**Deleted Scenes: Endverse**

This is a collection of deleted scenes from Job & Family (part 1 of this series). This collection contains MAJOR spoilers if you aren't current on Job & Family. I strongly encourage you to not just jump into these scenes without context because they will not be in chronological order and may not make much sense without being familiar with >200,000 words of set up.

That being said, please enjoy :)

**Notes**

Originally intended for chapter: 51
Characters: Sam, Crowley
Word count: 2,370
Sam leaned against the edge of the massive stone table and sighed. There were forty three piles of paper, each embodying a proposed contract. Twenty five of the contracts were internal to Hell and would need to be gone over with the utmost attention to detail. The last thing they needed was for some tiny oversight to undermine the fledgling policy changes they had recently put in place.

“I see it now, this really is Hell.” Muttered Sam as he thumbed through the closest pile, looking for anything exciting.

Crowley stepped forward to stand next to Sam before assessing their workload. He held out a crystal glass of scotch to Sam, who accepted it with a reflexive nod of appreciation. Crowley sipped from his own more liberally filled glass, then circled the table while eyeing the piles. He began skimming through a shorter stack and smirked.

“You’ll like this one, Ravana is proposing to give us 35% of his privately held souls in exchange for control of six parcels of territory in the Upper Pits.”

“Did he have specific parcels in mind?”

“Yes, and there’s nothing of value in any of them.”

“Well that’s not suspicious at all.” Sam rolled his eyes, sipped his scotch, then placed the glass down between several piles. “You’d think that demons would be either less generous or at least better thieves- so who doesn’t know the value of what they have, him or us?”

“I’ll send some people out to assess the parcels.” Offered Crowley.

"Is that area fairly safe? I need to look at something aside from provisions for a bit.“ The Archdemon thought for a moment, weighing the potential risks.

"You’re not going to get jumped right out of the gate, but you might not want to build a holiday home there."

Sam turned to the ever-vigilant Mir, standing silently at attention by the chamber door.

"Mir, you feel like a walk?“ The Knight nodded slowly to Sam. "You coming Crowley?"

The total area in question was the size of ten by fifteen large city blocks. It held two dozen dungeons that mostly took the approaches to torture of either solitary confinement in cells a bit smaller than a coffin or the classic technique of flaying. Sam preferred the solitary confinement dungeons because they rarely involved cries for help or sidestepping blood & viscera.

It had been hard adjusting to the carnage intrinsic in the environment. The first time he visited a dungeon, Crowley had to immediately take him back to a seclusion of the Citadel. For days he was barely able to eat- if there had been any question as to whether he was a vegetarian, it was decided that day. It had taken awhile for him to become somewhat desensitized to the violence, but it was part of the job.
The majority of the dungeons in the Pits were essentially below ground in that there was no empty space separating their outermost walls. The roofs sometimes varied drastically in height, creating cliffs that were appropriately carved from stone. Stone staircases or metal ladders allowed access from one rooftop to another. The rooftops were prized real estate to demons because they gave a view of Hell’s great expanse. It was almost unheard of for souls to walk the surface of the Pits, it was reserved for those who’d earned even such a pathetic perk.

Demons didn’t have homes, but many who didn’t work in the Central District would spend their free time on the surface of the Pits. So, when Sam started exploring the Pits he found scenes reminiscent of patio gathers. He’d been surprised to witness demons just standing & sitting around chatting, but it made sense in a way. Demons didn’t sleep and after witnessing how Ruby would occasionally get fatigued, he realized that even demons needed some time to recharge… well, everyone except him.

Sam descended one of the metal ladders from one rooftop to another. He marveled briefly at the metal comprising the forty foot long ladder. At first he’d assumed that these metal fixtures in Hell were just iron, then he realized how disastrous that would be. When he’d asked Crowley during the first few weeks of their alliance, it was explained that most of the ores were cobalt or tungsten. Climbing down the cobalt ladder, Sam wondered why blue wasn’t more frequently associated with Hell. He supposed the seas of Earth or symbolic sky of Heaven already laid claim to that association.

"Are you going to climb every sodding ladder?" Crowley called up to Sam.

"I’m being thorough.” Sam yelled down as he finished off the last dozen rungs. Crowley stepped closer, leaning in to speak quietly with Sam.

"I know you’re not entirely comfortable with the whole teleporting perk, but you can’t just walk and climb everywhere.” Crowley glanced at a handful of lesser demons standing a few yards off watching them with candid fascination. "It’s unseemly.”

"Come on, I just want to get some exercise. It’s a miracle your body isn’t entirely atrophied with how much you port.”

"I get my exercise.” Crowley objected.

"Just the other day, I saw you port to the opposite side of the table to grab a paper.“ Crowley scowled, but didn’t argue. "Anyway, we’re supposed to be searching this place, I don’t want to miss the hidden treasure trove because I didn’t take the stairs.”

"We’ve already gone through five parcels and there hasn’t been anything of value beyond your standard dungeons- the third flaying den had a good number of tender souls, but besides that nothing noteworthy.”

A tender soul was a soul that had been worked over to near breaking, which had a more immediate value than the underripe variety. A dungeon that was tender soul heavy, was to be prized, but there were probably twice as many tender souls in the collection that Ravan was proposing to trade. By itself, the dungeon wouldn’t be enough to justify the deal, so they had to keep looking.

"At least we’ve only got one more parcel to go.” Sam rubbed his neck and sat down on a roughly carved stone bench. "I need to take a break for a sec though. I’m going to go insane if I have cross check another den’s inventory.”
Sam looked out across the grey & tan stone rooftops, beyond them to the distant edge of Hell. As if in a classical depiction of Hell, it was encompassed in a large chamber of stone. At the very edge of the Pit was a stone face that extended up hundreds of feet above the highest rooftops, curving inward to a domed stone ceiling. He had wondered what was beyond the stone, but it seemed that no one in Hell knew. It was easy to see why humans would have assumed that Hell was located in the center of the Earth prior to the discovery of its iron core. Sam had initially smiled at the idea of all these demons living in an iron core, but revisiting the idea four years later, it didn’t seem so funny.

He saw that a small crowd of demons had formed to see him. Early on it had been unsettling the way the demons treated him. He had a celebrity status that was unaccustomed, but he quickly accepted that that was part of being a divine monarch. Crowley had sought him out to be the figurehead and it had come easier than expected.

The group watching him whispered in Abyssal, and he only didn’t understanding a word or two. They were speculating & arguing about just how impressive or menacing Sam was up close.

Wanting to improve his political base and also looking for a little entertainment, Sam leaned forward and placed his hand on the stone rooftop. He shut his eyes and focused for a moment, illuminating the small patch of stone in The First Light.

There was something to be said for being The First Light. Hell seemed to resonate with strange potential that only he could feel. Lucifer had created the entire plane, and while a vessel was nowhere near as powerful as their angel, Sam felt… if not the spark of creation, then at least a small artistic inclination. He could change things, maybe not by much, but even fleeting improvement was something rare & beautiful in a place like Hell.

When he pulled his palm back from the stone a small patch of grass grew from it. Based on the experiments Sam had run while killing time, since he made the grass outside the Citadel it would likely wither & die several days later. The closer he was to The Seat, the easier it was for him to create tiny areas of plant life. Within the great hall, he could make a simple garden without even getting up from his throne. He hadn’t fully tested the range of his abilities, but creating life, even just plants always struck a profound chord with the demons who lived in such a stark & lifeless environment.

"You do that enough and they’ll have you performing at birthday parties.” Crowley muttered as he indicated the demons who were visibly awed by the display. Three blinked away, only to return seconds later having collected others to see the grass.

"They like it.“

"It’s Hell, we’re not supposed to care what anyone likes unless it benefits us.” Crowley sipped his scotch, from a glass that seemed to magically appear whenever he needed it. Sam smiled, earned another murmur from the crowd.

“Speaking of birthday parties, how old’s the pup now?”

"Four. She just figured out how to use the light. We were pretty scared that she might hurt someone while learning, but she’s been really careful- which is something of a miracle. I swear she’s a menace, like Ruby or Dean. She’s also starting to experiment with flying, which is weird as hell. Cas can technically go after her, but he’s not always around. Luckily, she’s been really good about following the important rules, like
don’t fly too high and don’t let strangers see.“

"Does she know where you go?"

"Yes & no. She knows it’s Hell, but she doesn’t get what that means. She doesn’t understand death or the different planes."

There was an awkward silence while Sam & Crowley both waited to see who would bring up the same old disagreement. From the very beginning Crowley and the other Archdemons had been pressing Sam to bring Kaylee to Hell. Within Hell, the existence of a born demon was rumor that sometimes bordered on gospel depending on the caste. Yet Sam had always been vague when speaking about her— even Crowley didn’t actually know her name. Sam glanced knowingly over at Crowley, silently giving him permission to get the pitch over with already.

"You know how much it would mean to have her visit. Just letting the council see her—"

"I don’t want her down here. “ Sam leaned forward, resting his elbows on his knees. He absentmindedly played with the hem of his left sleeve while looking out over his domain.

"Are you worried she’ll be scared or in danger? Just keep her in the Citadel. Worried we’ll be a bad influence on her? Well, that’s inevitable. And so is her finding out what you really do.” Sam’s lips pursed ever so slightly at the last comment. Crowley shrugged, then added as an aside. “You need to work on that tell.”

"She’s a kid— I just want to let her stay a kid as long as possible.” Sam confessed. “Coming here might change that."

"After the blitzkrieg Heaven’s been pulling on Earth lately, I’m not sure it’s likely that anyone gets to stay a kid for long. I know that you are hidden better than most, but pretty soon she’s going to start asking questions and most the answers these days are pretty harsh.”

Sam rubbed his face. He knew it was true, but it didn’t make it any easier to accept. It was the thought of his kids growing up in that mess of a world that kept him up at night and picked at the back of his mind when he was strolling the Citadel’s endless halls.

"She’s already asking questions. And Tom has been asking to learn to fight— he’s starting to listen to the talk around the dinner table. The other day he sewed wards into half her clothes. Pretty soon she’ll be wanting to know why… and if she comes down here.“ Sam looked down at his hands, which had killed so many demons and performed minor miracles in the Abyss. “I just don’t want her to be corrupted by this place. I can endure it because I know how to fight that darkness inside me. But she doesn’t have any idea about evil.”

"How did you learn about it?"

"The hard way.”

"Some lessons don’t have an easy way.” Crowley offered with an apologetic tilt of the head.

Sam leaned back in his chair and looked at the skyless ceiling high above him. As much as this plane was a strange sandbox of potential, it was also a prison. It had its obvious negatives, yet with him around to protect her maybe it was one of the most controlled environments in which to learn how to resist evil… Also, in Hell, he wouldn’t have to worry about Kaylee flying off one day. Sam
sat upright at an epiphany.

"Land rights here, what do they cover?" Sam asked.

"What?"

"On Earth, at least in some places, before air travel started screwing it up when you bought land you actually bought a cone of space. It was from a point at the center of the earth out, intersecting the surface of the Earth at the borders of your property, and out to infinity. You got the mineral rights below you and the sky above."

"What’re you getting at?" Crowley raised an eyebrow.

"These Upper Pits parcels are restricted going down by the Lower Pits below them, but is there a restriction on the chamber ceiling?"

"No. But why would anyone care, it’s probably a hundred meters up at least."

Sam moved closer to Crowley and whispered in his ear.

"There’s something up there."
Per Sam & Ruby’s demands, the first time that Kaylee visited Hell she stayed deep within the Citadel. Since they were unsure how she would react to the new plane, they decided to bring her down together. She handled the teleportation with only minor wobbling in her knees, though the real test was how she would handle seeing demons in their true form for the first time. Ruby insisted on riding her meatsuit down in order to avoid frightening Kaylee, but not every demon could hide inside a human- nor should they have to. Despite the fact that they had warned her, when she saw Mir, she hid behind Sam’s legs.

“It’s okay, this is Mir.” Sam said as he took her hand and gently led her out of hiding. “He’s not going to hurt you, he actually wants to help you and keep you safe.”

Mir knelt down so that he was at eye level with Kaylee. The Knight smiled with as much softness as his granite-like face could manage. He reached into a pouch on his belt, pulled out a poorly carved stone figurine of a horse, and held it out to Kaylee. She cautiously took the gift.

“Thank you.” She said shyly.

“We might need to explain the nuances of Hell’s etiquette-” Said Crowley as he entered from the doorway to the High Council’s chamber.

“We’ve just gotten all the ‘please’ & ‘thank you’ lessons done. We’re not gonna turn around and teach her how to be an asshole.” Objected Ruby.

“When she visits, she’s going to stay in the Citadel- at least until she’s older.” Sam explained to Crowley. “Everyone can deal with her politeness until she learns to play the game.”

Kaylee became slightly more attentive at the mention of playing games. She rocked back & forth on her toes & heels while watching the interaction between the adults.

“Fine, we’ll give the little one some thorns later on.” Sam started to open his mouth to say something, but Crowley quickly added. “We don’t want anyone to mistreat her.”

“I don’t have thorns.” Kaylee hastily explained to Crowley in mild concern. Everyone’s attention being turned to her caused her to blush with embarrassment until she had an idea for a consolation. “I have horns.”

She took a few steps toward the Archdemon and scrunched her face in concentration. A pair of two inch long black horns flickered into view. Sam eyed Crowley while nervously patting her head,
absentmindedly fixing the hair along her forehead that had been messed up by the horns appearing.

“That’s wonderful, princess.” Crowley said as he removed the blood red rose from his lapel. He slipped the rose behind her right ear, carefully positioning it to be held in place by her horn. “Horns are even better than thorns.”

Sam & Crowley gave Ruby & Kaylee a tour of the Citadel. Despite having visited Hell on numerous occasions since having Kaylee, Ruby hadn’t seen more than a quarter of the Citadel. She’d been to the throne room a few dozen times in order to talk to Sam, but largely she was downstairs to work and left as soon as she was able. Her laboratory was second only to Morrison’s and unfortunately it was located in the same relatively isolated wing.

It was a nice change of pace to be able to explore their strange environment with two of the people who knew it best. Crowley may have been there many millennia longer, but Sam had a natural intuition that allowed him unique insights. Also, Sam & Ruby were pleasantly surprised how well Kaylee seemed to process the more disfigured demons and other potential sources of culture shock.

After a lengthy tour, then ended up back in the throne room. Ruby chatted with Crowley about the logistics of having Kaylee visit going forward, while Sam made some grass & flowers for her to play in with her stone horse. Sam watched her play, then looked over at Mir, who was also watching with a thin smile.

“Thanks for the horse.” Sam spoke quietly, so as not to distract from the important discussions & play. Mir nodded in acknowledgment, but he didn’t take his eyes off Kaylee. The Knight’s expression was even more pensive than usual. “Did you have any kids?”

Mir’s smile faded, then he nodded.

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The doors to the throne room burst open and Kaylee came running in, followed by a strolling Ruby. Kaylee rushed up to Sam, who knelt down to pick her up. Instead of accepting his invitation, she jumped up to plant a kiss on his cheek, then ran over to Mir. Mir shrugged at Sam while Kaylee bounced next to him.

“Whatever, go have some fun.” Sam said while waving at them. Mir smiled down at Kaylee, then hoisted her onto his broad shoulders and began marching in whichever direction she pointed. She led him out the primary set of double doors, on some adventure.

“She sees you all the time.” Ruby reassured as she patted Sam’s chest.

“I can live hundreds of years in the Abyss and seeing my daughter ditch me for some guy is the thing that makes me feel old.”

“Give her time, she’ll ditch you for a lot of guys.” Ruby teased. She looked around at the empty throne room. “Where’s Shola?”

“She’s working on some contracts in Beijing. We might have an in with a massive hunter network there. She took Joseba & Meili.” Sam glanced around the hall, then grinned. “Actually, now that we have a few minutes to ourselves. I want to try something.”

Sam took Ruby’s hand and guided her over to the Seat. He sat down and she watched the tree change. The look of wonder on her face never ceased to delight him. It reminded him of the night they fell asleep below the shooting stars.
“You trust me?” Sam asked.

“Only for the last five years.”

Sam motioned for her to come closer. When she was right in front of him, he turned her to face the hall. He placed his hands on her waist and guided her down to sit on his lap. Once she was stable, he rested his arms on the armrests. She placed her hands atop his. She was sitting on the Seat of Hell, with just Sam protecting her from its intensity. He felt the rush from the Seat increase and almost pass through him.

“This is incredible.” She whispered. Her head leaned back and rested on his right shoulder. He could see her chest heaving as she took exhilarated breaths.

Sam waved his hand, closing & locking all the doors to the hall, then leaned forward to kiss the side of her neck. Her hands let go of his and reached backwards to hook onto his neck. His left hand slid up her shirt, then cupped her breast. His right hand slid down, unbuttoned her jeans, and reached into her panties. He started playing with her. She groaned and arched her back, but he held her to him, safely apart from the throne.

The combination of Ruby’s pleasure and the mildly intoxicating power of the throne was making him hard. He moved Ruby further down on his lap for just long enough to push his jacket to the side and undo his pants. For her part, Ruby started wriggling her jeans & panties down too. He quickly pulled her back to him and push deep into her.

She rocked her hips forward & backward as he played with her. Sam had never felt anything like it. It was like he was giving her the pure power that he felt through the throne. It was frantic & primal, a blur of pleasure. Ruby’s moans echoed in the hall and he gripped her tight as they came together.

"It’s good to be the king." Ruby panted.

After Kaylee finished exploring with Mir, Sam took her home by himself. While pulling her pants back on, Ruby had had an epiphany regarding the composition of a new weapon against angels. She had given Sam a kiss then run off mentioning something about the nature of flight. Sam barely heard her, he was still flush from some of the best sex of his life and could only really process that for the second time in a few hours he’d been ditched.

He didn’t actually mind Ruby tossing him domestic duty. Time at home with the kids was something he treasured. Tom was on a camping trip with Bobby, Isa, & four of the other kids. So Sam & Kaylee got to enjoy some father-daughter time. Sam even indulged Kaylee with a tea party-something that Ruby would only ever concede to after the most dire of tantrums.

It was the next day before Ruby returned from Hell. She found Sam & Kaylee snuggled up on the couch while Sam was reading Paradise Lost aloud. He got to a stopping point, then placed a bookmark between the pages. After Sam was done reading Kaylee ran over to Ruby to claim an overdue hug.

"Sam, we need to talk." Ruby said meaningfully before looking down at Kaylee. "Hey starlight, can you go play with the other kids for a few minutes?"

Once Kaylee was gone, Ruby walked up to stand right in front of Sam. She took his hand and put it on her abdomen.

"I think we’ve got a souvenir," she moved his hand slightly so he could feel the small bump. "from
"You think you’re pregnant— that was yesterday!" Sam ran his fingers through his hair.

“I’ve been working downside for about ten weeks.” She crossed her arms in front of her chest, a little peeved that the amount of work she’d just put in had gone underappreciated.

“I thought we were using that contraceptive spell?”

“We are— or were. It’s actually a self-inflicted hex. After I got suspicious about the bump I checked out the throne room. There are protection wards all over the Seat, among other things you have one that knocks out hexes & curses.”

“I can’t believe this… Again? How does this keep happening to us?”

His question was rhetorical, he knew exactly how it happened. They had a fairly active sex life combined with limited information about their physiological compatibility, and contraceptive method that hadn’t exactly gone through rigorous trials. There weren’t any warning labels suggesting that Ruby should probably stay away from magical anti-hexing trees. As much as the magic came in handy, Sam had to admit that it had its drawbacks too.

“We could keep it.” Ruby floated the idea as she wrapped her arms around Sam’s neck and massaged his nape with her thumbs. “We’ve been more or less stable for four years.”

“The world’s going to shit. Is it really right to bring another kid into this mess?” Sam sighed through a sad smile. He’d seen a lot in the four and a half years since they decided to have Kaylee. If pressed, he’d confess that he didn’t have any regrets about that decision. Yet, having another kid was a little daunting in light of the things he’d been seeing coming through the gates downstairs as of late.

“The world’s always going to shit.” Ruby pushed a lock of hair behind one of his ears. "You’re just too young to know that. You had a shit environment to grow up in, so did I. I think it’s less about whether the world is ready and more whether we’re ready."

"You want to have it?"

“I like our kids and they make you happier than anything else. Call me selfish, yeah, I kinda want to have another kid.” She shrugged playfully.

“You wanting me to be happy is very selfish.” Sam wrapped his arms around her thighs, hugging her midsection. He rested his right cheek against her stomach, thought for a moment, then leaned back. His expression was troubled.

“What do you want to bet the kid’s the antichrist?” Sam touched her abdomen again and the corner of his mouth curled downward. The fact that they’d both been a little high on some really dark magic while having sex… knowing his luck, that sort of thing was bound to bite them later. She tilted his chin up so that he was looking into her eyes.

“Isn’t there some bullshit going through the wires about you being the antichrist? People call you the devil—our daughter’s an abomination—Hell & damnation—blah, blah, blah. I don’t really give a fuck. You’re a good man, doing the best you can to save the world. And, I don’t like to brag, but our kids are pretty awesome too.”

“We’re idiots.” He kissed her tiny belly.
“Nobody’s arguing with that.”
“The kids need to learn how to fight.”

Dean had been pressing the issue ever since the whole Sumrall fiasco. With Heaven using such broadband force, there were too many unpleasant what if’s.

“They’re kids and it’s safe here, why can’t we give them more time to be young?”

Sam knew that the world was coming apart at its hinges just as well as the next guy—better in fact, but the idea of the kids fighting terrified him. He’d grown up combat trained and like a self fulfilling prophecy, that existence had consumed more than half of his life. Since retaking the Pits from Lilith, he hadn’t really gotten his hands dirty. There were a few exceptions, but generally he considered his life peaceful and that’s what he wanted for his kids.

“I get that, better than almost anyone, but the world is getting scary, fast.” Dean continued his pitch. “We’re out there seeing it fall apart. I don’t want the kids to be dragged into something and not know how to handle it.”

Sam rubbed the bridge of his nose and sighed. He knew this was coming. The kids were getting older and the world would begin stripping away their innocence. Starting to take Kaylee downstairs had been his first concession, but she was still safely hidden away from Hell’s true nature. Soon she’d start learning about death, torture, & evil. Tom would expand his knowledge of the craft to include offensive spells, and he’d probably start asking to go hunts with uncle Dean.

“I don’t want them to be hunters or soldiers. I don’t want them to be like us.”

“We might not get that luxury.” Ruby said as she put a hand on Sam’s thigh. He looked over at her. She was seated beside him on their not quite long enough couch. Her hair was pulled back into a loose ponytail. She wore a crimson maternity blouse with silver embroidery. Tom & Kaylee both had been thrilled at the prospect of getting a little brother, but just a few weeks shy of his arrival Sam was getting worried.

“They’ll never be down the line soldiers or hunters.” Dean added. “But they should be capable of fighting & leading.”

“I don’t want to raise my kids to kill.”

“It’s better than raising them to die.”
“Alright, line your fist up with your arm like this. That’ll deliver more power.”

Dean finished correcting Tom’s posture, then offered his palms as targets. The boy swung and connected with his right arm.

“Tom, you gotta loosen up a bit more.” Ruby suggested from her seat on the porch. She handed off the newborn Alex to Sam, who smiled as he watched her descend the few steps to the clearing where Dean & Bobby were giving the three oldest children basic instructions in hand-to-hand combat. The little audience cleared some space for her as she approached Dean. She stretched a bit as she walked, which made Dean & Bobby exchange a glance.

“You looking to help with the demonstration?” Asked Bobby.

“Yeah.” She responded. Bobby nodded in approval, while Dean looked over at his two day old nephew.

“Uh, Rube. You sure you should be roughhousing?” Dean asked quietly.

“Cas put my meatsuit back in order. I’m good to go, and I haven’t had a nice brawl in almost a year.”

“Yeah, well…” Dean chose his words carefully. “You might need some warming up before you jump into a brawl.“

"Kick his ass!” Yelled Sam with a grin. Dean scowled at Sam, then looked at Bobby. The older hunter shrugged and started motioning the children to give Dean & Ruby some space.

“I’m not going to hit you in front of the kids.” Dean held up his hands in forfeit.

“Damn straight you aren’t.” Ruby teased.

“I’m serious.” Dean looked at the children.

“It’s just sparring. How’re they supposed to learn how to fight if they’ve never seen one before?” Dean dropped his hands in concession to Ruby’s point.

“Kaylee’s with Belda, right?” He asked while checking his surroundings.

“Yeah, what’s up?”

“She’s about that age- I just don’t want her first long term memory to be me punching her mom in the face.”

“Get him in the lower ribs. He hates-” Sam started to advise Ruby.

“For fuck’s sake, Sam, don’t help her.” Dean threw Sam a what-the-fuck face. He was regretting inviting them to sit in on the little lesson.

“Sorry man, I picked my side.” Sam held up his son.

“Enjoy your baby time because after this, it’s gonna be you & me. No powers- I saw you in Sumrall. You barely know how to hold a gun anymore, I want to see if you can still figure out how to even make a fist.” Dean jabbed.
Sam flipped Dean off, then shrugged.

"Is this about right?"

Before the started their little sparring match, Ruby turned to the three children watching them. She wanted to make sure that the situation wasn’t going to be misunderstood. There was a lot of playful teasing around the camp, but the truth was that all the animosity between her & Dean had been dead & buried for years.

“Dean & I aren’t mad at each other. We’re just going to show you what a fight looks like, okay?” She explained. “Keep an eye on how fluid the motions are and how we’re going to be using the whole body whenever possible.”

“Well shit, how do we start this? I feel like we should bow or ring a bell.” Dean looked at Bobby, who shrugged.


“Want me to just start?” Ruby offered.

“Sure?”

Ruby ran at Dean, but dodged to her left at the last second in order to avoid his punch. Sliding downward, she punched him hard in the abdomen. He tipped slightly forward from the impact, but had the foresight to sweep her legs as she passed by him on his right. Knocked from her feet, she managed to turn her fall into a feeble somersault, ending with her in a kneeling position.

Dean watched, a little impressed by the save, but quickly charged her. As she turned to see him about ready to tackle her, she blinked out of his way. Dean hit the ground and rolled several feet through the dirt.

“That’s cheating!” Dean shouted as he got up and swung a few times at Ruby.

“Sometimes demons cheat.” She replied while dodging a punch.

“That’s a lesson kids: sometimes people cheat at fights.” Added Bobby to emphasize the point. “If you can do it yourself, you might as well.”

She landed a knee to his ribs, but the turning motion left most of her torso exposed. Dean swung at the opportunity and punched her in the breast. She staggered from the painful impact. He was about to apologize, but instead had to dodge a high kick meant for his chest.

Ruby dipped, then swung upward connecting with his jaw. After shaking off the hit, Dean went on the offensive. As she struggled to back away from his swings, he took advantage of his longer stride by lunging forward. Making good on his prediction, Dean landed a punch to her face. In annoyed retaliation, she poked at his lower ribs. He recoiled slightly, but instead of backing off he immediately came at her again.

Dean moved up on Ruby’s right side and kneed her in the abdomen. She hunched forward, but as she did so, she grabbed Dean’s raised knee, then threw all of her weight at him. With only one foot on the ground, Dean lost his balance. He fell backwards, hitting the dirt hard, with Ruby falling elbow first onto his torso. She rolled off of him, but didn’t bother getting up.

They were both laying on the ground panting. Dean poked a finger inside his mouth to make sure all
his teeth were in the right spots. Ruby touched her nose, which throbbed and started dripping blood. She looked around, then gently tapped Dean with the toe of her boot.

“Where’s Cas at?” She asked Dean.

“He’s visiting one of his sisters.” Dean sighed then covered his face with his hand in embarrassment. "Anael’s off the grid… Cas said he wouldn’t be home until tomorrow."

"Fuck."

“That’s another lesson, kids,” Bobby added as he offered a hand up to both Dean & Ruby. "Don’t go into fights half-cocked."
Ruby peeked into Alex’s nursery. He was in his firetruck footie pajamas. His pacifier had fallen out of his mouth and the little trail of drool running down his cheek made him look even more like Sam. Except for the stubby black horn nubs sticking out through his dark brown hair. She couldn’t exactly take sole credit for the kids’ quali, but it wasn’t all Sam’s fault either. She watched him sleep for a few minutes before finally heading to her bedroom.

It had been a long trip downstairs- 36 hours Earth time or 6 months Hell time. Despite normally running down every other day for at least a few hours at a time, she still wasn’t used to being away from home so much. Unfortunately, work demanded it.

They were testing out some anti-angel area of effect spells based on an augmented anti-demon spell. The idea of the experiment was to find out whether demonic forms of flight such as smoking out or teleporting operated on the same principles as angelic flight. If so, with some minor adjustments several of the weapons that had been developed to fight Lilith’s army could be adopted in the fight against Heaven.

Of course, that’s how it should’ve gone, but there had been an accident. Three of the Maji working on the spells were destroyed in the blast and several blocks of Central had been hit with fallout. Aside from the initial blast, it wasn’t fatal, but a few thousand demons had temporarily had their powers suppressed. Ruby ran the cleanup effort, but the blast knocked a lot of the effect upward leading to some unforeseen complications.

Sam had been in Hell during the initial drama to provide some sense of leadership for the community, but once the politics were taken care of he returned home to take care of the kids while Ruby worked. She found him in bed, reading The Bardo Thodol. He finished making a little note in the margin before smiling up at her.

“How’d it go?”

“We’ve got the situation mostly contained, but I think that some of the carnage may have escaped through the Howling Gate. We’re not entirely sure where that gate comes out- Morrison is guessing somewhere in North America or the Indian Ocean. I know, I know, that’s a whole lot of unknowns.” She took off her jacket and jewelry. “It shouldn’t be a problem as long as we can locate it in the next few days- Earth time. Then all we need to do is use some heavy duty purging spells and no one’s the wiser.”

"Are you sure that you guys are going to be able to find it? I could move over some grunts to help
“This type of juice we can sniff out from miles off. I’ve got people making the rounds already.” She pulled off her boots. "If we don’t find anything within the next 48 hours, then we’ll call in the cavalry. In the meantime, there’s no point pulling apart Dean’s little army. I’m sure he needs all the stability he can get."

"I feel like the hunters & angels wouldn’t mind us pulling back some of our people.” Sam stretched in bed and the sheets slid down a little, uncovering his chest. "We’ve only sent up a quarter of our obligation and there’ve been over a dozen fights."

"Any idea if we’re starting them?” Ruby asked as she stripped down to her panties, then slipped a soft t-shirt on over her bare breasts.

“It almost always depends on who you ask. Of course none of ours want to confess to anything that might be mistaken for defying orders, and the humans & angels-”

“Let me guess, spending five minutes with one of us is justification enough to start a fight?”

“You got it in one.” He tapped a finger to the tip of his nose. She climbed into the bed and curled up beside Sam. She traced the edges of the tattoos on his chest with her finger.

“Can’t we just make them all do some trust fall exercises or something and call it a day?” She mused.

“I think you’ve solved this thing.” Sam kissed the top of her head. He took a moment to summon his courage, then threw caution into the wind. "Do you want to get married?"

He wore his simple silver ring nearly every day, only taking it off when working with non-demons that he wasn’t close to. It gave him an extra level of comfort, a tangible reminder of his personal sanctuary in the great Abyss. Despite his preference to wear it frequently, Sam noticed that Ruby only wore hers when she was feeling particularly sentimental.

"What do you mean?” Ruby propped herself up on an elbow so that she could read his facial expressions. "Like Dean & Cas? …cause I’m not sure they got a certificate or anything."

"I don’t know.” His brow furrowed at the realization that he wasn’t entirely sure what he was asking her. "I mean, it’s not about paperwork. I love you and we have a family."

"Isn’t that enough?” She raised an eyebrow at him.

“I just- you’re more than a girlfriend to me. I don’t know how to explain you to people that does you justice.”

“How many people do you have to explain me to?” She wasn’t trying to be snarky, she was just trying to figure out what he was getting at.

“I didn’t mean it like that… I’m just proud of us and you- I wish I could make it official. I want to have this word or concept that I could just hold up and everyone would understand what you mean to me.”

She nodded in acknowledgement of his feelings. They’d gone for six years without labeling what they had between them. Since finding out about the first pregnancy they’d both silently expected some long term commitment, though once or twice Sam had feared she would leave him. After seeing that Ruby had stuck with him through becoming King of Hell, adopting one son, & choosing
to have another, he wasn’t as concerned with her just up & leaving someday.

But he wanted more. He had his job and kids, now he wanted his wife- who would be exactly the same person as before, but with new labeling. She’d had to work harder than anyone else realized in order to earn her rank within the Maji caste. She wasn’t the second in command through nepotism. Her incorporation of spellcraft and combat skills had brought their entire army to the next level. Combative Magics Research and Development was her other baby, the one that got cast in a shadow every time her personal life came up. Sam was bogged down in the politics and taking up a label just sounded like asking for her to be sucked deeper into that world.

“I don’t want to be the Queen of Hell. I don’t want to be known primarily as your wife or the kids’ mom.” She caressed his cheek. "I’m not ashamed or scared of the association, but I’ve worked hard to make my own contributions… I don’t want my accomplishments to be drowned out by my personal life- by some word or concept that defines me by you.“

"I guess I can understand that.” He’d lost his smile, but he drew her hand up to his lips and kissed it. "It doesn’t mean that I’m not committed to you & the kids.” She rolled so that she was half on top of him, looking down into his eyes.

“I know you’re in this for the long haul.” He reassured, then pulled her down into a kiss. After a moment she broke the kiss & grinned at him.

“I mean, you barely age anymore and you’re king of my plane- I think I’m kinda stuck with you.” Her voice teased, but she also teased him physically by rubbing her hip against his crotch. "Here I was thinking I could make you my fuck toy and run, but you had to go messing that up.“

"Ha ha.” Sam said sarcastically. He closed his eyes briefly with pleasure from Ruby’s gentle grinding, then regained some focus. "Fair warning: the Council might start bugging you about it.“

"Don’t the Arches have anything better to do? First they’re all about kids, now they want a wedding- do they own a fucking tabloid?“

“They think it’d be good for stability or morale or something.”

“When did Hell start giving a fuck about morale? Things feel very backward.”

“These are crazy times.” Sam drew her into another kiss. She ground harder as one of his hands slid up her shirt. With a flick of his wrist the bedroom door locked. A sly grin spread across her face as she pulled his boxers off.
“Seriously, you need to wear fewer layers next time.” Dean complained between breaths. He was on top of Cas, pinning the angel to the motel room bed. Their legs were intertwined, which had made it even harder to get the trench coat out from under Cas. Dean leaned in for another penetrating kiss, then Cas gripped Dean’s shirt, pulling him closer.

Their hard dicks pressed between them, but Dean only missed half a beat before starting to grind against Cas. The realization that Dean wasn’t slowing down gave Cas encouragement. While Cas had never experienced a physical relationship, he’d spent enough time observing humans that he knew dozens of different ways the evening could go. The prospect of moving their relationship to what was commonly considered the next level by human standards was exciting. Though Cas understood that while he might not have any anxiety over a sexual relationship, Dean would be more cautious.

Cas’ hand slid up Dean’s back, pulling off his shirt. Dean supported himself with one hand and used the other to pull at Cas’ tie, attempting to undo the knot.

“Jesus, fuck- I thought bras were bad.” Dean commented while propping up his torso to get a better look at the situation.

“Let me help.” Offered Cas, who removed the tie and began unbuttoning his dress shirt.

Dean watched and casually ground. He admired Cas’ ever so slight musculature. It had taken some time for him to relax enough to really enjoy the little details of their relationship. But he was starting to feel freer. There wasn’t anything wrong with their relationship, even if it’s newness still occasionally threw him.

As they kissed, Cas’ fingers traced down Dean stomach, stopping on his belt buckle. To that point, the pants had always stayed on when they were making out, but Dean’s pulse rose a little at the realization that Cas might be testing the boundaries.

“Can I do this for you?” Cas whispered into Dean’s ear. Dean took a deep breath. He’d received countless blow jobs before, but never from a guy- he pushed that thought from his head and reframed the moment. He’d never had a blow job from someone he had real feelings for. It was a big step and he intended on appreciating it. He nodded with an affectionate smile, then rolled onto his back.

Cas undid his belt, button, & zipper. As his pants were slid down, Dean bit his lower lip. He was a mixture of eagerness & nerves. His heart was pounding as his boxers were pulled down.

Cas’ lips were as soft as ever. To his surprise, Cas took him in deeper than he’d ever had before. In hindsight, Dean was pretty certain that angels didn’t need to breathe. For having never given head before, Cas was a quick learner with a delicate touch. Dean held the back of Cas’ head as he came.

“You pray when you orgasm.” Cas observed while laying down next to Dean.
“What?”

“What?”

“Not in the traditional sense, but I can feel it- it’s nice.”

