Okay.” Sam says again.

“Hey, they made you talk less. All I’m seeing is positives.”

Sam laughs. It’s ugly, hysterical. He can’t stop. Dean tries to act like it’s normal. He chuckles uncomfortably, reaches over and pats Sam on the back.

“I’m a fucking comedian, I know,” Dean says. His thumb trails over the top of Sam’s spine once before he pulls his hand back. Sam’s skin is shocky with the touch. Something cold pools in his stomach. Sam chokes on his laughter.

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**Fort Worth, 2009**

Anna tries to walk quietly after she swings the door open. There’s dirt on the floor, scrapes against her boots, but she’s learned how to step right.

Castiel is talking to Hael. Heads tipped together at the desk they’re working at. Anna soundlessly takes a seat near the corner of the room. She tries to get some work done, but she’s distracted. She’s nervous about what happened that afternoon, about the news that had traveled up from San Antonio. She hopes that it’s just another piece of sensationalism. There’s enough of that to go around.

She’s picking at her cuticles when Castiel clears his throat. Anna looks up.

“Hael tried to get in contact with someone in San Antonio today. Apparently it’s a solid lead.”

Anna heaves out a breath, “Well, that’s shitty news.”

“The man the alpha targeted, he’s fine,” Hael says.

Anna raises an eyebrow, “He is?”

“Yeah, nonfatal attack. And they were pretty aggressive toward the omega, apparently.”

Castiel makes a sound in agreement, “So they’re not a bonded pair?” Anna surmises.

“No, bonded—just,” Castiel hums and Hael turns her head to give him her full attention. They’re lost in silent conversation for a few long moments. Anna never got that modification. She can’t help but be a little irritated every time they use it, leave her to play catch up.

“It’s a strange connection,” Castiel says when he finally realizes they’ve slipped back into their silent communication, “But they are bonded.”
“Dangerous?” Anna asks. Anything they hadn’t documented already, hadn’t figured out the mechanics to, was a hindrance to the operation.

“I think not,” Hael says, “They seem to want to be left alone.”
“But we can never be too sure. We can’t overlook something,” Anna says. They really only get one shot at this. There isn’t room for unaccounted omegas, variants Anna hasn’t considered. Anna isn’t going to mess it up.

“I agree,” Castiel says, “We need more information. Hael? Can you track them?”

“I doubt it,” Hael says softly, the tone of voice she uses when she’s trying to focus. She closes her eyes for a moment, “No, sorry.”

“That’s alright,” Castiel replies, “You said they were heading north?”

“At least from what the barkeeper saw.” Hael says. She stands, moving to collect her glass and papers that are strewn across the table. Anna stands too. She’s been there long enough to understand when a decision has been made.

“Alright,” Castiel says, stands himself, wooden bench creaking with the release of his weight, “Then north’s where we need to look.”

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Blue Earth, 2007

Sam likes Jim. He’s kind to Dean, treats Sam the same way he did the last time Sam met him. They pull up to his house late, pull in under a dim lamp post, almost three in the morning, and he comes out to meet them. He helps them get their bags in, brings them to their room.

It’s small, but clean. Two twin beds are covered by white sheets, tucked and folded with precision. They’re pushed close together, and the sight gives Sam a deep throb of contentment. Sam doesn’t think Jim could’ve known, but he likes him for it, nevertheless.

The room is above the choir that takes up the corner of the first floor, where Jim used to have church services.

“This isolated, people aren’t comfortable leaving their homes,” Jim says by way of explanation. Sam wants to offer to come to a service, but doesn’t know how to say it without coming off like he’s doing Jim some sort of favor.

The first day at Jim’s starts late. Sam sleeps straight through noon, and Dean must, too, because Sam only wakes when Dean rouses from his bed, moves quietly across the wooden floor to the door.

Sam is used to waking quickly, is unaccustomed to the drowsiness he feels in his bones, but seeing Dean leaving jolts him awake, “Where are you going?”

“Just gotta talk to Jim,” Dean says, “You should try to sleep some more.”

Sam looks at the clock on the bedside table, “It’s two in the afternoon.”

“And you still look like shit,” Dean says.

Sam doesn’t know what to say to that. He doesn’t want to be bothered by it, probably wouldn’t be any other time, but Dean hasn’t been more than ten feet from him for the past forty hours. The way
he’s moving toward the door, Sam can’t help but get panicky.

“Well, I don’t need to look pretty to go see Jim, right?”

Dean raises an eyebrow, “No, but I’m sure Jim will be disappointed.”

Sam can’t bring himself to scoff, is already swinging his legs out of bed. Walking toward Dean calms the alarm in him, makes him feel normal enough to be afraid of whatever’s happening. He doesn’t let himself focus on it.

If he’s worrying, Dean’s going to pick up on it, and God knows he’s put Dean through enough recently.

Jim’s in his office, which is just a table pushed against the wall of the kitchen. Outside the window, Sam is surprised to see that it’s late afternoon. The sun is low and heavy with heat in the sky. It’ll be night soon.

“Hey, boys,” Jim says. He looks tired. Sam wonders if he slept at all.

“Jim,” Dean says, nods.

They sit at the table with him, and Jim stands to get them drinks.

“Want anything to eat?” Jim asks, and Dean declines. Sam accepts, but it’s just because he saw the sandwiches on the counter when they came in, wants to be polite. The thought of eating makes him a little sick, appetite all but gone.

Sam pulls apart his sandwich, notices Dean watching him carefully, and almost smiles with the thought that Dean’s worried about him. Wants to make sure he eats right. Sam takes a bite.

Dean nods, satisfied, and turns his attention toward Jim.

“I know I only got you the information last night,” Dean says, “But you know this shit, right? I don’t want to rush you but this is—you know. Kind of time sensitive.”

Jim nods, “Of course. I wish I had better news for you, but I’ve been going over it all night, and I can’t find anything new here. There’s no telling what happened to Sam. If anything’s even going to present. And even if I could tell—well. There’s not a cure. You know that.”

“Fuck.”

Sam blinks, “I feel fine. If I was an omega, I’d know by now, right? I’d need to be with my—alpha?”

The word is foreign in his mouth. Jim nods, “That’s how it works. At least, based on the very little information we have. And most of Azazel’s commanders seem to be the alphas so this is promising. Possibly.”

“Possibly?” Dean asks.

“Omegas who lack an alpha, who are left by their commanders, who fought the bond—I did get some new information on that.”

“Yeah?”

“It’s not good,” Jim says, “Seems like there’s a sort of kill switch for the omega. Incapacitates them, makes them need their alpha. And if they’ve been abandoned, it eventually burns them out.”
Jim’s voice is sympathetic when he says it, but he doesn’t hesitate, doesn’t try to make the facts any prettier.

“But we don’t know, ” Dean says. Sam takes in his brother. He’s sitting there, shoulders pulled inward with tension. His voice sounds desperate. Sam feels useless.

“No,” Sam says, the only thing that he can do, “We don’t.”

And it’s true. Sam almost convinces himself that he feels normal, that Dean leaving the room always made his head shoot with pain, that it made every nerve in his body prickle.

Dean tells Sam he’s going to make a grocery run. Jim needs some stuff, he says, and Dean wants to pick up some beer. Sam knows it’s because he wants to give Jim a chance to talk to Sam about what happened in the lab without Dean hovering.

Sam would appreciate it, but the moment he says it, Sam feels panic start to seize him. He doesn’t say anything. It’s just lingering fear from the past three weeks.

When Dean leaves the house, Jim tries to start talking to him. Sam’s thoughts are scattered. He remembers most of the past three weeks. Suddenly the memories that gave him nightmares are hazy, like Sam’s looking back at them twenty years later.

“Sam?” Jim’s voice sounds distant.

“I was—“ Sam stumbles through his sentence, “I’m sorry, what was I saying?”

“Are you alright?”

Sam opens his mouth slowly, tries to respond. Before he can’t get a word out, his head bursts with pain. Sam crumples in on himself. He hits the kitchen floor, grabs his head in some attempt to soothe himself. The pain folds over, doubles—hot and piercing, it travels down his spine like fire licking at his bones.

It spreads to his stomach, throbs down his body and centers there. His whole body is burning but his stomach feels like it’s being ripped apart. Sam groans, whimpers. Opening his mouth makes his teeth hurt, like every piece of skin keeping them in place is weakening.

Someone—Jim. Jim? Flits their hands down Sam’s back. Where he touches Sam feels scalded, jerks away from it. He isn’t touched again.

He doesn’t know how long he lies there. It feels like a long time. He doesn’t know how he’s still breathing. His heart is beating too fast. Sweat drips off him in a steady, burning trickle.

Sam wonders if he’s going to die.

Through the fog of pain Sam hears the sound of Jim’s voice. He’s on the phone. Sam’s sure he has to be on the phone.

The next thing that breaks through is the sound of the door opening. Dean’s voice filters through, loud and frantic and perfect.

“Dean?” Sam mumbles. Dean’s by his side fast, gets his hands on Sam’s back. Sam is prepared to flinch away from the pain he expects but.

Sam’s body does the exact opposite, arches into the touch. Dean’s hands feel so good. They turn Sam over, one on his side, one on his back and everywhere they touch feels like salvation.
Sam thinks he’s breathing again. His body strains toward the hands. He needs them to be everywhere. He wants to take off his clothes, feel them on his skin.

Once he’s turned over, the hands leave him.

Sam screams. He didn’t know it could be worse, but it is. It’s so much worse now that he knows what relief feels like.

Dean touches him again, hands moving nervously across Sam’s body. Sam tries to calm himself down. Dean’s hands are stabilizing. Sam’s aware enough to be afraid.

“Holy shit,” Dean says, “What the fuck is going on, Jim?”

“I,“ Jim swallows, “I think. I don’t know for sure but I think Sam’s heat has been triggered.”

“Heat?” Dean echoes. His hands trace down Sam’s spine. Sam feels like sighing from the relief it brings, like cool water over his burning skin.

“The kill-switch. The omega shut down.”

Dean’s hands stutter on their path down Sam’s back. Sam whines. The path Dean had been tracing had satisfied something deep in Sam. If only he had gone a little further had touched him in just the right place.

What the fuck was he thinking? Sam tries to shake his head against the cool tile he is lying against, but Dean mistakes it for thrashing, a response to pain, and jerks his hands away from Sam’s body.

Sam buckles in on himself. He’s lost again.

“Shit!” Dean yells as Sam starts twitching on the floor, “Shit! Fuck! What did I do?”

“Dean,” Sam groans from the floor.

“What’s he doing? What the fuck’s happening?” Dean sounds horrified, worse than the time Sam got clawed by a werewolf, two claws cut to the bone on the lower half of his leg.

“I think. I don’t know how. Dean, could you touch Sam again?”

“What?” Dean says. Sam doesn’t know why Dean isn’t doing it already. It’s the best idea Sam’s heard in years. He tries to tell Dean this, ends up pushing his head against Dean’s thigh.

Sam sighs happily when his cheek brushes against Dean’s solid, soothing weight. The headache that had been throbbing from his forehead down to his teeth ebbs out into nothing but a memory.

“What the fuck is he doing?” Dean says.

Jim takes in Sam rubbing his head against Dean’s leg, feverishly pushing as much of his body towards Dean as he can. He cracks his knuckles in quick succession, eyes trailing Sam’s movements.

“He—Sam I think—He thinks you’re his alpha.”

“His what?” Dean’s voice is loud, his body moves away from Sam’s. Sam doesn’t know why Dean keeps doing that. Can’t he see how much Sam needs him?

Sam’s headache erupts back to the surface. Sam can’t believe his head is still together, hasn’t split right down the middle.
The only thought besides the pain is Dean. Need, need, need.

“Sam?” Dean says softly from somewhere across the room.

Yes, yes, need you, Dean, need.


Dean walks toward Sam this time slowly, steps measured. He kneels on the floor with intention, places his hands mechanically on Sam’s sides. Sam feels all his tension release.

“You didn’t hear that?” Dean asks Jim.

“No,” Jim says, “I didn’t.”

Dean begins to stroke a hand up Sam’s sides, measured movements up and down his ribs. Sam wants to cry. He had never realized how good it felt, Dean’s hands.

“What do I do? How long till he calms down?”

“I’m not sure. I have some reports but I don’t think they apply here. I don’t know what to tell you, Dean. I just—this hasn’t happened. An omega choosing their own alpha. And a fraternal bond is. But as far as this episode, it’s—it’s, if I had to guess, just from what I’ve seen. They don’t have a time limit. The diffusion of the heats requires contact with their alpha.”

“I’m his alpha, right? I’m in contact with him.”

The room is quiet for a long moment. Dean continues to smooth his hands over Sam’s torso, eyes fixed on Jim’s tight face.

“What? How long do I have to do this? Is it an overnight thing? I’m alright with that.”

“It seems like it’s not a matter of duration it’s more about the, uh, level of physicality.”

“What the fuck’s that mean?”

Sam can hear the heavy sound of Jim swallowing, “I’m not sure it’s the case here. I can’t say for certain. But generally, copulation is required to, um, bring a heat to an end.”

Dean’s hands tighten on Sam’s ribs, pressure too much, but Sam hardly notices. Now that he’s heard it, the need for that, for exactly that churns in his stomach. Dean is so good and his hands are warm and touch him just right and what would Dean fucking him feel like?

His cock up inside Sam, where the ache and heat of the episode haven’t been soothed. Now that he knows he can get it, it’s the only feeling he can focus on. Dean’s cock in him and his body all around him, soothing every gnawing, needy place inside of him.

Sam feels something wet ooze out of his hole. He hardly notices. It’s not Dean, it’s not important.

Dean’s hands still haven’t moved from Sam’s body, even though Sam can feel the tension coiled in Dean’s fingers, legs tight under Sam’s head.

When Dean speaks, his voice is choked and scared. Sam wonders if that should upset him. Maybe it should. It’s stopping Dean from taking care of him.