Dean pressed Cas against the bedroom wall, then he started unbuckling Cas’ belt. He lowered to his knees as he finished with the zipper. Cas looked down with surprised anticipation. Dean pulled Cas’ pants down, then rested his fingertips on the waistband of Cas’ boxers.

He’d never touched another man’s cock before. With Cas, he’d always rubbed it through at least one layer of cloth. But Cas had been giving him head every night for weeks and recently the desire to repay the gift had become overwhelming.

Dean slid down the boxers. His hand gripped Cas’ cock and stroked it experimentally. For a moment he looked up at Cas’ face to solidify his conviction. When he rubbed the tip with his thumb, Cas took in a sharp breath. Seeing his partner’s pleasure made Dean’s own cock twitch.

He licked his lips and started taking in Cas. Cas’ cock had seemed large, just looking at it, but as he moved his head forward he realized just how big it was. When Cas’ tip was at his throat, there was still a good amount that hadn’t passed Dean’s lips.

Dean held the base with his hand and rubbed it while he started massaging the shaft with his tongue. He pursed his lips and sucked, eliciting a moan. He could feel Cas getting harder and it gave him a profound satisfaction. Dean dragged his teeth gently along the shaft, causing another helpless moan.

He briefly released the base of Cas’ dick to undo his own pants. Returning one hand to Cas, he used the other to stroke himself. Dean worked Cas in rhythm to himself, but to his surprise the leading thrill was feeling Cas. Every time he moaned Dean got closer. Feeling Cas get harder inside him was incredible. Cas was a being of timelessness & incredible power, but he could feel him reaching the edge.

“Dean… I can’t…” Cas moaned. The idea of pulling away barely even registered. Dean wanted to feel Cas break. He was gonna take him.

He could feel Cas’ fingers grip his hair. A final loud moan escaped Cas as he came. Dean could feel him pulse with ecstasy. An intoxicating feeling of power came over Dean. He’d made an angel moan & cum. He’d felt every bit of Cas’ pleasure.

As Cas came, Dean stroked himself to completion. After Dean’s eyes refocused, he swallowed to reduce clean up, then let Cas out of him. He looked up, smiling at Cas. The angel slid down the wall until he was eye level with Dean.

It was such a different experience than anything Dean had done before. He couldn’t really compare it to going down on a woman. The thrill that he got, feeling Cas gradually being overtaken with pleasure- he wasn’t sure if it was so satisfying because Cas was an angel, if it was just the reality of the vessel being a guy, or maybe it was because they had a real relationship to back it up. He wasn’t sure how each of those factored in, but he knew for sure that it was different with Cas. He didn’t want to emulate sex with a woman- that was a whole other chapter in his life with its own unique qualities. The two of them were exploring new territory together.

Dean hooked a hand around Cas’s neck and pulled him into a kiss as they tumbled onto the floor.

Dean looked down at Cas while thrusting into him. The position was a little awkward, but this was only their third time trying anal and there was definitely a learning curve. Cas was on his back at the
edge of the bed, while Dean stood next to it… Well, Dean was too tall to fully stand, so he had to bend down a bit. Cas’ legs hooked over Dean’s shoulders, while Dean grabbed at Cas’ hips to help with the penetration.

The position was a strange compromise. They wanted to be able to look at each other, so doggystyle was off the list. They’d tried Dean lying down with Cas straddling him, but for some reason it was a little underwhelming for Dean. The lack of effort required by him reminded him of getting head… and for some reason it also reminded him of having sex with women, which was oddly distracting.

It had taken him almost a year to come to terms with the fact that he was attracted to a man. When their relationship started getting physical, Dean was surprised to find that he liked giving head more than receiving it. There was something about feeling the build up and the break of Cas that was satisfying on a whole new level. He’d always been very giving during sex, but now that he was in a real relationship it was so much more validating.

There was an intimacy involved in giving Cas head that helped distinguish what they had from all the one night stands of the past. He didn’t want that life anymore. He didn’t want the one night stands. He didn’t want the women. He wanted something different, something more. He wanted an intimate experience, that was just his & Cas’. He wanted to feel Cas break inside of him.

Dean came hard at the thought. He looked apologetically down at Cas, who hadn’t quite had enough to get him off.

After finishing Cas, Dean stretched out on their bed. Sex didn’t seem to fatigue the angel at all, but he liked to lay beside Dean, bordering on snuggling. Cas understood that the intimacy & comfort was something that Dean needed as part of embracing their physical relationship. Dean could get sex almost anywhere, a quick fuck and part ways- But with Cas the physical was partially justified as reinforcing their relationship. Eventually, Dean would feel more confident and not need to make excuses to himself, but until then Cas was happy to be supportive in anyway that was needed.

“I think I want to try it the other way.” Dean broached the subject with a little embarrassment. They’d both assumed that, since he’d had a history with women, he’d prefer to be the top. He had never expected to be asking someone to put anything in his ass, but there he was. He pushed all the nasty things his dad would call him from his mind. Him trying out being a bottom wasn’t anything to be ashamed of- his boyfriend had just done it and he had nothing but respect for Cas.

“Do you mean like we did it the second time?” Cas asked as he rested his head on Dean’s shoulder.

“I didn’t have a particular position in mind. I meant… what if you’re the one… on the inside?” He was blushing. He felt like a god damned four year old. That’s gonna be one more thing to practice in front of the mirror.

“If you’d like to try that, of course.” Cas smiled softly up at Dean.

The next night brought the moment of truth. After a fair amount of foreplay, they’d both been stripped to their boxers. Dean’s fingers slipped into Cas’ waistband and started playing with him. Cas broke their kiss so he could look Dean in the eyes.

“Do you want to keep going?” Cas wanted to offer an out before they got too far. Dean swallowed, licked his lips, then nodded.

“Let’s give it a shot.” Dean laughed a little from nerves & excitement. Cas smiled back at Dean in reassurance, then kissed him slower than before. They took their time stripped each other’s boxers,
there wasn’t any rush. When Dean was ready he rolled over to grab the lube from the nightstand and handed it to Cas.

Cas applied some lube to his hand while Dean laid back down on the bed. Once the lube was applied, he gently pushed one finger into Dean. Dean took a deep breath and tried to relax, but the anticipation was making it difficult. Cas massaged him until he loosened, then inserted the second finger. Dean had expected it to feel strange, but he was surprised that it wasn’t really painful. The third finger made him take another breath as he leaned his head back. When he had relaxed enough, he felt Cas take his fingers out, then there was the sound of getting more lube.

A moment later, hot, hard flesh rested against him. His heart was pounding, making him flush and causing that eager throbbing. He knew that Cas wanted him just as badly- he could feel it, and soon he’d feel it more.

“Are you ready for me?” Cas asked.

“Yeah.” Dean breathed.

Cas pressed into him, slow & firm. Dean could feel Cas’ head start it fill him and didn’t know how he’d be able to take it all. The feeling was overwhelming- not bad, anything but bad. Dean gripped the sheets and arched his chest forward. Cas stopped in concern.

“Keep going.” Dean managed.

As Cas pushed in deeper, he passively healed Dean’s hole that was stretched wider than either had expected. The healing touch caused an incredible tingling sensation. The combination was pure bliss.

When Cas bottomed out Dean could barely focus enough to put together words. Every inch of Cas was firm power and it all came from him wanting Dean.

Dean didn’t know what to do. He didn’t have any suave moves, but he didn’t care. He was lost in the moment, overcome by Cas’ desire for him and his own need for more. Cas pulled out a little and thrust, earning a moan. After a few thrusts, he hit a spot that felt amazing. Dean’s eyes rolled back and he tried to form words.

“There.”

Cas focused on that one area and Dean instinctively rocked his hips slightly to help. He felt himself reaching the breaking point, but he could feel Cas getting there too. He fit Cas so perfectly that he could feel the angel getting harder and bigger. The thrusts became erratic, then finally Cas pushed in deep on the sweet spot as he came. The pulsing and the pressure sent Dean over the edge. He came harder than he'd ever remembered.

Looking across his wet chest he realized that in all their excitement over Cas’ cock, neither of them had thought to play with his. He came from having Cas in him, nothing else. Being the bottom had a lot of potential.

“Next time: you in me again, but with you laying on the bed.” Dean instructed. He wanted to ride Cas into the ground.
Inherited Traits

Chapter Notes

Originally intended for chapter: any after 51
Characters: Sam x Ruby, Dean, Cas, Bobby
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12/13/2010

“Can the munchkin even eat cake?” Dean looked at the small slice of yellow cake with chocolate frosting. He couldn’t remember what sorts of food Sam ate when he was one year old, so he deferred to Sam’s internet-based wisdom.

“As long as there aren’t any big chunks like nuts or chocolate pieces she should be fine.” Said Sam as he put the plate of birthday cake onto Kaylee’s high chair. She didn’t seem to know what to do with it, eventually settling for grabbing at the cake portion and making it into a pile of crumbs.

“Cas, how’s the hunting going?” Sam asked while dividing his attention between his own slice of cake and making sure Kaylee didn’t throw anything.

“It’s an interesting way of addressing the problem of threats to humanity. In many ways it’s impractical, but it’s hard to picture what else could be done.” Cas ate around the chocolate frosting on his slice of cake.

“We don’t really get to win the fight, but somebody needs to keep up the effort.” Added Bobby.

“Your numbers have declined considerably since the late 19th century.” Cas observed. “When I first noticed the trend I thought it was a reaction to the supernaturalism movement or maybe part of the transition from an agrarian to an industrial society. Now that I’ve experienced it firsthand… it’s more complex than environmental factors.”

“You forgot about the demon issue. We weren’t really topside that much for the last century or two.” Ruby pointed out. “It used to be a pain in the ass to get a pass up. Somebody’s bright idea to lay low.”

“Well, I think it might’ve worked. How many civilians nowadays actually believe in demons?” Commented Bobby.

“Don’t worry, I believe in you.” Sam said as he patted Ruby’s thigh.

“Ah, shucks.” Ruby said. “Eat your damn cake.”

“The decline might’ve been related to a reduction in the number of threats.” Cas conceded.

“I’ll bet good money there was a drop off in monsters in The South during the 18th & 19th century. Vampire blood was one of the biggest ticket items in the craft black markets back in the day.” Ruby smiled at some fond memory. “And don’t even get me started on the shit we pulled during the war.”

“The war?” Asked Dean.
“The War Of The Rebellion.”

“You were messing with the Civil War?”

“Are you kidding? Of course, I was. You can’t tell me that you would pass up a chance to get in on that.” She looked surprised that someone would suggest missing a chance to torment Confederates. “I had to trade an arm & a leg to get a pass topside, but it was completely worth it.”

Ruby was so enthusiastically telling her story that some cake fell from her plate onto her lap. She cursed, then went into the kitchen to clean up the mess. While she was distracted, Sam stole about half the remainder of her slice. The theft was spotted by Cas & Dean, who exchanged a wordless glance.

Suddenly, Kaylee sneezed so hard that her whole upper body jerked forward. When she opened her eyes they were solid black. She looked around in confusion that quickly turned frantic, then started crying.

"Oh shit.” Sam picked her up and started gently rocking her. "It’s okay, don’t worry. You’re okay."

"What’s wrong?” Ruby called from the kitchen.

“Her eyes are black.” Sam answered, then looked to Dean & Cas. "She’s never done the eye thing before."

Ruby rushed over and took Kaylee from Sam. She held Kaylee slightly away from her body so she could face her crying daughter, then blinked her eyes black.

"See, you’re fine. I’m doing it too. You can go back to normal.” Ruby blinked her eyes back to their human default, then returned them to black in solidarity.

“Does it hurt or feel weird?” Sam asked anxiously. He hovered next to Ruby’s shoulder helplessly.

“No, she’s probably just spooked by all the new stuff that she’s seeing- colors, wards, etc. I think she’ll calm down once she realizes nothing’s actually wrong.”

After a few minutes the tears stopped and eventually her small frown faded into indifference. She looked around the room as everyone watched her. The silence stretched while the adults waited for her eyes to change.

“How do we get her eyes back to normal?” Dean finally asked.

“I don’t know. I mean even if she understood everything we were saying, how do you explain that kinda thing.” Ruby shrugged.

“Maybe it’ll just go back on its own?” Sam suggested with a nervous shrug. "Like she could sleep it off?"

Kaylee stared in Cas’ general direction. She seemed to be enthralled by something. Her head bobbed subtly.

“Is she okay?” Sam moved closer to her.

“Maybe she’s tired?” Dean suggested under the theory that she could be nodding off.

“I’m going to try something.” Cas said, then a moment later Kaylee’s eyes widened and she leaned
back a little. "I think she’s looking at my wings."

“What?” Dean & Ruby said in unison.

“She seems to be moving her head in rhythm with my flapping and she reacted when I ruffled them.”

“You have wings?” Asked Sam with a more professional curiosity than Cas’ other friends.

“Flapping?” Dean scooted a few feet away from Cas.

“They aren’t corporeal,” Cas reassured Dean. “or visible on a human spectrum. All angels have them.”

“So wait, in all the time we’ve known you, you’ve just been standing around flapping your wings?”

Dean was trying to picture Cas running around on all their hunts with invisible wings & a halo.

“I don’t flap them all the time, just when I need to stretch.” Cas replied a little defensively.

Ruby made her eyes black again, then stared at Cas. She shook her head.

“I don’t see anything.”

“I wouldn’t expect you to be able.” Cas looked back at Kaylee. "To my knowledge, demons can’t see angelic wings."

4/26/13

"I don’t know what’s going on with her.” Ruby sounded worn out. "She keeps taking off her shirt and scratching her back. She says it feels ‘funny’. I’m thinking maybe she’s allergic to something, but I don’t see any hives."

Sam sat in his office and spoke to the silver goblet of blood. He wasn’t a fan of Hell’s telecommunications system, but the blood did provide better clarity of sound than a normal phone. Anyway, it was already filled when he’d gotten there.

"Maybe it’s the shirt? Did you try changing the fabric type?"

“Yeah, I tried that. I don’t think that- holy fuck.” Ruby fumbled with the phone while either putting it down or dropping it. Sam could hear Kaylee cry out and Ruby trying to comfort her.

Sam immediately popped back to their home, fearing the worst. He looked in Kaylee’s room, the bathroom, then started toward the hallway when he saw them.

Ruby walked out of their bedroom holding Kaylee to her chest. Two long slender black feathery wings hung from Kaylee’s back, just inside the shoulder blades. The wings were fully extended and so long that their tips dragged on the floor. Kaylee’s eyes were black, but barely open. She looked like she was struggling not to fall asleep.

“One minute she was just running around and the next had wings. I think it must’ve taken a lot out of her, she collapsed.”

Sam went over and gently touched one of the wings. She fidgeted slightly, which caused the wings to move weakly. The wings looked beautiful, but also strangely sad the way they drooped helpless to gravity. It looked uncomfortable and his instinct was to swaddle her. Sam carefully picked up one of the wings and folded it up, closer to her back.
“Cas should take a look at her. He’s got something like a pair, maybe he’d know what’s going on.” Sam suggested.

While pulling out his cell to call Dean, Sam helped Ruby fold up Kaylee’s wings. Ruby wrapped an arm around her daughter’s back to help hold the wings. Kaylee dosed with her face against Ruby’s neck.

“Dean, is Cas there?” Sam patted Kaylee’s head reassuringly as he spoke. "We need him to look at Kaylee- She has wings- Yeah, wings.”

Cas & Dean immediately appeared in the living room. Cas was missing his necktie, suit jacket, & trenchcoat. Dean was fully dressed, but obviously hadn’t shaved. They both just stared at Kaylee for several seconds.

"I was curious if this would be an issue.” Cas said without elaborating.

“You knew about this?” Ruby threw Cas a what-the-fuck face.

“The angelic markings that first brought her grace to my attention looked similar to the foundation of wings, but for her to actually manifest them…” Cas leaned forward unconsciously to see Kaylee better. "Can I examine them?"

"Just be gentle, she’s pretty exhausted from it.” Ruby warned as she carried Kaylee over to Cas.

He held out one of the wings. When it was fully extended he let go of it and stepped back in surprise. His eyes shot to Sam, then returned to Kaylee.

“Cas? Are you okay?” Dean asked in concern.

“I just haven’t seen wings like these since- The color is wrong, but the shape and feather pattern…” Cas hesitated. "are identical to Lucifer's wings."
When Ruby got home, Sam was sitting alone at the kitchen table. He'd been waiting for her and wasn't bothering to hide his frustration. Their cabin was silent because he'd asked Isa to take Tom & Kaylee on a long hike. He didn't want them to be around when Ruby finally came home.

They were going to have a… hopefully talk, possibly fight. Both of them knew it would happen after their argument downstairs. Ruby had marched into the throne room during a meeting with several military advisers, repelling uncertain guards with well timed glares. Sam had to cancel the meeting, then he retreated to his office to get chewed out by Ruby in private.

She'd found out that she had been removed from the roster for field testing several new magic based weapons of her design. When Sam had heard about the planned trip into a contested section of the Lower Pits he'd asked Morrison to reassign her to more work within the safety of the Citadel. He was just trying to spare her the trouble & danger, but she'd taken it as a blow to her pride.

Their fight in his office lasted for less than a minute before she left Hell in a rage, but to his surprise she didn’t go home. She'd disappeared for almost five hours. When he'd gotten home and realized she was gone he’d hastily checked to see if any of her belongs were missing. To his relief, everything was where it should be except Ruby. She wouldn’t answer his calls. He tried to locate her, but her warding against humans & demons blocked Sam twofold. So, he'd just had to wait and hope that she came home soon.

"Where were you? It’s been hours-“ He couldn’t even begin to sort through his feelings. Somewhere in the last few hours his fear, frustration, & guilt had gotten all mixed up. Judging by her expression, Ruby was equally confused by the whole interaction. Normally they were a united front, it was unsettling as hell to be at odds.

"I needed some time to myself."

"You left without telling anyone where you were going. It’s dangerous out there."

For the last two years, there'd been an increasing number of terrorist attacks, both by Templars and
other random factions. They’d barely dodged an attack on Tom’s birthday about a year earlier. But it was Dean’s near death experience a month ago that had really brought it home for Sam. Heaven was stepping up their game and didn’t care about collateral damage.

"I know it’s fucking dangerous- I know that better than most. I just needed some time to try and calm down. This whole fucking thing…” She shook her head while taking a deep breath.

"I get that you’re pissed, that I messed up your plans-”

“You pulled me from that mission without even talking to me!” She couldn’t help shouting. He didn’t even seem to understand what was wrong.

“And you volunteered for an insane stroll through a war zone without even talking to me!” Sam reflexively raised his voice to match hers. "When I started in Hell, you were the one that made a big deal about the importance of not making unilateral decisions that affect all of us- well, you dying would affect all of us."

"I’m not some jerk-off little underling. You used to trust me to be able to take care of myself. Now I can’t even risk the chance of a fight?”

"I’m not saying that- But what the fuck happened to us being a team? You didn’t even talk to me.”

"You don’t talk to me every time you go into the Pits. Danger happens. It’s been part of our lives for… our entire lives.”

“That doesn’t mean we go looking for it.” Sam knew she wasn’t actually looking for danger, but she wasn’t properly weighting the risks & benefits. He decided to come at it from another angle. Rubbing his neck in exasperation, he softened his tone. "We were going to settle down- that was the plan for having Kaylee. We’d be safe and be there to take care of her."

"That was your plan- and that was back when we had an out. This is a war, one that we have to win. There is no out. We’re in it.” The anger drained from her and was replaced with the heaviness of hard realities.

“I’m stuck in this, but you don’t have to be. We have to think about the kids.” He pleaded with her, but she rolled her eyes while sighing.

“I fucking am. You & them are why I’m still in this. I’m fighting for them.”

“But you can’t-”

“No! Can’t is a big word. You better think before you start throwing that around.” She pointed at Sam, warning him that she was about two poorly chosen words from laying into him. "You can tell me what I shouldn’t do, but you don’t get to tell me I can’t do. You’re the one that was just talking about us being a team, but you’re blocking me from doing my job and setting ultimatums. I’m not one of your peons, I’m your fucking partner.”

Ruby sat down in the chair next to him and slumped a little on the table. She looked as emotionally worn out as he felt. Sam reached out to touch her, to physically give her comfort, but hesitated for a second. Gently, his hand gripped her shoulder, then slid down her arm, and rested on her hand. After a painfully long moment, she squeezed his hand back.
"I’m not trying to run your life. I’m just scared. The kids need us.” There had been a time when he thought it wouldn’t destroy him to raise a child on his own. That had been one of the premises on which the agreement to have Kaylee was decided- but now things were different. Kaylee was almost four and they had two children. Kaylee & Tom loved Ruby, her death would crush them. Sam had spent decades witnessing Dean’s pain caused by the loss of their mother. He would fight tooth & nail to spare his own kids that pain. "They need their mom."

"The kids need a lot of things… and that’s what we need to be.” She turned to look him in the eyes. "We need to be their parents, but we also need to be more than that. You’re holding the fragmented Abyss together with leadership like Hell hasn’t known in millennia and they have no idea. How are they supposed to know what they’re capable of if they don’t see that from us? Where is Kaylee supposed to learn that women can fight & lead if she only sees you & Dean doing it? How will Tom discover the impact that magic can make in the world if he only sees the cheap tricks we throw around here?"

"I… I just want you all to be safe.” She drew his hand to her lips for a reassuring kiss.

“I know. But nowadays safety is just survival, I want more than that for our kids.”
10/20/2015

A high ranking courier entered the great hall at a pace that Sam found alarming. The demon glanced around the hall as zie approached, quickly assessing who might overhear the news. Zie stopped a little closer to Sam than usual and spoke at a loud whisper.

“Sir, we have a situation. Jieshi has been imprisoned for desertion.”

Jieshi was one of the heroes of the civil war against Lilith. She had been an inspirational figure, having led dozens of assaults on heavily fortified dungeons in the Lower Pits. At least 10% of their victories in Lower were attributed to her leadership, grasp of field tactics, & personal skill in combat.

“Jieshi? Imprisoned by us?” Sam raised an eyebrow.

“Yes, sir. Just an hour ago.”

“So what, she slipped a gate to go topside?”

“No… Actually, she had been assigned to Earth. She came back down.”

Jieshi didn’t look like Sam remembered her. He’d met her long ago when she had visited the Citadel to report on several successful campaigns in the Lower Pits. Back then she had been fierce, nearly eight feet of chiseled obsidian with talons to spare, but she had since wilted. Scars marked her shell, but they weren’t new- they were ancient, brought to the surface for some reason. She stood before him at silent attention.

“What happened?” Sam asked.

“I couldn’t… I can’t be up there.” He could sense her trembling below the surface.

“Why?”

“It’s not right up there.” She struggled to find the right words. "I can’t function in that place."

"Are you having trouble with our allies?”

“The angels are tight asses and the humans are all complete idiots- there are more than a few dozen people I’d like to drip dry-”

“But you’ve been working with people you hate for as long as you’ve been in Hell.” Sam mused. Jieshi nodded in thoughtful concession.
“Yeah… I don’t think that’s it… I just… I don’t know.” Anguish started blooming in her broken soul.

“When did you die?”

“The emperor was Wen and the dynasty was Han…” She tried to figure out how to translate it for someone with a western background. "2nd century BCE."

"Was this your first time going back?"

“…Yes.” She had hesitated, but it wasn’t because she was trying to hide her guilt, she was trying to hide her shame.

“Everyone else, out.” He ordered. His three assistants and even Mir left the room, closing the doors behind them. Jieshi tried to maintain some dignity, but he could sense her uncertainty. "I’m not going to kill you."

"Why not?"

“For starters, you’re one of the best soldiers we have. But mostly, I don’t think that deserting was your fault.” Sam sighed and leaned back in his seat. "Ever since I got down here, I’ve been wondering why this place should even exists- Not why it exists, we can all thank Lucifer for that. Whether you feel inclined to, I couldn’t care less."

Her eyes widened at his candid indifference to the glory of Lucifer, but he continued without elaborating.

"As best I can figure, Hell is a prison. The question is why & how should we punish. I’ve read your file,” He tapped his right index finger on a scroll he was holding. "I know you’re a thief and a murderer- though there was an annotation that your first killing was in self-defense."

"Like that matters.” She muttered.

“You’re right, mostly it doesn’t. Had I been in charge when you were brought in, maybe I would’ve sent you to a softer dungeon- like there’s a difference in the long term… I don’t know. But it’s too late now, you’ve been run through the ringer and now what am I supposed to do with you? Am I supposed to make you suffer more?” Sam looked around the hall contemplating their surroundings. "Like I said, this place is a prison, but there are many theories of why prisons should exist. Some people think it’s to exact righteous punishment, some think it’s to deter future offenders, others think it’s to remove the dangerous elements from the general population, & some people… they think it’s to rehabilitate."

"Are you gonna try to save our souls?” She laughed, but her amusement was tinged with sadness.

“No. We’re not in the business of saving souls. But I’d always like to see you become something more than a completely wasted opportunity- the only surviving record of your life is pain & death.” Sam held up the scroll containing her intake records. "If that’s the only legacy in your afterlife too… then I’m not sure why any of us even get out of bed in the morning."

He knew that he wasn’t going to make demons altruists, but he wasn’t prepared to dismiss their entire species as a lost cause. By committing many of them to the fight on Earth he had hoped to give them something that had been denied to them far too long. Those demons had a responsibility, to represent their people with some level of professionalism.

He wasn’t expecting them to say please & thank you, but each one was representing Hell to
numerous factions who assumed they were the lowest sort of scum. So far, most of the demons had revealed in proving the humans & angels wrong. Spite might not be the most sincere foundation to a cultural revolution, but it was a start.

"You’ve got a big fucking mountain to climb.” A smile flickered on her lips.

"Then it’s a good thing I have all the time in the world.” Sam absently tapped the scroll on the armrest of his throne before getting to the heart of the matter. "You’ve become institutionalized and that’s a disservice to us both."

"Sir, I… I…” She would’ve blushed if she’d had skin.

“Don’t try to deny it, I can read you. Anyway, you’re not the first and you won’t be the last.” Sam’s tone softened. "Is it the changes since the last time you were on Earth? Do you feel exposed or in danger up there?"

"It’s not that I’m scared- I could’ve been destroyed so many times, even without going topside… The changes are… unnerving, but I can try to avoid the cities."

“So, what’s bothering you the most up there?”

“I don’t know what to do when I’m not following orders. The other demons like to screw around, you know ‘raise a little Hell’, but I just… I just wait. I can’t even move sometimes. I don’t know what to do.”

“You don’t know how to cope with the freedom.” Sam suggested. Her shame flared and she nodded. "I don’t want to pull you from the field, it’d be a tragedy. You’ll go back, but I’m gonna have you assigned to an angel. If there’s anyone who can help you learn to embrace personal freedom it’s one of them."

“An angel? You can’t-” She started, but was cut off.

“You’re going to give it another shot. Four months Earth time, as a direct report to an angel. If you feel like you haven’t improved, then you can come back down and train new demons for combat.” They both knew that was a waste of her talents. He just hoped that having that as her alternative would provide some extra motivation. “Report topside and check in with my brother. He’ll get you in touch with your angel.”

“Sir, with respect, you’re gonna piss off whichever angel you force me on.”

“Don’t worry about that. Anael owes me a favor.”
Cas watched Dean replace his hearing aid’s battery. He was hunched over his nightstand, with a set of small screwdrivers. Cas moved to stand in front of Dean and waited. Technically, Dean could hear using just his right ear, but thanks to the tinnitus words were misunderstood frequently enough that Cas preferred to not waste his breath. When Dean noticed Cas somberly waiting to talk to him, he looked away from and worked a little slower. Cas tilted his head & crossed his arms, indicating that Dean better stop screwing around.

“You should ask Gabriel to restore your hearing. He might be able to undo the damage.” Cas said as soon as Dean had his hearing aid back in.

“I don’t need his help.”

“You’re disabled.”

“And yet I can still kick a seraphim’s ass.” Dean mimed a stabbing motion with a screwdriver. His tone was a bit more snarky than usual. He didn’t like it when people called him disabled- he was more capable than 99% of people, angels & demons included.

“I’m serious, you’re putting yourself in danger.”

“I’m constantly putting myself in danger.” He smiled, but Cas didn’t fall for the lighthearted feign. This time Dean wasn’t going be able to dodge the issue.

“This is different and you know it. You’re just being stubborn.” Cas sighed. "Your right ear’s getting worse, isn’t it?"

“It comes & goes.” Dean avoided looking at Cas while answering by putting his tool kit back into the small wooden set of drawers on his nightstand.

“That’s not what I asked.” Cas grabbed Dean’s jaw and turned it so that their eyes met. "I know you don’t like asking for help, especially from Gabriel, but you need to take better care of yourself. Being reckless because you’re proud isn’t fair to me or Dylaniel."

Dean wrapped his arms around Cas’ waist, hugging him. He looked up at Cas thoughtfully.

"Can’t I just be an inspirational lesson for him in overcoming adversity?” He joked, but his voice had softened in resignation.

“You’d be plenty adverse with your hearing fully intact.” Cas said while fixing Dean’s hair to cover
the visible piece of the hearing aid, the way Dean liked it.

“Next time we see Gabe, if there’s a good moment I’ll ask him. But I’m not begging or taking any shit from him.”

5/3/2023

“Hael!” Dean rushed over to the door and hugged her before she got both feet through the threshold. After giving her a kiss on the cheek, he looked her over. It’d been over a year since she’s moved to the Eastern European front. She’d grown her blond hair out even further and formed it into a French braid. It was strange to see her in civilian clothes, but today was no day for work.

“It’s good to see you.” She offered. “I’m sorry I missed Dylaniel’s last birthday.”

“It’s okay. We know how it is.”

“Actually, I’d like you to meet some people.”

She moved further into the living room of the beach house they’d rented for the occasion. A man with dark brown hair and grey eyes came in. He was holding a baby girl in a light blue dress, that matched her blue eyes.

“This is Radomir, my boyfriend.” Hael smiled nervously. “And this is Miroslava, our daughter.”

Dean was dumbstruck. Hael had told him that she was settling into her new deployment well, but she’d completely failed to mention having a boyfriend, let alone kid. He was a bit too shocked to offer congratulations or interrogate the guy, but his alarm must’ve been close enough to a prayer for help because Cas was immediately at his elbow.

“It’s nice to meet you.” Radomir extended his hand and Dean shook it. “I’ve met dozens of her siblings, but you’re the person I’ve been most nervous to meet.”

“You’re human.” Dean managed.

“Yes. I’m from Novi Sad.” Radomir watched Dean for any sort of reaction, but he was at a loss.

“That’s in Serbia.” Cas explained for Dean, who pursed his lips in embarrassment at the entire situation.

“Would you like to hold Miro?” Hael offered, mercifully changing the subject.

It was fairly common for angels to show him & Cas their children. He wasn’t sure if the angels were just showing him for their own pride, as thanks, or seeking some sort of blessing, but it always secretly delighted him. He had to admit that he was a big softy when it came to kids. Somewhere down the line he’d become the unofficial uncle of upwards of thirty nephilim and he was perfectly fine with that.

But Miroslava was different, by blood she was Dylaniel’s half-sister. Dean held her tiny form with even more reverence than usual. He could see the resemblance, which made him strangely aware of what must be the differences between Dylaniel’s appearance & his own.

“We were wondering if you & Cas would mind being her godparents.” Hael asked hopefully.

“My sisters wouldn’t know how to care for a nephilim if anything were to happen to us.” Added Radomir.
“Of- of course.” Dean was humbled by them potentially entrusting their daughter to him & Cas.

“No way- I bet you I could eat a whole lightbulb without powers!” Was shouted from the back deck of the house where the party was in full swing.

"We’d keep her away from Gabriel.” Dean assured.

Cas grabbed the next present off the pile. After removing the card, he handed the box to Dyaniel. The boy waited patiently for his xe to read the card aloud. Though Gabriel snapped his fingers, removing all the tape that was securing the brightly colored wrapping paper.

“This one is from Mary. ’Wishing you a joyous birthday. - Love, your bua’.”

Dyaniel carefully removed the wrapping paper, then opened the box to reveal a kid’s blue & gold cricket uniform and a small cricket bat signed by the entire Rajasthan Royals. Kali nodded with quiet approval. Tom patted Dyaniel’s head, then picked up and excitedly began twirling the bat to test its balance.

“It’s begun.” Dean muttered.

“Dyl, this is a really nice bat. You’ll be hitting like Bradman himself.” Tom handed him back the bat. A subtle smile flickered on Dyaniel’s face as he held the bat with more conviction.

Gabriel stepped forward with a fairly large rectangular box, which nearly dwarfed the young boy.

“Kali wanted to give him a lion cub, but I told her you’re allergic to cats-” Gabriel started explaining, but was interrupted when Dean put his hand on the box’s lid to prevent it from being opened immediately.

“Of all the things- that’s what you found wrong with giving a five year old a lion?” Dean asked.

“I don’t see your point.”

“We normally live in a cold climate.” Cas added, which made Dean cover his face with his hands.

“He wanted it to be wearing a sweater.” Kali added, clearly not thrilled by the idea.

“It would’ve been adorable!” Gabriel countered.

“Does your present need air holes?” Dean asked, as he checked the box for any ominous signs.

“Technically animals don’t need air holes if the box is only closed for a short time.” Cas corrected. Gabriel pointed to Cas and nodded in agreement. "It’s a flawed indicator."

"Does it have sharp- you know what, fuck it. Hey Dylan, daddy’s gonna open the present from Uncle Gabe & Kali.” Dean took the box, then looked warily at Gabe & Kali. "If this thing…"

"You’ll be fine.” Kali assured as Dean removed the lid.

“And we have another one for the ‘when you’re older’ pile.” Dean pulled a ¾ length golden scimitar out of the box. Its handle was engraved with different types of animals eating each other. "Do we really have to make a no weapons rule?"

"He’s probably too little to lift the thing, what’s he gonna do?” Gabriel said with a shrug, then spoke to Dyaniel. "That’s one of your mani’s swords."
"Can I get a do over on my present?" asked Sam with a bashful grin.

"What, did you get him the same sword?" Dean asked, rolling his eyes.

"I told you we shouldn’t have brought a hellhound pup." Ruby said to Sam, causing Dean to pick up Dylaniel and look around quickly.

"She’s joking. No, we just got him a tricycle."

After presents & pie, the party had quieted down. Kali & Ruby made a bonfire a little bit down the beach, which attracted most of the kids and their respective guardians. Gabriel had lingered on the deck in order to fill Sam’s shoes & laptop bag with sand. Dean decided to take the opportunity to talk to Gabriel one on one about his hearing.

"Gabe, can I talk to you for a sec?" He asked between sips of his beer, a gesture meant to disguise his discomfort.

"So far you seem to be doing okay, but don’t hurt yourself.” The Archangel didn’t bother looking up from his work, but Dean still tried not to roll his eyes.

"Cas is getting worried about my hearing. He was wondering if you could fix it."

"You want my help?" Gabriel stared up at him with renewed interest.

"Cas wants your help and I want Cas to be happy."

"Uh hm."

"Dammit, don’t act like this is some huge pain in your ass. All you have to do is snap your fingers— you put more effort into the kids’ birthday presents.” Dean gesture at the scimitar with his half-drunk beer.

"But I like the kids more than you.” Gabriel grinned, then stood up. "Okay, okay. I’ll lay some hands on you- just don’t get any ideas, Kali’s pretty possessive."

Dean took a deep breath to calm himself down. The last thing he needed was to deal with the ramifications of punching Gabriel in the face. Luckily, Cas walked over, providing some extra incentive not to blow the whole interaction up. Cas had probably guessed what they were discussing, since it was the only reason Dean would risk being alone with Gabriel.

The Archangel snapped his fingers, then scowled. Dean could still hear his tinnitus. Gabriel placed one hand over each of Dean’s ears and closed his eyes in concentration. After a few seconds he lowered his hands.

"Well…” Gabriel looked a little disappointed. "You might’ve been fighting a seraphim, but that wasn’t all the whammy that got laid on you. What even happened?"

"He did a thing where he held his hand at me and his eyes glowed, but everything went black. Then I woke up a ways down the road.”

“A seraphim detonating itself would boost the power enough to knock it into the next tier of healing, Archangel territory… but that doesn’t explain why I’m having trouble or how you survived. Humans don’t just walk away from seraphim dropping that kind of energy next to them.”

“Dean might not have been immediately next to him. I tried to throw Dean out of the way.”
“Physically throw or with powers?” Gabriel asked Cas, who hesitated. Gabriel looked at Dean with newfound curiosity. "It sounds like you got double whammied at the same time. Even just that extra bit of juice seems to be putting you out of my range."

"You can’t fix my hearing?” Dean asked. For years he hadn’t been planning on Gabriel restoring it, but now that even the possibility was gone the loss shook him.