“What if I can’t?”
“In theory you could just keep touching him. Forever,” Sam can hear Jim’s footsteps moving toward them, “But that’s not a solution. Any kind of life, anything goes wrong, and you’re away from him for ten minutes, he’s going to burn himself out.”

“That’s not an option,” Dean says, and his voice is steadier, resolved.

“Dean you can’t.”

“Can I take him upstairs? Will that hurt him?”

“I don’t think so, but—“

Suddenly Sam felt himself being hefted up by Dean, too-heavy body being held up by Dean’s steady shoulders.

“Dean, you shouldn’t just dive into this. Give it some time. There’s—there’s no information on what happens to the alpha, what this could do to you.”

“You said this is the only solution.”

“I just need some time to research, Dean. I don’t know—“

Sam whines against Dean’s side. One arm around him isn’t enough, it’s barely keeping the debilitating pain at bay.

Dean tightens his grip, “Do you want to leave, Jim?”

Sam hears Jim suck his teeth nervously, “I—I’ll stay in here. In my office. If you, I guess, need something.”

“Thanks, Jim,” Dean says and Sam wants to thank him, too. Can’t bring his mouth to form the words. Has the thought wiped away by the pressing need in a second anyway, so it doesn’t matter.

Sam tries to help Dean up the stairs as much as he can. He wants to, and his body must know what’s coming, some new instinct working to get Sam’s legs under him, help him stumble into Dean and Sam’s shared bedroom.

Sam already feels better. The room smells like them. Dean’s aftershave and Sam’s shampoo and the clean smell of their sweat from the small room that got too hot. Sam takes the smell in through gulps, feels his insides clench with heat.

Dean shoulders Sam off him on to the bed. He’s breathing deep, too, Sam can tell. He wonders if Dean can smell it too, can smell them.

Dean’s hands are almost shy as they move to rest on Sam’s hips.

“Sam, if you’re in there at all anymore, if you can hear me, I’m so fucking sorry.”

Sam tosses his head, let’s out a noise of irritation. What is Dean talking about? This is exactly what Sam wants; this is what he’s always wanted. This is what he was made for.

“I—“ Dean looks down at Sam, and his eyes are wide and wet, “I can’t do this without you, though. I can’t. I’m a selfish piece of shit.”

Sam tries to capture Dean’s hands, move them to Sam’s buckle. Sam can’t manage it right now, but Dean can. Dean’s got great fingers, Sam’s always thought so. Why isn’t Dean doing anything?
“I’m going to fix this, okay?”

And then Dean’s moving, his thick, fucking perfect fingers start to undo Sam’s buckle. Sam arches into the touch, let’s Dean know that he’s doing the right thing, that this is what Sam’s been asking for.

Dean’s hands are a little too rough, maybe, if Sam had it in him to care about that sort of thing.

Dean’s hands flutter on the upper thigh that he’s revealed pulling down Sam’s jeans. They’re at the edge of Sam’s boxers, like he needs to gather the courage to continue.

Sam moans, watches Dean’s eyes clench shut. Sam doesn’t know if that’s a good reaction or not, he just wants Dean to touch him, fill him up, stop the need he feel boiling inside him.

Dean slides Sam’s boxers off while touching as little skin as he can. Sam whines, only the parts of his legs Dean is brushing while kneeling over Dean are being touched, and Sam hurts.

“I know, I know,” Dean mutters. His pupils are blown wide, eyes on Sam’s cock, heavy and hard against his stomach.

“Alright,” he says with a swallow, and wraps a hand around Sam’s cock, starts to jerk him off.

Sam raises his hips into the touch. It feels so good, Dean is all around him, his thumb moving to collect the pre-come pooling sticky from Sam’s cock on his stomach.

“Yeah, Sammy,” Dean mutters and Sam moans, “Don’t worry, not gonna hurt you.”

Sam doesn’t know what Dean’s talking about. If Dean cut his ribs open right now, Sam would probably thank him, would love the feel of Dean’s hands on his lungs.

Dean seems lost, doesn’t know what to do with himself. The space between Sam’s body and Dean’s is getting smaller and smaller and Dean’s watching Sam’s face, wrinkle of concentration between his brows, gauging how Sam reacts.

Sam can’t control his body anymore, hips twitching and it makes Dean’s hand falter, thumb nail brushing the sensitive underside of the head of Sam’s cock.

Sam cries out, cock spurting another hot pulse of pre-come, hole convulsing around nothing as slick leaks onto the sheet under him.

“Shit,” Dean curses, licks his lips, “Shit, Sammy,” and he leans down and closes the remaining space between, crushes his mouth against Sam’s.

Sam kisses back frantically, tongue pushing inside Dean’s mouth just the way he wants, the way he needs right now.

Dean grips the underside of Sam’s jaw, tilts his chin up to adjust Sam’s angle and something about exposing his neck to Dean soothes Sam to his core.

Dean moves to kiss Sam’s upper lip. Sam’s breath catches, and he can’t help it, he grinds his hips upward into Dean’s lap.

Dean groans, nips Sam’s bottom lip. His breath comes out hot over Sam’s cheek. He grinds back against Sam, uses his free hand to undo his own belt, push his jeans and underwear down in one smooth motion.
Sam thought Dean grinding against him before was incredible, but his bare cock rubbing against Sam’s is fucking heaven. Sam rolls his hips into Dean’s frenzied grinding.

Sam’s mouth starts going slack around Dean’s, only able to half focus on what’s happening when the needy pulse of his asshole keeps drawing his attention.

“Dean,” he finally says, voice no louder than a rasp, but Sam’s happy he could speak at all. He feels like he hasn’t spoken for an hour, was just an animal, groaning and wanting.

“Need, fuck, fuck—” Sam mutters, takes Dean’s hand in his and guides it to his hole. Dean blinks at him, eyes wide and dark with lust.

“Dean,” Sam whines and Dean seems to understand then, brushes his fingers lightly down the crease of Sam’s ass, gropes at him gently.

Sam almost cries. So close, so good, and still not where he needs it. He feels so empty.

Dean slides a finger into the crease of Sam’s ass, and in one smooth movement, works a single digit into Sam’s hole.

Sam goes a little crazy, arching and clenching around the fingers, moaning encouragements out to Dean.

One finger quickly becomes two, three, and Sam is leaking slick so heavy it’s coating the sheets under them, making everything fucking filthy. Dean’s thrusting against Sam’s stomach as he fingers him, and his pre-come mixes with the smell, makes Sam’s arousal rack up another notch.

Dean crooks his fingers just right, and Sam feels a hot spike of pleasure shoot up his back.

“Oh,” Sam manages with a gasp, “Fuck.”

“You like that, Sammy?” Dean mutters, “Like having your little hole stuffed?”

And Sam nods because he does. He fucking craves it, wants more of it even though Dean’s already stretching him wide.

Dean groans, pulls his fingers from Sam’s hole with a wet sound.

Sam cries out, tries to work his hips back on Dean’s hand, can’t believe Dean would do that to him. He needs them, what is Dean doing?

But then Dean’s pushing Sam’s thighs apart, movements rough and jerky as he lines his hips up with Sam’s, cock prodding against Sam’s cheeks. Dean always takes such good care of him, Sam thinks, idea barely a haze in his mind.

Dean pushes in as slowly as Sam expects he’s able to. If Dean’s feeling one fraction of what Sam is, Sam can’t believe he isn’t hammering into him already. Sam wishes he would.

The feel of Dean’s cock in him is fucking perfect. It’s big, and even covered in slick and stretched, Sam can feel the burn of it. He clenches down, loves the feeling of being filled so well.

Dean lets a breath when he’s fully seated in Sam, balls pressed against Sam’s ass.

“You okay sweetheart?” Dean says, words struggling out rough as gravel.

Sam whines, rolls his hips in response.
“Yeah you are,” Dean says, and then he pulls his cock out almost entirely, and slams back in.

Dean’s a fucking jackhammer once he gets started, shoving into Sam’s willing hole hard and fast, hips angled just right to hit Sam’s prostate.

Sam’s body is so tightly strung, that the itch deep inside him is finally getting scratched, and Dean’s thrusting into him hard enough to make Sam’s vision edge on black.

It’s all Sam can do to push his hips back, toss his head as Dean’s stomach rubs against Sam’s cock.

Sam can’t come. His cock is so full that it’s almost painful, and his prostrate is being pounded relentlessly, but he can’t fucking come, can just lay there and take it.

“Fuck, Sam,” Dean hisses, sweat gathering on his forehead, neck bent low so his breath ghosts across Sam’s neck, and he jerks his hips forward one more time, hard enough to bruise, and oh god, he’s coming in heavy pulses into Sam.

Sam didn’t know he needed it, but the feeling of Dean’s come, hot as a brand inside him, tips him over the edge. He cries out, comes so hard it’s almost painful, hole clenching around Dean’s cock still buried deep inside him.

Sam’s body feels numb after that. His nerves are all but useless once they’ve cooled from the frenzied state they were in before, can’t pick up on any feeling at all.

Dean is still sucking on Sam’s neck though, and Sam’s tired body wants to tip it’s head back, so Sam gathers all his energy to let it.

“Good boy,” Dean breathes against his neck, and that’s what tips Sam over into sleep.

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Sam wakes up before the dawn, Dean’s heavy arm wrapped around his waist, jaw rough with stubble scraping against the back of his shoulder.

Sam’s body is sore. Every part of him hurts and—and there’s come leaking out of his tender hole. Sam closes his eyes and tries to breathe normally, doesn’t want to wake Dean. He can at least let Dean have this after what he made him do.

Sam tries to calm the panic clawing at his chest, swallows hard. This wasn’t ever supposed to happen. They did the worst thing possible to Sam at Cold Oak, the one thing Sam would go to his grave with. A disease, something that everyone could see Sam had, something that could infect anyone who got too close.

It already had. It infected Dean, the most important person to keep safe. He came and he saved Sam, was brave and kind and he took care of Sam and this is what Sam gave him back.

Dean rouses behind him, presses a kiss to Sam’s shoulder.

“Hey,” he says and Sam can feel his eyes start to water, knows that if he stays there any longer, let’s himself pretend that what happened between was anything but obligation and goodness on Dean’s part, if he let’s himself forget for even one second, he’s not going to be able to help it. He knows it. It’ll just be another thing forced on Dean, all the messy feelings Sam’s let fester for years, one more burden of Sam’s for Dean to take on his back.

“Bathroom,” Sam chokes out, and he darts down the hall, behind the safety of the bathroom door.
He turns the shower on to drown out the noise, and it’s then that he finally let’s out a long, choked sob.

He cries under the spray of the shower for three minutes, and then someone pounds on the bathroom door.

“Sammy?” Dean yells from the other side, voice too loud and harsh, “Sam, what the fuck’s going on? Do I need to come in there?”

Sam turns off the shower, tries to breathe.
Chapter Notes

I am so so sorry about the delay in getting this chapter written and posted!! this summer has literally kicked my ASS and all i wanted to write was fluff and also I don't know ANYTHING about science so I had to bullshit my way through a lot of stuff in this chapter!! But i hope it all came out convincingly and DO NOT WORRY AT ALL about this getting finished because I would never leave a story as a WIP!!! If this doesn't get finished, assume I am dead! OK I hope you enjoy :) i love hearing opinions and stuff too! ((that's me casually saying I am thirsty for reviews)) See end notes for some warnings as per usual!

Lampasas, 2009

Sam feels like heats hit him harder and harder. Hit them harder and harder. Sam can’t stave them off anymore. Dean so much as leaving to get food can set Sam off. And they used to be easier, too. One round, and Sam was taken care of. Now they go most of the night. Either Sam’s heat-addled body isn’t satisfied, or Dean needs to go again, to calm whatever instinct grows in him now.

They’ve been coming more recently, too. What used to be no more than once every two months now happens almost every other week. When the time between heats gets shorter, when it cuts down to every other day, once a day, Sam doesn’t know how he’s going to survive. When Sam’s in heat, Dean and he fuck like nothing else exists. One time, near the end of their first bonded year, Dean and Sam had fucked in the bathroom of a gas station, straight through the armed robbery happening outside. They’d come out to a cashier with a bullet in his shoulder, hadn’t been able to do much but try to patch him up. Sam absurdly apologizing the entire time.

He doesn’t know if he’ll even be himself anymore, when it happens. If he’ll have enough of his mind left to hate it like he does now.

He wants to ask Dean how much control he has while Sam’s in heat, if Dean could put Sam down if he ever got that far gone—but. They don’t really talk about it.

Sam has to let Dean know, of course, when things start going bad. They’ll be driving, and Sam won’t be able to ignore the need building in him anymore and he’ll shyly mutter, “Dean, I think we need to find a place to stop.”

And Dean is good at reading Sam. Probably already smelled the beginnings of arousal tens of miles back, but he waits to let Sam tell him anyway.

“Course, Sammy,” Dean will reply, and besides the few times it’s crept up on them, Dean somehow always finds them a place to stay.

During, Sam guesses he and Dean can’t help but talk, groans and pleas and praise. Dean likes to tell Sam how good he’s being, how perfect he is for him. Words that make Sam blush when he thinks about them later.
But afterwards, after both of their needs are taken care of, Sam or Dean moves to the unused bed and turns on the television.

Sam lies there, laughs along to whatever Dean’s making fun of, and tries to ignore the painful-good aches all over his body.

He always still smells like Dean, even after a shower, his whole body marked in a way he couldn’t wash off. Sam wonders if Dean can smell it too.

The most recent heat ended after going at it from nine in the evening, sun just leaving the summer sky, till four in the morning, when the room was dark and warm, not even the moon giving off any light.

Sam falls asleep almost as soon as Dean’s moved to the other bed and turned the TV on. He wakes up at ten the next morning to the sound of the bathroom door slamming open. Sam is scared for an instant, can’t pinpoint the noise and reaches for the gun under his pillow.

“Whoa, Sam, stand down,” Dean says, putting his hands up in mock surrender. He’s only got his boxers on, water still clinging to the top of his shoulders.

Sam’s mouth feels dry.

“I left you some hot water,” Dean says, moves across the room to bend over his duffel. Sam swallows, nods, “Okay, um.”

“You want breakfast?” Dean asks.

“Sure, I’ll be quick,” Sam replies.

“That’s, what, thirty minutes?”

“Fuck off, dude,” Sam mutters, slams the door behind him and showers methodically. He washes his hair, shaves, and rubs a washcloth between his legs without lingering.

His thighs are bruised. Sam shivers.

He’s brought his clothes into the bathroom. Dean is sitting on Sam’s bed when Sam gets out.

“What to?” Sam asks.

“Saw a shitty diner up the road, it’s on the way to Jim’s,” Dean says.

Sam hefts his duffle onto his back. The drive to the diner is only about ten minutes, but Sam’s stomach is grumbling.

The diner is small. Sam thinks it’s closed, when they first get there. There’s almost no activity to be seen from the outside, but there’s three people working inside—a waitress, two cooks.

“Sit wherever you’d like, boys,” The waitress yells from the kitchen window as they enter.

There’s two other groups there. Dean leads Sam to a booth as far from them as they can.

The diner smells good, like bacon and maple syrup and there’s a breeze in the air. The open windows around the diner leave the room comfortable, and Dean grins at Sam from across the table. His feet knock against Sam’s accidentally under the table. Sam forces down his smile. It’s a good morning.
“Get whatever you want, I’m paying,” Dean says.

Sam rolls his eyes, “It’s not even your credit card, Dean.”

“That’s the thanks I get.”

“What, you want me to put out?” Sam says, face pulling up into a smirk before he realizes what he’s said. He shuts his mouth with a click, sound like a window slamming shut.

Dean laughs it off. Then the table goes silent.

The waitress comes over to take their orders. She’s pretty, dark hair piled in curls on top of her head. Sam smiles back at her as she greets them, orders an omelet.

He looks over, and Dean’s leaning across the table, body tilted towards the waitress, wearing the kind of smile Sam has never had directed at him.

“Goddamn,” Dean says, “Aren’t you a sight for sore eyes,” and his voice is deep, same kind of tone he uses when he’s fucking Sam through his heat. It reminds Sam of the night before, when Dean groaned how tight Sam was, how perfect around his co—The woman laughs, pops a hip and turns her attention toward Dean.

“Well isn’t that sweet of you,” She says, voice dry and eyebrow raised, “What can I get for you, handsome?”

And she’s the kind of girl Dean likes. Sam’s known that since he was eleven. Dean likes a little chase, likes a sense of humor, and she tucks a piece of her hair behind her ear as she takes down Dean’s order.

Dean talks to Sam lightly while they’re waiting for their orders, and Sam tries to contribute, but Dean’s eyes keep returning to the waitress leaning over the kitchen counter.

She keeps looking over her shoulder, making eye contact with Dean and smiling before she goes back to ignoring him.

She brings the food to their table, and stays to talk to Dean while Sam is left to pick over his omelet. He’s still hungry, but his stomach feels weak. He doesn’t think he’ll be able to keep anything down and he hates it.

He hates how when the waitress laughs at one of Dean’s jokes, Sam thinks her laugh is high pitched and annoying. He hates the sick satisfaction lingering in the back of his mind that Dean won’t be able to do anything about the flirtation—can’t leave Sam behind, not ever. Sam hate’s that it’s bothering him anyway, how he has to dig his nails into his palm and focus on the sound of his own chewing so that he doesn’t have to hear the conversation he’s not a part of.

Sam wishes he could excuse himself to the bathroom. Can’t though, can’t risk what being so far from Dean might do to him. It’s suffocating, sometimes, how Sam doesn’t feel like he can ever really breathe without sharing Dean’s air.

Dean leaves with the woman’s phone number, and Sam leaves a ten-dollar tip because he’s guilty over how much he hates her.

They get in the car. Dean’s in a good mood, puts on one of his cassette tapes and sings along.

“Take it, Sammy!” He elbows Sam in the side.
“No, thanks,” Sam mutters, and keeps his gaze fixed out the window. Outside, the sky is grey and dark. The road they are on is a quite, two-lane affair, both sides nothing but flat plains, but Sam tries to seem fascinated.

“Okay, sunshine,” Dean says, “What crawled up your ass?”

“Nothing, Dean. I’m just not into the fucking cock-rock you inflict on me a daily basis. No news there.”

Dean scowls, flips the music off.

“Are you going to be like this the whole day?”

“Like what?” Sam says feeling all of thirteen again. Back when he’d lash out at Dean, at dad, at anyone who got too close. Course it always ended with him jerking off later that night. All the tension released thinking of the way Dean would snap back at him. He couldn’t help how good it felt, how much he wanted it. Still can’t.

“Fucking fine.” Dean mutters. The car whips down the road like a bullet. They don’t speak for the next fifty miles.

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“Here,” Hael says quietly from the back of the car. They’ve been driving for a long time. This is the first time she’s spoken.

They park outside the diner. It’s a nice place, Anna thinks. It feels like it’s been taken care of. Castiel goes into the diner with Anna and they leave Hael outside to do the real work. The diner puts Anna on edge a little. It reminds her of the place she grew up. The empty counters remind her of what happened to it.

She doesn’t like to remember. Not what happened there before, sure as hell not what happened there after.

It’s early morning. The air is close enough to the night to still have some chill in it.

They’re told to take a seat. Castiel nods his head toward the booth near the back.

“The omega was there?” Anna murmurs.

“Alpha, I think,” Castiel replies, “I can’t seem to pick up on the omega.”

“But you think they were here?” Anna says as she takes a seat at the booth.

“We’ll talk to the staff. Hael will guide us. Relax, Anna,” Castiel says, voice always smooth and calming.

“Do you think we should order coffee to ‘go native’,” Castiel says as he opens a menu mechanically, fingers moving in quotations.

Anna laughs.

She thinks he was probably like that before the modification. She may not have gotten all the mods, but she can’t imagine they could have cooked up Cas’s personality in a lab.
Anna doesn’t feel like becoming an omega changed her all that much. She can hear better now, and sometimes the back of her neck itches before she consciously realizes something feels off. Sometimes she feels something about a place, but that could be attributed to anything. She’d never been bonded with an alpha. She had escaped early on in the program.

It was easier then. The guards thought they were just protecting simple human playthings, not anything really valuable. Cas and Hael had a harder time of it. They escaped in the thick of it, when Azazel realized what he could do with his omegas.

Castiel didn’t talk about it.

Hael had an alpha. At least, at one point she did. Castiel had found Anna a few months before he told her they needed to head back in the direction of one of the camps. They’d found Hael fifty miles out, a lab van crashed and an alpha with his throat sliced neatly with a piece of the windshield’s glass. Hael was in heat, but she still snarled when they got close.

She’d been their first success. Not a cure, not yet, but Castiel leaned down next to her, gave her the injection, and her heat had subsided like it was a stomach flu she just had to get over.

It was as close to hopeful as Anna had felt in years.

Castiel does end up ordering coffee, and Anna tries to talk to the waitress while they wait for Hael.

Anna doesn’t have the same abilities as Hael, but she’s good at talking to people. She’s got the waitress smiling pleasantly along with her after a few moments and she’s nice. Pretty, too. At another time, what feels like lifetimes away, Anna might’ve gotten her number.

As it is, she smiles back at her and watches Castiel’s expression out of the corner of her eye.

He nods midway through the waitress explaining their pie options, and Anna looks away.

“Could we get the banana to go?” She interrupts. The waitress seems a little surprised, but she nods and goes to box their food.

“Did she get what she needs?” Anna asks quietly.

“Yes. Headed North. They’re closer than we thought.”

Anna thanks the waitress when she brings their food, but tries not to spare her another thought. She focuses on the mates they’re tracking. Once they find them, once they figure it out all out, then maybe she can think about that again.

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The way to Jim’s used to be marked more clearly. The sign marking the correct exit from the highway must’ve been knocked over in a storm, though. No one cared to fix it. Sam guesses it was a while ago. Dean and he almost miss it as they hurdle down the highway, but Sam finally speaks up, just a quiet mutter as he looks up from the map to let Dean know where they’re headed.

Dean turns off without a word, but Sam can tell most of his real irritation has dissipated. He probably wasn’t that mad in the first place.

Sam guesses it should make him feel better, but the constant pit in Sam’s stomach never really goes away. He guesses Dean feels like this most of the time, too. But Sam tries to—well, it’s just, he’s noticed that Dean as an alpha is more tactile, and Sam seems to be the most soothing thing to touch.
Sam thinks it’d work the same way for him, if Dean would just reach over and touch him; maybe Sam’s body could stop feeling like it’d been left out in the cold.

He doesn’t. Probably because he never had the natural impulse to touch Sam in the first place, so the thought that it’d be comforting to Sam just doesn’t occur to him. Sam cracks his jaw and tries to focus on Jim.

Jim had said he’d found something promising over the phone, nothing to get too excited about, mostly just wanted to see the boys again. But Sam’s happy just to be seeing him. There’s not another person on earth who comes close to understanding whatever’s going on with him and Dean.

Dean tries to talk to him a little bit. He points out old houses; landmarks that that he thinks might interest Sam in a cautious tone. Sam can feel him eyeing him and he tries not to let himself get irritated again. It’s hard to shake, though, the innate feeling of betrayal.

It’s not like Dean owes him a goddamn thing. It just that Sam can’t help it. Thinking about Dean flirting with someone else, interested in someone else—like Sam wasn’t enough—sends a shock of pain through his chest. Sam knows Dean doesn’t belong to him, not in the way Sam wants, but his body hasn’t ever caught on.

Dean’s doing everything he can. He’s already given more than Sam’s ever going to be able to make up. More than Sam’s ever going to be able to forgive himself. There’s a disconnect between what Sam knows, the guilt Sam feels, and the oil-slick impulses his body feeds him.

They stop an hour out from Jim’s, at a small convenience store that Jim has used to stock up for years. It never went under. Azazel’s armies never reached that far, even when they were at their most powerful, and the surrounding areas guaranteed that it had a steady supply of business over the years where everything was held stagnant in anticipation of Azazel’s next move.

It’s not too hot. A thin layer of gray mostly covers the sun. Sam’s head aches pretty badly; they’ll probably be getting rain.

The parking lot is half full, a quiet bustle of people that Sam finds comforting. He stretches when he gets out of the car, feels the irritation roll off him a little.

Dean waits at the entrance to the store for Sam to get out of the car and catch up with him. Sam knows the drill when they’re in places like this.

Dean leads their way through the store, turning to hold things up for Sam’s inspection. Sam can trail an aisle behind, maybe try to grab some things that Dean will pull a face at, but any farther than that, and Sam’s skin gets itchy.

They grab cereal and powdered milk and spam. There are some canned peaches that Sam convinces Dean to buy. Dean grabs some beef jerky, too, which Sam hates the smell of. Dean tells him it’s for Jim, and as soon as they’ve checked out, he digs into the bag and tears open a pack.

He takes a big bite, chews with his mouth open and raises his eyebrows to Sam like it’s a challenge.

Sam rolls his eyes, but he can’t help the smile that twitches at the corners of his mouth. Dean is treating him like he’s a fucking teenager, and Sam is still falling for it. He falls for it every single time.

It makes Dean happy, too, though. He’s grinning, pretty goddamn pleased with himself, as they make their way back to the car.

Dean pops open the trunk and drops their bags into the car. Sam moves to slide in between the cars
to get to the passenger side and as he turns, a woman bumps into him.

“Oh,” Sam’s voice comes out in a breath of surprise, “Sorry.”

The girl who bumped into him doesn’t move from where she’s standing, bends slowly over to gather the bag that had fallen when she ran into Sam.

She reaches out, touches his arm slowly as if to steady him. Sam didn’t realize he felt dizzy.

The space on Sam’s arm where she touched Sam feels inexplicably warm. Sam rubs his hand over it absently, eyes fixed on her.

He can’t seem to look away, and she doesn’t seem to be moving either. She tilts her head, ice blue eyes narrowing as she nods slowly towards him.

“Hey,” Dean says from his side of the car, “She giving you any trouble?”

The girl is tiny, no more than half Sam’s weight, and the idea that she poses any threat to Sam is ridiculous. But what Dean’s going through doesn’t make any sense. Sam hopes that this doesn’t turn into a scene. They have to go to this place a lot.

“No,” the woman says, “I apologize. That was my fault.”

She blinks, and Sam’s body jerks back to movement. He nods awkwardly at the girl, then shuffles around her body to get into the impala.

“She should watch where she’s going,” Dean murmurs, like he’s confirming it with himself. Sam doesn’t say anything.

Dean starts the car and pulls out. Sam watches the girl from inside the window as they leave the parking lot. She walks towards the grocery’s doors, but as far as Sam can see, she never goes in. He wonders for a moment why she had any bags at all, if she was going into the store.

They pull down the road quickly, and soon Sam loses sight of her before he can really be sure. He thinks about bringing it up to Dean. But what would he say? His arm still feels warm where she touched him, and Dean’s conversation is still stilted and uncomfortable on the driver’s side.

Sam shakes his head, tries to shake away the feeling. He isn’t upset anymore. He just feels kind of weird. He doesn’t want Dean to pick up on it, though, the irritation and strain from earlier already leaving both of them run a little ragged.

Sam licks his lips, “You think Jim’s still on that fucking tea thing?”

Dean laughs, a little too eagerly, picks up the lame conversation starter with enthusiasm, “Oh man, he texted me, earlier. Told me he’s got a pot boiling for you when we get there.”

“Sure he did,” Sam says, “Whole pot, there’s plenty for you, too.”

Sam lets the sound of Dean pretending to be normal soothe the rest of the nerves in his body. He watches Dean’s silhouette against the backdrop of the Great Plains going through a drought. His mouth moves quick and soft and Sam wants to trace the lines of it with his thumb. But Dean would—well, who knows what Dean would do, when he wasn’t in a state to really decide.