“When you tally up everything that was laid on you at once- Looks like… that’s just bad luck.”

Dean put on a good effort to be the cheerful host, but Cas was incredibly quiet for the rest of the night. After the guests had left, the kids were put to bed and Sam & Ruby snuck off to go desecrate one of the waterfront gazebos. Dean found Cas sitting by the embers of the bonfire. He threw some kindling on, then sat down next to Cas and waited for there to be enough light to help him see Cas’ lips.

“Talk to me.”

"You’re hurt because of me.” Cas spoke quietly. Dean wrapped an arm around Cas, pulling him into something like a seated hug.

“I’m alive because of you. I would’ve been completely fried if you hadn’t knocked me back. And I’m not hurt, I just carry a little extra piece of tech.” Dean smiled sadly. “I’m like Geordi La Forge, but minus the degree.”

“Your right ear is getting worse. I’ve seen it.” The tinnitus was mostly annoying, but every once in awhile the noise would be so oppressive it would give him a migraine. Every few days he’d become overwhelmed by it. He’d tried nearly everything to dull the pain, but more & more often the only thing that would work was either smoking until he was essentially nonfunctional or having Cas knock him out completely.

“Mary said it might happen, no big surprise.” Mary’s medical experience was strictly limited to human medicine, so he’d taken her prognosis with a grain of salt. But he still liked to read up on advances in assistive hearing technology when Cas wasn’t looking. He had his pride yes, but he wasn’t a complete idiot. Dean sighed. "Actually, I’ve been thinking about it and I’m wondering… is it better to keep going like this or… what if we just knock my right ear down to almost nothing also and I wear two aids- or with both ears gone I could get one of those implants?“

He didn’t like the idea of voluntarily losing the remainder of his natural hearing, but it would remove a growing source of crippling pain that could sneak up on him with very little notice. There were obvious risks to relying exclusively on technology for one of his senses, but there were risks trying to run an army or engage in combat when his concentration was spotty at best.

"Are you sure about doing that?”

“If we have the damage done by a human, then it can always be reversed if there’s trouble.” Dean suggested, trying to make the idea less upsetting.

“You’re assuming you’ll have an angel with you when you’re in trouble.”

"I don’t keep you around exclusively for the sex.”
Post-deleted scenes note: Miroslava isn’t the girl in the photograph in chapter 54. The age difference between the girls is almost four years.
“Have you ever read my intake file?”

“I haven’t read it, but I know where it’s stored if you’re interested.” Sam sipped his beer.

“You never wanted to sneak a peek?” Dean offered Sam a hit from his pocket-sized vaporizer, but Sam shook his head.

They were both seated on the floor in Sam & Ruby’s new, larger cabin. They were reclined against the base of the couch. Each had their outer legs extended, creating two opposite sides of a square. The remaining side had been constructed out of chairs & pillows.

In the middle, Dylaniel & Sa’dah entertained themselves. Playing wasn’t exactly the right word. Dylaniel was almost 18 months, though he didn’t quite act it. He barely said “da” or “xe” and he was still crawling. Instead of playing with toys, he tended to examine them quietly.

Sa’dah was 9 months old and was extremely affectionate. She crawled around their play area collecting toys and giving them to Dylaniel. Once she had given him every toy, she grabbed him in a hug. Dylaniel started crying, so Dean scooped him up.

“It’s okay, Dylan.” He held his son close to his chest to soothe him, but turned back to Sam. Dean softened his voice, then continued. "You can’t tell me that you’ve never been curious."

"I’ll admit that I’ve wondered, but some of that stuff I just don’t want to see- you know we get the record of every time you slept with someone assuming that previous partner would’ve considered it a betrayal.”

“No shit?”

“Yeah, that section accounts for like a quarter of our low-level offenses.” Sam leaned forward to redirect Sa’dah away from Dylaniel and toward the toys.

“Oh god, high school…” Dean cringed. "And like every day after."

"Yeah, I hate reading files with a lot of that kind of stuff. I mean it doesn’t even really tell you much that’s useful about a person. So you slept with a lot of people in the past, who cares-” Sam had to stop Sa’dah from climbing up one of the armchairs. He sat her down on his lap, with one arm he kept her from scurrying off and the other he waved a plush raccoon toy distractingly in front of her.

"It’s not even like having sex is a point against, it’s just the betrayal."

"You guys really need to publish some new commandments or something.” Dylaniel had calmed
down, so Dean put him back on the floor near the pile of toys. "Okay little man, back to work."

Dyaniel picked up a soft plastic Harley Quinn toy.

"That’s Harley Quinn, the sidekick to The Joker.” Dean explained. “She used to be a shrink named Harleen Quinzel, but she had a mental break and turned to a life of crime.”

“You’re seriously gonna teach him all about comics, aren’t you?”

“You read all those bibles to the kids, I get to read mine to the kids too.”

“Some of my books actually have useful information.”

“So do mine.” Dean turned back to his son. “Harley ended up in an unhealthy relationship with The Joker. You don’t want that, I don’t care if whoever has a cool purple outfit. Don’t take that kind of shit from anyone.” Dyaniel stared at Dean uncertainly. "If he understands everything that we’re saying I’m gonna be so embarrassed.”

They both watched Dyaniel watching them. He had a habit of staring at objects and interactions that didn’t catch the attention of other babies. It wasn’t really clear what was happening in his young mind. They didn’t have a yardstick for measuring a nephilim’s development, so everyone just tried to treat him like a human as much as possible… but it was still a bit unnerving at times.

"You & Cas don’t do stuff around him, right?” Sam asked quietly.

“I can barely kiss Cas in front of you.” Dean glanced over at Sam. "You & Ruby don’t… you know what, we’re changing the subject. I can’t talk about this stuff with the kids right here."

Sam released Sa'dah. She crawled up to the pile of toys and began playing with a rubber hammer that squeaked when hit. After a few good slams, the toy hammer was thrown. Sam caught it with telekinesis and dropped it back into the pile.

"You’re going to have such a panic attack over the sex talk.” Sam chuckled before having another sip of beer.

“Dude, I gave you the talk. I’ve got this. I’m fine.” Dean sat up little straighter, but his voice betrayed a little discomfort.

“You gave me some stolen Hustlers for my 10th birthday. It’s a miracle I ever had sex.” Sa'dah inched closer to Dyaniel. "Sadie, be gentle."

Sam & Dean looked at each other, both unsure if they should separate the kids before any contact was made. Dyaniel watched her approach. He leaned away from her slightly, but didn’t try to crawl away. She placed one hand on his arm. His eyes widened. Dean tried not to show how ready he was to snatch his son away.

"See, Dylan, you’re good. Sadie’s just trying to play.”

Sa'dah put her other hand on Dyaniel’s foot. Dyaniel’s giant wings popped into existence, and flailed in concern. One wing knocked Sa'dah backwards onto the rug. The wings weren’t very heavy, but their presence threw off Dyaniel’s center of gravity, causing him to fall onto his back. He jerked and struggled against the awkward extra set of limbs.

Sam scooped up Sa'dah, who was more confused than upset. She had blinked her eyes black in surprise when she fell and watched Dyaniel from Sam’s arms.
Dean carefully picked up the frantic Dylaniel. He held his son against his chest, then gently folded the golden wings up. With the wings fully drawn up around him, Dylaniel was almost entirely hidden except for his toes. Dean stroked the wings to try to soothe him.

“It’s okay, Dylan. Daddy’s got you. You’re fine. You did good.” Dean whispered, then leaned his head back against the couch so that he was facing the ceiling.

“I think he’s getting better.” Sam offered.

“Yeah, Dylan.” Dean said while softly hugging his whimpering son. "You hear that, you’re doing good- we’re gonna be fine."
Dean entered Sam & Ruby’s cabin without bothering to knock. Bobby, Cas, & Ruby were seated around the dining table chatting about current events. Alex enthusiastically gummed on the teething necklace that Ruby wore around her neck. Sam listened to the conversation while laying on the floor as Kaylee diligently tried to mimic Tom braiding Sam’s hair.

Dean tossed a paperback book onto the kitchen table and it skidded a few feet, catching everyone’s attention. The book was American Gods by Neil Gaiman. Dean had only gotten a little ways into it before having an epiphany.

“Is Heaven popular because it’s powerful or is it powerful because it’s popular?” Dean was so excited by his idea that he probably used his hands too much while talking. Everyone stared at him while trying to process what he’d just asked. Even Sam propped himself up on his elbows despite the kids yanking at his hair.

“Are you high?” Ruby asked in a fairly nonjudgmental tone as she blocked Alex from grabbing at her face.

“I- That’s not-” Dean flustered a little defensively, but continued. "Listen, in this book the more worshipers a deity has the more powerful they are. It’s like with the Christmas pagan gods- Mr. & Mrs. Cleaver. They said they were stronger until Christianity rolled into town and their worshipers dropped off. So, did God & the angels have more power straight up or did they usurp it?“

"The garrison, we’ve been around since the beginning…” Cas pursed his lips. "Actually, not the beginning. Our father made us, but I can’t be sure what came before and the other gods… They may have existed beyond our purview."

"You don’t know where pagan gods came from?” Bobby asked in candid surprise.

“It has been of little importance.” Cas smiled apologetically for not having a better answer. "Heaven hasn’t felt the need to address such minor threats."

"But they are threats!” Dean licked his lips in excitement. "You & Sam are always talking about the power of souls. Well, what if this whole gods thing is a zero sum game and Heaven just has more points right now?“

"You have a plan.” Cas tilted his head, intrigued by possibilities that he’d been too obedient to consider for his unfathomably long life.

“We recruit gods to the fight. They fight with us and we give them a flock.” Dean bounced slightly
on the balls of his feet.

“You’re serious about this?” Asked Bobby.

“If it’ll get us a guy that throws lightning, then yeah- I’ll kill a goat for Zeus in a heartbeat.” Dean looked around the room for reactions. Bobby & Ruby both seemed to be thoughtfully considering it. Sam was undoubtedly trying to figure out a loophole to utilize souls of the dead. And Cas stared at the wooden tabletop, possibly caught in an existential crisis. It wasn’t exactly the thrilled reaction he’d been hoping for, but at least no one had shot it down. "We’d still have to make contact with them and who knows where we’ll be able to find-“

"Gabriel.” Cas interrupted, then turned to look Dean in the eyes. "His significant other is a deity from India."

"Which one?"

“Kali, goddess of destruction, power, change, & time.” Dean had heard of Kali, so she was definitely a power player.

“Cas, we need to meet her.”
"What about Lailah?" Ruby suggested as she tossed the folder across the table to Dylaniel. He opened it up and began reviewing its contents. "She's as smart as they come and likes kids."

"Would she even be allowed to help in our child's upbringing?" Dylaniel asked while flipping through the pages of her service record. "For that matter, would I?"

Ruby & Cas exchanged an uncertain look that went unseen by Dylaniel. He had a reputation for being very capable... but not in his personal life. He'd never dated and the number of people who considered themselves his friend may have been in the single digits. It's not that people disliked him- though some did, it was more that he was unapproachable. Allied demons & humans had no idea what to make of him, since he'd only started doing anything more than observing on missions a year earlier. The fallen angels mostly fawned over him to an extent that prevented normal interaction.

Beyond that, there was a small minority of the fallen angels who hadn't entirely accepted nephilim. Their reasons for falling had nothing to do with love or compassion towards humans, so the stigma against nephilim quietly lived on in them. Dylaniel was aware of them, but nowadays he rarely gave them anything more than a cold glance.

An unspoken agreement to ignore each other had been reached after Dylaniel was pushed too far a few years earlier. A fallen angel had made the mistake of referred to him as 'soiled grace' within earshot. If it had been any other day Dylaniel might've let it slide, but it had been the anniversary of Sa'dah's death immediately following Alex’s. Calling the altercation a fight would've been generous to the angel. Before anyone could pull him off the angel, Dylaniel had broken eight of the fallen angel's bones including both legs. As he was being escorted away, Dylaniel advised zir vessel to keep his angel in check to prevent them both from getting killed. The not-so-veiled threat spread through the gossip network, most notably among the vessels of anti-nephilim angels.

He didn’t blame his parents for leaving him in the brig to serve his full six week sentence. They hadn't wanted to brand him with the additional stigma of receiving special treatment. For his part, he took the punishment as a lesson to keep a cooler head. He’d need to be able to shoulder more hatred if he was going to survive in the field as long as his dad. At fourteen years old, he’d beaten Kit’s record for being the youngest prisoner of the AFE.

Three years later, he still held that record. But he had another milestone in mind. Seventeen years and eight months had been the record for longest surviving nephilim. Currently, he was two months short of that goal. That was the record he was striving for. And every day he got closer to the morbid achievement seemed to underscore his mortality. Hence the recent push for him to reproduce.
"Would you want to raise a child?" Cas asked. He had found the experience of raising Dylaniel to
be equal parts confusing & rewarding. He was very proud of the man he’d helped bring into the
world & raise, despite not being as vocal about it as Dean.

"Probably not…” Dylaniel confessed. "I’d be curious to know about any kids I’d have."

"Know about or get to know? There’s a big difference.” Ruby pointed out as he slowly close the
file. His lips thinned, then looked up at them.

“I don’t want to do this.” He slid the file across the table to be with the other ten candidates.

“Dyl, I know you don’t want to, but it’s just part of the game. I’m sure that whoever you pick will
try to make it as quick & painless as-” Ruby stopped herself. "It’s not actually painful, I mean by
default- if you’re into that kind of stuff, more power to you-"

"I don’t want to talk about my sex life.” Dylaniel crossed his arms.

“Maybe try not to think of this part of it as your sex life? It’s like any sort of physical exercise.”
Ruby suggested and looked to Cas for help.

“Dylaniel, sex is a normal part of mortal life. It’s nothing to be embarrassed about-” Cas added.

“I’m not embarrassed.” Dylaniel stated flatly. "I’m just not interested. No amount of duty or
normalcy is going to change what I want from life."

Dylaniel got up from his chair, then left the room without looking back. Apart from the Ruby, Cas,
& himself, the bunker was quiet. Dean was undoubtedly bogged down in training the dozen people
necessary start replacing him as he transitions to a more adviser role. Kaylee was probably in Hell or
shadowing Dean. And as of two days earlier, Tom was reinforcing the abjuration magics at the São
Jorge base.

Dylaniel walked through the empty halls to his room. He grabbed his iPod before laying down on
his bed. After starting up Dark Side Of The Moon, he tried to relax… it was difficult. He knew
what the stakes were, but he also knew what they were asking of him.

After the population of the virtues choir fell below 50%, the AFE’s research department began
studying nephilim & vessels in more depth. One of the experiments was to determine if in vitro
fertilization could be used to create them. If possible, it could potentially make a huge difference in
the populations. Not every angel-human couple had the same difficulty conceiving as Dean & Cas
did, but on average the conception rates were about 15% of their human-human counterparts.

The results of the IVF experiment were informative, but disappointing. Every child conceived using
IVF was a human. Beyond not being a nephilim, the children weren’t even vessels. By being
removed from an ensouled body or its angel, the grace just seemed to fade into nothingness. As a
practical matter, that meant that all nephilim & vessels had to come about the old fashioned way. If
they had a variety of willing vessels to choose from, angels could switch their sex to accommodate
zir partner. But otherwise options for persevering the populations were limited- and unpleasantly
physical.

Dylaniel was tapping his fingertips to the music to try to take his mind off of the mating game. When
he was younger he’d fleetingly thought about taking up an instrument. His dad had given him his
aesthetic appreciation of music and his xe had given him an ear for tones & patterns. The hobby had
been set aside when he changed his focus to combat training. It was another thing that was sacrificed to the war.

He heard a knock and looked up. After a moment, Dean opened the bedroom door at a respectfully slow pace. Dylaniel paused his music, then pull out his earbuds.

"Can we talk for a minute?" Dean asked as he reached for a chair, but stopped just short of grabbing it. Dylaniel was pleased to see he wasn’t taking the conversation for granted.

"Yes." He put his iPod on the nightstand, but didn’t bother sitting up.

"I heard that you shot down all the…" Dean chewed his lip uncomfortably before settling on his wording. "offers."

"Yes."

Dean leaned back in the chair. He sighed while running his fingers through his hair. Neither of them wanted to be having the conversation. After taking a few moments to collect his thoughts, Dean leaned forward to rest his elbows on his knees.

"I’m sorry we didn’t give you a brother or sister.” Dean said quietly.

"I don’t blame you or xe.”

"I know you don’t- I just hate how unfair life is for you.” Dean rubbed the back of his neck. "I had hoped that we could win this thing while you were still a kid, but you haven’t been a kid for a long time-"

"I don’t want to have a child.” Dylaniel stared at the ceiling while talking.

"Do you not want to have a child or do you not want to make one?"

"Both.” Dean nodded at his son’s response, then smiled at a thought.

"Did I ever tell you that I was really uncomfortable when your xe & I were trying to have you? I hated having him stuck in the wrong body- and we were trying for about six months. I’m surprised he didn’t divorce me for being so damn touchy about it.”

"Touchy?” Dylaniel propped himself up on his elbows, then looked at his dad.

"Being with a woman after so long with a guy- I didn’t want to do anything but the bare minimum. Lights off, down to business, get it over with."

"That sounds efficient.” Dylaniel commented. Dean chuckled while rolling his eyes.

"Yeah, well. Most people actually enjoy sex- not that there’s anything wrong if you don’t. Some people just aren’t into it and that’s fine.” Dean caught himself and tried to reassure Dylaniel that he wasn’t judging him. "I’m just saying if they ever nail you down, there are ways to make it easier for you."

"That’s comforting.” Dylaniel raised one eyebrow to help convey his sarcasm. "Making the process easier doesn’t help me avoid it all together."

"Maybe you need to have higher standards.” Dean mused with a shrug of false innocence. "You’re the first of the nephilim to get paired off- you’re setting a precedent. And you’re the Sword of Heaven, you should be discerning… I wouldn’t be surprised if it takes you years to find someone
worth entrusting the bloodline to."

"I thought Sam & Kaylee were the politicians.” Dylaniel commented through the smallest of smiles.

“Hustlers are more common in our family than politicians.”
Tom sat in one of Dean’s many offices, but at least this one was located in a warmer climate. He’d asked to visit their California base in the hopes of sneaking in a little springtime fun, but his hopes had been slightly cramped. Ruby suggested that he could put in some labor on the base to earn his vacation, something about learning to be an adult. After getting dropped off, he’d gone to check in with Dean, but his uncle wasn’t there.

An assistant told Tom that Dean had run home on an errand. Since he hadn’t also been collected it was undoubtedly a minor thing, probably Dylaniel having an episode. Aside from a handful of angel, no one in the AFE knew that Dean even had a kid, so it didn’t surprise him that the assistant lacked detailed information. Unsure of what else to do, Tom decided to just wait for Dean’s return.

Just as Tom was nodding off, there was a knock at the door. A lanky boy with shaggy brown hair & teal eyes came in. He looked about the same age as him, maybe sixteen or so. The boy wore military style boots & pants, but Tom recognized his Black Sabbath t-shirt as one that Dean had purchased a few months back.

“You looking for Dean?” Tom asked.

“Yeah. You know when he’ll be b-back?” He was soft spoken, but stood a little taller while he was assessing Tom. His nose twitched slightly, then his head tilted in curiosity.

“I’m not sure. Hopefully, not long. He had to run home to take care of some personal stuff. I kinda got abandoned here.” Tom admitted.

“Join the club.” A smile twitched on the boy’s face, then he extended a hand. "Jacob."

"Tom.” He introduced himself, then grinned with recognition. "You’re the kitsune, Dean’s been training."

"I take-” Jacob struggled for a moment before restarting his question. "You’re the nephew, Tom- my?"

"Yeah.” With a little more context, Tom looked over Jacob. He’d heard about the kitsune pup- he caught himself and wondered if that might’ve been derogatory. He’d heard about the kitsune youth that Dean took in as a mentor of sorts, but he’d never seen him. The kid’s mom had been friends with his dad years ago. Tom noted the lanky form and shaggy dark brown hair… he could see where Dean might’ve given Jacob a little more leeway than another kitsune. "This is so weird."
“Scared I’ll eat you?” Jacob chuckled revealing rather human looking teeth.

“No, I’m just feeling déjà vu… Have you met my dad?”

“No.“ Jacob raised an eyebrow.

“Have you met your dad?”

“Yeah…” Jacob’s brow furrowed and his voice was baffled.

“Sorry, dick question for me to ask. I just, thought… You know what, nevermind.” Tom scratched his head uncomfortably. “I’ve got like low blood sugar or something.“

“Wanna g-grab some food?” Jacob offered. "No b-brains or anything.“

Jacob led Tom through the base in something that resembled a tour. It wasn’t the most informative due to his guide being a person of few words and distracted by his mission. After sniffing at the air a bit he changed course a few times in search of the most delectable conquest. Tom had to work to keep up the the kitsune, who moved in strange bursts of speed. One of Bobby’s old hunter manuscripts had described kitsune as being sprinters by nature, and Tom understood that the bursts were probably compulsory.

Jacob managed to secure two grilled chicken sandwiches & some sodas from one soldier’s private cookout. Despite being a bit quiet it seemed that he had a reputation as the guy who could get his hands on anything. The food from somewhere other than a mess hall had been exchanged for a ten pack of condoms and assurances that a shipment of ‘watermelons’ were coming in next week. They ended up eating their spoils in the bed of a for army truck, in some understaffed supply depot.

“You just keep your jacket pockets full of condoms?” Tom asked between bites. Jacob blushed, then shrugged innocently.

“Always b-be pr-prepared.” Tom laughed and raised his coke can to toast his host.

“Watermelons’ aren’t real watermelons are they?”

“No. Strips for your mouth- flavors for b-blowjobs.”

“No way, you’re the local smut runner?

"B-Business is good."

“Remind me to hit you up for some porn before I go. I bet you can even get the hard stuff- Your clientele into vamps or demons?” Tom asked, but Jacob only mimed zipping his lips shut. Tom nodded with an amused grin as he pulled a deck of cards from his pocket. "Wanna play? Maybe I can get some goods on the house.“

"Don’t know how to play.” Jacob shrugged.

“How can you hang out with Dean and not play cards?”

“I don’t hang out with him. W-we work together.”

Tom was a little surprised by the idea that Dean didn’t spend recreational time with Jacob, but he supposed it made sense. Dean had a family to get home to, including a young son. He probably
didn’t have the ability to socialize, even with a kid that he’d somewhat taken under his wing. It seemed that Jacob trained under him as his primary work and ran a side business in his free time…

“What do you do for fun?”

“Read.”

“Seriously, you live on a military base full of cool equipment and you have no sense of adventure?” Jacob hesitated, then Tom grabbed his arm and pulled him off the truck bed. "Come on, you’re gonna live a little."

It was debatable whether Tom had technically ridden a motorcycle before, but Jacob didn’t need to know that. For his thirteenth birthday, Dean had given Tom a dirt bike, which he used around camp. His experience riding through bumpy terrain left him fairly nimble on a bike, but he’d never upped the power… until he had someone to impress.

Stealing a motorcycle from the AFE vehicle depot was surprisingly easy. The guards were more concerned with looking to outside threats. Tom was literally able to grab the keys from the wall and fire it up without anyone glancing. He assured Jacob that, if anything, they were testing the base’s security.

Tom drove, while Jacob clung to his back. Jacob shouted a few course corrections in order to point Tom in the direction of the least guarded exit, then with a quick wave to the confused guards they were on the road.

They traveled up Highway 1 along the California coast for about an hour. Tom wasn’t going anywhere in particular and Jacob was just enjoying feeling the wind in his hair. Neither bothered trying to make small talk over the purr of the engine, which was fine by them.

Eventually, the road turned inland and Tom stopped, unprepared to risk missing the first oceanfront sunset since Gabin had taken him to the beach as a child. Tom was ready to watch from the highway guardrail, but Jacob had a better idea.

They rode back south, but turned off toward the water just before reaching the base at Fort Bragg. Tom hadn’t ever seen a beach like it. The sand looked as though it was made of glass beads & pebbles.

"Welcome to Glass B-Beach.” Jacob sifted his fingers through the sand. "Used to be a dump."

Tom picked up a handful of the glass pebbles. They were mostly clear, green, & brown- the standard colors for glass bottles. The whole place had been glass shards, worn smooth by the sea & time. It was beautiful now, but a hundred years earlier in was no more than a landfill.

He had seen towns that had been recently abandoned. It was becoming a more & more common sight. Scared humans huddled together against this strange new world, fortifying their cities while they leave their old lives behind. Buildings, farms, cars, roads, bridges, dams, monuments to the past- anything that couldn’t be taken with them was left. Tom supposed the world was one big dump.

Yet seeing the picturesque beach, he wondered if a hundred years in the future their abandoned towns & cities would be reclaimed by the forests & fields. Maybe that was Heaven’s promised paradise? Why do you need divine intervention when you can just let the moss grow over the bones
of humanity.

"We’re playing against the clock.” Tom muttered to himself as he sunk down to lay on the sand. Jacob sat down next to him to watch the sun finish its descent below the horizon.

“I’m in. W-What’s the game?”

Chapter End Notes

Glass Beach: https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glass_Beach_(Fort_Bragg,_California)
03/12/2019

"You want to take the kids to a game at some point?" Asked Dean.

The brothers were laying in the warm spring sunlight on the pier closest to Bobby's cabin. Dean had managed to convince Sam to sneak away for a quick smoke by the water. He preferred to have company while getting high because it made him chatty and today Sam happened to be his draftee. He normally would get high at night away from the kids, but lately he'd had to take whatever opportunities he could. At the moment the older kids were all preoccupied and the infants, Dylaniel & Sa'dah, were being watched by Cas & Ruby.

After Dylaniel was born, Dean decided to temporarily limit his time with the AFE. He'd originally only planned on taking a little 'secret paternity leave' as he called it, but the truth was that his son & husband needed him more than he'd expected. Cas was fairly good with kids, but he lacked an easygoing & warm demeanor that the young nephilim seemed to desperately need. Dylaniel had been very wary of everyone other than his parents from about a week old. So Dean took it upon himself to teach their son how to be more comfortable, relaxed… some would say more human. The task was a completely uphill battle and by the third month he'd realized how much of a time commitment it would be.

By some bizarre stroke of luck, Sam was able to spend a significant amount of time at home that overlapped with Dean's leave. After Sa'dah's birth a month earlier, Sam had lobbied to increase his hours topside to help care for the newborn. The discovery of the wild roses around the nursery had made him eager to stay close to home. Of everyone at the camp, he was the most capable of handling another surprise display of power. The Council concede to his time off, especially since he & Ruby had gone above & beyond in having Sa'dah to begin with. He was grateful for the rare period of quiet family time, including occasionally listening to Dean's intoxicated musings.

"Game..." Sam took a hit, then passed the joint back to Dean. "Like sports?"

"Yeah, I've always wanted to go to a baseball or football game with the kids. Now that we're both taking some time off work, I think it'd be fun."

"I hate to break it to you," Sam said, a little reluctant to bring his brother back down to reality. "but I think you're going to have a hard time finding a real stadium experience baseball or football game."

There had been so many attacks at major events that several months earlier most professional sports leagues had canceled their upcoming seasons. It hadn’t made a significant impact on their lives to that point. Even back when they used to hunt together, watching the occasional game was more of a homage to the wholesome upbringing they'd never had. Sam didn’t follow sport news, unless it was incidentally related to some high soul yielding event. Dean had very briefly followed baseball in a
social capacity when he was trying to build solidarity during the AFE’s early years, but he gave it up after it became bogged down in gambling.

"Okay, so not around here. We could go somewhere else—there's gotta be some place with a real game."

"How do you feel about cricket?"

"Tiny grasshoppers, used to keep me up at night." Dean finished the joint with two puffs, then flicked the butt into the lake. "It's like baseball, right?"

"That’s probably the best analogy you’re going to get." Sam shrugged then continued his pitch. "Mary has a cousin in the Indian Premier League—he plays on the something Royals. They’re still having games."

"Cricket... huh." Dean chewed his lip uncertainly.

"It might win you some points with Kali," Sam appealed to Dean's implied obligation to make nice with Cas' siblings & their significant others. It wasn't the best selling point, so Sam tried to reframe the trip to focus on someone Dean actually liked. "Mary'd love to see you."

It had been about a year since he'd seen Mary. He had never expected to be the kind of person who was friends with his doctor—he'd never expected to be the kind of person to have a doctor, but she had a special place in his heart. As the trend shifted toward relying on angelic healing, human physicians were less & less utilized. But Dean had found her incredibly helpful in a pinch—like the last time he visited her to get a discreet fertility test. A community clinic in Jaipur, India was one of the last places anyone would think to find Dean Winchester... maybe he could take in more of the sights next time he was in the area?

"Do they serve hot dogs at the games?"

"I'm not sure." Sam admitted. "Definitely not beef ones, probably not pork either."

"They don't make everything out of that tofu stuff, do they?" Dean furrowed his brow at the idea.

"You're thinking of paneer, that's a cheese. And no, they're not all vegetarians—Remind me to take you out for some real food."

"I make real food." Dean's voice was feigned offense.

"You make steaks & burgers."

Sam had barely tried Dean's cooking in the roughly ten years that they'd had reliable access to kitchens. Both of them cooked regularly, but they each made their own food even during group meals. It wasn't that Sam doubted Dean's skill, it was just that Dean almost always included meat and Sam couldn't stomach it since seeing his first human soul butchered.

"Like I said, real food."

"You're going to make Dylan a vegetarian, mark my words." Sam teased.

"You stay the hell away from my son."
watched Sa'dah with a silent curiosity that he'd given her since they'd been introduced three weeks earlier.

"Can you two idiots sober up and watch the kids for a bit?" Ruby asked. She didn't generally have a problem with them getting high during the day, mostly she was just annoyed that she couldn't join them while still breastfeeding.

"Where's grumpa at?" Sam gently kicked Dean for the question. The nickname had been the result of Alex not being able to distinguish the words grandpa & grumpy for several weeks. Dean thought the mistake was hilarious and immediately made it Bobby's name in his phone. Sam had tried like hell to teach Alex the correct pronunciation, but the kid was stubborn as they come.

"Bobby & Isa took the teens & Kaylee shooting." Ruby explained. "Belda has her hands full with Alex- she's probably getting a crash course in counterspells as we speak."

"We should check on her, shouldn't we?" Asked Sam with a slight turn of his head in the direction of Belda's cabin.

"That's all you." Dean told Sam while raising his hands in abstention. "As long as he doesn't burn anything down I'm staying out of the line of fire."

"It only happened twice-" Objected Ruby.

"Four times." Dean interrupted, then started ticking off fingers. "My porch, Isa's roof, your kitchen- ."

"Kitchen fires happen." Sam offered halfheartedly.

"Yeah, but they're usually caused by the stove."

"Okay, fine- wait, what's four?"

"Bobby's boat."

"You said it sunk." Ruby commented in surprise.

"Technical it did... eventually." Dean rolled his eyes. "I covered for the kid, so sue me."

"Whatever." Ruby finally pardoned Dean, unwilling to throw a stone inside a glass house. She knew perfectly will the massive list of things she let the kids get away with. Sam tended to be the source of order while she mostly offered a nice juxtaposition. "Sadie's sleeping like a log. Sam, you can probably take her while keeping an ear out if Belda needs back up."

"The little man & I can work on that whole stacking blocks thing- I swear he's almost up to four." Dean bragged a bit. "Where're you two up to anyway?"

"I'd want to stop by our Istanbul base. Anael would like me to meet with several of the newly fallen angels. Two of them are very ill." Said Cas. Dean propped himself up on his elbows and tilted his head back to look at Cas better- albeit upside down.

"You sure you should be going? It sounds kinda dangerous."

"It's not a physical illness and I won't establish a telepathic connection to them. Anael just thought it would be helpful for me to talk to them."

"Don't let your guard down-"
"I know, Dean. I'm going to be fine." Cas' voice was soft reassurance mixed with the fatigue of having to regularly let Dean know that he was okay. In many ways he thought it was sweet of Dean to worry about him, but with work, the difficulty pregnancy, & Dylaniel's special considerations- Dean sometimes seemed to worry excessively.

"I'm gonna run downstairs on some caste business." Ruby interrupted, heading off anymore back & forth between the newer parents. "Flo called, she thinks she might have a lead on some high grade munitions. Turns out the New Cumberland Army Depot has its own fledgling coven. I'm gonna go chat with their Maji and see what he needs in order to spread the good word."

"You're gonna try to convert an entire army base to demon-worshippers?" Asked Dean, amused by the mental image.

"It's the DOD's largest distribution facility- you bet your ass I want them in the flock." Ruby explained excitedly, earning a look of utter admiration from Sam. "If we can bag them- in my book, they don't need to slaughter a single goat if they can sacrifice a few stinger missiles instead."

"Hey Sammy," Dean elbowed Sam playfully. "you ever feel like there's something more than our simple, boring lives?"

Sam shoved Dean with a little extra push of telekinesis, rolling him off the pier into the lake. Cas just stared flatly at Sam as Dean splashed & sputtered in the water.

"What? I'm helping sober him up."
Anonymous asked:
i was wondering about Dean taking Tom hunting and getting into the fight with Sam.
Any chance I could get a ficlet? ;-) it's okay if you're busy. thanks!

6/7/2015

Tom tried to open the cabin door as quietly as possible, but it didn’t matter. Sam was waiting for them. He was sitting on the armrest of the couch with his arms crossed in front of his chest. Dean barely got a foot in the door before he saw Sam and knew they’d been caught.

“Tom, go to your room.” Sam’s voice was completely neutral with Tom, but his tone turned colder when he looked to Dean. “Dean, we need to talk, outside.”

Dean patted Tom on the back, then turned to go back outside. Sam followed him out, closing the door behind them. They walked a few yards away from the cabin to talk in the relative privacy of the moonlit clearing.

"Look before you start complain-” Dean didn’t get through his sentence before he was completely blindsided by a punch to the face. He staggered backward, then touched his left cheekbone. "Fuck, Sam!"

"You went on a fucking hunt!” Sam’s body was tense, holding back another punch. Dean offset his footing, readying himself for an actual fistfight, but he held his hands up in forfeit.

“Yeah, okay. We went on a hunt. It was just a salt & burn.” Dean said in his defense. "He’s been begging to go for years-
"

"And you just take him, without talking to me?"

“There’s been plenty of talking, but you aren’t hearing it.”

“So fucking convince me. You don’t just lie to me.” Sam ran his fingers through his hair in frustration. "You said you were going to take him to Chicago. We had no idea where you two were.-"

After a little finagling, Sam had managed to rework his schedule so that he could join Dean & Tom for the weekend outing, but they hadn’t checked into the motel that Dean claimed they were at an hour earlier. When Sam called Dean for a second time it went straight to voicemail. A few hours later Dean sent some vague text about the Blackhawks’ arena having bad reception, but there wasn’t a game that day. A few pulled strings revealed that Dean hadn’t been in Chicago for at least a month. Sam had tried to contact Cas to help locate them, but the angel was unreachable at Hael’s. He had no choice, but to wait for them to come home.

"He was safe- nothing was gonna happen to him.” Dean countered, but that just frustrated Sam even more.
It was one thing to put Tom in a situation that was potentially dangerous—Sam hated the thought of it, but he knew deep down that it was impossible to keep the kids safe all the time. The thing that really pissed him off was something that didn’t seem to even be registering with Dean.

“You lied to me!” Sam wanted to yell, but he managed to keep the volume down, if not the tension in his voice. "You lied to me right in front of him."

"Sammy, c'mon. It’s not-"

“Don’t you get it? He lied to me too. Now it’s okay to run around behind my back.”

For six years nothing had come between Sam & Tom, but now their ironclad relationship had been pierced. A new precedent had been established. Tom had backed Dean on the false story, betraying his dad’s trust. Sam didn’t blame the kid, he was just following Dean’s lead.

“He wouldn’t need to be running around if you listened to what he wants.” Dean responded, completely missing the point.

“He’s twelve, he doesn’t know what he wants.”

“And he isn’t gonna learn by you keep him cooped up.” Dean stood a little taller, confident in his moral high ground… though he may not have fully thought through his implementation.

“There’s a difference between experimenting and going after a ghost.”

“We were helping on hunts when we were his age-” Dean tried to reframe the outing.

“No.” Sam cut Dean off. "He can learn to shoot. He can learn to fight. He can learn to cast- but I don’t want him going on hunts. He’s not going to be a hunter. He’s not going to be like us."

"I’d want my kid to-” Dean started.

“He’s not your kid!”

Dean scowled a little at the comment. Sam’s words hurt more than he would’ve expected. He loved the kids and being there for them was one of the things that made him truly happy. Rationally, he knew that they weren’t his kids. It just wasn’t in the cards for him & Cas to have kids… meanwhile Sam had stumbled into having three. It was a more sensitive subject than he would’ve ever admitted.

“Well technically he’s not yours ei-” If he’d been thinking a bit clearer he wouldn’t have tried for such a low blow. He didn’t get the chance to finish.

Sam telekinetically hit Dean across his entire body, knocking him back into the dirt. By the time Dean collected himself enough to get up, Sam was back in his cabin. Then Dean heard something he’d never heard before, the sound of the cabin door locking.
Cas sat by Dean's bedside while his personal physician, Mary, gave him a thorough examination. Dean had barely been conscious when they'd arrived at the AFE hospital. A routine effort was made to heal any of his remaining injuries with magic & angelic powers, but when nothing proved successful they resorted to human medicine.

He was put on intravenous fluids & pain medication until a full assessment could be made and treatment decided on. The combination of the long period of severe pain, drugs, & emotional trauma left him fairly unresponsive. Once the combat high had finished he was overwhelmed by the situation. His eyes were raw slits that avoided everyone else's and Cas was forced to speak for him throughout the intake & examination.

Most of the damage had been done by Alastair and was thus healed easily enough by Cas, but Abaddon had been used to ensure that there were significant lasting injuries. She had inflicted five broken ribs, dozens of cuts on his arms & torso, and several more serious injuries.

Abaddon had mostly followed Alastair's orders, but she did take one indulgence. She traced over the Templars' carving on his forehead so that it would remain a permanent fixture. When the swelling had gone down the slightly jagged letters of 'sinner' were legible. Of the more unusual injuries, the forehead carving was easiest to address, so that's where Mary began giving her report.

"The cuts on your forehead went through to the small layer of muscle along your skull. We can use a skin graft to improve your appearance, but there will be subdermal scarring that you will probably still feel. You might have some sensation through the skin graft, but we couldn't predict how much or how accurate it would be."

"Accurate?" Cas asked. Despite the fact that Mary was addressing Dean, it wasn't clear how much of the information he was actually processing. Cas had to try to be Dean's advocate.

"The procedure would require severing even more nerves. Nerves do grow back, but there can be an impairment to the signal or sometimes it never returns. The practical risk is numbness, phantom sensations, or chronic pain."

For the moment Dean's forehead was bandaged, obscuring the damage. Being cut across the forehead had become a pretty standard insult to enemy soldiers, but almost no one actually walked around with the scars. In general, those that were marked were either killed or healed after the fact. Aside from the Knights, Raphael & Gabriel were the only people in the field capable of doing lasting damage and neither of them bothered to deface bodies.

"The branding on your back appears to be a hex. Several of our magics healers were looking at countering or removing the effects. We discussed the possibility of removing branded area, but it's unlikely that it would remove the hex itself. The damage extends into many of the muscles in your back. Trying to cut away all that tissue could cause all the same symptoms I described for the skin graft plus impairment of motor skills."

"What's the effect of the hex?"

"It appears to block supernatural forms of communication. No magic comms, no telepathic connections."
"He can't pray." Cas said as he looked over at Dean.

Cas had blown it off as being the stress of the past 36 hours, but he'd felt like something was off about interacting with Dean. Normally, Cas could read Dean fairly easily, partially due to their intimate relationship though Cas also was highly attuned to Dean's needs. Beyond being considerate, he had a habit of listening to Dean's silent whims- his unconscious prayers. But with that form of communication blocked, Dean was even harder to read and at the worst possible time.

His behavior & mood was understandably unpredictable. There were certainly going to be emotional manifestations of the ordeal, but it was too soon to have a full sense of it. An hour earlier, Dean had feebly tried to fight off the two nurses who attempted to place IV lines. Cas wound up being the only person that he'd allow to touch him- until he was largely sedated. Once he was in the bed there was even less behavior to interpret.

Despite not being very communicative, it was obvious that the thing that bothered Dean the most was the loss of his penis & testicles. He was partially sedated when Mary went to remove his pants during the examination. She didn't fall for his attempt to redirect her attention, then began silently crying.

"You need surgery to treat your wound. They cauterized it, but that only stopped you from bleeding out. At the very least we need to remove the damaged flesh, give you a skin graft and make sure your urethra is functional." She hesitated for a moment. "Technically speaking, it's possible to give you a prosthetic- even an artificial penis with skin, but it wouldn't have feeling or be sexually functional."

Mary paused to allow them a chance to ask questions, but neither took advantage of the opportunity. Cas was too busy watching Dean for his reaction. Dean's lips thinned slightly and he closed his eyes for a moment. When Dean didn't meet Cas or her face, Mary decided to continue.

"Since testosterone is primarily produced by the testicles you'll have to take supplements to compensate for the loss. It might take some time to figure out the right dosage for you and you'll need to monitor your levels periodically."

"Can you give us a few minutes?" Cas asked Mary.

"Of course, but we really need to get him into surgery as soon as possible." Mary patted Cas' shoulder as she left the room.

Cas watched Dean for several seconds. He was hoping that Dean would take the initiative to talk first, but he didn't- he didn't even look at Cas.

"Did you hear what Mary said?"

"Yeah." Dean's voice was weak and broke with emotion.

"Do you have any idea what you'd want to do?" Cas asked.

"No."

"We need to decide-"

"Babe," Dean leaned his head back against his pillow as a few tears fell from his eyes. "I can't do this... I just..."

"Yes, you can. We're going to get through this together. We'll adjust." Cas took Dean's hand.
"This is like your hearing loss."

"It's not the same."

"You've been through so much and you have every right to be upset, but once you've had some time for the shock to wear off you'll see that it's just another injury." Cas dragged his chair closer to Dean's bedside and leaned forward. "You're still my husband and Dylaniel's dad. You're still you."

Dean faced Cas and squeezed his hand in the first gesture of reassurance since arriving at the hospital. Dean looked down at his body, then took a deep breath to collect himself.

"I don't want some fake thing." Dean eventually said with a tired determination. "I just want to be me- whatever that is."

Dean's first surgery lasted five hours. When he woke up, he saw Cas sitting in an uncomfortable hospital armchair. Dylaniel was curled up, sleeping awkwardly on his xe's lap, using the armrest as a pillow. Dean gave Cas his first smile since the whole nightmare had begun. Neither of them wanted to say anything that might wake up Dylaniel, but their mere company brought a profound comfort.

After a few minutes, Dylaniel shifted and opened his eyes. Dean waved for his son to climb up on the small hospital bed with him. He didn’t care if his broken ribs were sore Dean held his son close until they fell asleep.
Cas walked up behind Dean and hugged him. He kissed Dean's neck, then circled around to face him. Dean returned Cas' kiss, but his body inched away as Cas tried to close the distance. The angel didn't notice at first and pressed forward in excitement over the most passionate kiss they'd had in months. But it stopped abruptly when Dean's hands gently pushed Cas' lower body away.

It had been two months since Dean's castration. In that time they'd only engaged in fully clothed kissing while avoiding Dean's crotch and Dean had taken to sleeping in pajama pants. Cas had tried to be sensitive, though there had been little to no progress. He wasn't about to demand sex, but he wanted the issue to at least be acknowledged.

"Dean, please... You're just making yourself feel worse by hiding it." Cas observed.

"I'm not in the mood. It's a legitimate medical thing." Dean said defensively.

"Your medication should be taking care of that- If you're still having trouble it's probably depression or negative body image."

Dean turned and stepped away from Cas. He hated when Cas suggested he was depressed- he wasn't sad, he was frustrated. His problem was physical. It was an injury he could deal with.

"I'm fine- I just pee sitting down now." Dean joked, but even he didn't think it was funny. "No big deal."

"If it's no big deal, then take off your clothes." Cas hadn't seen Dean naked since it'd happened, even in the hospital.

"Babe, I'm not-"

"Take your clothes off or I'm taking them off of you myself." Cas took a step toward Dean, who recoiled a little while positioning his hands in front of his crotch.

"Jesus Christ, Cas!" Dean hopped backwards and huffed. "I'm not into this whole dom side of you."

"Stop evading the subject."

"You know what? Shove it up your ass- God knows I can't help you with that." Dean's voice was a mixture of pain & bitter snark.
"I understand that you're angry & embarrassed, but the monsters that did this to you aren't here. They aren't relishing in your pain or suffering from your anger. It's just the two of us. And I'm trying to help you." Cas placed a hand on Dean's shoulder. "But you're so distressed that you're hiding from me, physically & emotionally. I know you don't want me to see, but you have to face that fear... That way you can remember that I love you no matter your form."

Dean hesitated for a long moment, then pull off his shirt and slipped off his pants & boxers. Instead of a penis & testicles, there was just a fresh scar. The scar was a thin red line that descended between his legs. It reminded him of the crack on a woman, especially now that his pubic hair was growing back after having been shaved for the surgery.

He could feel himself turning pink. His legs unconsciously turned inward to try to hide whatever could be hidden. He was ashamed, laid bare & barren.

Cas approached him thoughtfully. The angel's eyes took in every scar, the slight crow's feet, the grey hairs, & the implant behind his ear. He saw all those things, but they hardly registered compared to the man that bore them. Cas caressed Dean's abs before wrapping his arms around Dean's waist.

"You're still the most magnificent human I've ever seen." Cas said as he kissed Dean deeply. After a moment's hesitation, Dean returned the kiss then pulled Cas to him.

Rationally, Dean knew that very little had changed. At almost fifty years old he wasn't planning on having anymore kids. Even from a purely recreational perspective, things weren't too different. Despite his earlier outburst, Cas was the top in their relationship. Had Cas been castrated they would've needed to rework their routine.

Rationally, it wasn't a big deal... but Dean was having trouble being so rational. He was caught up in a confusing crash of emotions that he hadn't really thought through. He tried to bury away his insecurity in his love & lust.

He could feel Cas' dick getting harder and pressing against him. It was strange to not be rubbing his own cock against Cas. In some ways the absence was horribly distracting, yet once his embarrassment was pushed aside, he realized it made him extra aware of Cas.

His anticipation grew, creating that heat in his gut... but that's where it stayed. With a slight pang, he realized there wasn't anything he could do for himself. He wanted something, but the only satisfaction he could get now was from having Cas inside him. He desperately pulled down Cas of his clothing, then laid down on their bed. Cas climbed on top of him and began preparing him.

After a few minutes Cas was inside him. It generally felt good, but there was a strange vulnerability to it that he didn't understand. Cas wasn't doing anything wrong or different than normal, but the intimacy was somehow tarnished.

Dean wasn't as emotionally engaged. He felt needy, pathetic, broken. Everything was confused and overwhelming. He tried not to think about his feelings. He just focused on being fucked.

He felt the build up and release. His orgasm was somewhat satisfying, but it wasn't exactly the explosion of ecstasy that he was used to. All the sense of power came from Cas- he loved feeling Cas' strength & passion, yet that didn't mean that he liked subordinating himself or being gentle. Cas might've been the top, but Dean had always taken charge.

Now though, he felt strangely passive. There wasn't any sign of his own lust or hard power. When he came there wasn't any showmanship, just a soft moan and a little dampness between his legs.
This time Cas had been physically on top of him, since he was too emotionally unsure to lead. It felt wrong. It's wasn't exactly that Cas had overpowered him, but more that he was underpowered.

He loved Cas and was comforted to know that his husband was still attracted to him. Yet at the same time, the experience underscored the fact that something else was very wrong.

"Hey Rube, can we talk for a sec?"

"Sure, what's up?" Ruby didn't bother looking up from her work. She was drawing out some sort of design on the desk in Sam & her bedroom. When Dean closed the door behind him, she put down the pencil and gave him her full attention.

"It's personal- like if you tell anyone..."

"Lips are sealed." She even mimed the zipping of lips.

"I'm having some trouble being with Cas since..." He didn’t know how to refer to his castration. The whole family knew, except for Dylaniel who hadn’t been told any details of his dad’s injuries. Nobody had talked about it, everyone was uncomfortable talking about it, including himself. But desperate times called for desperate actions.

"Your surgery?"

"Yeah..." Dean sat down on the edge of the bed, then took a moment to gather his courage. "It doesn't change the logistics really, but I feel like less connected- that's not right. I used to be more engaged and now- I don't want to feel like I'm just laying back and taking it."

"Okay..." Ruby's eyebrows rose at the unexpected candidness of the conversation. Dean & she would regularly share confidences, but they almost never talked about their sex lives aside from tangential mentions when they were having the kids.

He gave her credit for not reacting to the fact that he was a bottom. Over the years he'd heard enough derogatory comments or tone deaf jokes to know that most people assumed he was the top in the relationship. He was sure the assumption was based on the fact that he had the more dominant personality of the pair while in public, and while he wouldn’t have been surprised that someone as close as Ruby knew that he rarely fit the stereotypes, it still was nice to see that she wasn’t phased.

"I was thinking, since you're a woman- I mean you don't really have a dick to begin with." He chuckled nervously. "Not that I have tits for Cas to play with."

His eyes wandered anxiously around the room. He wasn't even sure exactly what he was asking for, help certainly, but he didn't know how she could help him. She was just the person he felt most comfortable talking to.

"That wouldn't even solve your problem though. You don't need Cas to have a good time. You're the one that needs more." He didn't argue with her, though he had trouble meeting her eyes. "Can you still get off?"

"More or less,” The sensation was too hard to describe, so he focused on the attainable- the logistics. “but not... from the outside."

"You have any toys?"

"No!" Dean could feel himself blushing. "I'm into Cas, not random anal."
Having sex with Cas was its own separate thing. Yes, it was fun and scratched some primal itch, but it was about their relationship first & foremost. He wasn't looking to just be on the receiving end of anything other than Cas.

"You're not gonna feel in control of your own sexuality if you're entirely dependent on someone else. I don't care if he's your husband- I mean, you used to jerk off even though you were married right?"

"I came to you to get sex tips, not to talk about masterbating." The truth was that he used to masterbate regularly. He wasn't sure why he was embarrassed to admit it. Everybody masterbates and his evasion was pointless. He wasn't so much embarrassed to admit to jerking off, it was then facing the prospect of explaining why using a toy was appalling... There was something there, but he didn't really want to look too closely at it.

"Tough shit. I don't care how great Cas is in the sack, if you're not feeling confident & sexually independent you're gonna be uncomfortably as hell & left wanting. You're new to this, so you've gotta watch out for that trap."

"I'm 'new to this'? Are you gonna give me a pamphlet?" He was surprised by the determined tone of her voice. Apparently, it was a topic she’d thought about before and felt passionately about. Despite his discomfort with the conversation he didn’t want to discourage the her, though he did try to lighten the mood.

"No pamphlet, just a secret handshake- Seriously though, I'm a woman, having shit power over our sexuality has been like part of our unifying cultural identity since the beginning of time." Dean raised an eyebrow at the thought, but didn't question it. "Did you know most women can't get off from straight up penetration? Don't get me started on missionary, what a fucking sham- You're probably better equipped now to get a woman off than before-"

"I'm not so interested in clam diving anymore." Dean said, cutting her off with the tiniest of amused smirks.

"I'm just saying, sex is more complicated than shoving tab A into slot B. And maybe your options are a little limited, but trying to work on your confidence and taking control again could make all the difference. Have you tried cowgi- cowboy?" Dean's lips curled helplessly into a smile at her correction.

"I used to be on top of him most of the time." Ruby nodded as she took in the information.

"Do you two do the whole snuggling thing afterwards?"

"He stays with me while I sleep afterwards." Dean corrected.

"Have you snuggled since the surgery?"

"Yeah." Dean's brow furrowed, then he sighed. "He's been concerned about me... He's been holding me- to comfort me, but it's not the same. I miss his head on my chest with my arm around him. I miss him clinging to me instead of the other way around."

"So what, him trying to comfort you has switched the dynamic in your relationship?"

"I'm cool with him supporting me, but I just want things to be normal again…” Dean massaged his tired eyes and tried not to think about everything that was going on with the AFE or the problems the brand on his back had been causing. “or as close to normal as they can get."
"Get back to that." Ruby prescribed. "Know that you can treat yourself, give yourself back that independence & confidence. Tell him you need to take charge. Then go to town."

"Thanks, Rube."

"Tie him down while you're at it. I have this set of cuffs-"

"Stop. Please don't give me any disturbing mental images." Dean realized he was sitting on Sam & Ruby's bed and hastily stood up.

"Scared it'll be hard for you to get it up?" Ruby teased. He halfheartedly punched her in the shoulder, but he had to admit it felt good that she wasn't treating him like he was made of glass.
Ruby knocked at the door, then entered when there was no answer. The fourth floor studio apartment was dimly lit & hazy. The smell of spices & grilled meat from the nearby market penetrated everything. She had to kick a mason jar of dehydrated crickets out of her way in order to fully enter the room.

Tom was lounging on a shabby single bed. He only wore the lehenga portion of a turquoise saree, revealing his ever-growing tattoo collection. An ashtray on the nightstand held the remnants of several joints.

"You might wanna consider at least warding your front door." Ruby suggested as she closed the door behind her and inspected the doorjamb.

"Nobody's looking for me." Tom countered as he sat up.

"I was looking for you." Tom shrugged apologetically for not considered her.

"If you'd called first, I would've cleaned up." Tom hastily brushed some plastic bags of spell components off the only chair in the apartment.

"Looks like you've been having fun." Ruby observed. She picked a bra up off the floor, then checked the size. It was a 34D, which meant it was a woman's. On the rare occasion that Tom wore a bra, he wore a 42B. "Cinderella coming back?"

"Deepi." Tom corrected with a grin. "Hopefully- I'm not sure though. She knows that the rent's paid for two weeks, then I was figuring I'd head southeast a bit. Maybe stop by Sri Lanka before checking out Indonesia."

"Fly by night or do you actually like her?"

"She plays cricket, digs magic, & doesn't judge me- You know the west needs to get in on the whole third gender thing." Tom starts rolling a joint. "We have angels & demons with all their variations- humans need to step up our game."

"Aside from philosophizing about cisnormativity while stoned out of your mind, what've you been up to?"

"I've picked up a few new tricks with the craft, but mostly I'm seeing what humanity has to offer." His lips curled into a smile as he lit the joint.

"Should I be expecting any grandkids?" Ruby crossed her arms and raised an eyebrow.

"God, I hope not." Tom chuckled while taking a hit, then he held the joint out toward his mom, but she didn't move to accept it.
"Have you visited Kali?" Ruby asked.

"Not yet." He confessed.

"You're in her domain. The least you could do is stop in at one of her temples." Ruby leaned forward, imploringly. "I know she's tough as nails, but a little support never hurt."

"She'd rather see you-you could bring Dyl, she'd like that." He avoided Ruby's eyes.

"If she got to know you-"

"I bet she would like me... especially now." Tom mused. He was a smart guy. He knew perfectly well that he was self-destructing. He just wasn't sure why he should care.

"Tommy, you should come home."

"Did someone else die?" He knew it was a cheap shot and not the tasteless joke he'd attempted to disguise it as.

"No." She wasn't remotely amused.

It had been six months since Alex was murdered. Tom had stayed with the family until Kaylee & Dylandiel seemed emotionally stable, then he took off to go find himself... or to get even more lost under false pretenses. He didn't have centuries of work to distract him like Kaylee and he didn't have Dylandiel's... discipline?

Before Alex's death, Tom had been the first choice for taking over one of Morrison's orphaned covens. He knew the craft like the back of his hand and was charismatic enough to be a leader if he chose to, but when his little brother died he abruptly quit. Some of the fire inside him died with each of his siblings.

"I like traveling." Tom said in defense of his four month and counting world tour.

"You like getting shitfaced & fucking." Ruby corrected.

"In scenic locations."

"I'm not asking you to be a shut in, just visit. We all miss you- your dad & I are worried about you."

"Like dad even knows I'm gone." Tom muttered while flicking the ash off his joint.

"Don't be a dick. I know that you're hurting, but don't turn that around on the people that care about you. If he could be here he would, but he can't." Ruby reached into her pocket and withdrew an envelope. She stood up, handed Tom the envelope, then kissed his forehead. "I'm not gonna bust your ass over this. Just know that you have a home."

She patted his cheek, then made to leave. He quickly got up and hugged her before she disappeared. Tom wasn't quite as big as Sam, but he still dwarfed her.

After she left he stared at the envelope for several minutes. It'd been almost five months since he'd had any sort of communication from his dad. Their interactions were mostly one-sided thanks to Lucifer. Tom could send messages to Sam, but Lucifer hated Tom and made it nearly impossible for Sam to communicate with him. It was a painful complication, which meant the only real way for Sam to talk to Tom was via writing that was checked by a third person.

"Tommy,
I wish I could tell you this in person, but I wouldn't ask you to see me. I don't want to hurt you anymore than you are already. I know that you feel helpless, like you've failed them or failed us.

You can't run away from pain because it lives inside us. The only way to fight it is to embrace it, try to understand it, and use its lessons going forward.

I'm not saying there was a way to stop what happened to Alex, just that I regret not being there for him more. Don't live your life begging for regrets. See the world before it's gone, but don't do it just to run away. Don't run from your life, run to it- whatever that is & whatever you do.

We love you and always will.
Love, dad."
Ruby sat on the concrete floor of the basement near the bottom of the staircase. She stared at the dried blood where she had been knocked out by Lucifer just a day or two earlier. There wasn't much point in cleaning it up, there wasn't much point in anything until they knew.

Gabe & Anael were off somewhere tracking Dylaniel's prayers. Kaylee was consolidating the AFE's North American leadership after it'd suffered the loss of... 36 bases at last count. Alex had taken up the mantle of rallying demon troops while Kaylee was trying to create a more integrated army.

Ruby was supposed to be researching offensive spells that might work against Lucifer, should Gabe & Anael fail, but she'd needed a moment alone. As soon as everyone else had left she went to her bedroom to collect some books, but being alone in her & Sam's bedroom was too painful. The bed was full of memories of tender caresses and talk of the future. She didn't want to be there. Some weird impulse compelled her to retreat to the depths. Maybe she wanted to return to Hell or maybe she just wanted to literally have nowhere to go, but up.

So Ruby found herself sitting on the floor across from the angel-proof cell, spellbooks unopened on the floor beside her, when Sam appeared in front of her. She scrambled to her feet and drew an angel blade from her belt. He had his back to her and stared at the open gate leading to the warded section, conflicted. She held the angel blade ready for a fight, but when he turned to face her his eyes were soft. His cheeks were wet from tears and his hands had blood on them.

She took a step toward him, but he backed away from her. He stood trembling at the edge of the warding with his back to it. When his hands rose defensively, he became transfixed by the blood.

"I'm sorry- I tried to stop him- I don't want to hurt anyone-" He managed between panicked breaths.

She moved closer to him. His eyes didn’t quite meet hers and he began crying. He recoiled from her, scared to touch her, but he seemed to unconsciously stop at the brink of the gate. After a moment, she realized that he had been looking at her bruised jaw, split lip, & broken nose- sustained when Lucifer had struck her. At the time she'd suggested energy not be wasted healing such minor injuries, now the guilt it was inflicting on Sam was anything but minor.

"This wasn’t you.” She said as she touched her face and then took his hand. “None of it was you.”

“I couldn’t stop him- I can’t.” Blood began trickling from his nose as he cringed in pain. The temperature in the room began to drop and the spellbooks skittered across the floor. He looked at the angel blade she was holding, then the cell. “Just end it.”
She pulled him down to her and kissed him softly. Like too many before, their kiss tasted like blood & tears. Reluctantly, she broke the kiss, then looked him in the eyes. Her hands caressed his damp cheeks, slid down his neck, then rested over his heart. "I love you."

His eyes widened slightly with surprise. She could see him losing focus, possibly recognizing the red flag of those long coveted words. With a gentle smile of reassurance, she shoved him backwards over the threshold.

He screamed as soon as he crossed the threshold into the warded section. His body was convulsing even before it hit the floor. After a moment, he was completely motionless. She couldn't even tell if he was breathing. Ruby rolled Sam onto his back, then took his pulse. He was still alive, though his heartbeat was weak & irregular. She held his hands and wonder whether the blood belonged to Cas, Dean, or Dyaniel- maybe all of them, or any of the millions more killed by Lucifer.

Ruby placed the tip of the angel blade just above his heart. She knew this was what he'd meant when he said "just end it". He'd asked her to kill him if he changed into something he didn't want to be. But she had refused, she'd said that she was going to save him. She'd had hope then, and now she wasn't sure what she had left.

While he was temporarily unconscious in the warding, Lucifer was equally vulnerable, but once he was moved into the interior of his cell they would start to recover. Even in a little cell, if Lucifer had access to his powers, how could anyone really force him back into this exposed state? Maybe this was their chance to be free, to save the world? Would Heaven keep fighting if they knew that their prophesied version of the Apocalypse couldn't take place? Or was the world just continue riding the momentum of hate?

Killing him would be the safer move, almost everyone in existence would kill him. He was just one life weighed against the world, but to her they were one in the same. In twenty years, they'd never given up on each other and every time their faith in each other had been inspired anew. She'd believed in him, that he would overpower Lucifer, no matter the agony & torments it entailed. But when Kaylee had described being hurt by Lucifer- when he'd hurt their children- when he'd looked at her with uncaring eyes… Her faith had wavered.

She'd told herself that Sam was dead, lost beyond any recognition or rescue. It had hurt more than she could feel… maybe she hadn't been able to feel anything. She'd been too far gone. She was dead too and her heart had just been too foolish to stop beating.

Then out of nowhere he was back, suffering in every way imaginable and asking to die. He'd fought against incredible odds to give the world another chance. He'd given her another chance, another choice of profound consequences. She could end his life, his suffering, maybe end it all… or her fool’s heart could keep beating fueled by the faith he’d just renewed in her. Did she have faith in him to endure? Did she have faith in herself to save him? Was their love worth endangering the entire world?

She tossed the angel blade aside, then knelt down and whispered in his ear.

"I hope you can forgive me someday, but I'm going to be selfish. I can't kill you because you're my hope. I'll work until the end of the world to save you because you're my world." Ruby habitually pushed a few stray hairs out of his face. "So yeah, your soul is gonna carry millions of scars because I'm too stubborn to let you go. We're a team. When this world ends, we'll see it together."

She kissed him on the lips, then dragged him into the featureless cell. After locking the gates she went upstairs to call Kaylee. The shock was still a bit too much for her to process, so she fell back on her responsibilities while she still could focus on alerting the others.
Kaylee’s reaction to the news that Lucifer was contained barely even registered. Ruby managed to convey that she wasn’t sure whose blood he’d been covered in. There was a long silence as Kaylee processed her mom’s statement. A fatigued static started creeping into her mind as Kaylee assured her that they had angels looking for Anael & Gabriel in the hopes of finding Cas, Dean, & Dylaniel. Kaylee said something about coming home soon, but Ruby wasn’t honestly sure how the call ended.

After the call, she went into the bathroom and began washing the blood off her hands. When she felt a little dizzy, she sat down on the edge of the bathtub without turning off the sink faucet, then started sobbing uncontrollably. It took her a minute to stop.

Things would be better... but they didn't feel any better. The carnage would quiet down, but there was still a mountain of corpses to scale. Her family was scattered, possibly having suffered its own casualties. She wanted to shield her kids from seeing Sam. She had to protect them and comfort them. Even though he was alive, for now they didn’t have their father to help support them. She didn’t have Sam to support her. She was the vanguard of their grief, so she swallowed her tears.

Ruby grabbed some towels & a large bowl of water. After letting herself back through the exterior gate, she locked it, then tossed the key through the bars toward the stairs. She continued beyond the interior gate and tossed the second key to join the first. Then she sat down on the cold concrete floor and started washing Sam's hands. If there was even a chance he'd wake up, he wouldn't wake up to find blood on his hands.
Sam was curled up in a ball on the floor of their cell. He stared at the concrete wall and tried not to think of anything in particular. If he focused on a thought or feeling too much Lucifer would find a way to turn it against him. For what must’ve been years he’d been tormented in every way he could think of... maybe that was the problem. Maybe he was giving Lucifer ideas?

"I'm capable of thinking up ways of torturing you on my own." Lucifer reassured from across the cell.

"Could you stay out of my head?" He didn't even know why he bothered asking. Lucifer wasn't particularly interested in doing him any favors. He didn't even need to talk in order for Lucifer to hear the question. And he already knew the answer was no- he knew it because Lucifer knew it. Sam held his head.

"Be careful with that circular thinking." Lucifer said. "Let's not get stuck in a feedback loop again."

"If it hurts you too, maybe it's worth it." Sam muttered.

"But that little sense of accomplishment you’ll get will just make me feel better." Lucifer countered. "You know you're only hurting yourself."

Sam smiled reflectively at the joke, then cringed at his own reaction.

It was exhausting trying to draw the line between them and keep it clear. Lucifer's thoughts and feelings were nearly his own, but for that little voice that whispered something was wrong. It reminded Sam of his experience with depression, when he was younger, and again after Dean & Sa'dah's deaths. During those difficult times, thoughts & impulses would enter his mind and he’d initially be confused into thinking they were his own, but the truth was that it was the illness talk. Lucifer was just another affliction.

"I'm the purest of all the angels of Heaven," Lucifer walked over to Sam and stepped on his chest. He didn't bother trying to get away, there wasn’t any point. He just bore the pressure until his ribs broke. "You're the affliction, the human, the demon. You're the reason we're stuck enduring each other like this."

"You mean I'm the reason you're trapped."

The subsequent beating was about a 6 out of 10, which promptly rose to an 8 after Lucifer sensed Sam’s low opinion of it. The damage would take several weeks to recover from if Lucifer didn't agree to heal him, but that was fine. He wasn't going to beg and Lucifer wouldn't be persuaded anyway. The thing that ended the beating prematurely was when Lucifer struck Sam's face, but
blood trickled from Lucifer's nose instead. They both looked at the blood, derailed by confusion.

One of the unexpected effects of their intertwined minds was that their moods could change on a moment’s notice. If they both experienced the same emotion one immediately after the other there was an amplification that would occur, drowning out the previous moods. They were both surprised & confused by Lucifer’s bloody nose, which reset the focus of their attention. Rationally they both knew that a beating had just occurred, but they were both more interested in the implications of the nosebleed and the prior animosity was unanimously put on hold.

"Does that mean… Do you know which one of us is real?" Sam tried to shake his head, but everything hurt too much. He reframe his thinking, hoping that maybe the pain wasn't as real as he'd thought. With any luck, maybe he wasn’t in control of the body- though he wasn’t sure why the beating being wholly in his mind would make it any less painful. "Do you know which of us is in control of the body? Is that blood real?"

"We could make someone come down." Lucifer suggested. The most reliable method to determine which one of them was in control was to interact with someone else. Nine times out of ten, they could see each other, which meant that one of them was essentially a hallucination. But a third party only perceived the physical body and whichever one of them was controlling it.

Honestly, it was the moments when Sam couldn't sense Lucifer that were the most unsettling. It was never clear if Lucifer had found a way to evade him or if he'd finally decided to push Sam down into the subconscious somewhere. If Sam was alone did that mean that he was in control of the body or was Lucifer going unchecked. Strangely, Lucifer experienced the same combination of loathing & relief when they eventually would sync back up.

"Please don't bring anyone down. I don't need to know." Sam pleaded.

Lucifer's go to technique for getting the attention of someone outside generally involved hurting both of them so badly that someone watching would run down in fear. Everyone else was helpless to do anything for the pair of them, but they hadn't yet accepted their helplessness.

"Fine." Lucifer agreed.

Sam turned to look at Lucifer in surprise, which faded quickly. It was hard to stay surprised by anything Lucifer did or thought. The rationale for every statement or action followed like a penumbra. Sometimes it was harder to spot, but it was generally there. The source of Lucifer’s apparent mercy was that neither of them liked to upset Kaylee or Alex when unnecessary.

"I'm allowed to care about my vessels." Sam rolled his eyes, but he could feel some sliver of sincerity in the statement. For his part, Lucifer tilted his head in acknowledgement of the superficial absurdity of the statement.

"I'm your vessel."

"Which is the only thing that's sparing you from worse torture for bringing me here."

"This is you going easy on me?" Sam wanted to laugh, but it wasn't really funny- he knew it was true.

"You're not a bad person, Sam." Despite the pain in his ribs, he did start laughing at that.

"What the fuck does that even mean? Is that a compliment or what?"

This fucking relativism was disorienting. Lucifer thought of himself as a noble figure, but Sam
thought of him as a genocidal maniac... But they both could see each other's perspectives, and not in a truly empathetic way. Everything that was subjective was dangerously in a state of flux. He wished it would stop. He didn't know why it hadn't stopped.

"Why don't you just bury me?" Sam asked.

With a little effort Lucifer could probably push Sam away into the recesses of his own mind. Back before they had gotten into their cell Sam had to fight for control with all his will, but now that he was trapped without any hope of escape he barely saw the point in fighting. He only bothered trying to survive for the brief interactions with his family. "I know I'm your hostage or whatever, but you could just hide me away..."

"You wouldn't even fight it." Lucifer finished the thought. Sam stared at Lucifer in... he'd run out of defeat long ago. "It's not to torture you-"

"Not entirely." Sam muttered, causing Lucifer to smile.

"We're too close. I made you to fit me, you're my original vessel for this bloodline. There's so much between us..."

"You screwed it up. That's why I can read your mind too." Sam had struck a nerve, he felt it. Lucifer had underestimated something- not him exactly, maybe resilience or love or humanity.

"Don't you dare treat me like a fool. I am too profound for you even comprehend and you're barely more than a tool." Lucifer knelt down next Sam and gripped his neck. "It's vital that you know your place-"

"How're you supposed to beat that into me when you don't even know where you stop and I begin." Sam was surprised & intrigued by the idea that maybe Lucifer was going easy on him because the torture hurt the Archangel a little in turn.

Lucifer lifted Sam up by his neck, then slammed him against the concrete wall. He pressed until he heard the cracking of bone, probably the back of Sam's skull.

"Don't think that just because I dislike it, I'll fail to do what I need to in order to keep you in your place. I may care for the wellbeing of my vessel, but that includes teaching you lessons."

Sam couldn't help but grin through the pain. That was an idea, something to keep him entertained. He could turn the tables and try to teach Lucifer... what, tolerance? Maybe, he did have an infinite amount of time alone with the guy.

"Do you really think that between the two of us, you'll make the bigger impact?" Lucifer's question was bordering on a wager.

"I made a pretty big impact in Hell." Sam jabbed.

The fact that Hell had sided with Sam instead of its creator had been a minor sore point for the Archangel's pride. He didn't care for the demons, but he'd expected their blind loyalty. Lucifer's eyes narrowed as he leaned close to Sam's ear.

"Not as big an impact as you'll make when we get out of here and I make your hands kill every single one of those miserable things." Whispered Lucifer. Anger started to well up again in Sam, but he tried futilely to hide it. "You did the best you could, but when all you have to work with is worst filth in existence... Well, it's no wonder your soul is so tarnished."
"I'm sorry I wasn't listening, I was-" Sam started to give his snarky reply, but Lucifer started burning his throat. It didn't matter, Sam didn't need to speak for his strike to hit. Lucifer knew what he was going to say. 'I was distracted by the tarnish on your grace.'
"Yes."

He wasn't prepared, not that he could've imagined what it would feel like. In the same instant he was filled with ice and burned with the most intense light in the history of existence. He couldn't process thought, he was barely able to process sensations.

There were a few far away and simple sensations, but the input came in garbled. Hard. Cold. Dizzy. A sound... it was a voice... his daughter's voice. She was worried about something.

He wanted to find her, but he wasn't even sure where he was or if he was alive. He tried to move, to open his eyes- at least he thought his eyes were shut. There wasn't any image... He wanted to stand up- he didn't understand how he'd even pieced together the fact that he was laying down, but he knew it. Some strong instinct told him so.

A burst of energy surprised him. He didn't know what had just happened, but his natural reaction was to avoid thinking about it too closely. There was a weird oppressive force… Something new and powerful, he couldn't look at it straight on. It was easier to fear its unfamiliarity... He got the strange impression that the force liked it better that way.

Something was wrong- everything was wrong. He knew that Ruby & Alex were hurt, but he wasn't sure how he knew it. It was like he'd seen it without sight, like some sort of fuzzy real time memory. Instinct or that sinking feeling of déjà vu that carried unpleasant truths.

He couldn't see, hear, or smell, but he had impressions of senses. All he had were allusions to knowledge. Everything was run through a filter- that damn force. When he tried to focus on the force he got the feeling that it was staring back at him. The memories of the last few days flashed around him with incomprehensible speed, except of the moments detailing key strategic decisions. He wasn’t dictating the focus, it was the other force. With a moment of terror he realized he wasn't staring into the Abyss so to speak, he was staring into Lucifer.

Recognizing that he was being controlled by Lucifer gave Sam the will to resist. He’d found the thing he needed to fight, he just wasn’t entirely sure how. There was no physicality at all, the only thing he could think to do was to strive with all his will to impose on Lucifer’s presence. Despite the urge to recoil from the fearsome power of the Archangel, Sam pressed on.