Sam digs his nails into his palms, and lets Dean’s image go fuzzy. He focuses on the dying land
outside. The sky is very blue. When Sam was growing up, he used to look at a blue sky and take it as a comfort. They wouldn’t be driving through any storms, the roads would be clear, Dean might even crawl into the back seat and nap next to him if it got hot enough for Dean to feel sleepy.

Sam hasn’t really thought about that for a long time. Now, though, he looks at the sky and his stomach feels like it’s in his throat.

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“I can’t see anything about the alpha,” Hael says, “I tried. But you know how alphas are. I’m sorry, Castiel.”

Castiel shakes his head, “Don’t apologize. We’re very close now.”

Anna shifts uncomfortably in her seat.

“You said they seemed, what was it, close? At the grocery store?”

“Yes,” Hael replies, “He seems to have quite a hold on him.”

Anna frowns, “It’s just—I know I don’t have the same abilities you all do, but I just feel like we’re missing something here.”

“If you’re able to enlighten us as to what that is,” Castiel says, words harsh but voice soft and soothing, “We would be happy to take it into account.”

Anna thinks of the waitress at the diner, the feel of the booth they had sat in. It had felt—the place had felt—happy. Not content or settled, but warm in a way Anna hadn’t felt before. It’s just a feeling, though, not something useful, not something that has even ever been confirmed.

“Never mind,” Anna says.
“Okay,” Hael says after the pause from the front seat, and then she turns and hands Anna a gun, “Anna, you’re the best shot.”

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They get so close. They’re just two turns from Jim’s, just off the main road, then down a barely cut dirt path, and they would’ve made it.

Instead, the impala gets two flat tires near the turnoff. Dean pulls off onto the shoulder with a curse.

“Fuck,” he says, slowing to a stop. The car makes a groaning sound from somewhere beneath their seats.

“Fuck,” Dean slams his hands against the steering wheel. Sam sits quietly, wonders if anything he did now could be helpful. He reaches out a hand to rest on Dean’s back, and Dean jerks away from his touch.

Sam didn’t know he still had the capacity to be hurt by something like that. It shouldn’t be bothering him—it’s not about him, he knows, he knows he’s just being selfish and Dean’s frustrated so much more easily now and he’s tired and he does so much for Sam—but Sam kind of wants to curl up in the backseat and cry.

“Call Jim,” Dean grits out, tosses their cellphone over to Sam’s lap, “I don’t have any spares.”

“Okay,” Sam says quietly, “It’s going to be okay, Dean. You don’t have to get so worked up, Jim’s
right up the road.”

“Jesus, Sam. Are you always such a little bitch or is this the omega talking?”

Dean’s words hit him like a punch to the gut. Sam trains his eyes to the bones of his wrist, his throat feels thick with an ugly, embarrassing sob.

Sam tells himself it’s the alpha in Dean, that it’s not his fault. But Dean even being like this in the first place is because of Sam, so Sam guesses it’s his fault either way.

Sam blinks hard, dials Jim’s number and waits for it to start ringing. Sam clears his throat.

“Do you wanna talk to him?”

“Are you fucking crying? God, Sam, come on. I didn’t—“

A bullet shatters the rear window of the impala.

Dean lets out a sound that’s all panic, not at all human, and slams Sam’s head down against the dashboard.

“Stay,” he growls, and somehow, Sam can’t get his body to disobey. He’d heard about this—the alpha commands, but Dean had never done something like this before, he never would’ve robbed Sam of—another shot comes through the rear window. Time seems to be moving slower. Sam watches as the object narrowly misses Dean’s shoulder. It doesn’t look like any bullet Sam’s seen before.

“Fuck,” Dean yells and grabs for the gun tucked into his waistband.

The third shot does hit Dean in the shoulder, just as he’s turning to fire his own gun.

Now that it’s imbedded in Dean’s shoulder, Sam can tell it’s some kind of dart. It hasn’t gone deep. There’s hardly any bleeding, but Sam can’t stop the rising fear. He tries to jerk up and yank the thing out of Dean’s arm but he can’t. His body won’t listen to his brain. He struggles for a moment wildly before he figures out what’s going on.

“Dean,” he yells, “Dean, you need to tell me I can help you,”

“What?” Dean says, “Sam, not right now. They got me with something that’s fucking with me—I gotta get you out of here. Okay, okay,”

Dean’s gone into the sort of rambling thought process Sam’s only seen a couple of times before. Usually it’s when Dean is losing blood, or half crazy from pain, and he’s terrified and panicking.

“Dean,” Sam yells, “Dean you can’t get me out of here if I can’t move.”

Dean shoots three time out of the back of the car.

“Who the fuck are these people,” Dean moves to get out of the car.

“Dean, don’t leave me here,” Sam says, voice shrieking and desperate. He has a sudden, awful vision of Dean dead on the side of the road, and Sam still stuck in the car waiting for release that would never come. He’d fucking starve to death in there, the smell of Dean’s rotting body just outside the car door.

“Dean—“ Sam cries desperately, but Dean stands to get out of the car anyway.
He falls back into his seat in a woozy faint, body going limp as it lands, leg halfway out the door.

“Dean?” Sam says quietly, almost too scared to speak.

“Wuh?” Dean says blearily, “Sammy, somethin’s wrong. I’m s’sorry, Sammy, I’m sorry,”

“Dean,” Sam cries, “Dean you have to let me help you, come on, please, don’t leave me like this.”

“Like what?” Dean asks, and Sam realizes that Dean really doesn’t understand what he’s done and he’s fucking passing out and oh god what are they going to do to them?

“Dean!” Sam’s voice is little more than a sob, “Dean, you have to tell me to move—I have to help you—Dean, please,”

Dean blinks heavily, “Sure, Sammy, you can do whatever you want,” he says. Sam’s entire body feels like it’s been released from a vice.

Dean’s eyes have slipped closed, and his body is limp against the steering wheel, but Sam unbuckles himself and starts moving as quickly as he can. He reaches over towards Dean, grabs his gun, and looks out the rear window to assess.

There’s a knock on the back passenger window, and Sam’s already got his finger on the trigger when he feels a familiar pull in his arm. It’s like the alpha-command, but quieter, touching only the arm holding the gun.

“I’m sorry to do this, Samuel,” the voice outside the car says, and Sam can only see torso of a thin, willowy figure.

It walks toward the car and leans down into the window. It’s the same girl from the gas station, black hair pulled back tight away from her face. Somehow, Sam isn’t surprised.

“I don’t like having to use this on other omegas,” she explains softly as she opens the car door, “But I guess this kind of situation necessitates it,”

She leans over to undo Sam’s seatbelt, smiles at him kindly. Sam doesn’t know why he thought she was a threat. Nothing but warm waves of comfort are radiating through his mind. He follows her docilely as she leads him out of the car.

“But, Dean,” he says quietly.

“But, Dean,” he says quietly.

“Do not worry, Sam. You are not in danger any more.”

Sam doesn’t know how to explain that that’s not what he meant. Dean will be worried about him. Dean will be hurt. Sam thinks that maybe him leaving is not the best idea, but then the girl wraps her slender fingers around his wrist and that thought is washed away by another wave of calm.

“I can’t do this forever,” the girl says, but not to Sam.

From behind a car that’s parked a little ways behind the impala, Sam spots two other people. A man, who reminds Sam of the girl holding his wrist is in the driver’s side. He opens the door.

“Samuel,” the man says in greeting. Then, to the girl, “Hael, how much longer can you do this? Are you feeling alright?”

“Tired,” the girl replies, “Not much longer. We need to get him somewhere safe.”
“Do not harm yourself,” the man says, steps towards Sam and tilts his head like he’s assessing him.

“Please, Hael, I have this under control,” he wraps a hand around Sam’s upper arm.

The girl nods, and steps away from Sam.

All at once, the panic hits Sam. He tries to bolt, get back to Dean because this is going to fucking kill him. Jesus Christ, Sam can feel the pain already. How could he let this happen? What the fuck was wrong with him?

“Dean!” He yells, but the man’s grip around his forearm is like a rope tying him to the spot, and then he reaches out a hand and touches the middle of Sam’s forehead.

“Sleep, Sam,” he says. Sam does.

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“Something’s wrong,” is the first thing Sam hears upon waking.

“The bond isn’t responding the way I thought it would,” the voice continues, “The heat has been suppressed, for now, but—”

“What did I tell you?” Another voice says,

“You didn’t tell me anything, Anna,”

Sam’s head is pounding and his mouth is dry. He can’t help the groan that escapes him.

“He’s awake, shut up,” one of the voices says.

Sam opens his eyes. He’s in a small room. He’s in a bed, soft with the blankets pulled up to his waist. There’s a window over him, and it’s open. Sam can smell warm, fresh air. It’s smells like it’s just rained.

It’s nothing like the metal bars and lab he expects. It’s disorienting, at first, realizing how big a miscalculation he’s made.

“Where am I?” He asks.

“I’m afraid we can’t tell you that, Sam,” says the man from before, the one who—the one who put Sam to sleep? But that doesn’t seem right. There were no drugs, nothing like the dart they hit Dean with, so Sam can’t imagine how he just stood up without question, walked away, and passed out.

Unless. Oh.

Sam reaches his mind out gently, not wanting to do any harm, and finds the mind across from him barred. It’s not something Sam does often, but when he has to, he usually finds a mind open like a small crack in a wall. Enough for Sam to whisper into, work his way through if he has to.

The man in front of him has no cracks. It feels like a metal wall surrounds his mind. Sam sits upright in bed.

“Are you an omega?”

The man regards Sam for a moment, turns to make eye contact with the girl who brought Sam in. They’re communicating, Sam realizes.

“I don’t see any reason to lie to him,” another woman says. She’s standing further away from Sam
than the other two. Sam doesn’t know how to describe it, but she feels open in a way the two in front of him don’t. He doesn’t push into her mind, but his attention is on her.

“He’s not responding in the way I thought he would. It could be risky,” the woman in front of him says, “I don’t know—I don’t know what’s wrong with him.”

The words sting Sam, but he tries not to let them. He doesn’t think they’re going to answer, but he figures his guess was right. He doesn’t know if a group of rouge omegas is better or worse than being in a lab, has no previous information to work off of.

But even with a group of people he thought he was a part of, he doesn’t belong. Not just in the obvious ways, not just untrustworthy and captured, but he’s something they don’t understand. The girl makes eye contact with him and Sam thinks he might even be seeing fear there.

Whatever, it doesn’t matter. They aren’t his concern.

Sam’s feeling alright, but he has no idea what state this separation has left Dean. He doesn’t know how to ask, not when they’re just staring at him without so much as a word.

The redhead suddenly rolls her eyes, shifts closer to the other two omegas and whispers something in the other woman’s ear.

The woman nods slowly, and the redhead turns her attention back to Sam.

“All right,” she says, “This isn’t the fucking black cloak society, guys. We wouldn’t have pulled any of this shit with you, Hael. He’s confused. He’s scared. I don’t know what you two are getting so up your own asses about but we need to support one another.”

“His bond is stable, Anna. It’s—it’s not like something I’ve seen before. It’s almost like it was,” the woman in front of him tilts her head.

“Oh my god,” she whispers, “You were willing, weren’t you? They didn’t even have to force you and you—” she turns away from him, “Oh my god.”

Sam understands, then, a little. What must happen to omegas that never escaped the lab, what Azazel’s alphas must have been like. The woman in front of him is in pain. Grief sweeps over Sam so heavy that his eyes water with it. He doesn’t know what to say to these people, to make them understand without adding to their pain. There’s nothing he can imagine that is sufficient, that encompasses the worst years of Sam’s life and amplifies it. But to think of them viewing Dean like that, to cast Dean in that light, to present himself as a victim is unfair. What these omegas have gone through isn’t the same as what Sam has gone through. He feels like it disrespects them to pretend it is. And letting them think that he wanted what they went through willing is only causing more pain.

“He wasn’t one of them,” he manages, “He—he’s good. He’s so good.”

“I can’t imagine what you’ve been through, and I’m so, so, sorry. But you have to understand that Dean isn’t—if anything I made him. He wouldn’t do that. He’d never do that. Dean is—he saved my life. My body, it, I don’t know, we never really figured it out, but it chose him and he. I would’ve died without him. I am so sorry for what you’ve been through, but I wasn’t in any danger with him. Were you trying to help me?”

The room is very quiet for a moment. The redhead, Anna, clears her throat finally.

“Hael, Cas, I learned a long time ago what it looks like when you two are communicating. Come on, we’ll go outside.”
The two omegas nearest the bed file out of the door of Sam’s bedroom. Anna turns to look at him, “We need you to stay here, Sam. None of us want to force you. Can you promise me you’ll still be here when we get back?”

Sam nods. He doesn’t know where he is anyway. He doesn’t think he’s really in any danger with his captors, though the word doesn’t feel quite right. His only real concern is Dean, but he tries to comfort himself with the knowledge that his heat hasn’t hit him. Which is something else he doesn’t understand.

Dean’s probably in a panic, is probably out of his mind with trying to find Sam. But Sam tells himself at least he isn’t in pain. At least he’s alive.

He knows that Dean’s going to find him, like he always does. He knows it down to his bones, like an instinct. With the way they’re connected now, Sam doesn’t think he could disappear if he wanted to. Sam’s terrified, for a moment, about what will happen when Dean does find him. What Dean might do to these other omegas. He dismisses it, figures that the omegas handled Dean well enough beforehand, but he can’t completely quiet the discomfort the thought leaves behind.

Sam tries to listen for the omegas outside his room. There is a small window, but all that he can make out is vague murmurs, nothing that is any help. He guesses he could try to look into their minds again, but knowing what he knows now, it feels invasive and wrong. With everything they’ve gone through, their minds and bodies have been invaded enough.

Sam guesses he doesn’t have much of an option but to wait. Either for Dean or for them to come and tell him what’s going on.