Slowly at first, but then more & more he caught glimpses of what he had to assume was reality. He was worried that Lucifer would put up more of a fight to keep him hidden away, but he didn’t. Sam could tell his presence was known, he just wasn’t perceived as a threat. It even felt like he was being
humored at times, given access- It was belittling… but maybe that was half the point.

Lucifer teleported them to the AFE’s Wenatchee base. It had been months since Sam had been there, when he'd told the AFE’s leadership that Lucifer was indeed free. There was some sort of twisted irony that made this the Archangel's first stop... or maybe not. Sam was recalling the meeting, but Lucifer seemed to briefly fixate on the threats made against Alex as well as Sam's longstanding feelings of hatred toward Marcus Barbosa. This was where Marcus was frequently stationed, Lucifer had something in mind.

A rush of anger swept over Sam and for a moment he wanted nothing more than to tear through the base hunting that asshole. He knew there was going to be death and Marcus was better than most to top the list. He was caught up in the overwhelming righteous vengeance- until Lucifer started killing indiscriminately on route to Marcus.

The sound of snapping necks and the sight & smell of charred bodies shook Sam. He didn't want this, Lucifer wanted this. The desire to kill that he'd felt moments earlier weren’t his own feelings, it was Lucifer bleeding into his consciousness. It was chilling to realize that he couldn't trust the legitimacy of his own thoughts & feelings anymore. He couldn't trust himself.

For a second Sam could sense Lucifer studying this change in Sam's self identify, then their mood shifted. Lucifer was reevaluating his priorities- he was no longer trying to humor Sam. He still intended on killing the commanders on the base, but Marcus faded to the background, deprioritized.

Sam felt a wave of incredibly vivid memories flicker around him. Lucifer was looking for something, a piece of information. They settled on a conversation between Ruby & Dean that Sam had overheard. It was about the security at the AFE bases. Sam started feeling panicked at the thought that he was providing Lucifer valuable intel on the AFE's defenses. Maybe Sam hadn’t been intimately involved in the design of the bases’ security, but he wasn’t completely without insight.

As they were making their way to the building that housed the base’s magic defenses, Kaylee appeared in front of them. She was dressed in her royal clothes, angel blade drawn. To anyone else she’d look calm & in control, but Sam saw her littlest tells. She wasn't prepared to kill him. The thought that Lucifer's death march would next lead to his daughter terrified Sam, until the idea was pushed away with a minor feeling of reassurance.

Lucifer wasn't going to kill Kaylee, he wasn't even particularly interested in hurting her. She was an asset to him- not much of one, but in the world there were so few beings of significance that even she was noteworthy. He could teach her, convert her, like he had with Lilith or Cain or so many others.

It be easier this time because of Sam. It wasn’t just the fact that she loved Sam, that she wasn't truly committed to killing them. It was the fact that Sam was her mentor. For subjective decades or centuries she'd studied under her father in Hell. His voice was the voice of wisdom.

If he could convert Kaylee, Alex would almost certainly come too. Lucifer wanted his vessels available, both as an insurance policy and also because they were his. He'd worked hard to make a new bloodline from his confinement in the Cage.

Sam was torn between wanting Lucifer to leave his kids alone and the realization that the Archangel's interest in them was the only reason he was sparing Kaylee's life. The bizarre form of sentimentality was a very small weakness. But Lucifer’s casual concern for her didn’t mean that he would coddle her.

She backed away slightly, justifiably scared of them. When she tried to stop him with telekinesis, but
Sam hardly even felt her effort. He pitied her - in a strange way it almost seemed like Lucifer pitied her too. Sam wanted to protect his daughter while Lucifer wanted forge her into something harder.

In a display of his superior power, Lucifer threw Kaylee into the wall. Both Sam & Lucifer reached out in unison to prevent her head from connecting hard with the concrete wall. Lucifer was offering to help her in exchange for her loyalty. Sam could see the look of concern on her face when they picked up the dropped angel blade - she thought they were going to kill her. He wanted so badly to comfort her, but Lucifer didn't care about her feelings. Even if Sam could somehow communicate with her, how could she ever trust him?

Lucifer left her incapacitated on the sidewalk and returned to his work. As the small building burnt and the protection spells came down, they could sense a group of incoming angels. Sam wanted to move, to get Kaylee out of there, to do something, but Lucifer waited. The Archangel was pleased by the development.

Sam didn't understand why until Lucifer laid eyes on the twenty angels sent to capture him. Feelings of familial bonds & trust started to radiate off of a few of them. It wasn't clear if this was Lucifer's imagination, instinct, or part of angelic telepathy, but Lucifer knew he had supporters in the crowd. All he had to do was let them know he was ready to fight and they would join him, like so many others.

When the angels began fighting, Sam's first thought was of Kaylee. Lucifer had been casually using his powers to keep her there, to watch and learn some perverse lesson in loyalty. She was exposed while Lucifer marveled at the devotion he'd inspired. It took an angel attempting to harm her for Lucifer to step in to actually defend Kaylee. They healed her and sent her a safe distance away. Lucifer had started reclaiming his flock, with a quick warning for his loyal siblings to flee, he incinerated the base as Sam watched in horror.

After the eighth base Sam started feeling himself go numb. He started pulling in from their senses. The death was too much. He'd screamed until there was no strength left in his heart, then he turned inward. He couldn't stop the destruction that he was a party to, so he tried his best to shut out the carnage. He felt ashamed, but he didn't know what else he could do.

Then he heard Kaylee's voice again. She was standing in front of them, ready for another hopeless fight. They were in the plaza of some town that had been converted into an AFE base. He wasn't sure which base - he hadn't even noticed the Archdemon Samhain's arrival on the scene. Almost nothing had registered until he sensed his daughter.

In some ways he didn't understand why she was going to fight them again, yet he knew she was tenacious as they come. Several high ranking demons & angels were at her side, waiting for direction. Sam wanted to warn them off, to scream for them to run, but he couldn't. Once again Lucifer didn't want to kill Kaylee, which was ever so slightly comforting, though the Archangel was noticeably annoyed by her resistance. They were going to fight and Lucifer would be harsher.

She tried to fight. They threw Kaylee backward before she could even strike a blow. Some of her blood smeared on the asphalt where she slid. The memory of Sam bandaging her scraped knee when she was six flickered in their shared consciousness. Lucifer's attention briefly turned to the memory, then back to Kaylee who was staggering away from them. Sam was frantically pulling at Lucifer, trying to get him to let her go, but Lucifer wanted to make some point.

The Archangel followed her down an alley. He criticized her ill-advised attempt to confront him again, then Kaylee lit a ring of holy oil around them. For a moment Sam wanted to cry with joy, until he realized Lucifer wasn't concerned. It wasn't going to work, her trap had failed. With a wave
of their hand the flames were extinguished and nothing was stopping them. He could feel her trying to repel them, he tried to help her, but Lucifer fought against both of their wills.

While Sam struggled to divide Lucifer's focus something strange happened. They abruptly stopped moving. The power felt familiar. They both knew that Alex had joined the fight without even needing to turn around to face him. Lucifer hastily called up the countless memories of Alex using his powers- he was naturally gifted, but had far less discipline than Kaylee.

Sam threw himself into slowing Lucifer down, trying to buy his kids an escape. With some effort he broke Lucifer's hold on Kaylee's ability to teleport. He'd hoped that she & Alex would blink away, but instead she shattered the walls on either side of them. For a second Lucifer flared with respect, intrigue, & anger, while Sam feared for her safety. Thankfully he saw her disappear just before impact.

The pain was overwhelming, and completely unnecessary. Letting in the physical sensation of being crushed was Lucifer punishing him. Another set of memories flickered, triggered by the pain. When he'd been shot by the hunter in Philadelphia. When he'd cracked his skull on the throne room's floor- again thanks to Lucifer... After fighting Uriel, when he asked if he'd died and Ruby told him that he was fine, they were all fine, even the baby- Kaylee. Sam pushed the pain aside as best he could. He needed to stay focused.

Lucifer healed their shared body and threw the rubble away. The Archangel didn't care that some of the debris hit Kaylee & Alex, their injuries were unimportant as long as they weren't immediately fatal. The young vessels would live long enough for him to reach them, then he could heal or hurt-

Lucifer’s train of thought was interrupted by Sam’s observation. He saw Ruby for the first time since saying yes. For a moment Sam was worried that Lucifer would disregard her with a quick death like so many others, but Lucifer wasn't planning to kill her. He was also pleased to see her, she was an investment.

"Leave her alone!" Sam was startled by his own ability to articulate words, even if the cry didn't leave their mind. For the longest day of his life he'd been confined to emotions, senses, & memories. He could speak, not to the world, but speaking to Lucifer was a start.

Ruby moved to stand between them and their kids, trying to protect them. He loved her so much Sam felt overwhelmed by the emotion, then he realized another wave of memories was engulfing him. She was helping Alex walking for the first time in their little cabin. Her comforting Tom after he'd been picked on by some other teens. Her singing lullabies to Sa'dah in every language she knew. Ruby laying naked beside him in bed talking about going to her first moving picture show. Lucifer was accessing those memories too.

Lucifer didn't care about the love & compassion she had for her kids. It didn't even cross his mind how powerful those relationships were. He wanted to strip her down to the barest parts. To take away her insubordinance and passion, leaving her a tool. He didn't value her, he valued what he could do with her. Sam felt sick.

She was standing against them, as hopeless as it seemed, because of that passion. It's what had always set her apart. It's what Sam loved about her. But Lucifer didn't understand that, he couldn't understand that. To love her would be to give her too much respect. And she was defying him, publicly, on a matter that meant so much to him. Almost anyone else would already be dead, but Lucifer wasn't prepared to lose a potential lead on maintaining his bloodline.

They hit her. Sam could feel her soft warm skin before the crack of cartilage & bone. It was such a fleeting & wrong touch, but part of him panicked that it would be the only contact that he'd ever get
again. Then a new fear set in, that it would be far from the last.

His hand pulled back, Lucifer was going to hit her again- at least once, it felt like more. However many it took for her to know her place. But she wasn't going to break, not in front of the kids, not there. Sam knew it, but Lucifer didn't understand.

Sam was screaming in desperation that moved beyond words. He gave up trying to keep himself distinct- he wasn't even thinking of it as a fight between himself & Lucifer, his only thought was to stopping the assault on Ruby. He threw himself into Lucifer, which unbalanced the Archangel for a moment. Their borders blurred and both of them scrambled for control of whatever they could.

Lucifer prioritized their powers, while Sam instinctively tried to seize the body. With his vision no longer filtered through Lucifer, Sam really saw Ruby in terrible detail. Blood gushed from her nose & mouth, the angelic enhanced senses could detect the bruises already forming across her face and where his hand was gripping her shoulder.

She spat a mist of blood in their face. They deserved that and so much more. Lucifer took advantage of Sam's shock and grappled with him for control of the body. They released Ruby, to focus on the internal conflict. But by the time Lucifer had overpowered him, Ruby had activated her spell.

Sam had never felt such relief at pain. Their flesh burned as the blood ate away at them. But more than that, Lucifer was concerned. The Archangel hadn't expected the spell, nor did he know how to deal with it. It was common magic, some quaint little tool- but it had become an incredible nuisance.

They were vulnerable. Lucifer didn't know what else Ruby was capable of, though Sam had some idea. All those feelings of admiration, those treasured memories of Sam's, Lucifer took a second look at them. Sam could feel Lucifer searching for more information on Ruby, but this time he was assessing her as a threat. Dozens of fights where she used magic flashed in his mind. Sam walking in on her teaching Tom blood magic. Her designing the warding that prevented Lucifer's interplanar communication with his vessels. The Archangel had underestimated her, and the entire situation.

There were too many people around, witnessing Lucifer's folly. He wasn't sure how long it would take for him to stop the harm & repair the damage to his vessel. Rather than fumble in public, he left to recover in private. The base would perish on its own, it was more important that he rethink his plan.

Sam couldn't tell how long it took for Lucifer to solve the puzzle of the blood curse. When the spell entered their circulatory system he lost the minor grasp he'd had on most of their senses. For a long while all he felt was Lucifer's frustration, and he hoped that Lucifer felt his bitter satisfaction in return. After the input started coming back, he realized they were in the bunker. Lucifer had brought him home for some reason.

More memories flickered and Sam's heart sank. It was Ruby reading from several books at her desk. Then she was working with Cas to place wards on Dean. There was the goodbye with Dean two days earlier. Lastly, there was a memory not his own- Sam was catching glimpses of Lucifer’s mind... There was a creature of incomprehensible power, with elegant golden wings & a flaming sword casting him into shadow... It wouldn't happen again, Lucifer would make sure of that.

For the briefest moment Sam saw his & Ruby's bed. The sentimentality of the symbol barely even registered with Lucifer, who instead focused on the task at hand. He wasn't in a rush as such. If the others returned home he'd just immobilize them while he finished his objective.
But Sam could feel something unsettling the Archangel. Lucifer's confidence had been fractured and he was trying to be more cautious. He was listening for some sort of threat. Sam pressed the issue and caught flashes of Gabriel and Ruby's spell that had burnt their flesh. Lucifer didn't want to fight Gabriel and he was unaccustomed to magic.

Sam leaned into that fear, shaking Lucifer slightly by highlighting the weakness. While distracted by Sam's maneuver, their hand accidentally dragged along the tops of some of Ruby's spell books knocking one to the floor. With the two divinations books in their possession, he proceeded to collect some of Dean's personal belongings for the spell.

Lucifer considered going to the basement to ensure that the trap was still broken. Sam suspected that Gabriel might be down there, which gave Lucifer pause. That was a fight that neither of them particularly wanted. Lucifer didn't want to risk being near the trap, meanwhile Sam didn't want to risk Lucifer breaking it again. Their mutual concern convince Lucifer to merely leave quietly. He had to go prepare the some spells.

Sam tried to stop Lucifer for executing the locator spells, but the most he accomplished was slowing him down slightly. After a few tries, the Archangel found the right combination of incantations & reagents necessary to locate Michael's vessels. A wave of disgust reflexively spread through them when Lucifer examined one of Dylaniel's feathers before dropping it into the fire.

It wasn't a surprise that Cas chose to fight them, though Sam didn't expect Lucifer to show any restraint. Lucifer wasn't going to kill Cas, not yet. He was going to make an example of him. Destroy Cas in every way imaginable, then drag him before the masses along with the dead bodies of his husband & son. Dean & Dylaniel were too dangerous to be allowed to live, but he could take his time with Cas.

Sam loved his brother-in-law and as much as he tried to stop Lucifer from truly hurting Cas, the desperation paled compared to the fight he'd put up for Ruby or his kids. The hatred that Lucifer held for Cas was oppressive, but Sam could tell it was nothing compared to what the Archangel felt for Dean & Dylaniel. Lucifer was fixated on Michael's vessels and considered Cas to only be an easily dealt with obstacle. Cas was going to live for now, there was still time.

The real surprise was that Gabriel came to stop them. For a moment Sam had hope that Lucifer's reluctance to confront Gabriel meant that Gabriel could defeat them, but Lucifer felt more pity than fear. The two Archangels pleaded with each other to avoid the battle, but Gabriel pressed the issue. Sam could feel Lucifer's resignation- they were going to kill Gabriel. They were removing threats. He stood in their way and could potentially stop them if he was using Ruby's magically assistance. He was definitely trying to cast a spell.

Lucifer had tried to talk Gabriel out of it, but he had knowingly risked his life for Michael's vessels. Sam could feel the betrayal bubbling up in Lucifer. Gabriel was playing at tricks, but Lucifer was done playing. He’d force Gabriel to choose between his brothers, Lucifer & Castiel.

It all happened so quickly that Sam could barely react. Gabriel tired to save Cas and in Lucifer’s eyes chose his side. The angel blade had already pierced Gabriel’s chest before Sam could think to fight for control of the body. He hadn’t expected Lucifer to kill his own beloved brother. Sam had underestimated just how far Lucifer would go to remove threats… and Dean & Dylaniel were in the next room.

Lucifer’s sadness & rage buried Sam’s fear. Somehow this was all Dean’s fault. He was the one who’d corrupted Heaven. He was the one who’d poisoned the angels. He was the one who’d soaked the embers of war between the angels, forcing the angels to slowly kill each other- bringing their family to the brink of extinction.
Sam felt like he was drowning in the Archangel’s hate. Every fight that Dean & Sam had ever had consumed him. Lucifer’s battle with Michael was pure agony, some unfathomable event forced by pure emotion into the mind of just one man. He was losing it again. Spinning and confused in the pain- the lines were blurring. Violence was infecting him, blacking out his vision, but he could feel Lucifer acting on it.

Lucifer was beating someone- Sam didn’t even need to see or hear, he just knew it was Dean. He could sense Lucifer’s satisfaction at each bone breaking. Sam struggled to find something to ground him, but his own rage at Lucifer seemed to get lost in the mire. He was a flame caught inside an inferno.

Then suddenly Lucifer became ever so slightly distracted. The Archangel had caught Dylaniel and studied him in morbid curiosity for a moment. Lucifer was still anger, but in his moment of righteous disapproval Sam could feel their guard lower ever so slightly… and it seemed that his nephew could too.

Dylaniel drew his knife and swung, stabbing them in the chest. Sam could feel the blade pierce his skin. Alarm rose up in Lucifer at the realization that the boy had previously blessed the knife. They could die. Sam wanted it, he wanted it to be over. He fought with Lucifer to let it happen, but when the blade was an inch into their ribs Lucifer shattered it.

Lucifer threw Dylaniel in a burst of anger, then moved to finish both him & Dean. There’s was so little strength left in Sam. He’d spent a small eternity fighting, screaming, clawing, raging against Lucifer- and now Lucifer was moments from killing Dean & Dylaniel and he couldn’t fight against that kind of hate. Then he heard Dean’s voice through the darkness.

“It’s okay, you’re fine. Daddy’s here.”

A wave of memories overtook Sam, but they weren’t of fights or anger. It was Sam saying nearly the same words to Alex just days earlier when he was recovering from his seizure. Sam finally being able to hug his children to comfort them after Sa’dah’s death. Dean whispering reassurances to Dylaniel when he was scared to face a crowd. Sam & Dean taking their kids camping and telling ghost stories. It was Sam & Dean, despite the war, the planes, their crazy lots in life- finding their common bond in the love that they had for their families. It was them being the fathers their own could never be.

Those memories- those feelings were something that Lucifer could never understand. In his confusion, the Archangel falter.

Chapter End Notes

This was a bit trippy to write. Hopefully it hits some feels. Some parts I wanted to go into more detail, but honestly I just wanted to keep this under a million words.
Anonymous asked:
I have a request for a drabble/deleted scene. We had such a sweet moment after Kaylee was born, of Sam and Ruby looking at her and taking her in. Could we have something like that for Sa'dah or Alex?

9/02/14

“Hey cutie. Welcome to the world.” Ruby greeted her son with a fatigued smile.

Sam sat on the bed next to her and held their son so that she could see him. The newborn had dark brown hair & eyes that were reminiscent of Ruby’s meatsuit. He was a little smaller than Kaylee had been, but he wriggled around more.

“What’s his name gonna be?” Dean asked as he ventured into Sam & Ruby’s bedroom. He’d been helping Bobby & Isa distract Kaylee & Tom during the labor, while periodically peeking in to see how it was going. He arrived in time for the final few pushes and Cas handing off his nephew to Sam.

“Alex- Alexander.” Sam answered without looking up from his son.

“It was that or Mephistopheles.” Ruby joked weakly.

“I know we’re all on the same team now, but please don’t name your kid after a demon.” Dean wasn’t exactly concerned about it, but it didn’t hurt to go on the record with that sort of thing.

“Hey, don’t shit on our culture.” Ruby said halfheartedly. “We’re older than every civilization on Earth.”

“There are enough angels living on Earth at this point to make that statement questionable.” Cas countered as he moved to stand beside Dean, who was leaning against a dresser.

“She wasn’t serious.” Sam assured, but Ruby shrugged. She grabbed Sam’s shirt and pulled him closer to her, claiming a kiss before returning her attention to Alex. The two of them started discussing the resemblances between their biological children, then Ruby started inspecting Alex for quali.

“How are you?” Cas whispered to Dean while Sam & Ruby were distracted. He covertly intertwined his fingers with Dean’s.

“I’m happy for them.” Dean replied, but he couldn’t will himself to say anything more on the subject. Cas gently squeezed his husband’s hand in a silent gesture of sympathy. The smile on Dean’s face dimmed slightly, but he quickly recovered. “You two ready for Tom & Kaylee to meet him?”

Sam & Dean walked into Bobby’s cabin, catching the attention of the old hunter & his two adopted
grandkids. The adolescent Tom immediately looked to Sam’s expression for any insight into how Ruby & the baby were doing, but relaxed when he saw his dad’s beaming face. Sam knelt down next to Kaylee, who was playing with some dolls on the floor.

“Are you ready to meet your little brother?” Sam spoke to both of his kids, but directed his attention toward Kaylee. Tom had years of experience being an older sibling, but Kaylee had never even met a child younger than herself. Kaylee looked around uncertainly.

“It’s great having a little brother.” Dean assured his niece while sparing a grin for Sam.

“Yeah, it’s a lot of fun-” Tom agreed.

“I’m a sister.” Kaylee told Tom a bit indignantly.

“There’s no difference between boys & girls-” Tom began.

“Uh, well- that’s a whole different conversation.” Sam hadn’t yet attempted explaining sexes to the four year old.

“Come on,” Tom offered Kaylee his hand, which she accepted. “Let’s go say hi.”

The adults allowed Tom to take the lead in guiding Kaylee back to their cabin. It seemed important to let them fully engage in the relationship with Alex, rather than merely observing. Tom had started helping take care of Kaylee back when she was only a few days old and they ended up being incredibly close. Kaylee hesitated at her parents’ bedroom door, but quietly followed Tom over to the edge of the bed where Ruby was hold Alex. She climbed up onto the bed, then knelt next to her mom.

“Hi.” Kaylee spoke to Alex, then waited for something to happen.

“He’s too little to talk, but he’ll get bigger and be able to do all sorts of things.” Ruby said while angling the sleeping Alex so that Kaylee could get a better look at him.

“What things?” Kaylee studied the baby.

“All the normal people stuff- talking, playing…” Sam tried to explain.

Kaylee nodded, then blinked her eyes black and stared at Alex. She started to extend her hand towards him, but decided against it. After a moment her brow furrowed and she looked at Tom before looking back to Alex.

“He’s not human.” Kaylee observed with some confusion. “Brothers are human.”

“I’m human, but not all brothers are human.” Tom tried to explain, but he wasn’t sure she was old enough to understand the distinction. Kaylee looked between Dean & her dad with her eyes still black. Sam could see her processing the fact that Dean & him were brothers and he wondered how human he actually appeared to her demonic eyes.

“Cas has a ton of brothers and they’re all angels.” Dean oversimplified, but Cas didn’t attempt a nuanced correction during the delicate time.

“Alex is like you- he’s part demon.” Ruby cut to the chase, which seemed to satisfy Kaylee.

“Does he have wings?” Kaylee looked back to Alex thoughtfully.

“Probably, but not yet.”
“Does he have horns?”

“We probably won’t know that kind of stuff for awhile, starlight.” Ruby tried to stave off even more questions. “You didn’t get your wings until you turned four.”

“When he has wings I can help him.” Kaylee suggested, earning a thankfully unseen nervous smile from Sam. Then she looked to Tom. “What do I do now?”

“Well, there’s a lot of stuff that Alex is gonna need to learn.” Tom explained as the adults listened to see if there was anything they should add to his insights. “So, we’re gonna help him and teach him and be very patient with him. It’s hard work growing up- But the most important thing to remember is that even though he doesn’t know how to talk yet, he wants to be your friend.”

“He wants to be my friend?” Kaylee stared hopefully at her little brother.

“Yeah, because he knows you’re really cool.” Tom said as Sam patted his back.

“He’s smart.” Kaylee nodded with approval.

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02/02/19

“Do babies come from Hell?” Alex asked while collecting pillows for a fort Kaylee was going to help him make.

“No- not normally.” Tom rolled his eyes at the prospect of explaining any part of the baby talk to a four year old. He decided to try sidestepping the worst of it as he handed over the two pillows from his bed. “You remember when Dyl was born last year? Dyl was on Earth when he was born.”

“Uncle Cas was sick.” Alex’s eyes widened with concern. “Is mom sick?”

“Cas wasn’t sick, it’s called ‘labor’ and it’s like working to help the baby arrive.” It was somewhat problematic that this pregnancy would only last a bit over three days Earth time. It was hard enough explaining babies even with months of warning time, but their parents had agreed to have the latest kid in Hell, which meant an accelerated timetable for everyone else. “Baby stuff is kinda complicated, but the important thing is that mom’s fine and there’s gonna be a little brother or sister for us.”

“Dyl is little.” Alex gestured to indicate some height, then reconsidered and lowered his estimate.

“Dyl’s our cousin.”

Occasionally the distinction was lost on Alex, but Tom could hardly blame him. They were all a big, slightly confusing family. Their parents weren’t married, but their uncles were. Their grandpa Bobby wasn’t biologically related and Tom knew better than to consider the biological one worth noting. Tom suspected that Alex understood that they were not biological siblings, but Alex had never explicitly asked about it. Then there was the fact that their Uncle Cas had been a woman for almost a year.

“I think we have enough pillows.” Kaylee yelled from the living room, drawing her brothers out of Tom’s room.

“More pillows means more fort.” Alex reasoned as he threw Tom’s pillows onto the pile.

“There’s no way you two are gonna be able to keep this fort when mom & dad get back.” Tom
couldn’t see an unobstructed path across the room. “Newborns are a lot of work even without having to climb over a million pillows.”

“We’ll clean it up before they get back.” Kaylee waved off the worry, then started organizing the cushions by size and firmness.

“If you say so.” Tom doubted their ability to even tell which cabin each pillow & cushion came from, let alone to physically return them all in anything less than an hour. He wasn’t sure he was prepared to end the inevitable lesson in biting off more than they could chew… but in all probability he’d end up bailing them out at the last second. He’d accepted his lot in life as the oldest sibling/cousin years ago.

The front door of the cabin opened and Bobby came in. He paused briefly to take in the mountain of cushions & pillows that had been assembled, then shrugged it off.

“I just got word from your dad.” He announced. “They’ll be back in about ten minutes, with your new sister.”

Per the Council’s request, Ruby stayed in Hell for the birth of their third biological child. Sam stayed with her for the full term except for a quick stop topside to check on the kids. It wasn’t specifically for the kids’ benefit, but more because after several months Hell time, he missed them more than he could stand.

When the baby finally did come, the labor actually proved to be less strenuous than with Kaylee & Alex. It wasn’t clear if that was from personal experience or the Abyssal environment. Either way, Sam & Ruby weren’t about to complain about a six hour, complication-free birth. But the ease of the birth wasn’t the most incredible part. The newborn’s cries were the first to ever sound in Hell, a fact that wasn’t lost on anyone.

Sam could sense a small crowd of Citadel demons hovering outside the parlor, listening for any evidence of the baby demon. But politics was some far away thought that hardly even registered in his mind. He had another daughter.

He was delighted. His happiness was a warmth & life that infected the normally cold, dead landscape. The rare native flowers of the Abyss bloomed. For a moment there was an undercurrent of hope in Hell, though it wasn’t clear if that from Sam’s influence over the realm or the innate potential of new life. Hell was one step closer to self-sufficiency. Hell was one step closer to having a future, no matter what storms it might have to weather.

“What are we calling her?” Sam asked Ruby, who had claimed naming rights even before she’d gotten pregnant.

“Sa’dah.” Ruby gently caressed the light brown hair that bordered on dirty blonde. “I was thinking her nickname could be Sadie.”

“Sa’dah, I like it.” Sam wrapped his arm around Ruby and she rested her head on his shoulder.

There had been some awareness that she might be different than Kaylee & Alex. She’d been conceived under more supernatural circumstances than the other two and brought to term entirely in Hell. The silent assumption was that she’d be more… corrupted by the exposure to Hell, but she wasn’t. She was perfectly normal- to Sam’s eyes, she was just perfect.

“She’s a little miracle, isn’t she?” Sam chuckled, unable to contain the emotions welling up in him.
“All of our kids are.” Ruby corrected. “Four hellion miracles.”

Alex & Kaylee had barely finished stuffing the thirty fifth pillow into Alex’s bedroom when their parents entered the cabin. Tom moved to intercept them while Alex closed the door, hiding the mess. Kaylee nudged Alex forward to see the baby, then followed. Sam & Ruby introduced Sa’dah to her siblings, who all fawned over her tiny form in turn.

Dean & Cas entered the cabin, having been alerted by Bobby of Sam & Ruby’s return. Dean was carrying the 9 month old Dylaniel, who quietly watched everyone. Dean went to sit down on the couch, but hesitated when he noticed the seat cushions weren’t the same height and slightly different colors.

“Mom, dad!” Kaylee tried to preempt any investigation into the couch. “Want to see the nursery? Crowley sent some new furniture & Morrison sent some stuff too.”

“I packed up all the things made of dead animals or brimstone.” Dean said flatly, recalling the unpleasant afternoon. “Rube, it’s in a box in your closet if you want to sort through it.”

“I took the frog bones.” Tom confessed under his breath, then added at a normal volume. “The new crib looks nice.”

They all went into the nursery so that Sam could put down the dozing Sa’dah for a nap. Alex & Kaylee watched her sleep while Tom pointed out the wards from Morrison that had survived the purge. After giving the kids a few minutes to marvel at the latest addition to the family, Dean brought Dylaniel over.

“See Dylan, you’ve got a little friend to play with.” Dean told his son and pointed to Sa’dah.

“It’s nice that they’re so close together in age.” Cas observed.

“Sam, you’ve got to take some time off.” Dean suggested. “I still have a few months with Anael giving me command coverage. We can spend some time together with the kids- it’ll be great.”

It was hard for Dean to imagine anything better than getting some brotherly bonding time over taking care of the kids together. He’d helped take care of Kaylee, Alex, & to some extent Tom. Sam had helped him with Dylaniel. But the idea of the two of them raising their kids together- that seemed like some picturesque scenario he’d never dared to hope for.

“Yeah.” Sam said, more convincing himself than informing the others. “I can switch up my schedule a bit. The Council owes me one.”

“Be careful getting too comfortable you two.” Ruby warned. “Being stay at home dads isn’t really in the cards for the Commander of Earth’s army & the King of Hell.”
Dylaniel walked out of his bedroom to get a juicebox from the kitchen while his dad went to check on Bobby’s plans for the day. In his groggy state, the boy tripped over the edge of an area rug. His wings accidentally manifested and flapped in a reflexive attempt to break his fall. The edge of his right wing swung wide, knocking over a lamp, smashing its glass shade on the hardwood floor.

His left wing was painfully forced backward when he fell into the walkway between the back of their couch & a wall. For a moment he was stuck, face down on the floor, wings wedged awkwardly above him. After collecting himself he managed to dismiss his wings, though he could still feel the aching in his back where the injured wing connected.

He looked at the broken lampshade and was overcome with embarrassment. In a desperate move, he crawled over to it then tried to repair the damage, like his xe, but he couldn’t. When the angelic ability didn’t work from a distance, he tried touching a few of the pieces of glass, cutting his palm in the process. Before he could even react to the pain his dad rushed in the front door, ran over to him, and scooped him up.

“You shouldn’t have been messing with broken glass. It can be dangerous.” Dean explained while cleaning the sizable cut.

“I wanted to fix it.” Dylaniel sat on their bathroom counter while his dad worked on his hand.

“I know. It was a nice thought, but you’re not quite old enough to be doing that on your own.” Dean put an antiseptic & painkilling ointment on the gash, then inspected the extent of the injury. “Your xe isn’t going to be home until tonight and you aren’t gonna run around all day with a split open hand. Do you want me to take you to a base and we can get an angel to heal it or do you want stitches?”

“I get to pick?” Dylaniel asked, surprised by the tiny measure of responsibility after hurting himself.

“You tried to do a big kid thing- maybe it went bad, but maybe it’s time you started getting some practice with making big kid decisions.” Dean smiled at his son before quickly adding. “When an adult’s there to help you.”

“Stitches.” Dylaniel said after thinking it over.

“You sure?” Dean raised an eyebrow at the choice. “Angel healing hurts less.”

“Yes, stitches.” He wanted his dad to be the one to help him. Dean shrugged and pulled the first aid kit from the cupboard. “It was an accident.”

“I didn’t think you broke the lamp on purpose.” Dean assured as he started threading the curved needle. “Do you want to tell me what happened?”

“I tripped.” Dylaniel looked at the cut rather than his dad’s face. “My wing hit it.”

“You had your wings out inside the house?” Dylaniel was expecting his dad to scold him for breaking the rules. His cousins’ wings were haphazard enough to have established the rule before he was even born, but in terms of wing size they had nothing on him. He tried to follow all the rules,
yet the restrictions of his wings was extra important especially when he was around his dad.

“I didn’t mean to.” He didn’t want to admit that they manifested because he was startled.

“It’s okay. You’ll get the hang of it.” Said the man without wings.

Dylaniel watched his dad sew up his palm with a clinical fascination. His dad had experience with that sort of stuff because he was a human. Things came harder to humans and in many ways they were weaker than angels, but the fact that they had to sew themselves up occasionally made them seem tougher in a weird way. It was one of the things he liked most about humans, they somehow kept doing stuff even when they were literally held together with string. Now he was going to try being held together with string too.

There were so many things he didn’t understand about himself. He didn’t know what he was supposed to be able to do. He wasn’t even sure that he had a preference for which parent he’d take after, he just wanted to know what he was and what that meant. In many ways he was like his dad or his xe, but at the same time he wasn’t like either of them.

After wrapping the newly stitched hand in gauze Dean took Dylaniel outside to enjoy the summer day. Ruby stopped by to chat with Dean for a bit, so Dylaniel sat quietly on their cabin’s porch. He looked at his bandaged hand and tried to think of other human things that he might try someday. It was still the morning, so he experimented with yawning, but stopped when he felt the pain where he’d strained his wing. A small sigh escaped him while he lowered his head in disappointment.

Sa’dah sat down next to him and watched him in mimicking silence. She could see he was sad about something. It had taken her almost three years to figure out the subtleties of his facial expressions & body language, but she was easily one of the few experts in the field beyond Dylaniel’s parents. As much as she wanted to give him a hug, it was clear that he wasn’t in a mood to be touched. After a bit of contemplation, she ran off to a little garden by her family’s cabin, then returned with a single petal from a wild rose.

“It’s soft.” She held out the petal to him in offering. “It’s a hug.”

He accepted the rose petal and held it carefully in his injured hand. His fingertips gently touched the rose petal. Sa’dah smiled hopefully at him.

“Thank you. I like this hug.”

“I made for you.” Sa’dah explained proudly. “Especial.”

Later that night, Dylaniel’s xe repaired the lampshade while he watched. He could see the innate magic that his xe used, but it wasn’t like the magic Ruby & Tom used. The witches used recipes & words that could be taught. His xe, and all angels, they were made knowing how to use their magical abilities- none of them had been able to explain to him how he was supposed to use powers… if he even had them at all.

Dylaniel wasn’t sure he’d ever know how to repair damage like an angel. In some ways that thought didn’t bother him, that would just make him more like his dad. But one aspect of the limitation did give him pause. He wanted to protect the hug that Sa’dah had given him.

After some searching, he found a mason jar in which to store the hug. He placed it on his bedside table next to his nightlight. A month later, there were over twenty hugs in the jar.
Prompt: Ruby bonding with baby Kaylee

Prompt: So I have a small request for a deleted scene, if there's time. Ruby is a demon who didn't originally plan to stay with Kaylee. Could we have a scene of Ruby and baby Kaylee, where Ruby realizes how much she really loves her.

05/10/2010

“Come on cutie, it’s too nice a night to stay inside.” Ruby said as she picked up Kaylee from her crib.

Sam was pulling a shift down in Hell and Tom was watching a movie over at Dean’s cabin, so it was just the two of them for a few hours. Ruby carried her six-month-old daughter out into the warm summer air. She pulled up a rocking chair on her cabin’s porch and rested Kaylee on her chest. Kaylee reached up and gently grabbed at Ruby’s face.

“Watch it kid or I’ll nibble your fingers.” She softly started gumming Kaylee’s fingers while making ‘nomming’ noises.

Kaylee giggled, then mumbled something vaguely resembling words. Ruby smiled down at her.

“Pretty soon you’re gonna be saying stuff that your dad & I can understand. That’s gotta be exciting for you.”

There was a streak of light in the sky that caught Kaylee’s attention. She tried to lift herself up, but couldn’t quite turn herself around. Ruby helped reposition her so that she was reclined on Ruby’s chest and they were both staring up at the sky.