He looks around his room, but it doesn’t give him much of a clue to where he is. He looks out the window again; takes in the high sun and the wide fields surrounding the home they’re in and figures it must be afternoon. It’s either somewhere very far from Jim’s and Sam’s been out for a long time, or somewhere relatively close. Sam doesn’t feel like much time has passed at all, but he’s no good judge of that.

He doesn’t think these omegas are stupid, though. Can’t have brought him anywhere that they didn’t think was secure, so.

For all that, Sam doesn’t feel any more oriented than he did before.

He gets out of his bed, assesses himself. Aside from a slight headache, Sam feels fine. He feels better than he has in a long time, nothing like a pull or twinge of pain towards Dean, no itch of an upcoming heat. He feels almost human again.

He walks over to the door and isn’t surprised to find it locked. He could probably pick it, but what would be the point? He has no idea where he is, no way to get anywhere.

He walks the perimeter of the room a couple of times before the door to his room opens again.

The man leads the group of omegas this time. Castiel, Sam noted from earlier. He’s got a tray of food with him, and places it on Sam’s bed.

“Thank you,” Sam says, sits down to eat in an effort of showing good faith.

They don’t respond for a moment, but then Castiel says, “I’m sure you have a lot of questions, Sam. Treating you this way was never our intention. But you have to understand that we were completely unprepared for what you told us.”
Sam nods, “I know. I can only imagine.”

“As it is,” Castiel continues, “Hael feared we had made an error of some kind, that the suppressants we put you on might be affected by a willing pairing, but after checking you over again, we have found you to be responding normally,”

“Wait,” Sam says, “You were in my head again?”

“Nothing you wouldn’t want us to look at,” Hael says from behind Castiel.

“Oh, um, okay, thanks I guess?” Sam says, “What were you saying about suppressants?”

“We always intended to be completely transparent with you,” Castiel continues, gaze locked on Sam.

“Right, I got that,” Sam says.

“But you understand why that might not be the case anymore, correct?”

Sam thinks the guy’s voice is weird and stilted, but he tries to be friendly anyway, “I mean, not really, I guess. I get why you thought you had to kidnap me or whatever, but I really don’t have any idea what else is going on.”

Castiel purses his lips, “We have determined what a safe amount of information for you to have is. And you will find that our minds are not open to you so,” he shrugs uncomfortably, “I would not suggest trying it.”

“Jesus, Castiel. Is this whole Corleone act necessary?”

“Anna,” Hael says, “United front.”

Sam is confused and getting irritated, but he suppresses it, continues nodding in understanding, “Alright, then what have you agreed to let me know?”

Castiel smiles for the first time since Sam met him, so he guesses he must have said something right, “Very good. Alright. We have decided to tell you that you do not need to fear your heats anymore. And you do not need to fear any of Azazels’ men finding you here. You are virtually untraceable.”

“Untraceable?” Sam asks, “So, Dean—“

“Your alpha will not be able to track you either,” Castiel continues, “Also, we have a bathroom down the hall, a kitchen out front, and fencing around the perimeter of this property. By that I mean you will experience pain if you pass beyond the boundaries of this land.”

Sam’s good will towards the omegas in front of him evaporates in an instance, “So I’m your prisoner,” Sam says, trying to keep his voice steady.

“No,” Hael says.

“I can’t leave, right? You’re keeping me here, you’ve done something to my heats, you’ve made it so no one has any chance of coming to get me. What about that doesn’t say prisoner?”

“We thought we were rescuing you,” Hael snaps, “We were trying to help you. How could we have known you willingly paired with an alpha,” she spits the word out like it’s something dirty. Sam flinches at all the hurt in it and forces his anger down.

“Dean rescued me from one of Azazel’s labs at Cold Oak. He paired with me in my heat because my weird, fucked up body chose him as my alpha and he’s been punished for it ever since,” Sam’s voice
is quiet but solid, “If you wanted to rescue someone, it should’ve been him.”

“We probably should’ve gotten this information beforehand,” Anna says steadily from the back of the quiet room, “But there’s been no mistake here, Sam.”

“What do you mean?” Sam asks.

“We need you,” Hael says, “And from what you’ve shared with us, Sam, it appears you may need us.”

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Blue Earth, 2009

The black impala rolls into Jim’s backyard like a tornado, dust storm kicking up in a cloud as it screeches to a stop.

Jim hears it from the kitchen, comes out to the yard and sees the state of the car. He sees Dean alone behind the shattered windshield. He swallows.

“What in God’s name happened to you?” Jim yells across the yard.

Dean slams the door of the car shut behind him, kicks at the dirt, “Shit! Fuck! They fucked her up. Fuck all know’s if she’s gonna run right again, twenty miles on two flats. Fuck!”

“Dean, where’s Sam?”

Dean whips around to face Jim, wild look in his eyes, “They took him,” his voice comes out choked and terrified. It reminds Jim of when Dean was just a kid, when his dad dumped him at Jim’s and took off without so much as introducing them.

“Who?” Jim’s trying to stay calm.

“I don’t know. They fucked up my baby and they hit me with some kind of knock-out shit and they took Sammy,” Dean’s eyes are wide, and the light of the sun hits the dampness gathering in them, “I can’t feel him anymore, Jim.”

Jim nods jerkily, “Okay, okay, Dean. You need to tell me,”

Dean sobs, a sudden, ugly crack in the heat of the air, “I lost him again, Jim. How is he ever going to forg—what am I supposed to do? What if they hurt him, what if—“

He shakes his head violently, “I’m going to fucking kill them,” he says, voice coming out entirely different than the sob from before. Jim has to stop himself from taking a step back. It doesn’t sound like Dean, it sounds like a dying animal.

Then his voice breaks again, and Dean starts crying. That just sounds like heartbreak.

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Anna stays with him for the first watch. They don’t trust him to even sleep alone. Not that Sam is sleeping with all that he’s been told. Anna is sitting in a chair near the door, head tilted as she watches him.

“So,” Sam says, clearing his throat, “What’s your role in this whole, um, testing thing?”
Anna huffs out a breath. “Sam, as we explained, we’ve given you all the information we feel comfortable with at this time.”

Sam realizes that Anna’s the most open to talking. She was the one who encouraged Sam to ask questions when Castiel and Hael were telling him about their work, the only one who didn’t seem afraid to use Dean’s name.

“But don’t you think a willing test subject will be easier to deal with than a literal captive?”

“Yes, Sam, I do. I think you’ve figured that out at this point,”

“I just—what you guys have already done, with the heat suppressant. It’s just incredible. Anna, you don’t understand what that means to me.”
“I think we all understand exactly what it means,” Anna says, voice a little harsh. Sam nods, hates how stupid he can sound sometimes. It was true, though. The more that was revealed to Sam, the more difficult it was for him to not get excited. What these omegas were doing was amazing.

It was as potentially world altering as Azazel’s forces were when they first stepped onto the scene. It could change Sam’s life in a way he hasn’t allowed himself to focus on too much. He doesn’t want to let the hope blossom, but the seed is there, all the same.

“But the things that Hael said. About. About you all working on a total suppressant, something that just eliminates the omega urges, programming, whatever. I just need to know more about that, Anna. I want to be able to help any way that I can.”

Anna purses her lips, glances at the door that leads to the rest of the house. Hael and Castiel are out there somewhere, though Sam has a hard time imagining the two sleeping.

Anna seems to decide something, refocuses on Sam.

“They don’t think we can trust you because you keep defending your alpha. But I don’t think that’s such a big deal. I think if you’ve been an omega, you understand why we’re doing what we’re doing. You realize how important this is.”
“I do,” Sam says, and he means it.

“Okay, then,” Anna says, “I don’t think trusting you with this is a big deal, Sam, but Hael and Castiel are against it. They want to wait. I want to make some progress. I hope I’m not wrong.”

Sam shakes his head.

“The suppressant we’re working on isn’t anything like the heat suppressant. That was based off of some of the omega injections Hael still had in her system when we found her. This new drug is entirely synthetic.” Anna waves her hand in the air, rolls her eyes. “Okay, I don’t need to get into all that. Basically, we’ve developed a suppressant, but we don’t know if it works. At all. We’ve gotten all the information we can out of the three of us, but a lot of variables exist in the omegas community. You’re living proof of that.”

“Right,” Sam says.

“Well, we need to account for as many variables as we can. I mean, that’s what we thought, but the more we’re working with it, the more it seems to remain stable under almost any changes. So, what we’ve gotten down to here is—“
“You need to test it,” Sam says.

Anna nods, “Right. We need to test it.”
“And the three of you are just too valuable?” Sam asks, doesn’t like the bitterness he can’t manage to keep from his tone.

“Well, I suppose you could put it that way, yes. That, and none of us are in a paired bond, which is the largest group of omegas out there so,”

“But I’m in a willing bond,” Sam says.

“Yeah, we know. That’s part of why they had such a hard time with you, but I don’t think it’s a problem like they do, Sam. I think you’re exactly what we thought you were.”

Sam licks his lips nervously, “And what did you think I was?”

“You’re the answer to our prayers,” Hael replies.

Sam tries to process what Anna is laying out in front of him, so shining and impossible that Sam’s almost afraid to touch it, afraid it will burn him.

He’s been a test subject before, he thinks, and look where that left him. Look where that left Dean.

The hurt and anxiety in the pit of his stomach never really left anymore, not unless he was out of his mind in heat, and here Sam is with the opportunity to finally fix everything. He can make the sick swell in his stomach go away. He can finally feel like his body is his again.

Most importantly, he can make everything right for Dean. Dean can have a life outside of Sam, can free himself of the chain Sam’s had him tied down with for years.

That’s what really matters here, Sam tells himself. He knows it’s selfish to focus so much on himself when fixing Dean is what Sam needs to care the most about. Dean’s the one who’s had no choice in the matter.

“If I, um, if I let you test this on me and it works, it’ll break the bond pair?” Sam asks.

“If it works how we want it to you won’t even be an omega anymore. We don’t believe there’s a way you can be bonded as a human.”

Sam swallows, “And if it doesn’t work?”

Anna moves to sit next to Sam on the bed, a few feet away, but Sam recognizes it for the attempt at comfort that it is, “We have no way of knowing, Sam. It could do nothing. It could react with your biology badly. You’re our very first test. We—I’m asking a lot of you here. But I think you can tell that I just want to change things for omegas. I was to help. I would never want to hurt you—not any omega—and this. I think this can actually help a lot of omegas who have been hurt like us.”

Sam wants to help people, of course he does, but more than anything, the single impressing thought he’s had over the past few years has been about helping Dean. About finally getting Dean out of what Sam forced him into.

Sam nods, “Okay,” he says, “When can we do it?”

Anna’s eyebrows raise like she’s surprised, but her face is quickly smoothed over by a beaming smile.

“Just give me a couple minutes, Sam,” she says, “I’m going to go tell Castiel and Hael the good news. And then we can get started.”

Sam can’t help but feel like he’s missing something, that there’s some kind of play being performed for his benefit, but he doesn’t mind much. If he has to play along, let them think he can stupidly be led so that he can get the suppressant, he doesn’t care.
He lies back on the bed, and for the first time in years, he allows the faintest flicker of hope to light in his chest.

Chapter End Notes

Warnings: There is the implication of non-con in regards to unwilling omega bonds. Dean uses a gendered slur.
Chapter Notes

Oh friends...pals....buds......this has been a long road. I would like to start by apologizing for being a liar and saying this would be done on halloween. that obviously did not happen. my excuses are the usual--school, work, life, etc, but what it boils down to is i suck. and i'm so sorry for how long this took. i had a hard time getting this final part all together and tied up the way i wanted to but I hope that this is at least a little bit satisfying and worth the wait. like usual, this was only looked over once or twice by me so there's bound to be errors. please let me know. and i hope you enjoy :) 

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Anna runs a hand on Sam’s upper arm as Castiel prepares the shot, like she’s afraid Sam’s going to bolt.

Sam takes deep, steadying breaths and tries to not let her nerves rub off on him.

Hael had still been hesitant to try the cure, had made some noise about more testing, but Castiel and Anna shared the same desperation, and they agreed to try it on Sam almost immediately.

Sam hasn’t spoken to them about when he’s going to leave, but at least that won’t be such a worry if he can disconnect from Dean and stop him from feeling any more pain.

Maybe he won’t ever get out, and Dean can finally be free of him, if this stuff works the way it’s supposed to.

Castiel’s hand shakes a little as he rolls up Sam’s sleeve. It’s the most emotion Sam’s seen out him. He can’t decide if it’s fear or excitement. Both, maybe.

The shot itself doesn’t hurt. It reminds him of when he and Dean used to get flu shots every year, before any of the wars, at their school where the teachers would line them up by class and have the shots administered.

Dean always snuck over to Sam’s class, no matter where their grades were located. Sam wasn’t too afraid of shots, but Dean was there just in case.

Sam wonders if everything will always be so soaked in Dean, or if this will help that pass, too.

It only takes a few moments for something to hit Sam hard and heavy. It feels like he’s been drugged. He feels sick to his stomach. His eyes feel heavy.

As far as side effects, he’s thankful he’s at least not oozing brain matter out of his eyes.

He can’t seem to lift him limbs anymore, and he thinks of how Dean’s hands used to be bigger than his, when he’d hold Sam’s hand before Sam got his flu shot.

He smiles, and figures if this is going to kill him, that that’s not the worst last thought to have.

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Blue Earth, 2009

Dean can’t find a trace of Sam. Not a goddamn thing. Jim wonders if it’s going to drive him or Dean crazy first.

Dean should be able to feel something. He should be able to pick up some kind of trace of where his brother is. But they’ve been circling the area around the ambush for hours, slow circles in the blazing sun, and Dean hasn’t picked up on anything.

“I would feel something if he was gone, wouldn’t I, Jim?” Dean asks quietly as the sun starts to set, “I know I would.”