“That was a shooting star- it’s actually just some crap burning up in our atmosphere, but people like to call it a star because it’s bright. People get tricked pretty easily- mostly humans, but people in general.” Ruby pointed up at the moon and Kaylee reached out for her hand. "That big bright thing is the moon. You probably don’t have good enough eyes, but there’s a rabbit shape on the moon-fuck, you probably don’t know what a rabbit is… Not that it really matters, you have no frame of reference for anything I’m saying right now anyway…“

A silence stretched between them because Ruby didn’t know how to carry an extended conversation by herself. She slowly rocked the chair and felt a small pang of guilt.

“Your dad would know what to say.”

Sam was always talking to Kaylee, reading to her, making her laugh. Some aspect of it came naturally to him in a way that it didn’t for her. Sam had loved Kaylee even before she was born. He didn’t hesitate to do whatever he thought might make their daughter smile. It secretly awed her to see how good he was with children considering his own upbringing. He was striving to make up for his own father’s failures- Sam was a million times better than John. Sam was better than her.

She cared about Kaylee, she was protective of her, but there was something missing from their
relationship. She wasn’t sure how to be vulnerable to Kaylee. Sam was probably the only person that she’d ever bared her soul -so to speak- to. She’d shared her past with Sam and might very well continue to share her future with him too, but that future included this tiny person that she barely knew. Sam wasn’t scared by that… but maybe she was.

She didn’t remember her parents or most of her childhood. It was too short, with too much pain. When she went to Hell, the demons who worked her over tried to strip away all of her happiness, compassion, & love. They wanted to tear away all the good to leave the broken & desecrated soul-just another demon bound by the covenant of the Maji. But while trimming away the undesirable parts of her humanity, they’d left the reason why she’d sold her soul. The Torqean demons who worked her over only saw the anger & need for vengeance and left that piece untouched. They didn’t look past the pain to see her passion to save her friends & family, which fueled her wrath. That passion survived, some small capacity to love.

When she’d formed her coven, she’d had the chance to get her claws into the witches’ souls. It would’ve earned her some favor in Hell, but she hesitated. She had become a demon trying to save the people closest to her, her improvised family, and she wanted more than anything to protect them. Her family was her anchor to humanity even when she was inhuman.

But she’d lost so much of her family in the natural course of human mortality and then in the massacre six months earlier. There had been death for centuries and far too much recently. The surviving members were all so young and hadn’t learned all the stories of their parents, of their people. Countless histories had been destroyed with the deaths of the older coven members- and Ruby was old, nearly all of her life was in those histories. There was no way to recover all that had been lost. There was no mending those wounds.

Now she was the sole keeper of the past. Only she knew the story of the journey from Haiti to America or even just the story of how Tom’s parents met. She’d been alive for almost three centuries Earth time, longer counting her time in Hell. There was so much that she’d experienced & learned and all of that value was as fragile as her survival. She looked up at stars and held Kaylee’s delicate form with a little more reverence.

“When I was your age, my mom or dad must’ve shown me these same stars & moon. I was half a world away, before humans harnessed electricity… and I saw the same stars we’re looking at now. The stars are always up there, even when you can’t see them. No matter how old you get or who’s around to look at them with you- they’re something special.”

Kaylee gripped Ruby’s thumb and made an almost cooing noise. Ruby smiled down at the strange little bundle of life she’d helped create. Of course Sam would love Kaylee, he loved easily and by all reasonable measures Kaylee was loveable. Ruby knew it, but… so much of her existence had been losing people she cared about- her parents, her allies, her friends, her coven… Her past was a field of tombstones and how was she supposed to trust the tiny sliver of her heart to such a frail little thing that couldn’t even communicate?

Kaylee reached up at the sky, trying to grab at a second shooting star, then she started mumbling some more gibberish. Someday, probably soon, Kaylee would start to actually talk. If she was anything like Sam, she’d be an endless source of questions. And if she was anything like Ruby, she’d finish mixing the potion before finishing reading the recipe. Little Kaylee, who was already grabbing at shooting stars, would undoubtedly want to turn over every rock to see the whole world.

So much of Kaylee’s life was in the future and so much of Ruby’s life was in the past. The only way Kaylee would grow was through the help given to her and the only way Ruby would grow was
through giving that help. The past wasn’t Ruby’s secret to protect or her burden to bear alone. That vulnerability of caring wasn’t to be shied away from because that bond of family & friends had given her strength through the sea, whip, flame, Earth, Hell, and back again. If she could do just one thing for her daughter, she wanted to give her that strength. She wanted to share three centuries of the past and however much of the future they could.

“You might not know this because I haven’t practiced with Tommy in a few months, but we don’t have to speak English in the house. Tommy & I speak something called dagbani- your dad doesn’t speak it, but maybe he can learn with you. It was the first language I ever learned to speak. I can teach you all twelve if you want, but right now we’re gonna start with something easy.” Ruby pointed at the sky. “The stars are called saŋmarsi, and the moon is ŋmarga… okay, maybe something with fewer syllables. Your dad is your ba & I’m your mom, which is your ma.”

Ruby sighed when Kaylee started wriggled in her arms. She worried that her first sincere attempt to share something of deep personal value with her daughter would end with Kaylee fussing. But instead Kaylee leaned her head back so that she could see Ruby.

“Ma.” Kaylee said while reaching for Ruby’s face.

Ruby was speechless. As far as she knew, that was the first time Kaylee had spoken anything more than strings of mumbling. Everyone had expected her first word to be something along the lines of daddy. Sam spent all his free time playing with her, that just made sense. But there the two of them were, sharing that milestone together.

Another shooting star flew across the sky, causing Kaylee to giggle and grab at the streak of light.

“Don’t worry, you’ll catch it someday.” Ruby kissed the top of Kaylee’s head. “You’re something special.”

Kaylee rolled onto her side, then clung to Ruby’s shirt. She blinked slowly while saying ‘ma’ several times before falling asleep in Ruby’s arms. Despite the periodic streak of light in the night sky, Ruby didn’t bother looking up. She only had eyes for her daughter.

"You’re my starlight.”
Cas glanced into Dylaniel’s bedroom. The boy was sitting on the floor, back against the side of his bed. His arms wrapped around his legs, holding them to his chest. A few toys laid on the floor in front of him.

Cas sat down on the little bed, next to where Dylaniel was huddled. He considered patting Dylaniel’s head or touching his shoulder to provide some comfort, but he didn’t want to presume that Dylaniel was accepting of physical contact. Instead he leaned forward, resting his elbows on his knees.

“Are you upset about Sa’dah?” Cas asked, knowing that on some level his son was undoubtedly upset about Sa’dah’s death. It had only been two weeks since she had died and their family had relocated to the bunker. Cas often wondered if the lack of physical reminders of his cousin increased or decreased the pain Dylaniel experienced.

“Yes.”

“Can you talk to me about your feelings?”

“Yes.”

Cas waited for almost a minute, but Dylaniel didn’t elaborate. The boy was in one of his extremely literal moods. Cas didn’t find those episodes nearly as alarming as Dean. It was understandable that in times of stress one wouldn’t want to read too much into statements. Though humans often had to interpret many non-telepathic forms of nonverbal communication.

Their son’s difficulty with the full range of human communication could be a significant handicap if he didn’t develop angelic forms of communication to compensate. Every few weeks Cas had tried to telepathically connect with Dylaniel as he would an angel, but so far the attempts were unsuccessful. He hadn’t told Dylaniel that he was trying it, the six year old was already under enough pressure.

“Were you playing with your toys?” Cas asked, hoping to find a topic that Dylaniel actually wanted to discuss.

“I was… no.”

“Is something wrong with your toys?”

“I’m not sure.”

“What do you mean?”

“They don’t work.”

Cas looked at the toys. He reached down and picked up a plastic triceratops out of the group. None of the toys appeared to have complex moving parts or required batteries. No pieces were missing or poorly aligned.
“Your toys seem to be functional.

“I don’t… know how…” Dylaniel’s eyes turned down in embarrassment, but Cas couldn’t understand what his son was trying to express.

“What do you mean?”

“Sadie told the stories.”

“I remember that she used to tell stories often.” Cas acknowledged. He would regularly see Sa’dah excitedly acting out the most fantastic stories for Dylaniel’s amusement. She seemed to relish the challenge of making him smile.

“I don’t know any.”

“Well, when she was telling you the stories she wasn’t recalling anything from memory. She was making the stories up, pretending.”

“How do I pretend?” Dylaniel’s question confused Cas.

“Pretending… It’s the word for when you play or act in a certain way and it’s not based in reality. I expect it’s a lot like dreaming, but you have more volition because you are awake.”

Dylaniel’s brow furrowed so much that Cas worried that he was about to start crying. The nephilim looked around the room uneasily, then held himself tighter.

“How do I dream?”

Cas stared at Dylaniel in surprise. He knew that nephilim slept, but only then did it occur to him that in six years Dean & he had never once had to comfort Dylaniel after a nightmare. Dylaniel wasn’t asking for a technical explanation, he was asking for instructions.

“When you sleep, do you see images or experience any other sensory input?”

“No.” Dylaniel looked up at his xe. “Am I supposed to?”

“I don’t know.” Cas climbed down onto the floor, then extended his arms to Dylaniel. “Can I have a hug?”

Dylaniel nodded, then scooted over to his xe. Cas wrapped his arms around him. The angel carefully wrapped his incorporeal wings around them both, though he wasn’t sure whether Dylaniel was even aware of them.

“Am I broken?”

“No, you’re a miracle. We’re just still learning how all the pieces fit together.” Cas kissed Dylaniel’s forehead, then tucked a few stray blonde hairs behind his ear. For a moment, Cas could see a resemblance to Dean in their son’s anxious darting eyes & slight nostril flare. It wasn’t as heartwarming a resemblance as their common smile, but it made Cas beam lovingly just the same. “You’re so much like your dad.”

“Does dad dream?” Dylaniel asked, slightly comforted by the comparison and his xe’s calm & gentle tone.

“Yes,” Cas delicately turned Dylaniel’s face up to his. “but that doesn’t mean there’s anything wrong with you. Your dad wouldn’t want you to have his dreams.”
“Why not?”

“They scare him. They remind him of the bad things that happened to him in the past. More than anything else, he wants you to have a happy future.”

That night when Dean tucked Dylaniel into bed he had a surprise. He pulled a comic book from his back pocket. Dean laid down on the bed next to his son and they read through the issue together.

“What happens next?” Dylaniel asked when they reached the cliffhanger at the end of the issue.

“We can find that out together tomorrow night. Does that sound good?” Dean grinned slyly.

“Yes.”

“Awesome.” Dean stood up, tucked the blanket around Dylaniel’s shoulders, then kissed him on the forehead. As he went to turn off the light he almost said ‘sweet dreams’, but caught himself. “Sleep well.”

Chapter End Notes

I don’t know if this sort of interaction between Cas & Dyl is sweet or painful after chapter 65.
Flora & Fauna Of Hell

Chapter Summary

I could write endlessly about Hell culture & politics. The whole fauna of Hell issue ended up not making it into J&F in a significant way (so far). Each time I thought of including it, it felt like too much of a long aside. So, ta da- another deleted scene.

08/02/2012

Sam sat cross legged on the floor of the throne room staring at a sapling that had sprouted from one of the hundred cracks he’d inflicted over the last year. He was pretty sure it was a peach tree, that’s what he’d been trying for and it certainly looked like it could be a fruit tree. His fingers gently touched its tiny leaves as he mused on the issue of why his plants always seemed to die. It would probably last for at least a week, but for some reason nothing ever took.

Maybe it was just the nature of Hell. Everything was dead, except for him. Things existed there, but to say that they lived there would be pushing the term to its breaking point. Death was an intrinsic part of being a demon, being Abyssal… but not really.

The Abyss was also home to hellhounds & imps, and he was pretty sure they weren’t the demonic souls of dogs or whatever the hell imps were most similar to. Hell didn’t collect animal souls. The hounds & imps were native- they were possibly alive. Sam had no idea how to locate imps, but there were hellhound trainers in Central.

He had yet to actually bother looking into hellhounds. Memories of running from the beasts had made him reluctant to finally look one in the eyes. They were easy to avoid because they were kept in large kennels except when they went topside to collect on contracts. As such, he didn’t know what to expect despite having been King for years.

They were massive, some coming up to his own chest. Their bodies were muscular, with pointed heads, large goblinoid ears, red eyes, and sharp teeth. Black fur hung in strange tattered remnants from charcoal grey leathery hide. Spikes of grey bone broke through the flesh at most of their joints and along the spine.

After an hour of searching, he saw what he’d been looking for, a hellhound pup. It was no bigger than a labrador puppy. It’s bizarre ears were oversized and hung awkwardly. The red glow to its eyes wasn’t as bright as an adult’s. The black fur coat was just a thin fuzz coating its grey skin.

Most surprisingly, it was playing. The pup hopped around the ankles of an older hellhound, nipping at its heels. Its tiny needle-like teeth occasionally broke the skin, but it didn’t seem to intend any real harm. After a few good bites, the adult began snarling at the pup and swatted it away.

“Are the pups the result of sex or is there some other breeding method?” Sam asked the nearby trainer.

“Sex, it just doesn’t happen very often. Hounds are almost always female. We’ve had three males in the last hundred years.”
“Do the pregnancies take very easily?”

“No, maybe one a year.”

The pup bounced around, then bit at a point on the adult’s leg that must’ve been particularly sensitive. The adult growled and wheeled on the pup, which tried to run for cover, but the enclosure didn’t have any good hiding spots.

“Stop! Leave her alone!” Sam yelled at the adult hellhound in Abyssal. He wasn’t exactly sure what he expected, but the hound hesitated and watched him uncertainly.

“Your move, sir.” Commented the trainer, who was ready to spring into action.

“Stay there.” Sam commanded the adult hellhound, then he opened the gate to the enclosure. Four hellhounds watched him and he could hear a low growling coming from the group. He snapped his fingers and pointed at them in warning. The growling quieted, but none of them relaxed into a sitting posture- they were coiled, ready to spring.

The pup cowered in the corner. Sam picked her up, then started carrying her toward the exit. When the other hounds realized what was happening they bared their teeth at him, but didn’t attack. After sealing the enclosure behind him Sam looked down at the pup.

“Are you planning on keeping her out?” The trainer asked.

“It depends, were they pissed at me for stealing their treasured child?” Sam nodded toward the hounds.

“Probably not, I’d say that she wouldn’t cut it. Hounds kill more than half their pups- it keeps the species strong. She’s a runt and they know it.”

“Yeah, I was a runt too.” Sam said, mostly to the pup.

Sam scratched behind one of her floppy ears. She playfully nipped at his hand, drawing blood, which she started licking excitedly.

“Any suggestions for getting her to not bite me?”

“She’s a hound. She’s gonna bite & claw someone every once in awhile.” The trainer shrugged. "Maybe just let her get it out of her system on some prisoners occasionally?"

He named her Garm. It took a little practice, but Sam managed to get her decently trained. He had to give her access to prisoners for at least four hours out of the day otherwise she’d get antsy. But aside from that she was fairly well behaved. She stayed close to Sam as best she could, but somehow knew not to touch the Seat.

When Sam scolded someone she’d pick up on his tone and growl at them. It was adorable more than anything, until she got to be waist height, then he had to admit that she only looked cute to him. Just like her master, Garm didn’t stay a runt. She eventually came up to Sam’s armpits, making her one of the tallest hounds.

When Alex turned five, the lead trainer gave him a saddle for his birthday. Sam & Ruby had initially been against the idea of Alex using Garm as a mount, but the boy seemed to have a way with hounds.
After learning as much as he could about hellhounds, Sam went in search of the imps. Imps were the rarest of the Abyssal species—well second rarest if Sam & his kids were included in the numbers. Demons had a population in the tens of millions, hellhounds clocked in around two hundred, Knights totaled fifty two including those loyal to Lilith, but imps… the best guess was five.

Imps weren’t part of the system, by all accounts they were feral, which could’ve explained their low numbers. They were more or less trapped in a confined space with an industrial civilization. Their territory was completely encroached upon.

Sam searched for them for subjective decades before giving up. It had seemed too much to hope that the species had survived somehow. Then one day years later he spotted one by chance.

He was strolling along the exterior walkways of the Citadel with the 18 month old Sa’dah when she started excitedly saying ‘bird’. He picked her up, then tried to follow her gaze to the thing that had caught her attention. Three winged creatures were circling the roof of the Citadel. When she started reaching out for them he decided to take her inside. The last thing he needed was for her to figure out how to manifest wings around the creatures. He asked Mir to watch her for a moment while he made his way to the rooftop.

It was covered in something resembling orange and yellow clover. A few dozen spindly trees sparsely ordained with giant black flowers grew every forty feet or so. A little ways off he could see five of the creatures perched in one of the trees.

Their wings were bat-like, but they also had two tiny primate arms with comparatively large claws. Their legs were like a bird, but their tails were reptilian. The heads reminded him of one of the snubbed nose monkeys, but with fangs & solid white eyes. Each of them had a different color pattern to their hide, but the palette were all in greys, black, & reds.

The imps were meticulously extracting seeds from the large black flowers and eating them. At first he thought one was throwing the occasion seed over its shoulder until it turned around. There was a baby imp clinging to its back between the wings. Nestled among the orange clover, he could see the remains of what looked like a nest… and a second.

"There were other Abyssal- other species, right?” Sam asked Shola while watched Sa'dah playing in the throne room.

“It’s hard to say exactly how many there were, but at one point at least ten species existed, not including your variation.” Shola offered what she’d heard. "We might have some information in the archives, possibly even some first hand accounts."

The archives within the Citadel were massive. Many of the documents had to be stored in an incorporeal format in order to accommodate the sheer quantity. The most important documents had hard copy originals, in addition to the backup, which took up approximately 250 million scrolls. When the incorporeal records were factored in Hell’s grand archives contained about 13.2 trillion documents and grew every day. With the exception of whatever Heaven deemed worth noting, it was the greatest intellectual asset in existence… and almost no one ever utilized it.

Sam had Revner, the senior archivist, guide him through the labyrinth to the earliest internal records they had available. They gathered hundreds of annals and transcriptions, which Sam brought back to his office to review.

After what must’ve been weeks of researching he found an account of something called a monuth. It was a bird of prey that stood as tall as a human. They were said to be born from the ash wings
produced when an angel died in its vessel. They ate the souls of the living and served as guardians of despair. Sam reread the previous line of the journal entry, unable to discern some nuance.

"Revner, can you look at this entry for me? I don’t understand the phrase ‘guardians of despair’. Does that mean that they somehow nurtured the feeling of despair or that they protected souls who were experiencing despair?" Sam asked as he laid the scroll out before the ancient demon. Zie leaned in close to read the handwritten entry. Sam could sense zir curiosity & doubt. After a moment, zie unraveled the scroll further, then grinned.

“I can’t say, but you could go ask someone who’s seen one.” Zie pointed to the ending of the entry.

'When its throat was slit, white blood seemingly made of many screaming souls poured to the ground of Hell. The blood melted through the dungeons of the Upper & Lower Pits, as well as eating through the blade of the honored Knight Mir.'

Sam started rolling up the scroll, to take it with him as he looked around for Mir, but his eyes stopped on another hastily read section. Supposedly, monuth were ‘born from the ash wings produced when an angel died in its vessel’.

“Revner, I’m also going to need all the records we have on the deaths of the four angels who assisted in rescuing my brother from Alastair.”
Dylaniel walked along the sidewalk of the AFE base beside his dad. They were on their way to surprise Cas, who'd been unable to break away from a project for the last two days. He missed his xe, though Dean & Ruby had tried to make up for the absence with several fun activities in lieu of his normal routine of studying & combat training.

The pair were casually stopped several times on the way to Cas’ office. Dylaniel was used to people asking his dad questions at every opportunity. His dad was an important member of the AFE, just as he would be someday. He was less comfortable when the people speaking with his dad would steal glances at him. The worst thing was when occasionally someone, usually an angel, would unabashedly come up to them with the purpose of looking at him. His dad offered some minor protection from the social interactions, but he'd explained that it could take a long time for people to get used to him. It might be easier for Dylaniel in the long term to learn to endure it.

When they got to the building with his xe's office, Dylaniel saw four adults caring for three infants and two women with very large bellies in a few side rooms. He immediately recognized the three infants as nephilim. They were like his little... Hael called Miro his godsister, but he didn't understand what God had to do with her. In their home, Cas’ father & Dean’s father were spoken of with comparable rarity & resentment.

Cas was so happy to see them that he wrapped Dylaniel in his arms and pulled him onto his lap. Dylaniel got to tell his xe about how he scored three points on his dad during sparring practice with a knife. Then they had the rare treat of ice cream. Tomorrow Tommy would be returning from a month-long stay with a coven outside of San Juan and he’d promised to give Dylaniel his first dirt bike lesson. Cas promised that he’d try to return home by late morning, so that he could be there for the milestone.

After saying goodnight to Cas, Dylaniel & his dad went to one of the base's cafeterias for dinner. Dean collected two trays of human food, handing one to his son. The move caused a few whispers from onlookers, who apparently weren't sure what nephilim ate. When Dean noticed that Dylaniel was getting embarrassed by the strangers talking about him, he mercifully took their meals to a private room.

"You've put up with enough gawking for one day." Dean said as he shut the door. “I'm proud of you for dealing with it so well.”

"They watch me because I'm a nephilim?" He knew that most people had never seen nephilim before.

"I'm sure some of it is because you're The Sword Of Heaven- they stare at me sometimes. I don't think that's ever gonna lose its novelty for some people, especially the angels. But I think once nephilim become more common they'll stop staring at you so much."

"Why were there nephilim at xe's? I've never seen so many before."

"We're trying to make a system to help them & their parents. There's starting to be a good number of you guys now, the AFE just wants to make it easier for couples to have nephilim."

"Is it hard having me for a son?" Dylaniel's brow furrowed.
"No- oh, Dylan. That's not what I meant. I'm sorry." Dean immediately dropped his fork and hugged Dylائيل. "I meant it can be hard for angel-human couples to make a nephilim."

"Make?"

Dean paused. He'd just accidentally walked right into it. He was dangerously close to the sex talk. For a second his brain struggled to think of so way out of it. But Dylائيل wasn't dumb, he'd know there was some topic being avoided and it'd make everything that much worse.

"Yeah. The parents- a couple has to work together to make their babies."

"How do you make a baby?" Dylائيل was imagining some kind of sorcery. That was the way most complicated stuff that wasn't machines seemed to happen.

"Well, it's a physical… biological process. The traditional way it works is with a man & a woman..." Dean chewed his lip at the realization that in a few short sentences he'd already opened a can of worms. "You know there's a difference between boys & girls, right?"

"Girls don't have penises or balls." Through necessity Dean had had several conversations with his son about privates, but it was always a little amusing watching the soft spoken Dylائيل talk so bluntly about penises.

"That's not always the case, but we can talk about the exceptions later." Dean wasn't sure he should get into the topic of trans people until he'd established some foundational knowledge. "Do you know what girls have instead?"

"Periods." Dylائيل answered with confidence. Kaylee was always complaining about having those, whatever they were.

"You're not wrong..." Dean scratched his neck. This conversation was proving harder than he'd thought. "but that isn't what I meant. Do you know what a vagina is?"

"No." Dylائيل watched his dad make a few shapes with his hand while thinking about what to say. As the pause stretched, he wondered how much his dad really knew about girl parts.

"Okay, between girls' legs they have a hole that boys don't have, it's called a vagina. When a boy & a girl-" Dean caught himself, then started again. "When a man & a woman want to make a baby, the man puts his penis in the woman's vagina. Then some stuff comes out of the man in the woman and it mixes with some stuff that's already in the woman to become what eventually turns into a baby."

Dylائيل stared at his dad in horror. The whole thing sounded like a painful & disgusting process. He couldn't understand why someone would do that, let alone how they would figure that out in the first place.

"Fuck." Dean let out a sigh. He knew that that was a horrible explanation, but it wasn't like he'd had time to outline an answer or anything. Maybe he could undo some of the damage. "You look concerned. I did a bad job of explaining it and I'm not sure where to start, so how about you tell me what's worrying you."

"How does a penis get in a hole? Why is he peeing in her? How does the stuff that's already in the woman get in the woman? How does the baby get out of the woman? Did those big women have babies stuck in them?" Dylائيل's face scrunched in confusion. "Do you or xe have a vagina?"

"Oh my god..." Dean covered his face with a hand. He was nowhere near prepared to tackle all
this. Maybe he could rope Sam & Ruby into helping? They'd had the sex talk three times... Cas could probably handle it without doing as much harm as him. "That's a lot of questions. This is a really big topic and your xe is better at explaining this kind of stuff-"

"Are you embarrassed?" His dad usually tried to make his xe do stuff that he was too embarrassed to do. Humans could be very sensitive.

"A little, yeah."

"Is making a baby embarrassing?"

"No. It's just most people don't talk about the logistics so directly." Dean tried to remember how he'd learned about sex. "Most humans have this kind of direct talk like once or twice growing up and the rest you just sort of pick up through movies, tv, experimenting when you're older-"

"Experimenting?" Dylaniel said in disbelief. "Why don't humans just follow instructions?"

"It's call being a teenager, it's like a human tradition to fumble through everything." Dean admitted, then added. "Also, not everyone is the same and experimenting helps you learn what you like... Are you gonna let me off the hook for now?"

Dean watched Dylaniel, hoping that their conversation would be allowed to die. Dylaniel prodded his small plate of pasta with his fork for a moment, then looked up at his dad.

"But how does the penis get in the hole?" Dean ran his fingers through his hair while trying to summon some composure.

"You know how sometimes your penis gets hard? Well the reason it gets hard is because someday when you're older it'll make it easier to put it in someone-" Dean cringed at the hypocrisy of his statement. "but you don't have to be the one that's putting your penis in other people- I'm just saying, biologically speaking the reason why penises in general get hard is to make it easier to put it into another person."

"To make a baby?" Dylaniel didn't understand why his dad was talking about putting penises in people when they needed to be women with vaginas to make babies.

"It doesn't have to be for the purpose of making a baby. Most of the time, when two..." Dean briefly considered including an exception for relationships or sexual groups of more that two people, but stopped himself. That was another conversation to be tackled later. "people do things that involve each other's penises or vagina... areas, it's called sex. Adults more often than not have sex without trying to make a baby."

"Why?"

"Because usually when you get old enough doing that feels good and you want to make the other person feel good too."

"Do you have sex with people?" Dylaniel asked, trying to get some sort of grasp on the strange concept.

"Just with your xe. It's an intimate experience, meant for couples... if an angel & their vessel both are in a relationship with another person, then that's actually..." Dean noticed himself getting off on a tangent. "Listen, Dylan there are a lot of exceptions and weird rules to this whole thing. The different species makes it even more complicated. It's hard to explain, so take everything I'm saying with a grain of salt."
"I have a lot of questions."

"I'm sure you do." Dean suspected that Dylaniel always had questions, even when he was in his quieter moods. And he was definitely not in a quiet mood. Bodily topics always had a way of inciting him, it was probably getting some new measurable distinction between him & angels.

"I have at least twenty questions." Dylaniel informed his dad.

"Is there any way we can put this on hold until I can find you some books with diagrams or your xe can help me out with this?"

"I..." Dylaniel opened & closed his mouth, debating whether he'd agree to his dad's terms.

"Is something bothering you so much that you need to know the answer right now?"

"Do you or xe have a vagina?" Dean had intentionally overlooked the question earlier. He could see where that line of questioning might be going.

"No, your xe's vessel & I both have penises."

"How did you make me without a vagina?" Dylaniel asked, apparently still caught up on the idea of conception more than sex.

"Your xe & Auntie Hael traded vessels, so that he was using a female vessel- which has a vagina. You & Miro were both made in the same vessel, but you have different xes & dads. Does that make sense?"

"I think so." Dean relaxed slightly at the prospect of being done with the topic. "How do you & xe have sex if neither of you have a vagina?"

It was like an alarm was blaring in Dean's brain.

"Sex isn't just putting a penis in a vagina. It's lots of things."

"Like what?"

"Well, it's trying to make the other person feel good by touching different parts of their body in different ways. Depending on how the couple do it they can make both of them feel good at the same time." Dean felt like that wasn't a bad evasion, until Dylaniel continued.

"Do you & xe touch each other's penises?"

Dylaniel had once turned a corner to see his parents kissing. They were fully clothed, but his dad was pinning his xe to the wall. As they kissed, his dad pressed his crotch against his xe's crotch. When they noticed him, they both readjusted their pants and his dad blushed for several minutes... He was blushing right then too.

"Yeah, we do." Dean answered while debating whether he was going to draw the line at explaining what a blow job was. He generally liked to be as honest as possible with his son when directly asked about something, but that felt like it could easily be the basis of Dylaniel refusing goodnight kisses for the foreseeable future.

"And that makes you feel good?"

"Yeah."
"I don't like when people touch me." His dad turned a little pale at the statement.

"You mean normal touching- Nobody's touched you below your underwear, right?"

"Normal touching." Dylaniel's answer made his dad relax visibly.

"I want you to remember that if anyone tries to touch you below your underwear without your permission, you're allowed to kill them." Dean said, then waited for Dylaniel to nod in understanding before returning to a lighter tone. "When you're older you might like having some people touch you and probably not just normal touching."

Dylaniel stared at his dad skeptically. Being touched in general made him feel anxious. The contact was always too intense, even if someone was just patting his shoulder it was like his mind had trouble thinking of anything other than trying to break the contact. It was easier to tolerate when it was someone he loved trying to comfort him- it made his parents happy when they could hug him. But the idea of someone touching him in such an invasive way sounded so much worse than normal touching.

"There are different ways of doing things together that feel good to adults- it probably won't make sense until you're older. There's this thing that humans go through called puberty, where your hormones & body changes. It's an early step in becoming an adult. After that a whole lot of this stuff makes more sense."

"Do nephilim have puberty?"

"We think so. You remember the story of Seraph & Sophia." Dylaniel smiled at the one bright spot in the conversation. He liked the story of the twin nephilim who were hunters. "They were seventeen and passed for human, doing that probably meant that they went through puberty."

"And if I have puberty, it'll make more sense?" Dylaniel looked up hopefully. Maybe someday he'd figure out the appeal of touching?

"Some stuff can be explained without having to wait for puberty, I'm just doing a shit job of it. Other stuff is like..." His dad thought for a moment. "It's like your tastes change a little. You might find that touching & sex sound good to you."

“How will I know?”

“I think it's a pretty safe bet that there’ll be plenty of people willing to help you figure that out when you're ready.”
Prompt: Lucifer using his kids to torment Sam

Chapter Summary

anonymous asked:
"So what about a scene with Sam and Lucifer, with Luci taunting Sam about using his kids if he ever failed, and how he can make more vessels using him, etc. just sort of emotional abuse to Sam by Lucifer specifically using the existence of Sam's kids against him (and all the ones Ruby would of had if she hadn't known what it would turn into)"

Chapter Notes

I went through a few iterations of Lucifer’s harassment and this is how it came out. Hopefully it makes sense and hits the mark of the request. I was pleased to get this ficlet request when I did because in the next chapter there’s a little piece of a conversation that alludes to these sorts of issues and it’s been a fun challenge to frame the issues from a different angle with different characters.

11/03/2030

“The expansion of the northeast quadrant Upper Pits is going well, but it’s caused a little infighting over which section we build out next. The upshot is that I have a bunch of meetings tomorrow. Alex won’t be sitting in on those, so he should be able to visit you.” Kaylee said as she packed up her plate & utensils. She had arranged a little picnic for her & her dad. Sam didn’t actually have to eat, but participating in any sort of normal social interaction was a treat. “I’ll try to come down after all that’s over though.”

“How’s your mom? I haven’t seen her in a while.” Sam asked.

He sat on the floor next to the bars of his cell, trying to ever so slightly lessen the distance between them. Nobody else was in the bunker at the moment, so Kaylee couldn’t let herself into the interior without becoming indefinitely stuck. As a compromise, they settled on eating their meal with the bars between them- not the most pleasant picnic, but all things considered it was still nice.

“It’s been two days.” Kaylee offered the sense of scale. She knew he had trouble keeping track of the time. There were no clocks or natural light in the room and who knew what Lucifer was contributing to the mix. "She isn’t feeling well, but she’ll be fine… just a little stress."

"If there’s anything I can do…” Sam felt beyond helpless- worse, his situation was undoubtedly a contributing factor.

“I’ll let you know.” Kaylee’s eyes shifted as she briefly debated telling him something. "Things have been tense between some of the AFE officers & the family during the last month or so- rumor is that Alex has a girlfriend."

"A girlfriend?” The thought filled him with a combination of joy and regret that he couldn’t be more
involved in his son’s life. “Do you know anything about her?”

“He hasn’t fessed up, but we think there’s something going on with one of his human bodyguards. She’s with him whenever he’s topside, even when she’s not on duty.” Kaylee shrugged. “And he’s been a little too happy- the flora blooms in Central have started spiking when he’s downstairs. Brisma has asked that he stay out of the Pits until he gets it under control.”

Sam laughed. It was just like the Torquean to see the growth of plants in their territory as a negative thing. The last thing they needed was flowers adorning the walls of their dungeons. Many of the castes appreciated the growth of plants in Hell, but it had to be done carefully, and creating plants on the rooftops above the dungeons without creating it within required a finesse that Alex wasn’t known for.

“A human?” Sam smiled at the idea. “I always thought he’d end up with a demon.”

“It’s just a rumor- Tommy might shake him down for answers pretty soon. Even if it’s true, it’s not like they’re about to get married.” Kaylee shrugged while starting to stand up and stretch. “He’s still a kid. He can barely sit through a Council meeting.”

“Give him a few years and maybe he’ll calm down a bit.” Sam stood up in anticipation of her leaving. It wasn’t like he could hug her, but it seemed like a warm gesture. “If he spent enough time downstairs, maybe he’d get a little more desensitized to it?”

Ever since he was a toddler, Alex had always gained a small, but noticeable amount of energy while in Hell. It wasn’t hyperactivity exactly, it was more of an enthusiastic hypersensitivity. Sam & Kaylee both had the ability to sense Abyssal & changes in Hell from quite a distance, but Alex’s range was about 50% further under reasonable conditions. When he was around demons or in Hell he was passively receiving a lot more sensory input, which made him distractible at times. He could rally demons as well as the Knights- better depending on the caste, but he lacked the discipline necessary to rule. Though, at sixteen years old, that wasn’t a huge surprise.

As a child Kaylee had taken to her lessons on ruling a realm very well. From a young age she understood that she was next in line for a huge responsibility. She hadn’t expected for it to fall on her at the age of 19, but by all accounts she carried it well. Her popularity was the combination of continuing & building upon her dad’ policies, her upbringing in Hell’s public eye, and her presence as a field commander during the fight against Lucifer. Crowley continued to assist her through the trials of leadership, but as time passed Crowley’s tutoring skills were redirected toward Alex.

“Alex spent a month straight downstairs during those first few months when you weren’t totally lucid. I don’t think it really helped that much. And if he does have a human girlfriend I don’t think he’s gonna be taking more than day trips for a long time.”

“Fair enough.”

“Anyway, he doesn’t want to be King.” Kaylee smiled at the memory of an eight year old Alex running around with a toy sword, plastic breastplate, & a fake magical cloak. “He wants to- what was it… a Mage-Knight?”

After they said their goodbyes, Sam watched her leave, treasuring even the bitter sound of her fading footsteps.

“Oh my, she really is growing into quite the stunning creature.”

Sam turned to Lucifer, who was leaning against one of the walls watching the staircase. He had left
them alone during their meal, patiently listening for whatever morsels of information he could find in Kaylee’s stories. Occasionally, Sam thought about asking his visitors to be less candid with their conversations, but the unspoken agreement between Sam & Lucifer gave him the fairly regular uninterrupted conversations with his family, for which he was incredibly grateful. Once Ruby, Kaylee, or Alex was gone though, the pair could return to their routine of bickering & angrily ignoring each other.

“Don’t talk about her like that.” Sam snarled at him.

For as long as they’d been bound to each other, Sam could feel Lucifer’s growing interest in Kaylee & Alex. The siblings’ resistance to him during Lucifer’s brief campaign had particularly caught his attention. The Archangel coveted them- not in a sexual way, thankfully Lucifer was asexual. But Lucifer saw their value and he wanted everything of value he could take.

“I’ll talk about her however I please.” Lucifer strolled over to Sam, blatantly goading him. Sam tried to emotionally brace himself for the coming attack, but that almost felt like it was encouraging Lucifer. “You know how powerful she is- controlling all those fiends in Hell, but she’s been dabbling in the humans’ hierarchy too, hasn’t she? The power she commands is staggering- more than you ever had.”

“She’s not officially an officer.” Sam knew that Lucifer wouldn’t care about something like official titles, he wasn’t so dumb as to think that an honorific gave any more power than the will, wit, & connections of the person wielding it.