Jim nods his head, and fixes his eyes on the ground. He doesn’t know. He hopes so. Sam can’t be gone. Something like that would turn Dean’s whole world off. He can’t imagine he could be in a world without Sam and not feel it immediately, not follow Sam as soon as he did.

So he doesn’t entertain the thought. He smiles at Dean encouragingly, and says, “Maybe we need to widen our parameter?”

Dean nods numbly, “Yeah, I just. This isn’t how it usually works. It—it was supposed to keep him safe. Close to me. And now,”

“He is safe,” Jim cuts in, “You would know, Dean. He’s safe, and when we find him, he’s still gonna be safe.”

Dean takes awhile to respond, but when he does, his voice sounds steadier than it has since he first pulled up to Jim’s, like he’s found some kind of resolution in himself.

“Okay,” he says, “I’m heading this way. Watch my back.”

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Sam wakes up to sunlight pouring in through the small window over his bed. The room feels too hot, stifling, and his joints are a little achy, but he’s alive.

His body feels good otherwise. Normal. He yawns, and pops his jaw. None of the other omegas are in the room with him. He takes that as a reassurance. Nothing could have gone terribly wrong if Sam didn’t need supervision.

Sam sits up in bed slowly, cautious of any potential nausea, before standing. He really does feel just fine, so the worst possible outcome didn’t happen.

Maybe it didn’t work at all, and Sam is exactly the way he was before. But maybe—he lets himself think of it for a moment—maybe they had actually fixed him. Maybe Dean and him were finally free from Sam’s fucked up body and needs and maybe Sam could finally start making it up to him. Maybe they could stop running now, stop fighting, settle down and try to rebuild like the rest of the world was doing.

If Dean even wanted to stay with him. Oh, god, how had Sam not thought about that? Why would Dean want to stay with him once leaving was no longer going to cause him physical pain?

After what Sam had put him through the past couple years, Sam can’t imagine that Dean’s skin doesn’t crawl every time he looks at him. If Sam was cured, then Dean was free to go.

Sam had kept Dean chained to him for years, and he guesses he shouldn’t be so heartbroken at the idea of Dean finally having some fucking choice for once, but he is. He’s a fucking awful human
being and he’s a worse brother. Why would Dean want to stay with him?

Sam wanders out to the kitchen easily, finding the door to his room unlocked. In the kitchen, Castiel, Anna, and Hael are huddled around the small dining table. Their heads turn with a jerk when they hear Sam’s bedroom door open.

“Sam?” Anna says, eyes wide with shock.

“Hey,” Sam says.

“I didn’t feel him coming,” Hael says quietly to Cas, “Neither did I,” Castiel replies.

Sam sits at the table with some hesitation. He was never comfortable with the omegas, and the way they’re watching him now only serves to increase his anxiety.

“Can you read him?” Castiel asks,

“No,” Hael replies—“Anna?”

Anna is looking at Sam in a way she hasn’t before. Sam had felt for all of them, had wanted to help them, but the only one who seemed to want to help Sam back was Anna. Now she’s looking at Sam the same way Cas and Hael did when Sam first got here. Like he’s something fascinating and terrifying. Sam looks down at the table.

“What do you want me to do?” Anna asks, “Do you, you know, have a feeling about him?” Hael says.

“That doesn’t mean anything,” Anna says hesitantly, swallows, “But, no.”

Castiel smiles. It’s a small thing, barely pulling at the corners of his mouth, but it’s there. Sam can’t bring himself to take that as a sign he can relax.

“Congratulations, Sam,” Castiel says, “I would tentatively say that it seems like the treatment has been a success.”

Sam had expected that, had hoped for it, but hearing it still feels like a surprise.

“Oh god,” Sam says, “What—what does that mean?”

“We don’t know. Not for certain. We intended for the treatment to be a complete cure, but we’ll have to run some tests, see how effectively it worked—I think a couple of months from now we’ll have a much better understanding of the cure and—oh my God,” Hael’s voice is high and happy. She sounds like a little girl, “This is it. This could be it.”

And she grins at Cas and Anna and Sam wishes he could be happy with them, but what she said is bothering him, “A couple months?” He repeats.

“Just so we can continue the testing,” Hael says, “We still don’t understand this completely. I think it would be best for everyone—and for you,” she says almost as an afterthought.

Sam shakes his head, “I can’t just stay here. What about Dean? It’s already been too long. Do you even know what this could be doing to him?” He tries to keep the panic from his voice, but the joy from the possibility of his cure is burning away with the anxiety pumping into him.

“Dean,” Hael says the name distastefully, “The alpha never suffers when the omega bond is broken. It’s only the omega. It’s always been only us.”

Sam shakes his head, “We can’t know that for sure. And even if it is true, Dean’s still going to be
freaking out.”

Sam doesn’t know if that’s true. Maybe Dean’s felt the connection snap, and he’s grateful for it, is already halfway to Canada. But no. Even if Dean can never bring himself to forgive Sam, he still wouldn’t be able to leave Sam in a situation that was uncertain. Sam was always going to be a burden to him, in one-way or another. The least Sam could do was try to make the break easier for Dean, if that’s what Dean wanted.

He shouldn’t make Dean search for months, on some dogged mission to find Sam that was only his out of a sense of duty. He’d find Dean again, tell him he was free, and then Dean could finally go if that’s what he wanted.

Sam hoped it wasn’t what he wanted, but he couldn’t imagine a world in which it wasn’t.

“Sam, this is bigger than you and Dean,” Anna says, and Sam doesn’t think she’s ever sounded so unfriendly, even when Sam first met her as his captor.

“We helped you,” Anna says, “The least you could do it help us.”

“I didn’t ask for your help!” Sam protests, “You kidnapped me. You forced me here and gave me a heat suppressant I didn’t ask for and now you’re keeping me prisoner. How much better are you than Azazel’s men?”

“He’s right,” Castiel finally says, “I’m sorry, Sam. We were desperate. Are desperate. And we do not wish for it to be this way.”

“But Castiel—“ Anna says.

“We are not like them,” Castiel says, “We do not lock people up and experiment on them.”

“A little late for that revelation,” Sam says quietly, “Shit. Sorry. That’s not fair. I know what it’s like to mean to do something and end up hurting someone and I just—I just want you to know how much this has helped me. Regardless of how we all got here.”

Castiel smiles, “Thank you, Sam. That’s very kind of you. But we still need to do a lot to fix what we have done,”

He leaves the room for a moment, returns with a cell phone—“Cas,” Anna argues, but Castiel cuts her a look.

“Calm down, Anna,” Hael says quietly, “This is the right thing to do.”

“You may call this alpha,” Castiel says, “We will not stop you.”

Hael nods, moves to leave the room, “I will remove myself from the room. I do not wish to make you any more uncomfortable.”

Sam tries to stop her, but one by one, the omegas file out—not far, Sam doesn’t think, but enough to give him some kind of privacy. He stares at the phone in his lap.

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Sam calls Dean as soon as he musters the courage. He doesn’t know what he’s expecting—what, that Dean will just tell him to find his own way back, Dean was already headed the Florida, maybe they’d run into each other some day.
The phone barely rings once before it’s cut off, and Dean’s voice crackles through the connection, “Dean Winchester.”

Sam’s stomach still lurches at the sound of his voice. No surprise.

“Hey, Dean,” he manages, swallows hard, “It’s Sam.”

“Fuck,” Dean says over the phone, sounds like an exhale, “I can tell it’s you, Sammy, course I can. Holy shit, where are you?”

Sam gives out the coordinates that Cas had relayed to him. It wasn’t far from Jim’s, from what Sam could tell, and Dean’s choked laughter over the phone line confirms it, “Don’t know how I could’ve missed you. You okay, baby?”

The name throws Sam off, but he says “Yeah, Dean. The omegas who took me—they’re good. They’re letting me go.”

Dean scoffs, “Sure they are. Whatever, I’m coming to get you, okay? Already in the car.”

“Okay, Dean,” Sam says, “I think—I mean, I have a lot I need to tell you.”

“I’m sure you do,” Dean says, “I’m going to stay on the phone with you till I get there, okay? You gotta keep talking to me.”

“Alright,” Sam says, but for the next half hour as Dean navigates towards him, Sam can’t bring himself to tell Dean what’s happened. He keeps dancing around the subject, making Dean promise that he won’t bother the omegas, asking about Jim.

“Sammy, to be honest, all I give a shit about right now is you,” Dean says, but sighs like he can tell that Sam’s face has gotten tight with disapproval, “Jim’s good. He’ll be better once he knows you’re okay.”

“You haven’t told him yet?”

“Well I’ve been on the phone with you, haven’t I?” Dean says, and over the quiet sounds of the house around Sam settling, the wind outside, the quiet song of a bird that’s outside the kitchen window, Sam hears the sound of a car’s engine.

“Alright, Sammy,” Dean says, “I’m here for ya,”

Just like Dean always was. Just like Dean always would be.

Sam moves through the house efficiently, nervous energy and anxiety preventing him from darting outside like he wants too. He stands outside the tiny home and watches as the impala speeds through the barely cut dirt road that leads to the porch.

The car stops with a lurch and Dean jumps out, makes it to Sam in what seems like a blink of the eye, and Sam almost crumbles with the relief of Dean’s hands on him again.

He checks Sam over carefully, and his hands just feel good and warm and solid. They don’t fuel some animal itch deep in his stomach, unwanted and painful. They just feel like Dean’s hands, good and safe and perfect.

It hasn’t been long, but seeing Dean after any period of separation always makes Sam unsteady, like he hasn’t had any water to drink for days, and he’s finally getting some relief.
Dean’s laughing like he can’t believe it, all over Sam, before his hands finally settle on his neck and he pulls Sam toward him, kisses him hard on the mouth, “There you are, Sammy,” Dean says, “Jesus, you don’t know how crazy I went. Need to get you home. Can hardly smell you at all anymore.”

Sam blushes. That’s as explicit as Dean ever got regarding this thing between them, and for a split second, Sam could picture it—Dean taking him home, taking care of him, filling him deep so that Sam feels safe and for once he could enjoy it, wouldn’t feel like clawing at every part of himself Dean wasn’t touching.

But it wouldn’t ever happen. Dean would know as soon as Sam told him, and then he would never have to deal with Sam again.

Sam already felt guilty about the kiss he let himself have. It was just Dean trying to calm him, assuming his fragile omega nerves must be fried, but what it was really was a final act of selfishness Sam allowed himself.

He presses his lips together, tries to memorize the way Dean’s hands are on him now. He tries to think of a way to do this that will hurt the least.

He takes a step back, away from the reach of Dean’s hands.

“Dean,” he says, proud his voice doesn’t falter, “Dean, something amazing happened—we. We don’t have to do this anymore.”

Dean’s smile drops.

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The thing was, Dean was always sure it bothered Sam more than it bothered him. Of course it did. Sam was the one who had to deal with the heats, the changes in his body.

Dean didn’t feel like he had much to change. Some things just seemed to amplify. His natural desire to always be near Sam got stronger, but Dean didn’t mind that.

Sam was always the type to appreciate his space, though, so the longer the bond between them dragged on, and the closer they had to be to avoid pain, the worse Dean felt. It had to be driving Sam up a wall. Never got a moment’s rest from Dean, from the way Dean had to paw over him to calm himself down.

Sometimes Dean was more aggressive, tougher than he wanted to be. That was the only downside. It was hard to control, harder when Sam was in danger. He guessed it just had to do with keeping his omega safe.

That was the other thing about it. He finally let himself think about it. About Sam really, truly being his.

It’d always been there. Dean pinpointed it to Sam’s fourteenth summer, long days in the car where Sam would get crabby from the heat and eventually strip out of his shirt.

But if he’s honest, it was there from the first time he saw Sammy. It wasn’t in the way it turned out to be, it was just that he saw his baby brother and he thought, yeah, that’s mine.

It changed over the years, but there was never a time in his life that Dean hadn’t loved Sam with everything he had.
He wanted to take care of him. He wanted to protect him. He had been planning for a life away from Dad for a couple of months when Sam got taken—they’d go live somewhere safe, Dad be damned, Sam wasn’t going down in some suicide mission that never helped anyone anyways.

But Dean hadn’t worked fast enough, and when Sam was taken, everything else went to shit.

When Dean had finally gotten Sam back, he’d thought maybe then they could settle down. Sam could heal up from whatever they had done to him, but they’d be fine. They could be happy.

When Sam turned out an omega—an omega that chose Dean, holy shit, Dean decided that it wasn’t going to be a possibility.

Sam was so freaked out after that first morning, shutting himself in the bathroom, and Dean could hear him crying, smell the anxiety and grief rolling off him waves that Dean had decided right there that he wasn’t going to uproot Sam’s life any more than he had to.

He would keep Sammy safe like he always had. He’d do what he had to do to fill the need. Sam would never have it if it weren’t for Dean’s negligence.

But the way Sam reacted, that stuck with him. Maybe Sam would never be cured of this, but Dean wasn’t going to burden Sam with anything more than the cursory acts to keep them both ticking. He wasn’t going to let Sammy die, no way, but he wasn’t going to try to get Sam to settle down and play house with him. That would make it worse.

Sam hated it, that much was clear. Was pissed at the way his body was out of his control, got tense with the aggression that Dean started taking to more easily. Dean wouldn’t add to that. Sam had enough to deal with, didn’t need to add in Dean’s messy feelings.

So Dean tried to see it as an agreement of sorts. Not anything he ever worked out with Sam, but just to keep himself in line.

He takes care of Sam, but then he leaves him alone. He tries to let Sam forget about it as quickly as possible, works to make sure they got back in the swing of things quickly.

That’s what Dean intends, but sometimes his instincts got the better of him.

Sometimes it was just this thing he always had for Sam, but now he had an excuse.

Dean tried to tramp down on that most of all. That was the worst thing he could do.

When Sam told him he wasn’t an omega anymore, Dean’s hands had felt like lead. He stepped away from Sam immediately. Jesus Christ, didn’t he have any goddamn control?

But Sam didn’t seem to mind, was just happy that Dean hadn’t been affected, just like he’d hoped.

“Hey,” he said, “This is a big fucking deal for us,”

And Dean nodded and smiled. Arrangement over, then. No more casual affection, long hours in bed together, and the times he could keep Sam by his side and take care of him. Back to the status quo. Dean could do that.

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**Blue Earth, 2009**

Jim gets a call from Dean an hour after he’s left the house on a lead. Yeah, he’s got Sam. Yes, he’s
safe, thank fucking God, Dean mutters.

No, no need to come back, he responds tersely. We’re all sorted here.

“I still got some research on omegas—“ Jim starts.

“No,” Dean replies, “Like I said. Sorted.”

“You know,” Jim says, “You don’t sound like a man who just got his brother back unscathed. This is as near a miracle as we’re gonna get these days.”

Dean is quiet, “Alright, Jim. We’ll call you sometime.” And he hangs up.

Jim hasn’t heard Dean Winchester sound like that since the day his Daddy abandoned the search for Sam. Jim keeps his phone in his sweating palm, but he doesn’t expect it to ring.

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**Fremont, 2009**

Sam can't tell if Dean felt any difference when it happened. They didn't talk about it.

He wasn't sure if Dean was relieved or ready to bolt or whatever, because Dean wouldn't fucking talk about it.

He still watched Sam the same way he did before, eyeing him intently like any moment Sam was going to explode or have a bout of heat.

But that's normal. Ever since Sam was a kid Dean watched him like that. It was just Dean's weird, obsessive worrying and it wasn't anything that surprised Sam. What surprised him was how normal Dean was acting otherwise.

Dean had been this way when Sam was an omega—Sam didn't know if he still qualified as one, if it was just suppressed, how long it would even last, despite what Cas and Hael and Anna said, he wasn't going to let himself get too hopeful about the future—but it had made sense that Dean didn't want to talk about it then. Dean had hated it. Sam had been a disgusting, endless chore. The thought still makes Sam cringe, still makes his body heat with shame, but he was better now.

Now, at the very least, even if Dean would never forgive him, at least Dean could be free of him.

But Dean won't say a word about it. It's like nothing has changed from when Sam was an omega. At least nothing except for him. Sam still wanted to reach over and take Dean’s hand in his, he still felt a jolt of arousal in his stomach when he remembered the heats he spent with Dean, how good Dean took care of him, but the aching, unbearable itch of his body's cravings were gone. He felt human. He felt like he was in control of his body for the first time in years.

For Dean, though, it was like the past week had never happened. The revelations of the day before weren't mentioned. They continued driving down the highway, just like they had before, like they might stop at the end of the day, and pull into a motel, and Dean might still take Sam into the room and push him onto the mattress and give him exactly what Sam needed.

He keeps up the light chatter that had been their soundtrack for the past couple of years. No mention of their father, or the war, or the strange machine that was Sam's body. Instead he points out landmarks, talks about old television shows he had watched with Sam growing up, laughs about the memories of shitty records and the nights before the war, when he and Sam would make forts and
pretend to be wizards.

Sam plays along like he usually does when he wasn't being hampered by his old biology. Now that he felt completely his own, and even though he was wracked with anxiety, he didn't see the point of burdening Dean with it.

He let himself think that maybe it'd always be like this. Maybe they'd just keep driving, and Dean would somehow always find something to talk about, and Sam couldn't touch him anymore, no. But being with him at all was a lot more livable than being without him.

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**Cody, 2009**

Dean doesn't seem to know what to do with Sam. Sam wonders if there are some residual alpha effects. He considers a call to Cas, but decides against it. He had told them before that Dean wasn't dangerous, but they were already wary.

Cas still texts him every once and awhile, checking in, asking for updates, which Sam gives him easily. Dean pretends not to notice.

But Dean will reach over sometimes, thoughtlessly, like he wants to lay a hand on Sam's neck, his thigh. Sam usually clears his throat, and Dean jerks his hand away. Sam doesn't blame him. Even if Cas and the other omegas were right, Dean had years of habit imprinted on him. Sam had needed his touch just to survive for so long that the instinct to take care of Sam and the new reality of their situation hasn't sunk in yet.

Sam's trying to help. He can tell how embarrassed and uncomfortable it makes Dean, how his face pinks up under his freckles every time he realizes what he's done.

So mostly, Sam tries to stop it before it gets to that point. But on long day trips, supply runs to bring Jim information and materials from down south, Sam's eyes will get heavy and sometimes he will doze against the window.

Sam wakes up sweating but still in a the comfort that lingers after a good, deep, sleep, to Dean's hand in his across the console. Dean must've taken it subconsciously, just as much a part of driving as his shitty music and blazing heat.

Sam doesn't want to move, doesn't want to cause Dean any embarrassment, and privately the feel of Deans skin against him makes him so comfortable he could nod back off. His breathing must change upon waking, though, because Deans fingers twitch in his like he's suppressing a compulsion to rip his hand away.

Sam doesn't know what to do. He keeps his eyes closed for a long while, hand clasped loosely around Dean's fingers, unable to move. Maybe Dean's figured it out, how much Sam still needs this even though he shouldn't anymore. Maybe he was going to give Sam this. Another sacrifice, and not even for Sam's life, just because Dean pitied him and wanted him to be happy.

Which Sam couldn't deal with. Not again. Dean wasn't going to sacrifice any more years of his life for the cause of fixing the shit Sam got himself into.

Dean hadn't forced Sam to fall in love with him, he hadn't done anything but be himself, and this was not his fucking responsibility.

Sam squeezes his eyes tightly, let's his thumb brush against Dean's palm. He has a hard time
swallowing. He knows that this is only making it worse for himself, that if he could only do it quickly, it would hurt less, but he can't bring himself to tear away just yet.

In response, Dean squeezes his hand lightly, thumb brushing over Sam's wrist so sweetly that Sam almost feels like crying.

Instead, he lets himself enjoy the last bit of pity and sacrifice he will let Dean give him, works to memorize the feels of Dean's hands on him, and then he pulls his hand away. He sits up, stretches out his tingling hand, and fakes a yawn.

"Jesus, I'm tired,"

He watches Dean’s hand jerk back towards his side like he’s been burned. Sam watches him from the side of his gaze for the next couple of miles. His arm stays frigidly pressed against his side.

Sam doesn’t say anything. He gets it. He really does. He curls his fingers over his palm, lets himself pathetically stroke over the place they were touching. It doesn’t help.

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New Castle, 2009

"Dean," Sam asks, a few days down the road, directionless, phone calls ringing in the tiny front seat that Dean refuses to answer.

"Yeah?" Dean says, voice a high, fake cheerful that sets Sam on edge.

"What are we doing?" Sam asks.

"Same as we always do, Sammy," Dean says.

"But we don't have to anymore," Sam says, "You've had to run around with me for years. I thought you'd want a break."

Dean licks his lips, "That's not what I want," implication hanging in the air.

Sam stares at him.

"But aren't you tired?"

"Nope," Dean replies shortly.

Sam doesn't know what else to say. He had thought Dean would've ditched him by now, but they just keep going, like nothing's changed at all. They can't live like this. Dean can't want to live like this. Directionless, stagnant even though they're whipping down the road at seventy miles an hour.

"Are you sure?" Sam says, can't bring himself to say what he really means—you don't have to watch me anymore, Dean. You've done enough. Please, you have to stop doing this, because he's a coward, and if he does, that might actually do what he wants it to. Dean might actually listen.

"If you want to say something, go ahead," Dean says, "but stop trying to put it on me."

And Sam doesn't know what to make of that. He does want to say something, but his tongue pushes heavy against his bottom teeth, and he doesn't open his mouth.

"Oh, wow," Dean says, "Look at those hills." So forced it almost unhinges Sam's jaw, almost has
him saying it.

Instead he nods, "Yeah. Remember that fucked up movie about those hill cannibals you showed me when I was little? Still freaks me out,"

And they drive on.

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**Aurora, 2009**

The longest they stop in those horrible weeks is for a couple of nights outside of Aurora. It’s a cold night, unusually so, and Sam can’t stop shivering as he unloads their bags.

“You alright?” Dean asks, and Sam nods instead of saying anything. He wonders how long they can go without ever actually saying something.

Once they’re unloaded, Dean offers to go grab them some dinner.

“Burgers?” Dean asks, and Sam agrees because he doesn’t have it in him to care about it.

“Really, Sam, burgers?” Dean prods.

“Yeah, that’s fine,” Sam says.

“We had burgers the past two weeks,” Dean says, and great, he sounds pissed, “Don’t you wanna speak up or something?”

Sam’s on edge, too, to be honest. He doesn’t think he’s really relaxed for years, but these days, he feels like he’s one push away from exploding.

“Burgers are fine, Dean. This town doesn’t have anything I like in it anyway.”

“So, what, are you pissed that we keep doing this? Keep stopping in these shitty towns? Sorry, princess, but do you have another suggestions?”

Sam can feel his irritation rising—why has Dean chosen now to be an asshole? Sam’s head hurts, and he’s not that hungry anyway, and the way Dean’s looking at him, angry and challenging, is making his chest ache.

“I don’t know what you’re fucking saying,” Sam says, “But I don’t really care.”

Dean strides across the room toward the door, paces back to Sam quickly, “You don’t care?” He says.

“No,” Sam says, “I think I’m just going to go to bed.”

“That’s great, Sam. You’re doing me a great fucking service,” Dean says, and he slams out of the room.

Sam doesn’t sleep, of course. He’s still trying to work out what misstep he took to piss Dean off, if it was random, does he have any chance of keeping Dean around, or has Dean finally hit his limit?

It’s weird being alone like this. Sam hasn’t gotten used to it. Dean being able to leave at any time, the two of them finally able to be separated.
Sam feels freer than he has in years. And he’s grateful for it, so grateful, and he’s overwhelmingly happy because of what it means for Dean but.

But being alone, without Dean right by his side, for the first time in what feels like forever, makes Sam feel like he’s going to cry. Every single time.

He tells himself it’s a dependence his body has developed. A response

Dean opens the motel room door quietly, and Sam closes his eyes even though he hears Dean unwrapping his food and chewing.

He listens to the sounds of Dean showering and brushing his teeth before bed, listens to him quietly pad back into the room and slip into the bed next to Sam’s.

Sam stays awake, listening, till he hears the quiet sounds of Dean’s snoring. He can’t remember a time it ever annoyed him, can’t really imagine falling asleep without it.

Sam gets up from bed and goes to piss. When he gets back, he sees that Dean has left food for him on the table.

He was hungry, despite what he said, so he goes to unwrap his meal.

Dean’s got him a turkey sandwich. Which is something close to remarkable, lettuce and everything.

Sam eats about half of it before his anxious stomach forces him to wrap the rest of it up.

In the morning, Sam wakes to the sound of Dean leaving the room again. He shuts the door quietly, and for a split second, Sam thinks he’s split.

He sits upright in bed quickly, eyes darting to Dean’s duffle immediately. He breathes a sigh of relief. Everything is still there. Dean will be back.

He doesn’t think he’ll be able to sleep again, figures he has to be too worked up, can’t even believe he fell asleep after what happened last night.

The next thing he knows it’s ten in the morning and Dean’s returned, coffee and donuts in hand.

“Oh, morning,” Sam says, pretends he didn’t even notice Dean had gone, “Hey, thanks.”

“Yeah, no problem,” Dean says.

They eat their breakfast silently, but it isn’t as uncomfortable as Dean forcing conversation.

“You think you want to hit the road again today?” Sam asks after they’ve finished.

“What’s the point?”

“What do you mean, Dean?” Sam swallows.

“You said you’re tired,” Dean says, voice strained, “What’s the point of pushing ourselves so hard? We aren’t running from anything.”

“I never said I was tired,” Sam says, instead of focusing on anything else, “I asked if you were.”

“Okay, Sam, whatever,” Dean says, “But I thought we could, just, you know. Rest for a couple days.”
Sam has an insane, fleeting thought that Dean wants to stop to get laid. That he has, for some reason, stopped their endless, speeding trip across the U.S.A so that he can get some pussy, but he dismisses it. He tries to.

“I mean—yeah. I think we’re both tired.” Sam finally says.

“Right. Good.” Dean says, “So, what do you want to do?”

“Huh?”

“There’s a movie theater, I stopped in last night. It’s all old shit, from, like, the 80s because that’s all they had in storage but. Dude, imagine seeing *Blade Runner* in a theater.”

Sam stays silent, is trying to work out what is going on.

“Or—“ Dean sits down on the bed next to Sam, “I mean. I don’t know. We don’t have to, if you don’t want to.”

And of course, the first time Sam’s able to understand Dean in weeks, is when he realizes Dean’s disappointed they aren’t going to see some stupid movie together.

“No, Dean. That sounds great. Let me shower and we can go.”

It turns out the theater is only showing Top Gun that day, and Dean mutters about being misinformed, but it’s not so bad.

It feels like they’re young again, like Dean’s just taking Sam to a movie and day out of the house. Just some time, the two of them, before everything got so fucked up.

Maybe that’s what this is all about. Dean is trying to get back to that, trying to erase decades and all the awful shit that went down between them.

Sam laughs at Dean’s comments throughout the movie, and when they leave, Dean knocks against Sam’s side as they walk back to the motel.

“That was nice,” Dean says when they get back.

“Yeah,” Sam says, and they spend the evening on the same bed, watching TV, not any news, talking shit about whatever terrible show is on.

They fall asleep that way, and Sam wakes in the middle of night, bleary and warm, to his head on Dean’s chest.

Dean is curled around him, breathing softly, and Sam tells himself that he’s too out of it to do anything. He falls back asleep easily.

In the morning, he wakes to an empty bed, and to Dean stuffing his clothes in his duffle near their room’s door.

“Dean?” He says with a yawn, “What’re you doing?”

Dean’s back is to him, “Just getting a little stir crazy in this room. Figure we should hit the road again.”