“But they rely on her counsel & troops.” Lucifer countered. “The kind of position she’s in- with one swift strike, how much would come crashing down?” Sam felt a small thrill emanate from Lucifer. It wasn’t that Lucifer wanted to hurt Kaylee, he was just delighted to potentially have access to such a vital piece of the infrastructure holding up the world. “That’s the double edged sword of greatness, and she could be so much more. You were damage incarnate and you had barely an interest in Earth. I bet she knows all sorts of critical information. Do you think she would break under torture?”

“Shut up.” Sam recoiled from Lucifer in every way possible. He tried to muddy their connect while Lucifer was imagining ways of torturing Kaylee. The Archangel didn’t experience a sadistic pleasure from the idea, it was more a curiosity to fill the time… but when he sensed Sam’s discomfort, his interest was piqued. Figuring out how far he could push Sam was one of his only dynamic forms of entertainment and he took advantage of it whenever possible. “Or do you think she’d need more complex forms of coercion?”

“She’s tough.” Sam tried being conversational in an attempt to defuse the situation, but he knew Lucifer wasn’t taking the consolation prize.

“She’s very stubborn- your whole family is.” Lucifer conceded. The non-confrontational answer worried Sam. “It’s an asset, once worked through initially. With a little effort, she could be broken and rebuilt into such a force- the humans & the demons, none of them could comprehend her.”

“I won’t let you touch her.” Sam said with a growing sense of unease at Lucifer’s conviction. Pacifism was one, but he didn’t want Lucifer to become taken with the idea on some sort of uncontested merits. Lucifer opted to redirect his aim.

“What about your son- your real son.” Sam glared at Lucifer’s jab at Tom. “Alex does have quite the gift, doesn’t he? His powers are so far along- he has that rebellious streak, but with his lineage that’s to be expected as much as the stubbornness… It’s a shame he’s so taken with the demons. The natural order is so often overlooked- I don’t blame him for not understanding, luckily that sort of
thing can be taught—"

"There’s nothing wrong with demons.” Lucifer laughed at Sam’s statement.

“Please, there’s everything wrong with them. They’re literally the worst of the worst, that was the reason I made them. You of all people should understand that.”

“Well, you underestimate them.” Sam shot back.

“I know you’ve taken to several of them, but that’s just your flaws showing.” Sam could feel vindicated amusement rolling off Lucifer at some thought. “Maybe I should be flattered that you were drawn to my creations even before you knew I existed? And you think your relationship with the demoness is profound.”

Sam hated when Lucifer talked about their special connection, the bond between vessel & angel. Part of the problem was that it highlighted inescapable aspects of Sam as an individual. There had always been & would always be a part of him in some way linked to the genocidal Archangel. Another issue was that, because of the connection, Lucifer knew mentioning their connection was a button of Sam’s to be pressed for entertainment.

Lastly, Sam had the strange sense that Lucifer felt threatened by his relationship with Ruby. She was the only person to make Lucifer retreat from a fight. Lucifer’s pride had been hurt by a demon- and Ruby wasn’t even an Archdemon or Knight. But beyond embarrassing Lucifer, she also passively fought him for control of Sam’s heart, mind, & soul. Without her, or the kids, Sam wasn’t sure he could maintain the will to resist- and Lucifer was well aware of it.

“You don’t know the first thing about Ruby & me.” Sam glared. Lucifer could talk all he wanted to about his love of God, but he couldn’t comprehend romantic love or the love of a parent for their child. To the Archangel it was all chemicals & primal nature. It was below him to accept someone with all their flaws- he’d experienced perfection after all, why should he settle for less? Of course he’d never be able to truly understand the imperfect strength of Sam’s relationship with Ruby.

“I know everything about you two. I know how you used to watch her sleep. I know how nothing made you happier than raising children with her.” Lucifer paused. Sam could sense a coming verbal attack… one that also hurt Lucifer slightly. "And I know how Ruby killed our children, two of them so far-"

“They weren’t your children.” Sam hadn’t been told about any pregnancies, but it wouldn’t have surprised him, nor did the idea that she would terminate them. But Lucifer wanted them to have more kids- that was why he went dormant while Ruby was around. He was trying to allow them privacy in order to encourage reproduction. There was no doubt in Sam’s mind that Lucifer wanted him to have as many biological children as possible. Lucifer was very territorial of his vessels, and apparently he had additional strong feelings about hypothetical nephilim.

“Maybe you should tell your brother & Castiel your feelings on angelic parentage?” Sam cringed at Lucifer’s superficial reversal. “Do you think that’s why Ruby isn’t seeing you right now? She’s ill from ending another one? Do you think Kaylee & Alex know or does she hide it from them? She could easily have Castiel destroy the evidence when she’s done taking leave of her vessel-”

“You’re not getting to me.” Sam muttered. Lucifer was only riling himself up even more. Ruby & Sam had agreed to stop having kids after Sa’dah’s death. They wanted to wait until things were more stable, when their children could be safe. It was a little painful to have each opportunity slip away, but neither of them wanted a child entering this horrible situation.
“They were more than my vessels.” Lucifer spoke with a vigor that was almost nonexistent in their cell. It unsettling to witness. “Do you have any idea how powerful our children would be?”

“It’s not going to happen.” Sam tried to shut him down before Lucifer became even more worked up. He could feel their pulse rising. If they didn’t cool off quickly, their powers would start firing and they’d probably be injured. “She won’t keep them and you can’t stop her- not without risking her life, and you don’t want to lose the possibility she might change her mind in the future. It’s a moot point, so just fucking drop it.”

In his frustration Sam had crossed the line. It wasn’t that Sam thought he’d done something wrong all things considered, but Lucifer took that sort of tone as disrespectful. Sometimes it was worth a fight- this time it was just a matter of Sam not having the endurance to continue taking the verbal harassment… which was about to turn physical.

Lucifer threw Sam into the wall, then started burning the flesh on his arms & chest. Sam tried to hurl Lucifer into the bars of the cell, but the pain was so distracting that Lucifer instead just crashed through a small table before hitting the ground. The Archangel picked up one of the broken table legs and approached Sam. He rested a sharp edge of the leg over Sam’s stomach as a lingering threat. Sam didn’t attempt another counterattack.

“Sam, I don’t think you appreciate the impermanence of our situation. I was trapped before. We will get out, sooner or later, and when we do one of the first questions will be whether your kids, grandkids, further descendants are alive or if the line will need to be furthered.” Sam scowled at the thought of what that implied, but didn’t say anything to provoke him further. Lucifer pressed the table leg hard enough that Sam’s eyes glanced down to check for blood. “You might hate me- you might want nothing more than to be rid of me, but I’ll find a way out of here and when I do you’ll be begging me to keep you.”

“What?” The pain faded to the background of Sam’s mind, he was too confused.

“After watching all the agony you’re enduring, don’t you think one of your kids will want to spare you more? Your family does that compulsively, trading your lives for each other. Tell me I’m wrong. Tell me that if I gave them a simple choice, them for you, they wouldn’t take it. Because I’ll bet that either one would let me in.”

"No. They wouldn’t fall for that.” A few tears escaped Sam, partially from the pain, partially from the thought about one of his kids destroying themselves to try to save him.

“Fall for what?” Lucifer gave a frown of feigned offense. "Rescuing their father, reuniting their parents, knowing power unlike anything else, ending the war and saving the planet. Many people would kill for just a fraction of that- given a little time I can make them happily kill for it.”

“I won’t let you.” Sam’s voice shook.

He tried not to think about what torture Lucifer would use to instill his lessons- probably similar to what he’d been inflicting in an attempt to teach Sam subservience, but the kids wouldn’t be nearly as prepared for it. Sam caught glimpses into Lucifer’s mind and was even sometimes able to dish it back at the Archangel. Everyone else was vulnerable to the more subtle manipulation & abuse.

“The more you fight me, the more you’ll suffer, the more they’ll want to help you.” Lucifer discarded the table leg and leaned closer to Sam as he described his gambit- words could be far more destructive than a pierced stomach. “The less you fight, the easier they’ll think it is to control me. You’ll see, I’ll win.”
"I’ll kill you."

“You’d kill yourself.”

“I might.”

“You might.” Lucifer nodded thoughtfully. “I guess we’ll both have to see.”
Prompt: Ruby tells Sam about Alex's death

Chapter Summary

Anonymous asked:
"can I please get a ficlet where ruby has to go tell Sam that Alex is dead? Bonus points for lucifer being a dick :) I know how much you loooove angst"

Chapter Notes

Sorry it took me way too long to post this ficlet. Part of the delay was school finals, part was an angst overload (there are only so many times you can write grieving in a few month span), but another roadblock was that I was conflicted between satisfying the prompt & writing what felt true to my version of Lucifer. I don’t think Lucifer would use the death of his vessels as a means, and as much as he likes to keep Sam in line or use him for entertainment I don’t think he’d cross that line for fun. When it comes to a few very personal things, Sam & Lucifer are a united front and that’s part of what makes their relationship dangerous.

I thought about doing this ficlet as some sort of scene that was to be taken in isolation from the rest of Job & Family, but I realized how hard it is for me to think of these versions of the characters behaving differently. I have a different spn fic series on AO3, and I’m casually writing three other shorter spn fics- all with different versions of the characters. So I don’t mind writing ficlet requests that don’t conform to Job & Family, though it proved too hard to do that for such a specific moment about an original character from Job & Family.

All that being said: I’m always happy to get ficlet requests, even if it toes the line of Job & Family or different AU. Hopefully this gives you what you were looking for, but if not send me an ask or message. I will happily write some truly devastating torture or nearly anything as long as I can clearly distinguish Job & Family from another AU. This time I just erred on the side of Job & Family in lieu of extra credit.

6/02/2032

Ruby stopped at the top of the stairs down to Sam’s cell. She rested her forehead against the door and took a deep breath. Telling him about Alex’s death was the last thing she wanted to be doing, but it would be its own sort of cruelty to leave him in the dark. He’d find out eventually, Alex had been one of the only three people that Lucifer allowed to visit Sam.

She’d needed about a half hour to collect herself enough to make it home. Kaylee was safely in Hell. Tom was working a job in Accra, but at her request to come home he said that he’d wrap things up within four hours. Cas & Dylaniel were visiting Radomir & his daughter, Miroslava. Dean had undoubtedly told Cas for security reasons, but she questioned whether Dean & Cas would risk interrupting their son’s time with Miro.
Truth be told, Ruby was grateful they were alone. She didn’t want anyone walking in or watching them on a monitor. Sam deserved some dignity in a vulnerable moment like this.

Lucifer greeted her—Lucifer seemed to always be in control by default. She didn’t think any less of Sam for it, fighting Lucifer for dominance had to be exhausting.

“I need some time with Sam.” Her voice wavered with discomfort, but her voice was determined.

Lucifer & Sam could both hear the distress in her voice. Lucifer withdrew slightly out of curiosity. When his face softened, she knew it was Sam. The lack of an argument was a relief, though it just meant she had to tell him all the sooner. She didn’t care if no one was there to let her out, she wanted Sam to hold her, so she let herself into the cell.

Ruby hugged him and he barely got him arms around her before she broke. He helped hold her up, worried that she’d fall, then walked her to the bed. Once she was sitting on the edge of the bed, he knelt down to look her in the eyes. He wiped a tear from her cheek and kissed her softly. Sam didn’t need to know what had happened to know that she needed the tenderness that only he showed her.

“What is it? What’s wrong?” His face had lost some color. She could see him imagining the unpleasant possibilities.

“Alex.” She couldn’t say it at first, her lips just quivered. "He’s dead."

Sam buried his face in her lap. His hands weakly clung to her legs. A small bookcase flew across the room, breaking into pieces on the concrete wall. Ruby flinched, but realized the hostility wasn’t directed at her. Lucifer was apparently absorbing the loss in his own way. Ruby ran her fingers through Sam’s hair as he cried and Lucifer destroyed half the objects in the cell. When she was confident that Lucifer wasn’t about to hurt them, she slowly gripped Sam’s arms and pulled him up to her. They laid down on the bed, clutching each other.

After an unknown stretch of time, Sam noticed Ruby shaking. At first he thought it was from grief or anger, but he could see her breath forming small clouds. Lucifer in a rage had turned inward, a now quiet seething that was almost more concerning than smashing furniture, but Sam wasn’t anywhere near prepared to interact with the Archangel. Sam just held Ruby tight and raised his body temperature to warm her.

When Sa’dah died, he hadn’t been there for Ruby as much as he would’ve liked. He’d been so overwhelmed. His sadness had blinded him and his hatred had drawn him into dangerous thoughts. This time though, he didn’t have a war to run or all those conflicting interests. His entire life was contained to a twenty by twenty foot cell and the three—two people who could stand to be around him.

"Where is he?” Sam asked. He hoped it was Hell, as cruel as that might be, but if it was Heaven at least maybe Sa’dah wouldn’t be alone anymore. When Ruby didn’t say anything, he held her tighter.

“The blade was cursed. He’s just gone.” It was the real & total loss of their son. He began crying again and it was Ruby’s turn to kiss gently. Reflexively he thought that the total loss of Alex was the same absence that would happen if Ruby died. Knowing firsthand the feeling of that sort of loss… he wanted to just hold Ruby, laying there in the timeless safety of his cell forever. Yet their family needed them— their family needed her.

“What happened?” He wasn’t even sure he wanted to know, but he needed to know.
“He was stabbed in his sleep- It was fast.” She added as cold comfort. “Nasrin was with him.”

“She’s dead too?” Sam had never met her, but for months Alex had told him enamored stories about the tough as nails & sharp witted beauty. It was hard for Sam to not be fond of the woman who could make his son feel so blessed in such a bleak world.

“Yeah, she tried to fight, but it happened too fast and she was unarmed.”

“Who did it?” Sam could hear Lucifer ask the same question. Unlike Sam, Lucifer couldn’t care less about Nasrin. He was consumed with the thought of killing whoever had taken one of his vessels from him. Personally, Sam liked the idea of unleashing Lucifer on the killer.

“We’re still looking. Probably a human or angel. Dean & Anael are running the investigation. I tried to get Dean to stop & grieve with the family- Anael is more than capable, but…” She was sure Dean blamed himself. He’d never fully forgiven himself for the call to separate the kids before Sa’dah’s death. The fact that Alex had died on an AFE base had to be crushing.

“The killer needs to be taken alive.” Sam whispered, but Lucifer helped get the words out. Sam was still in shock & overwhelmed by the news, but Lucifer was more interested in helping to exact cold vengeance… and Sam wasn’t exactly opposed to letting him take charge of those thoughts.

“Dean knows.” Ruby reassured. “Once the AFE is done interrogations, Hell will get any prisoners.”

It was going to be a good will gesture between the AFE & Hell. Human, angel, demon, or something else- all of Hell would want to tear the killer apart. It wasn’t about justice, it was about wrath. Maybe some larger retaliation by could be prevented, but Hell was rarely a place for mercy and the killer would receive none.

“Can you ask Shola to keep an eye on Kaylee?” Sam asked as a whole new batch of worries started creeping into his mind. “And Tom’s going to be devastated- oh god Dylan-”

“Stop.” Ruby held his cheeks so that he was looking in her eyes. “Dean, Cas, & I can take care of Tom & Dyl. I’m sure Kaylee will want to see you- you can help her too. But you need to listen to me, sooner or later you’re gonna have to face a stretch of time down here alone and I can’t stand the thought of you torturing yourself with grief. You need to take care of yourself.”

“I need to take care of my family.”

“Then take care of me.” She kissed him, deeply that time.
Everything was too stressful. Tom had become distant since Sam’s imprisonment. Kaylee was trying to manage Hell while teaching her little brother what she’d learned from their father. Sam was barely coherent most of the time, though Lucifer sometimes gave him a pardon when Ruby or his biological children came to visit. Dean was still struggling with what essentially was the total loss of his brother. And Ruby…

Ruby was exhausted. She’d been trying to keep her family afloat, but most of the time it was taking all of her willpower to keep her own head above water. Though she had to admit it was a common feeling. The conflict with Lucifer’s forces had killed almost a quarter of her friends & colleagues. Technical martial status aside, it felt like almost everyone was a widow or widower- and those were the lucky ones. If Radomir’s gunshot wound had been an inch to the right, Dean & Cas would’ve become guardians to their four year old goddaughter.

Ruby sat down in the big soft armchair in her bedroom, then sighed. As an afterthought she unbuttoned her pants to get more comfortable. She looked up at the wall in front of her, which was covered in notes for her latest project, a weapon that could kill an angel while leaving the vessel unharmed. It was a seemingly impossible task, but she couldn’t bring herself to give up on Sam. Her head sunk down to her chest from discouragement & fatigue and her eyes settled on her loosened pants.

“No. No fucking way.” Ruby exclaimed as she paced in Cas & Dean’s bedroom. Cas sat on the edge of the bed watching her. "I’ve been using hexes- I’ve been careful."

"Lucifer could’ve interfere.” Cas suggested.

“That son of a bitch!” She yelled.

Dean opened the door of the bedroom to find Cas looking concerned & Ruby looking caught between rage & crying.

“What’s wrong?” Dean ask cautiously.

“I’m pregnant.”

“I don’t- what?” Dean hurried inside and closed the door. "How?"

"The last few times I went down to see Sam Lucifer left him alone-”

“You had sex with him?” Dean ran his fingers through his hair. "Rube, you can’t do that- he’s not…”

"He’s not what?”

“He’s sick, or at least he’s not right. How do you know he understands what’s happening?”
“Jesus, I’m not abusing him. He was lucid.” Ruby pinched the bridge of her nose. “I know that he’s all over the map when you try to talk to him, but sometimes he’s okay with me. He knows where he is, what’s happening.”

"And fucking him seems like a good idea?"

“When he’s Sam, he’s Sam. I’m not going to treat him like he’s a child or disabled. So yeah, a few times things got physical.”

“I’m not saying you should…” Dean leaned his back against the dresser and covered his faces with his hands. "I don’t know. I don’t know how we’re supposed to deal with him… I don’t know how we’re supposed to take care of him. That fucking- Lucifer!”

Dean swung around, knocking his collection of vinyls & record player to the floor. He hunched over the dresser with his back turned to Ruby & Cas. Cas silently approached Dean and hugged him. Dean was too fatigued to care that Ruby saw him crying. When she walked over to pat Dean’s back, he wrapped an arm around her and pulled her into their hug.

"We’ll figure this out.” Cas reassured them. "Lucifer can’t make Sam hurt anyone else. The kids are safe. It might take some trying, but we’ll find a way ahead.“

"This baby, it’s…” Dean started, but he wasn’t sure what to say. The news was too new & confusing. "How far along is it?“

"It’s hard to say, it’s a nephilim-“ Cas reconsidered his statement. "Well… I don’t know how to categorize it since you aren’t human."

"I’m not having it.” Ruby said flatly. "I’m not having Lucifer’s kid."

"It’s Sam’s kid.” Dean sighed at the entire situation. He wasn’t saying Lucifer wasn’t a factor, but to him it being his brother’s child was far more important.

“Sam & I talked about it a few years ago. We’re done with kids. I’m not going back on that, especially with Lucifer in the picture.”

“But…” Ruby looked up at Dean with a determination that stopped him before he could even figure out how to articulate his feelings.

“I’m not going to turn around and have some kid after deciding not to- I’m not going to betray Sam like that. It was his choice too.”

“Fuck, I’m sorry. I know I don’t have a say in this.” Dean closed his eyes, trying to bury his anguish. "I just miss him…“

"This kid isn’t some substitute for Sam.” Ruby hugged Dean a little tighter. "And if you want another kid or something, there are better ways- I just can’t go through this."

"I know- I won’t ask you to… We’ve just had so many losses. I just wish we had something to be happy about for once.”

“Go hug Dyl. Take him to visit Miro & Devi. There’s your something to be happy about.” Ruby
offered. Dean held her close to him & kissed the top of her head. She rested her cheek against his chest, accepting whatever comfort she could, then turned to Cas. "How long do you think I have to smoke out for in order to end it?"

"A few minutes. I can stay with you and let you know when to reenter your body. Once it’s done, I can also… heal your body, so that you don’t have any pain or complications."

“Thanks Cas.”

“Do you want to use our bed for smoking out?” Dean offered. Ruby had gotten rid of her & Sam’s queen bed a month earlier. "I could go occupy Dylan and you could take care of it before the other kids come home."

"I’ll use your bed, but we don’t need to do this all cloak & dagger. I’m gonna tell the kids, at least mine, you two can decide when or how to tell Dyl. I just don’t want them finding out somehow and feeling like we’re keeping secrets.” Ruby explained. "If we’re gonna get through this whole mess, we need to do it together- all of us."

Chapter End Notes

I have to admit that I was nervous the first time I mentioned Ruby terminating some pregnancies. I thought about leaving it out entirely to avoid risking offending anyone, but it is a part of explaining the character's relationship with their changing world. I hadn’t really expected to post this scene because it initially struck me as redundant. Then after writing the deleted scene where Sam & Lucifer's feelings over the terminations are explored, I realized that there is some value in looking at other character's thought/reactions.

Not to mention this gave me an opportunity to touch upon Dean's perspective on Sam/Sam's capacity after being possessed. That's a whole other gem to explore sometime.
Ruby teleported to the camp center. It'd been almost a year and a half since she'd visited their old home. The winter solstice was only a day away, so the sky was dark despite it not yet being night. The full moon illuminated at least a foot of snow blanketed everything in sight.

The camp had been largely abandoned after Heaven's attack that resulted in Belda's death, and prefaced Bobby & Sa'dah's deaths. After quickly recovering Belda's body, no one in the family had returned for weeks fearing that Heaven would be monitoring the site. Eventually, when it became clear that Heaven wasn't keeping watch there was a minor effort to collect some of the important personal effects, but by that point they'd been living in the bunker for so long that most of their old belongs were simply abandoned in the cabins.

Ruby entered the cabin that she'd shared with Sam & their family. Every surface was coated in a thin layer of dust & frost, giving a ghostly sheen. She went to each of her children's bedrooms. Posters were worn & cracked on the walls. Toys lay scattered on the floor, having not been put away on a single day almost 15 years earlier. A handful of glamors and minor charms that Tom or Alex had probably been experimenting with fizzled & flickered on a spectrum that few other than Ruby could appreciate.

When she reached Sam & her bedroom she paused. They hadn't shared a bedroom at all in over a decade. This was some old, far & away life, but as much as it pained her she had to see it one last time. She stepped in, then slowly approached the bed. It creaked under her weight as she laid down on it. Most of the padding had crumbled away, leaving an ice cold & lumpy mess that smelled of decay. She tried to think of laying there, beside Sam speculating about the second baby's sex or getting tackled by the kids in the early morning shuffle. But that was long ago and this place was no longer a home for her.

Ruby walked the full mile through the snow. She knew there were better things she could be doing with her time, but it didn't matter. This had its own importance and no one else would go to the effort… almost no one else. The temperature was dropping, her legs were beginning go numb, and her cheeks stung, but every sensation was welcome reminder that by some standard she was still alive. Occasionally, a bird would caw in the distance breaking the silence, comforting her that she wasn’t alone.

It'd been years since she walked the trail and the snow cover obscured the ground- yet somehow she knew she was heading the right way. After awhile she could see the massive conifer ahead of her. Sa'dah had insisted that it was the most beautiful tree in the whole world, no one else was sure exactly why, but they decided disbursed her ashes there is what she would’ve wanted. Bobby had asked to be returned to Sioux Falls and Aime had taken Belda's ashes. But years later, when Alex had died it only made sense to spread his ashes with his sister.

From a hundred feet off Ruby could tell that Sam had been there recently. There was no snow around the tree, it had all been melted away. As with every time she’d visited, wild roses grew around the base of the tree, but this time there was a new addition. Alex's favorite plant, a black vine
that bloomed blood red flowers climbed the tree. It was a native plant of Hell, growing on Earth
with more vigor than she’d ever seen. With a start she looked around to notice that the vines
extended out below the snow, wrapping up a dozen nearby trees.

When she got closer she could see where Sam had arrived. The snow was abruptly disturbed, with a
few steps through the virgin powder before it was melted away.

She could've hurried back to headquarters to confirm that Lucifer had visited Alex & Sa'dah's graves
after his escape, but he was already gone. Instead she sat down on the ground by the rose bushes,
unsure of exactly what she was doing anymore. It may very well have been the most serene location
in the world at that very moment. Despite the cold air she could smell the sweet roses. She closed
her eyes and remembered rocking Sa'dah by the open window of the nursery.

Ruby briefly thought about staying there, but she still had two kids to be there for- three including the
newly orphaned Dylaniel. She wasn't going to leave them to face this dark time alone. She stood
up, then plucked one rose & one of the red flowers. She tucked them into her interior jacket pocket
above her heart. "Come on, maybe we'll see your dad."
Tom

Immediately after the last meeting Tom went to go find a bathroom. He found a combination bathroom & storage closet, then closed the door. For several minutes he stood, hunched over the sink, letting the water run over the back of his head. He wanted to throw up, but he hadn’t eaten all day, leaving him with nothing to expel. Eventually he was able to look up and face himself in the mirror.

There wasn’t any question that the world was ending. He could read the writing on the wall- he damn well better have been able to, the letters were a mile high and written in blood.

In a way he’d been preparing for the moment for over a decade. If he was honest with himself it was part of the reason he’d never settled down or had kids. He already had enough family to lose- he already had enough everything to lose. The whole world had been his sampler platter, hundred of fleeting thrills in different locations, and now it was all being taken away at once.

It hurt, but he’d been expecting it to hurt- that almost made each adventure more spectacular. Each time he visited a new destination it may have been the last time he’d see it. He treasured the details and indulgences.

Now he knew it was the end and he wasn’t sure how to spend his last few hours of autonomy. The idea of getting drunk and fucking every woman in the temple who would have him crossed his mind, but it felt wrong. He was worn thin and the thought of endless meaningless sex didn’t sound appealing. Maybe he was predisposed to a certain amount of hedonistic tendencies, but he wasn’t that simple.

Tom was looking at his reflection in the mirror when he noticed the supply rack behind him. He turned around to see a full cricket set. It’d been years since he’d played, but it used to be a favorite pastime of his teenage years & twenties. His dad & uncle Dean would take him to matches and occasionally play with him back when they lived at the cabins. Tom grabbed the set and went in search of other wayward souls.

“I’m putting together a game, you in?” Tom asked while twirling a cricket bat.

“You want to teach me now?” Kit raised an eyebrow.

“You start practicing now, you might be half decent in a year.” Tom teased, causing Kit to shove him.

“A b-bit, then I got plans.”

“It’s the end of the world and you’ve got plans- it figures, fucking schemer.” Tom prodded Kit with the tip of the bat. “As long as I get first dance with you.”
“Always.”

They found a relatively empty courtyard to play in that was only a few meters too small. There were a few obstacles in the form of fountains & plants, but they made due. Tom laid out some luminescent powder, which gave the entire area a blue-purple glow in addition to the moonlight.

Within a half hour the teams were more than full and a few dozen onlookers had gathered. Several radios lined the field, ready to call everyone to duty in an emergency- even more of an emergency. No one spoke of the war or the troubling state of the world. Those who weren’t technically on duty made small wagers, which Kit facilitated as usual.

Dylaniel stopped to watch part of the second game. His presence drew the attention of many of the players. He was known for his combat & command skills, not for any sort of recreational behavior.

“I want to see the nephilim bat.” Called out Vexil, a demon that was playing on the team opposing Tom & Kit. A few onlookers & players cheered at the prospect of seeing Dylaniel try to play.

“He’s hurt- lay off guys.” Tom told the group, but Dylaniel stepped up to accept the bat.

“My whole baggie says he doesn’t make a single run.” Vexil yelled while pulling a plastic bag of dried mushrooms from his jacket.

“In.” Kit pulled a flask of everclear laced with siren’s blood from his back pocket to indicate he’d take the bet.

“Just don’t bless the bat or you’re liable to kill someone.” Shouted one of the people watching from the rooftop surrounding the courtyard. A few people laughed, but were shushed as Dylaniel got ready for the pitch. In a smooth sweep, he hit the ball clear from the field, then handed the bat back to Tom.

“Six runs.” Dylaniel commented as Vexil tossed Kit the baggie. The kitsune withdrew three mushrooms, then tossed the bag to Tom, who offered some to Dylaniel.

“Fucking conspirators.” Vexil muttered. Dylaniel returned one mushroom to the demon as a consolation prize.

“He uses a sword.” Kit said while looking at Vexil like he was an idiot.

“You okay?” Tom quietly asked Dylaniel, who pocketed two mushrooms and had started leaving.

“No, but who is? I need some time to think.”

“Ok.” Tom acknowledged. “Come find me if you’re thinking about doing anything stupid. Consult the expert.”

Tom leaned against a pillar, watching the fourth match. It felt good to see everyone taking some time for simple fun.

“Only you could be behind something like this now.”

Tom turned to see Deepi, a vision as always in her olive green & silver kurta. They’d dated on & off for about two years a decade earlier. She’d been there for him right after Alex’s death and during a particularly heavy period of drug use, but when things started getting serious he’d pushed her away.

“Now’s the best time for something like this.” Tom replied. “How’ve you been?”
“Alright, when you consider everything.” They stood silently watching the game for a few pitches. “I actually should thank you. About a month after I left I went to one of Kali’s temples. You’d always talked about her like she was real. I don’t even know why I thought praying to her would help me find you- hell, I didn’t know if I wanted to take you back or punch you in the face.”

“I wouldn’t have thought less of you for either.”

“Anyway, she actually showed up- Kali spoke to me.” Deepi smiled. “She’s so incredible. I never would’ve known or become one of her attendants without you.”

“You know, the funny thing is that isn’t the first time I’ve had a god steal my girl.” A smirk crept across Tom’s face. Deepi elbowed him.

“I dumped you. I wasn’t your girl.” She corrected.

“That’s fair, I didn’t mean it in a possession sense. I’m just saying that you dumping me doesn’t make me less of an idiot.” Tom shrugged. “Go find some cupid to pull the arrow out of my ass, then we can talk.”

He could see her blushing and inched closer to her experimentally. She watched the move, considered him for a moment, then stood next to him. Her head rested against his shoulder making him debate wrapping an arm around her, but she spoke before he could make his play.

“Are you worried about dying tomorrow?” She asked quietly.

“Not really.” Tom smiled down at her. “I’m more concerned that I won’t live tonight.”

“I can’t tell if you’re being honest or hitting on me.”

“Both.”

“You always were a man of many talents.” She wrapped her arms around him, pulling him into a kiss.

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**Dylaniel**

Dylaniel carried the two mushrooms to the highest rooftop of the temple. He wanted to be as close to the heavens as possible. There was a spire with a point large enough for him to easily sit on, but it lacked an obvious way up. He manifested his massive golden wings, then leapt from the roof. Despite some lingering weakness & pain, he managed to successfully gain enough altitude with a few passes to make it to the top of the spire.

For a moment he almost put away his wings, but changed his mind. Instead he extended them to their full thirty five foot span, stretching and letting the wind blow softly on his feathers.

He ate one of the mushrooms, then started cycling through the different frequencies of telepathic networks. Angel radio had its access restricted, so he didn’t bother tuning in to that static. Pirate radio had devolved into a mess of signals that he wasn’t capable of or inclined to parse. But there were other lesser used frequencies between them, which weren’t restricted.

He stopped on a station that hummed with hauntingly beautiful tones. It was the true voices of angels mourning their dead. The more he listened to it, the more he could pull the names of the dead from the song. Some of the names he recognized as their own troops, but others belonged to Heaven. He took the second mushroom, then felt himself being caught up in the music. He
telepathic synced up to the channel and joined his xe name to the music.

The song was only for lost angels, some neutral ground for their family to mourn together. Despite that Dylaniel added his dad’s name to the song. Its tone clashed slightly against the harmony of angelic names. He didn’t want to go out of his way to cause trouble, but he didn’t really care about the feelings of anyone who’d be offended. There was a noticeable hiccup in the music as the dozens or hundreds of voices processed the overstep. He didn’t care about the disruption, when the beat count came around again he restated his xe & dad’s names.

The music recovered slightly, though he noticed a few voices had gone silent. When the next cycle came, he wasn’t the only voice carrying his parents’ names. He sat there under the stars, letting the wind blow through his wings and listening to the song of the dead for an unknown length of time.

“Dyl.” Miro called up to him from the ground. She manifested her cream colored wings, took a running started, then worked her way up to circle the roof. “Can I join you?”

“Yeah.” Dylaniel put away his wings to give her space to land next to him.

She took a few passes before lining up a landing. He helped hold her legs on the tiny platform while she caught her balance. She sat down, pulling her wings in behind her, but she didn’t dispel them.

“It’s been a long time since I left my wings out.” She confessed.

“Same here.” Dylaniel said while manifesting his own again. He held them open, spreading behind Miro.

“Are you okay?” She asked, sensitive to the fact that Dylaniel had difficulty showing his full range of emotion.

“No.” Dylaniel confided. “Is there any word on your dad?”

“No word, the Black Forest base has been silent for almost a full day. I’m sorry about your…” Miro quelled her expression of sympathy. Technically, they had no way of knowing if his dad was dead, though she’d heard about Cas. Her lips quivered. “What do you think happens when an angel dies?”

“They disappear, they don’t have souls.” He said flatly.

“I know, but they have grace.” Miro looked up at the stars. “I know it’s silly, but I like to think that the stars are made up of grace. That’s where my xe went- that’s why we have the urge to fly, because we want to touch their grace- to be with them again.”

“You don’t have to reach the stars to touch your xe’s grace.” Dylaniel sighed. “You’ve carried Hael’s grace your whole life and you will for the rest of it.”

“But do you think there’s something to it? To their grace, that ties them here?” She asked hopefully, trying to find some metaphysical comfort that he didn’t believe in. He drew his wings forward, wrapping Miro in something akin to a hug.

“Have you listened to the song of mourning?” He evaded her question.

“No, what is it?”

“It’s our lost angels, and family…” A tear escaped him, but he didn’t move to wipe it away. “not as stars or lost to nothingness, but made into music and carried by the living. As long as the song is
carried by one living person, part of them will survive.”

They sat together listening to the music. Dylnaniel was surprised to find that when he tuned back in his parents’ names were carried by even more voices than before. Miro added Hael’s name to the song, though she hesitated to offer her dad’s name to the list of the dead. After an hour of silently listening to the song, Miro looked up at Dylnaniel.

“Hey brother, want to join me in a flight?”

“Are you going to try touching the grace in the stars?”

“I don’t need to, I’ve already got my xe’s in my soul.”

Kaylee

After her last meeting of the night Kaylee went back to her assigned room. She entered it, closed the door, then stared at the bed. They had four hours until the pre-mission briefing. All the major projects had a subordinate officer covering for her. In many ways it made sense to sleep, but she couldn’t.

She found Kit’s room, then knocked. He opened the door, smiled sadly at her, then gestured to invite her in. As she entered he offered her a small dried mushroom.

“You all in one piece?” She asked with a raised eyebrow, then ate the mushroom.

“Yes, m-ma’am.” Kit closed the door then approached her.

He held her neck and dragged his thumb along her jugular. While closing his eyes, he softly nuzzled the other side of her neck just below the jaw. She’d learned years earlier that kitsune don’t kiss, so she took the act for some sort of sign of affection or comfort. In all the times they’d had sex, she’d never seen him start off so tenderly. It was both a surprisingly nice change and incredibly unnerving.

She wanted to find some sense of normalcy, so she didn’t attempt to be gentle with him. Instead she pulled his shirt off, then manifested her claws, fangs, & horns. Without cutting very deeply, she dragged her claws along his chest. She might not have been one of his species, but she was predator enough to scratch that particular itch for him. His breathing sped up and he pulled her closer.

“You ready for a bump in the night?” She whispered in his ear, then snapped her teeth at him.

Experience had taught her to let Kit take the lead in getting her out of her clothes. He moved faster than a human- more so when he was excited. More than a dozen of her garments had been ripped back when both of them had tried to strip her in the past. Occasionally that was an extra tease, but not when she didn’t have a change of clothes.

He had her down on the bed in a few seconds and was between her legs immediately. She had to admit that Kit had that advantage on the other guys she fucked- he always started by going down on her. Like so much of his routine it was probably instinctive, a more direct foreplay to make up for the fact that he never kiss her or played with her breasts. Kitsune were all about scents & pheromones and she could only imagine what eating out a partner must do to him. She clawed at his back while he went down on her, just the way he liked it.

He made her come once before flipping her over onto her hands & knees, then started taking her from behind. She leaned down slightly to allow him to bend over her on all fours. That position was his favorite and she always got a thrill out of him completely losing himself to a more primal nature.
Kit fucked her harder than anyone else, but he always made sure she was slick & sensitive first.