And Sam works just as quickly to pack up his things, doesn’t even shower, because of course Dean noticed what happened last night, and of course it freaked him the fuck out.
And he’s still acting like he wants to be stuck with Sam in the car for the rest of their lives.

Sam knows he can’t let that happen.

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**Laredo, 2009**

Sam can't stop it eventually.

It's a couple weeks later. Weeks of quiet car rides, of separate beds and mornings more silent than the ones after Sam's heats.

Deans trying. He really is. It makes Sam's heart swell every time Dean flips the channel to a history documentary without a word, the times he returns from a beer run—the separation still makes Sam a little edgy in expectation of pain—but it's not enough.

Deans not happy, that much is clear. And what little joy Sam's getting out of his days is tinged with guilt.

They can't go on like this. It's wearing them both down.

They go out to a local bar for dinner, end up sitting in a booth near the back. It’s one of those old neighborhoods, one that wasn’t too touched by the war because there wasn’t anything of interest there in the first place.

There’s plenty of regulars, but with the amount of people who were uprooted, they’re more hospitable to strangers passing through than they’d be expected to be.

The man who serves him is quiet but attentive, their glasses never getting half empty. He’s working the bar too, keeps asking is they want anything. Trying to turn a profit, but the idea of a drink with what Sam’s building himself up to say makes his stomach turn even worse. Dean must not be in the mood either, causing their waiter to get impatient about taking their meal orders.

They don’t have many options, the standard bar fare, and Sam isn’t feeling so hungry.

He orders a plate of fries to pair with Dean’s burger, picks at them halfheartedly when they’re delivered.

“You aren’t hungry?” Dean asks, but it’s not like he’s eating much either.

Sam knows that the past couple of days having been wearing on both of them, run ragged as they ever were dealing with Sam as an omega. Sam hadn’t planned on hashing this out in the bar, had thought maybe he’d wait till they got back to the motel, but the tone in Dean’s voice, the happy chatter of old friends around them, the quickly-going-cold plate of fries between them just presses the point home.

They can’t live like this. Dean shouldn’t be living like this.

Sam dips a fry in ketchup, chews it slowly and counts down in his head. Swallowing is hard with how dry his throat has gotten.

“I don’t know how to start,” he says.

Dean’s eyes widen across the table, “Start what?” He asks, and Sam can’t decide if he knows what’s coming.
“You said the other day that I need to say something,” Sam says, “So, I guess this is me saying something,” Sam takes a breath, “We can’t keep doing this, Dean.”

Dean’s expression is near panic. Probably doesn’t have a clue then, no idea what’s coming, and just assumes that Sam’s going to say the worst.

That he wants to go back to the way things were. Which isn’t true, not totally, but there’s enough truth remaining that it makes Sam’s stomach sink in guilty resolve.

He wouldn’t do that to Dean, not again. He wouldn’t prove whatever fear Dean had correct. For once, he could relieve some of Dean’s burden.

“Don’t freak out,” Sam says, “It’s okay. This is. It’s good.”

"Dean," Sam starts, "I know the past couple of years have been rough on both of us."

"Do you?" Dean asks.

Sam flushes. No. He doesn't. Dean must have been able to tell that Sam didn't hate it as much as Dean did. Sure, it was shitty for him, but it wasn't as bad as it was for Dean. Sam shouldn't be acting like they're the same.

"Well. I can understand. For you, I mean," Sam taps his fingers nervously, "and I'm sorry."

"You don't have anything to be sorry about, Sam," Dean says.

"Yeah, I do," Sam plows on. He has to say this while he's got the nerve, "I didn't know what was going on with my body or whatever but that's not an excuse. And that was really fucked up, and I'm. I'm really sorry, Dean."

"You're sorry because what they did to you forced you to shack up with me?"

"I mean. Yeah. I guess that's what I'm trying to say."

"Yeah, well," Dean gets a look on his face that Sam hasn't seen since he was fifteen and was about to stand up to dad, "I'm not."

"What?" Sam says.

"I'm sorry you had to go through that. And I know it hurt you, and I still want to fucking end anyone who had a hand in it, but I'm not sorry that you chose me."

"What?" Sam repeats dumbly.

"I'm not sorry it was me. I'm sorry you hated it, but if that's what had to happen to keep you alive, I was happy to do it."

Right. Of course. That was Dean all over. Sam was so stupid. Why would Dean mean anything else? He was willing to give up so much just to keep Sam ticking. Sam doesn't know what he did to deserve that kind of devotion, but he suspects it has more to do with Deans inherent sense of good and responsibility than him.

"Oh," Sam says, can't help the disappointment that creeps into his tone, "Dean. You. You have to stop doing this."

"Doing what?"
"You have to stop sacrificing yourself just to keep me alive and happy. I'm not a little kid anymore and honestly—honestly, you should think of yourself for once. You've done so much for me already. Too much."

Sam can't bring himself to meet Dean's eyes after he gets it all out. This is the moment, he's sure, that Dean will get that he's free from Sam. This is the moment he leaves him.

"Jesus Christ, Sammy," he hears instead of the sound of Dean's footsteps walking away, "don't you get it yet? Making you happy, being with you, is about all that makes life worth living."

Sam's eyes shoot up to Dean. He's looking at Sam like he's stupid, face mocking, but it's a forced face and Sam can imagine that under that, Dean's on edge with nerves.

"You think it was a chore for me to take care of you all these years? Sammy, it was my pleasure," he laughs, "literally."

Sam feels tears prickling at the back of his eyes as he meets Dean's smirk. He wants to say something equally as earth shaking. Dean's just dropped a bomb on him. He said something that Sam had only dreamed about, hoped for, his entire life.

How is Sam supposed to compete with that? How was he supposed to get his stupid mouth to work so that Dean could understand?

Sam thought he was being brave before, but that was nothing compared to this. This felt like being at the top of a cliff and deciding to jump, trusting that you'd land in water at the bottom, somehow not break your neck.

Sam swallows hard, and leans across the booth.

"What're you doing?" Dean says.

"Come here, dumbass," Sam says, even though his voice shakes.

Dean leans forwards, not very much, but he's close enough for Sam to tilt his neck and press his lips against Dean's.

Sam had never gotten to do this before. He'd never kissed Dean with a clear head, when his body wasn't desperate, and Jesus. He'd been missing so much.

It's not much more than a brief press of the lips, Dean's mouth parting in an intake of breath, but Dean breaks away and Sam feels hot all over. He leans forward before he can stop himself, already needy for more.

Dean's hand on his chest stops him and he freezes, realizes what he was doing.

Sam blanches, body catching up with the anxiety from before, going cold all over.

He smiles at Dean cautiously, "Dean?" He says.

Dean's carefully schooled expression of confidence from before is broken open. He's smiling, a big smile that crinkles the corners of his eyes, and his pretty skin is pinked up and Sam doesn't think he's ever seen Dean look quite that good.

"Sammy," Dean replies, and it's not a question.

"You gonna let me kiss you again?" Sam says, Dean's joy catching, Sam feels overwhelmed by it.
“Sure I will, baby,” Dean says, and Sam can feel himself blush to his temple, “Just wanna take you in for a moment.”

“Oh my God, Dean,” Sam laughs, “How have you gotten a date? Ever? Fucking sap.”

“Yeah, yeah,” Dean says, and leans forward and pecks Sam, “Don’t think I’m gonna have to worry about that anymore,”

And Sam almost says it right then, right there. But instead he lets himself be kissed by Dean, hard and hot, because, really. For the first time in years, he knows they have time.

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Amarillo, 2014

Lizzie Grewber was out of options. She thought she was out of options.

Her daughter was born small and pink and perfect. Amanda had raised her to five on her own. She’d bathed her and read to her and fed her.

Amanda loved her more than she thought she could love anything.

The symptoms started when Lily was six months old. Nothing life threatening—a attachment to her toys and foods that bordered on extreme, a fussiness that never fully went away if her mother wasn’t in the room.

Lizzie had thought it was normal baby behavior, till the fevers started.

The doctor said that it was something in the environment. Most of the toxins had cleared the air years ago, but what remained was not harmless.

Lily had been exposed to it. Maybe in the water, maybe when Lizzie took her to the park.

It was supposed to be too rare for it to happen to them.

The symptoms she was experiencing now would only get worse. When she reached puberty, since Lily had never had an alpha, her heats would burn her out.

Already, her bonding with her mother and early fevers make Lily grouchy and achy most of the time.

Lizzie had tried to take the news well. She had kept her crying to when she had moments alone, had focused on enjoying what time she had left with her daughter.

It could be worse. The history of omegas told her it could be worse. She had time. She didn’t feel lucky, but she tried to tell herself she was.

She’d gotten the call a few months after Lily turned five. A kind voice filtered over the wire. The man had heard from Dr. Hanson about Lily’s condition. If Lily fit the criteria, and if Lizzie was open to it, they knew some people who might be able to help.

Lizzie set up a meeting with them during that conversation. She was sitting near the door now, nervously picking at her nails.

Dr. Hanson had assured her that these were good men. Men who understood.

Lily was playing in the living room, happy and fever free. Lizzie believe Dr. Hanson, but she didn’t
believe she was this lucky.

The knock came at three on the dot, just like they’d agreed on. The men who enter the house are broad and tall. They enter in smooth synchronization, the shorter man staying at the taller man’s back.

The shorter one introduces himself as Dean, the tall man, whose voice Lizzie recognizes, must be Sam.

Lily has stopped playing and is eyeing the men from her spot on the floor.

“Who’re you?” She asks.

Sam—big Sam, who’s hands are scarred and arms are thick with muscle, enough to make Lizzie a little nervous—turns to the sound of Lily’s voice.

He takes two quick strides across the floor and kneels beside the girl.

“You must be Lily,” he says, holds out a hand, “I’m Sam.”

Lily tilts her head and stares at Sam. Sometimes, she picks up things about people. Dr. Hanson says it could be scent, could be an ability, strange, animal words that Lizzie doesn’t understand.

“Sam,” Lily repeats, smiles and takes Sam’s hand, just like her mama taught her, “You’re big,”

Sam laughs, “Yeah, I am.”

Lizzie watches anxiously. She doesn’t know a thing about these boys, only knows what Dr. Hanson has told her. Sam was among the first to be cured. She should feel free to ask questions, but nothing too personal—might upset Dean a little, and that’d put Sam on edge. Rules of behavior, but no real histories. No idea who she was letting around her little girl.

Dean stands next to her, gaze softer, less twitchy.

“He’s great at this, you know,” he tells her, like he knows what she’s thinking, “Best hands your girl could be in.”

Lizzie flushes like she’s been caught, and keeps her eyes trained to Sam’s form. Dean’s right. He knows Sam well.

A couple minutes later Lily is laughing and talking with Sam easily, turning to her mother midway through a giggle to ask if Sam could stay.

“I don’t know, baby,” Lizzie starts.

“You said friends stay for dinner, remember? Mommy?”

And Sam grins, and Lizzie sighs and agrees. A rule she’d made awhile ago, back when Lily was still bringing friends over.

She clings to Sam for the rest of the evening, whispering in his ear, pointing at Dean.

“She thinks you’ve got weird legs,” Sam teases across their dinner table.

Dean gasps, “Aren’t you gonna defend me?”
“Nah,” Sam says, “She’s right.”

Simple as that, Lily starts laughing again, cheeks pinking up as she gazes at Sam. It’s a kind of admiration, openness, that Lizzie hasn’t seen in years.

Dean was right and he knows it. He meets her eyes and smiles softly, something warm and gentle that Lizzie knows hasn’t been conjured by her.

“He’s a good man,” Lizzie says later, while Sam’s talking to Lily about the omega treatment facility—Yes, he can stay with her the whole time. Yes, there are people like her there. Yes, Dean’s coming, too.

“Yeah,” Dean says, “The best of them,”

They pack up the next morning. Lizzie’s let them stay overnight, so Lily has a chance to pack up, to say goodbye. She won’t see her for about a month, Sam tells her, but they’ll call often.

Lizzie is hopeful, but she still can’t choke back the tears when she sees Lily’s small, pink suitcase packed into the back of the boy’s huge black car.

“You’re gonna feel better,” She tells Lily, even though it’s more for herself, “When I see you again, you’re gonna be feeling better.”

Lily rolls her eyes and hugs her mom, “I know that, mommy. Sam got better there, too.”

Lily is only stunned for a moment, before she feels tears welling in her eyes again.

Sam had been like her baby. He was proof of a chance, of a life after the mutation.

She looks at Dean as he gets in the passenger seat, watches the way he watches Sam.

Lily has more than a chance at recovery. She’s got a chance at a real life. And a life where someone will look at her the way Dean looks at Sam—this isn’t the end for her that Lizzie always feared.

She kisses her hard, once on the forehead and lets Sam lead her to the car by the hand.

She waves as the pull down the road, watches as the black impala disappears down the road, nothing but a tiny black speck before she can no longer make it out on the horizon.

Chapter End Notes

we did it guys!!!! the longest fic i've ever written is finally over!! (i know this is shrimpy compared to a lot of fics but it was quite an accomplishment for me). This was a huge experiment in a lot of ways--both in genre and in a longer-length fic, but i hope it was still an enjoyable read. HUGE BIG thanks to everyone who commented on the first two chapters it really kept me going ANNNNND because sam and dean did not go to pound town in this ending (i wanted it to happen too) there WILL be a porny timestamp of this fic at some point in the future but that's the only thing i'm saying because we've all seen how good i am at keeping to a schedule. ALRIGHT!!! THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR READING I LOVE U
In depth warnings: Dub-con because Sam and Dean have sex while Sam is in heat, and Sam feels like Dean is doing it out of obligation afterwards. During, Sam is too out of his mind to consent. Violence is mostly discussions of shooting, blood, and vague mentions of gore. Hate speech includes homophobic language.

ANYWAYS hope you liked it!!! Let me know if you see any really glaring errors!

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!