He bit the back of her neck, just at the nape, breaking the skin. She knew it was reflex for him, but normally she’d still hiss at him in Abyssal to stop him after a few seconds. This time she just let him do it. She started moaning when he found her sweet spot. The low growls of pleasure coming from him pushed her over the edge. He thrust frantically as he came with her.

His fangs released the back of her neck, he licked at her wound for a second, then he pushed the shaggy hair back from his eyes. She knew he was just catching his breath for a moment. Kitsune never fucked just once. Their species practiced group sex, which meant stronger bonds among a pack or, as it would turn out for a lone kitsune like Kit, physically exhausting marathons of sex between a couple.

He would have to come at least three more times before his erection would subside. The added stakes of the night carried them through the blur of biting, scratching, sweat, blood, & cum. After her sixth orgasm & Kit’s fourth, Kaylee noticed that despite him running out of strength, he was still hard.

“I’ve got this.” She said as she pushed him onto his back and climbed on top of him. Despite riding him roughly, she did take the time to lick a few of the cuts on his chest. The taste of blood didn’t do anything for her, but the act drove him nuts. He reached up to caress her cheek, careful not to scratch her face with his claws. She rubbed her face into his palm, then nipped at his wrist, safely away from the veins.

He liked seeing her claws, fangs, & horns, but tonight was different. She took a chance and tried to manifest her wings in the small room. It was a bit cramped, but her elegant black wings, even folded, extended above them. While riding him, her wings rocked slightly. He looked up at her in awe.

“You’re beautiful.” He whispered. Her feathers flustered as they both came.

Afterward, she carefully repositioned to lay down beside him with her wings tucked behind her. He wrapped his arms around her. His fingertips traced her horns, then pet her wings a few times before he helplessly succumbed to sleep.

Normally, they’re little flings would end immediately after Kit’s customary hour long nap, but this time Kaylee fell asleep in his arms. She woke up three hours later to him nuzzling her cheek.

“It’s time.”
“Shola, can you contact Hael.” Sam requested as he finished flipping through a stack of papers on his desk. “I should go make penance, if she’s free to patch me up I’d like to take care of it before the next Council meeting.”

“I’ll contact her right away.” Shola said before disappearing.

It had been a long few weeks in Hell. Hathai was having a disagreement with Morrison over a brawl that had resulted in eight Luxia & six Maji being injured. Sam held court on the matter within hours in order to prevent any retribution between castes. Unfortunately, after the trial he referred to Lucifer as “the locked down lord” within earshot of Hathai. Within the Citadel it was no secret that Sam didn’t worship Lucifer, but he was still expected to keep up appearances while in Hell. The slight combined with the fact that Sam was in a relationship with a Maji had caused some resentment among the conservative castes.

He wanted to go appease Hathai & the Luxia before the next Council meeting. The last thing he needed was to have Hathai & her sympathizers throw up roadblocks on every point on the agenda because of hurt feelings.

“Hael can see you as long as you leave here within five days. I’ve prepared a talisman queued up for her apartment.” Shola explained when she reappeared a moment later. She handed Sam the small copper coin talisman, which he slipped into his pocket.

“I’ll be back shortly.” Sam stood up and stretched.

“Sam,” Shola stopped him before he ported away. “thank you.”

“I was the idiot who decided to talk about Lucifer before Hathai left the interior.” Sam shrugged. He was getting too comfortable while sitting on his throne. This would be a lesson to remember.

“No, I mean thanks for trying to keep them happy.”

Roughly thirty percent of the demons in Hell practiced a human religion. That wouldn’t be a big deal except for the fact that Hell had a state religion. Had Lilith been in power there almost certainly would have been a cleansing of the heretics years earlier. Despite her flaws, Hathai was at least practical enough to know that Hell couldn’t afford the loss of so many demons. Instead she allowed them to practice their own faiths as long as it was in secret. Shola was one of those demons.

“It’s my job.” Sam said and smiled at her.

“No it isn’t.”

Sam arrived outside of Hathai’s favorite temple in the Central District. He could’ve popped directly into the entry hall, but the whole point of the exercise was to be seen. A few dozen demons on the
street spotted him and whispered at the prospect of him going to temple. He paused for a moment at the doorway, pretending to have some reverence while actually just giving his audience an extra few seconds to perceive him.

He entered the hall, which was lined with twenty Luxia going about their prayers. His presence broke the concentration of several of them. He could sense them straining to covertly observe him. Several were skeptical of his sincerity, which he noted for future reference. Hathai was bowed in prayer at the head of the hall. Sam moved to stand beside her and gazed up at the massive stone statue of Lucifer.

“Are you here to make jokes or penance?” Hathai asked without opening her eyes.

“I’m here to beg forgiveness of my creator, of my master.” Sam offered. She looked up at him warily.

“You wouldn’t have to beg for forgiveness so frequently if you learned to respect him.” Hathai observed.

“I think the First Light may be made of rebellion.” Sam mused. “A gift to illuminate flawed systems.”

“Just beware not to illuminate the failings too close to its current source.” Hathai turned to him. “Are you ready?”

“Yes.” Sam unbuttoned his long jacket, removed it, then handed it off to one of Hathai’s assistants. He took off his simple black t-shirt, revealing his heavily tattooed torso. After removing his shoes & socks, he slipped off his pants. Without checking to see how many demons were watching, he took off his boxers.

He stood naked in front of the crowd that had grown to nearly forty Luxia. Technically, the temple door was unlocked. Any demon could walk in and watch him make penance, but very few dared to enter the Luxia’s domain even for such a spectacle. This was his thirtieth time making penance and his sense of modesty while inside the temple had died around the fifth time.

Sam approached the altar to Lucifer. He looked down at the display of tokens to the demon castes. On his first visit he’d committed the faux pas of casually tapping the tiny silver scale of the Crossroads. He’d had to seek a second round of penance for playing around in a house of humorless faith. He picked up the cat o’ nine tails of the Torquean and held it out to Hathai.

“Would you assist me?” Sam asked.

It wasn’t a sincere invitation, instead it was something of a custom. He wasn’t really capable of torturing himself convincingly, but at the same time it was considered a lethal offense for anyone to hurt him without his consent. So each time he wanted to earn points with the more religious factions of Hell through self-flagellation he had to literally invite someone to torture him.

“For you, gladly.” Hathai smiled and accepted the whip.

Thankfully there were predetermined limits to the torture. He was never worked to the point of endangering his health and no one risked causing injury to his genitals. It was a more delicate process than any other torture of Hell, but he was the only person in Hell who had a body capable of breaking. And since angels weren’t allowed in Hell, his closest healer was one talisman hop away.

He knelt down on the rough, cold stone. His hands gripped the edge of the altar. He looked up at the carving of the Archangel with false contemplation, then took a deep breath.
“Please begin.” He instructed.

It was customary to beg for forgiveness and offer praise to Lucifer while being whipped. He managed to get through asking for forgiveness for his disrespectful tone, but his heart just wasn’t in it for much more. There was too much to do for him to be singing the virtues of some long-secluded whiney genocidal angel. Sam tried to keep it together, but the absurdity of his situation made his concentration falter.

“What is your praise of Hell, our people, our father?” Hathai asked, starting the second half of the ritual.

“Here we belong… fighting for survival.” Sam grinned through the pain. “He will come to be the ruler of our world. He is immortal… Through his grace I have inside me blood of kings.”

Hathai struck him harder than normal. Sam should’ve taken the warning, but he couldn’t help himself. None of the other Luxia could make out his words.

“He has no rival. No man can be his equal-” Sam was cut off by Hathai whipping him viciously in rapid succession. He gritted his teeth partially to stop himself from crying out and partially to stop himself from laughing. She’d caught him crossing the line- he let her have the righteous pleasure of getting back at him. By the time she was done beating him he could sense that some of her anger had been quelled.

“Please excuse our audience.” She whispered to him. It was tempting to deny her the private conversation, but he reminded himself that his original intention was to improve her mood.

“Everyone but Hathai shall leave. I need to consult with my spiritual counsel.” Sam ordered, earning a fresh spark of annoyance in the Archdemon. After the temple’s hall was cleared, she shook the whip at him, but didn’t move to hit him.

“If you pull another stunt like that-” Hathai started.

“Well I’m sorry if it’s hard to come up with prayers while you’re beating me.”

“Then maybe you should spend more time studying the true faith instead of your stories. Then you might have some of your prayers memorized.”

“Our alliance with Earth demands a broad range of knowledge. I’m being diplomatic.” Sam smirked.

“Diplomacy starts at home.” She replied. He didn’t have any comeback.

Hathai picked up his pants from the floor, pulled the copper talisman from his pants pocket and embedded in deep into a cup of salt on the altar. She turned back to Sam, dropped the whip on the floor in front of him, then walked away.

Sam looked up at the statue of Lucifer again. The Archangel was depicted, not as the picturesque man that so many humans envisioned the angel to be, but instead as a creature of many faces. Lucifer was neither male nor female. Zie was beautiful, horrific, & fierce- more than that, zie was oppressive. A being too awesome to be contained to any form, even zie’s tributes inspired a swell of emotions.

For Sam, he mostly felt loathing & fear… both at the Archangel zirself, but also at the strange feeling of familiarity depictions of Lucifer produced in him. Every time he heard a new story about the Morningstar it hit his nostalgia as an old bedtime story might. When he gazed into the statue above
him, he saw his own eyes staring back. It didn’t matter if it was his imitation, it still scared him…
But he couldn’t keep letting his disgust at & fear of Lucifer risk harming Hell’s internal political
climate.

“I’m going to do this for them, not for you.” He told the stone beast.

Sam gingerly picked up the whip and pulled himself into a standing position. He carefully returned
the whip to its stand, then retrieve the talisman. The salt didn’t burn him the way it had Hathai, but
he took the insult for what it was. Several cuts on his hand stung as he grabbed the coin. He tidied
up the altar, attempting to give it some small measure of respect. Lastly, he cleaned his blood from
the floor, then held his clothes in front of his crotch as he activated the talisman.

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Anonymous asked:
So I'd love an alternate to that scene, where Sam was seeking penance. Where Hael wasn't avaiable,
so he had to go home to Ruby, bleeding and bruised, and she had to get him through it.

Sam arrived in Hael’s Aberdeen studio apartment. There was a hastily written note scribbles on a
wall-mounted chalkboard that read “Emergency with Fallen - Sorry.”

He pulled the cell phone from his jacket pocket, then let the pile of clothes fall to the floor as he
called Ruby.

“Are you free? It’s not life or death.” Sam reassured.

“More or less, what’s up?”

“I need a little help with something. I’m at Hael’s apartment.” He could barely finish the sentence
before Ruby appeared next to him. She hung up her cell, then slowly walked over to examine him.

“Jesus Sam-” Her hand reached out to touch one of the many long gashes covering his back, legs, &
arms, but she hesitated. "I’m gonna fucking kill Hathai."

"Hey, calm down.” He weakly held her shoulders, scared to take her hands while he still might have
salt on them. "I'm not asking you to go out on a hit, I just need some help with all this."

"Want me to find Cas?” Ruby offered.

“I don’t want him to see how it can get. It’d take about two seconds before Dean knew.” Sam tried
to take a deep breath, but his back hurt too much. "Can you patch me up? I don’t want to go home
like this and I don’t want to deal with a bunch gawkers downstairs.”

"Step one: you clear your calendar while I start a shower for you. That’s way too much blood for a
damp towel.”

After Sam finished calling Hell and postponing his meeting with the Council, he went into the
bathroom. Ruby was finishing checking the temperature of the water, then started digging through
the medicine cabinet for a first aid kit.

He slowly climbed into the shower. The water stung at first, causing him to lean forward and hold
onto the shower head for stability. It took a minute for him to get used to the mild pain, but once he
was acclimated the warm water began soothing his muscles. The sound of the shower curtain being pulled back made him glance over his shoulder.

Ruby had stripped and was climbing in behind him. She held a suturing kit. Her delicate hands caressed his back, searching for the wounds most urgently needing care.

“I fucking hate her.” Ruby commented while starting her first set of stitches. "She’s dangerous."

"She’s the least dangerous Luxia with any chance of controlling the caste.” Sam sighed. "She’s not that bad, I just need to play the game better."

"You play the game better than anyone short of Crowley- relax your left arm.” Ruby instructed while softly pushing his shoulder blade in to narrow one of the cuts. "And Crowley doesn’t have to pretend to like them."

"It’s not enough.” Sam muttered.

“It’s never enough for some people.” She tied off one set of stitches, cut the thread, then kissed a clear part of his back before moving on to the next wound. "You’re keeping those idiots from killing each other, I call that a win."

"Can’t I want more?"

“It’s impossible to make everyone happy.”

“Yeah, but it’s not impossible to try.” Sam nodded to himself briefly, before she touched his neck to remind him to hold still. "That has to be important in a place like Hell, trying."

"Hell doesn’t deserve you."

“And yet they’re stuck with me.” Sam smiled. He let her work on his back in silence for several minutes. Despite the pain it was comforting on some profound level.

“I know you aren’t religious, but have you ever just had blind faith in something?” He finally broke the silence.

“Magic.” Ruby answered, then kissed his back again. "You."

"Kiss ass.” Sam blushed, but turned serious. "You know I’m not comfortable with Lucifer… with being his vessel, pretending to like him. But for so many of our people, he’s part of their faith. I need to find a way of respecting that, of staying civil, if I want to keep them from acting out. I mean I’m supposed to be Lucifer’s chosen."

"You are Lucifer’s chosen. If you don’t dance to their song, well maybe it’s time that you picked the tune.” Sam chuckled at her metaphor. She tied off another row of stitches and cut the excess thread from his back. "What?"

"Do you like Queen?” Sam shook his head. "Nevermind- It’s just I was playing with fire and I need to be more careful. If I’m going to keep us all together, then I need to-"

"Care for the people on the edge of the night?” Ruby didn’t quite sing it for him.

Sam turned around and cupped her face in his hands. He kissed her lightly, then she moved in more passionately. She tried to grip his arms, but he cringed when she touched a cut. Her hands moved to his chest, down his torso, and started stroking him. He groaned.
“Hael’s pretty tolerant, but this is pushing it.” Sam said after regretfully breaking their kiss.

“She’s an angel, she’s probably never set foot in a bathroom.”

“Yeah, well I can barely move like this.”

“Not a problem.” Ruby whispered, the kissed down his chest as she got onto her knees.

“You’re evil.” He braced himself against the tile wall and muffled a small moan. “I take it back, you’re divine.”

Chapter End Notes

Sam learning to fake piety.

I like writing interactions between 2039!Sam & Hathai, because it’s so rare to write Sam disliking someone and still having to cooperate.

This scene was basically the result of me wanted to explain "making penance" since it was mentioned in chapter 55 (The Winter Rose), plus me getting drunk, plus me listening to a bunch of Queen.
5/12/10

Ruby was standing in their kitchen cutting up some vegetables to make doubles & stewed greens for dinner. Sam had just gotten back from a long shift downstairs, so she offered to cook dinner and let him have some playtime with Kaylee & Tom. She watched them, laying on the living room floor. Kaylee was still learning how to roll over and sit herself up.

“You’ve almost got it.” Tom encouraged the six month old. She propped herself up with one arm, but it almost immediately gave out. Before she could fall over, Tom caught her, though Sam had become fairly well versed at saving her from tumbles with telekinesis.

“Her’s been picking up a lot recently.” Ruby commented. "I’m sure you two will be chasing her around in no time."

"No pressure.” Sam reassured Kaylee as he tickled her stomach. She giggled, then grabbed onto his hand.

“Ba.” She reached out to Sam, who stared in mild confusion. "Ba. Ba."

Ruby stopped cutting up some herbs and stared at them. Tom was open mouthed with surprise, but Sam didn’t understand what had just happened.

"I think she just called you dad.” Ruby said while circling around the kitchen counter to join them.

“What?” Sam’s eyebrows rose.

“I mean not in English, but she did. I’ve been trying to teach her Dagbani- ba is dad.” Ruby shrugged. "I started using it went you weren’t home, like why the fuck not- I didn’t know she’d pick up on it."

"Ba.” Kaylee reached out to Sam more emphatically. He picked her up and she snuggled in his arms.

"Ba?” Sam confirmed with Ruby & Tom, though it was a little hard for him to speak through the tightness in his throat. "That’s right, Kaylee. I’m your ba."

Ruby sat down on the floor in front of Sam. She grabbed Tom and pulled him onto her lap, hugging him in the process.

"So Tommy, what bad words are we gonna teach her first?” Ruby smirked. "I’m kidding, the bad
words are more of a three year old thing."

"Do you know who they are?" Sam asked Kaylee as he pointed at Tom & Ruby. "That’s mom & Tommy."

"Ma.” Sam’s chest heaved, overwhelmed by emotion. "Mi."

"Was that a mommy?” Ruby asked, unsure of whether two syllable words were out of the question for such a young child. Tom scooted to the side to allow Ruby to get to her daughter. But instead of reaching out for Ruby, Kaylee’s eyes followed Tom.

“Mi.” Kaylee repeated.

“Oh no way- she can’t pronounce T’s yet.” Ruby guessed. "She’s trying to say Tommy."

"Mi.” Kaylee laughed. "Mi."

After a good many minutes watching Tom trying to teach Kaylee how to correctly pronounce his name, Ruby went back to preparing dinner. She casually watched them while rolling out the dough for the doubles.

Sam got up, walked around into the kitchen, and began rubbing her shoulders. His eyes scanned the counter full of chopped ingredients, looking for something to sample. He reached around her to grab some shredded spinach & mint, but before he could eat it Ruby took a bite at the greens, stealing half his prize. He popped the remainder in his mouth, then leaned against the counter and faced her.

"I…” Sam slid a few inches closer to her and lowered his voice. "I know that I’m not around sometimes-""

"Neither am I, it’s part of the gig.” She offered, hoping to quell whatever guilt he might be feeling.

“I wish I was here more-” Ruby kissed him, silencing him.

“You’re doing great.” She went to pat his chest, but realized her hands were covered in flour and settled for lightly head butting his left pec. "I know you want to be here with them all the time, but it’s okay to have other responsibilities too."

"I hadn’t realized you weren’t speaking English when I’m downstairs.” He broached the subject meekly.

“The other night I was thinking about my parents, my life- like being-alive-life life, & what I want for Kaylee. I want her to know my history, to be part of my family.” Ruby looked at Tom, one of the only surviving members of her coven. Sam nodded thoughtfully while watching her watch the children.

“How do you say ‘daughter’ in Dagbani?” Sam asked.

“Pakpoŋ.” Ruby smiled at him. "You really want to learn?"

"Of course, it’s important to you.” Sam blushed a bit, then glanced at Tom & Kaylee. “Anyway, I can’t let you all talk about me behind my back.”

Sam scooped a little of the chickpea filling from his doubles and held it out for Kaylee to try. She stared at it cautiously.
“It’s food.” He explained, then nibbled a little bit in demonstration. Kaylee did something resembling taking a bite. Her eyes widened, but she didn’t smile or cry out. "Do you think it’s too much?"

"Nah, it’s not like it’s spicy or anything. She’s probably just used to sweeter stuff.” Ruby patted her daughter’s head. "Congratulations, you’re one step closer to french fries."

"Ruby, can we go get a burger tomorrow?” Tom asked. For the last few months they’d kept their cabin meat free for Sam’s benefit. He didn’t have a problem with others eating meat, but the smell of heated flesh still made him physically ill for hours on end.

“Actually, if you’re feeling up to it I can show you how to make teleportation talismans.” Ruby pointed at the boy, then added. "You’re not gonna be making any for a long time though. They’re tricky as hell and deadly if you mess them up. But there are a lot of cool principles it introduces- and we can use it to grab some lunch."

Ruby grinned at Tom, who beamed at the prospect of seeing such a complex spell… and having a burger undoubtedly accompanied by fries. His brow furrowed at a thought, then he turned a little more serious.

"I can learn this stuff when I’m older, right?” Tom asked. "I can cast the big spells without being a demon, like my dad did."

The four adult survivors of Ruby’s coven were all proficient witches, but none of them had known the craft to anywhere the same degree as Gabin. With Ruby living in the same camp as them, Belda & the others left the more complex casting to her. It was a little disheartening to her coven in its weakened state, but Tom’s curiosity & aspiration made her a bit more optimistic.

"You don’t need to be a demon to use the heavy craft. Your dad was a great witch, and if you want to someday you’ll be a powerful witch just like him.”

“And like you.” Tom added while pushing some of the food around his plate with his fork. "How long did it take you to be a powerful witch?"

"The craft is… well, a craft- I’ve been studying it for centuries. If you find out that you really love magic, then you’re gonna be studying it your whole life.”

“And you’ll keep teaching me?” Tom asked hopefully.

“For as long as you can stand me.” Ruby promised with a little wink.

After dinner, Sam sat on the couch and read aloud to Tom from a book of illustrated poems. The boy dragged Ruby over to join them. Ruby leaned her back against an armrest and bent her knees over Sam’s lap. Kaylee dozed on her chest, while Tom sat on the other side of Sam, admiring the intricate illustrations.

“Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;”

Tom slowly relaxed, snuggled up against Sam & Ruby. He wrapped his arms around her knees and leaned his head against Sam’s chest. Sam repositioned the book slightly to make it easier for Tom to
admire to beautiful drawings.

“Then took the other, as just as fair,  
And having perhaps the better claim,  
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;  
Though as for that the passing there  
Had worn them really about the same,”

Ruby carefully adjusted Kaylee’s blanket. She caressed the infant’s soft brown hair and marveled at her tiny fingers, which clutched a silver pentagram necklace Ruby was wearing.

“And both that morning equally lay  
In leaves no step had trodden black.  
Oh, I kept the first for another day!  
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,  
I doubted if I should ever come back.”

Tom’s head started nodding with fatigue as he succumbed to sleep. Sam closed the book as quietly as possible, then looked over at Ruby. They were both immobilized by two sleeping children, but neither of them cared. There was no sense of urgency or danger, just quiet calm.

“I shall be telling this with a sigh  
Somewhere ages and ages hence:”

Sam continued at little more than a whisper for Ruby’s ears only. She smiled at him while taking his hand.

“Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—  
I took the one less traveled by,  
And that has made all the difference.”

They sat in a profound peaceful silence. He brought her hand it to his lips, then she gently pull his hand to her lips and kissed it in turn.

In that moment she didn’t want anything else. There might come a day when Sam or she would have to venture into dangerous & terrifying unknowns. There might be worlds to see & explore, new people to meet, discoveries to be made- but in that moment she knew she’d made her choice and that all roads before her would lead back to Sam- would lead back to her family. Her life might be a journey, but as long as they were together, she was finally home.

Chapter End Notes

I was thinking about making this realization take place during/after some dramatic event, but I think this sort of thing often enough just sneaks up on you. One day you just notice that you’re thinking about the future and you assume the other person/people are a part of it.
Dyaniel descended the staircase into the lower basement. He held his leather messenger bag flush to his body, hoping to make as little noise as possible. For months he’d debated going down to confront Lucifer, but today the timing had been serendipitous.

The only people in the bunker to stop him were Alex & his dad. His cousin had been busy watching a movie in one of the parlors. And his dad had been reading reports in the library while presumably listening to music. Dyaniel had slipped away from his studies unobserved.

To his disappointment, Lucifer was watching with rapt attention when Dyaniel reached the bottom of the stairs. He’d tried to open the door to the basement quietly, but the Archangel’s senses were better than he’d anticipated. Even though things weren’t going to plan, he continued into the basement.

“What brings something like you down here?” Lucifer’s question began as little more than a snarl, but by the end of the sentence there was a dark amusement to his voice.

Dyaniel wasn’t sure what to say. He’d been hoping that the Archangel would be incapacitated. His dad had repeatedly complained to his xe that Sam & Lucifer were largely nonfunctional. Being faced with a completely lucid foe was something he hadn’t expected. More than that, he wasn’t prepared to see such a venomous expression from his uncle Sam’s face.

“Is your trouble with speaking or are you as deaf as your dad? Or is it your mind that’s damaged?” Lucifer asked after waiting several seconds for Dyaniel to reply. “You know that everyone is aware there’s something wrong with you. It’s not just the fact that you’re soiled- it’s actually funny. The last of Michael’s line and you’re a cripple.”

“I’m fine.” Dyaniel spoke up, but he suddenly felt very aware of his posture. He shifted his weight, trying to look more like how he thought an average human might stand.

“That’s what they’ve taught you to say.” Lucifer was nearly purring and hardly seemed to notice the few drops of blood escaping his right tear duct & ear. “Don’t you ever wonder why you’re broken? Don’t you ever wonder why you would turn out this way unless it was God’s will? The first publicized offense to the natural order and you’re defective.”
“He doesn’t care about me- it’s chance- it’s not my fault.” Dylaniel’s throat felt tight as he gripped the leather bag tighter. “There’s nothing wrong with me.”

“Sam’s seen it. Ever since you were born Dean’s tried so hard to pretend that you were normal, to pretend that he could love you. You were his one shot at having a family and what a disappointment. He wanted a son, but all he got was another third rate soldier. The only person you’ve ever come close to killing was Castiel when you were born—”

Dylaniel was trembling slightly. He pulled one of his dad’s pistols from his bag. The gun dwarfed him, but its weight didn’t bother him. He aimed at Lucifer, then gathered his conviction, blessing the weapon.

“You think it’s that easy to kill me?”

Dylaniel unloaded the entire magazine and kept pulling the trigger several times before he realized that Lucifer was still alive. The Archangel had merely teleported to the other side of his cell, out of the line of fire. He telekinetically pulled the bullets from the wall and held them in his palm.

“You know that you won’t be the one to kill me, right?” Lucifer smiled at Dylaniel. “You won’t kill Michael either. You’d never kill your dad. You’re just too weak to get the job done. Michael must be furious to know that his grace wasn’t just soiled, but it was wasted. All that potential just buried in such a small pathetic thing.”

“I’ll kill you.” Dylaniel watched Lucifer rolling the bullets on his palm. “I’m not scared of you.”

Lucifer telekinetically hurled one of the bullets through the bars. It lost some control & momentum as it passed beyond Lucifer’s influence, but it struck Dylaniel’s left leg piercing the flesh.

The door at the top of the stairs burst open as Dean came rushing down. Lucifer tried firing at Dean but the bullet stopped short, grabbed by Alex, who followed his uncle down. Dean didn’t even look at Lucifer. He started applying pressure to the gunshot wound, then wrapped his arms around Dylaniel picking him up.

“Dean, we were just talking about you—” Lucifer started, but Dean was already carrying his son up the stairs.

“Don’t listen to anything he said.” Dean warned while tucking Dylaniel into bed. Cas had rushed home to heal the gunshot wound. Despite the fact that their son didn’t cry from the pain, they both agreed that Cas should partially sedate him. “He’s not your uncle.”

“Lucifer is my uncle.” Dylaniel still managed to correct his dad through his drowsiness.

“You know what I mean.” Dean had taken the pistol from Dylaniel’s hands after getting him upstairs. He didn’t need to ask why he’d gone down there. “Promise me that you won’t go down there by yourself.”

“You’re scared he’ll kill me?”

“I’m scared of a lot of ways it could go.” Dean admitted.

“I promise.” Dylaniel said solemnly. “You didn’t ask me… make me promise not to kill him.”

Dean pulled the bedsheets taut and tucked the blanket under Dylaniel’s shoulders in order to buy himself a few extra seconds to reconsider the issue. It wasn’t the sort of thing he ever wanted to talk
about, but at the very least he’d been hoping that if it had to occur, it’d be many years from then.
That didn’t stop him from occasionally worrying about Dylaniel eventually being the natural choice
to fight Lucifer should the need arise- Dean wouldn’t be alive forever. And he knew that Dylaniel
took promises so seriously that he’d grown to never throw the word around lightly.

“I wouldn’t ask you to promise me something like that.” Dean assured. “I couldn’t kill him, maybe
I’d never really be able to- hopefully we’ll never find out… I don’t want you going down there to
confront him, but if something ever happens I want you to know that it’s okay to protect yourself.”

“He said I couldn’t kill him.” Dylaniel didn’t meet his dad’s eyes.

“Assholes love to put down people that they’re scared of.” Dean tilted his head in an allusion to a
shrug.

“He isn’t scared of me.”

“There’s a shattered knife on your wall that says otherwise.” Dean pointed to the fragments of the
knife that Dylaniel stabbed Lucifer with half a year earlier.

“Is Sam dead?” Dylaniel asked quietly.

He knew that Sam was a sore subject for his dad, but he was trying to understand what had just
happened. Years earlier he’d learned that some inhabited vessels were alive & some were dead. The
truth was that he didn’t know what his uncle’s state was. At various times he’d overheard his parents
& Ruby refer to Lucifer as ‘destroying’, ‘strangling’, or ‘overpowering’ Sam, but it wasn’t clear if
that was figurative, literal, and/or lethal.

“No, but he’s not well- it’s like he’s hurt, but we can’t make him better.” Dean closed his eyes for a
moment, trying to maintain his composure. “Most of the time he’s not in control and we don’t know
what he’s perceiving or how he’s doing.”

“Is he ever Sam when you visit him?”

“Sometimes, for a few minutes. I can see him…” Dean rubbed his face to wipe away the forming
tears. “Just remember that he loves you… and I know that he saved us before, but you can’t ever
count on him again. You understand?”

“Yes.”
Repercussions & Reproduction

Chapter Notes

This deleted scene just kept getting bigger & bigger because I love this kind of stuff. It could easily be a lot longer and better, but then it’d be getting equal effort as a real chapter and that seems like a dangerous game. Not perfect, but hopeful it’s a little appeasement during my break for finals.

4/15/2032

“Rube, we got a situation up here.”

“What’s wrong?” Ruby was in her lab in Hell when she got the call from Dean. She didn’t even wait for his answer before she started blowing out the candles at her current work station. There was a natural time delay associated with transmissions from Earth and Dean knew to only call her in Hell if it was important.

“Alex put six of our people in the hospital- two of them are critical.” She could almost hear Dean cringing. “He’s in the brig at Sioux Falls. I’m here now, but he got whammied so he’s gonna be out cold for at least another half hour.”

“I’m on my way.”

Ruby found Dean leaning against a wall just outside the brig’s holding area. He was rubbing his temples, which drew her attention to the greying parts of his hair. Cas was trying his best to keep Dean young, but when Dean was stressed it was easier to see all the years on him.

“How bad is it?” She asked while looking around. The hallway was empty- possibly having been cleared.

“Well, it doesn’t look like we have any fatalities.” Dean offered with a false smile.

“That good?” Ruby leaned against the wall next to Dean. “What the fuck happened?”

“There was some kind of brawl about an hour ago. Alex is still out, so I haven’t gotten his side of it, but there’s a partial picture. Four of them were walking down the street one way and he’s walking towards them. The four stop walking, so he stops walking. Meanwhile the other two happened to be walking up behind him. There’s a strange pause where everyone is uncertain about what’s going on and then Alex let’s loose on them.”

“Well that sounds like bullshit if I ever heard it.” Ruby muttered. “He wouldn’t just fight six people for no reason. I know how stubborn he is, but he hates fighting.”

“Yeah, I think our six victims didn’t do any research before coming up with their party line.” Dean suggested. He’d also found the stories suspicious, but he wanted to get Alex’s side before confronting the infirmed soldiers. It wouldn’t surprise him if the group of six had assumed violence could be causally attributed to Alex because he was part demon, but he didn’t want to immediately voice that particular concern to Ruby.
Dean guided Ruby into the brig to see how her son was doing. Alex was lying on a cot in an otherwise empty cell. Any visible injuries he might’ve suffered in the fight were healed by the time Dean arrived. His clothes were minimal, plain black t-shirt, jeans- but he was missing his shoes & belt. He wore warded handcuffs.

“Apparently the soldiers that detained him were worried he’d be able to cast with this stuff.” Dean handed Ruby a plastic tub containing some of Alex’s personal effects.

“Seriously? They think he’s gonna cast through warded cuffs? You’ve got some real amateurs working for you.” Ruby started examining the belongings. Based on the contents of the tub, when he’d been arrested he was wearing his black leather jacket embroidered with the red blossoms of Hell & the sigil of Lucian. She glanced at Dean while holding up the jacket.

“You don’t think they fought…” Dean sighed. Ruby had gotten onto the same page as him. He didn’t want to be seriously considering that bleak theory. He didn’t even want to think about how bad the situation would be if it turned out to be a hate crime. “Relations with Hell have been pretty good the last few years.”

“Were any of the people on the other side demons?” Ruby asked.

“No, but that could just mean that demons are smarter than the rest of them.” She raised an eyebrow, but let the hypophysis drop until they had more intel.

“Three talismans, a heartwood bundle,” Ruby listed off items that she found in his jacket’s pockets. She opened a plastic bag of dried plant material and sniffed it. “weed-”

“No surprise there.”

“A gris-gris.” Ruby said as she picked up a small leather pouch that was loose in the tub. She opened it up and examined some Arabic writing. “You sure this was picked up off him?”

“It might’ve been on the ground, why?”

“It’s a woman’s gris-gris.”

“Fuck… I’ll find out what happened to Nasrin. You wait here with him.” Dean suggested, then left for his second round of questioning.

Alex groaned and tried to reach up to touch his face, but jerked in surprise at the metal cuffs on his wrists. He looked at them before rubbing his sore jaw. As the world started coming back into focus it became clear that he was in a cell. There was a strange muted quality to his surroundings- it wasn’t just the drab setting, he couldn’t feel the world humming. It was too quiet. He looked at the handcuffs again, noticed the warding, & began trying to force them off.

“Be careful or you’ll end up looking more like your dad.” Alex turned to see his mom & uncle Dean sitting on folding chairs outside of his cell.

“Why am I in here?” He asked while carefully sitting up.

“We were gonna ask you the same thing.” Ruby said. “You beat the shit out of six of our guys. What happened?”

“It was self-defense.”
“They say that none of them laid a hand on you before you put the first one through a window.” Dean countered. “I’m not saying they weren’t dumb enough to pick a fight with you, but you’ve got to give us more to go on.”

“Nasrin & I were going to go get some lunch and a group of guys blocked the street in front of us. We tried to go another way, but more showed up. She pulled her pistol & blade. One was an angel, popped up right on her. She thought they were going after me, but they were really after her. So yeah, I locked down flight and laid into them trying to get her out of there.” Alex’s stomach dropped. “She’s okay, isn’t she?”

“She’s okay.” Dean reassured. “She’s in the Fort Bragg brig. They’ve got her for a bunch of bullshit charges like resisting arrest.”

“They were trying to arrest her?” Alex’s brow furrowed. “They didn’t say- it all happened real fast.”

“What I don’t get is why there’s a restraining order between you two.”

“What?!” Alex exclaimed. “I didn’t- She’s my bodyguard. It’s her job to be with me.”

"Alex, now’s the time to fess up." Dean switched into a softer tone. “She’s not just your bodyguard, is she?”

“Are you two having sex?” Ruby added, causing Alex to bury his face in his hands. Dean shot Ruby a glanced at her very direct approach, but didn’t comment.

“What answer gets Nasrin in the least trouble?” He asked without looking up at them.

“With us, the truth. With everyone else…” Ruby frowned at the thought. “We’ll figure it out.”

“Yeah.” Alex confessed. "For a few weeks."

Ruby pulled the gris-gris bag from her pocket and tossed it through the bars to Alex. He caught it, realized what it was and sighed.

“Tell me you two are using something more than a gris-gris for contraception.” Ruby said. “You know it’s important for you to be safe with this stuff.”

“Fucking a bodyguard’s got to be as safe as it gets.” Alex joked halfheartedly.

“Jail isn’t the place to be cute.” Ruby smirked.

“Yeah, we’re being careful.”

“Cause magic isn’t foolproof-” Ruby started.

“I get that better than anyone.” Alex murmured.

Alex & Kaylee had both been informed that they were unintended pregnancies as part of the sex talk. Kaylee had been held up as the lesson of don’t assume it can’t happen. Alex was the lesson of understanding the contraceptives you’re using and possible interactions. Neither of them resented their origins, but Alex was certainly tired of hearing the story.

“We’re going to go find out how much of a hornets’ nest this is. Just sit tight and don’t talk to anyone without back up, okay?” Dean suggested.
“While I’m stuck in here, if I agree to behave, can they at least take off the cuffs.” Alex held up warded handcuffs. "It’s like everything’s dark & muted with them on. It feels wrong, like I kinda feel sick.”

“How sick?” Ruby asked and blinked her eyes black to assess Alex.

“I don’t know how to- like a migraine, but almost the opposite. It’s not too much input, it’s too little. The emptiness is the problem.”

“We’ll see what we can do.”

“This has scared everyone.” Bishop observed as he poured himself another cup of coffee. He was one of the senior most officers in the AFE, equally importantly he secretly considered himself a friend of the family.

“You’d think this is most frightening for the two people in prison.” Ruby offered.

“Or the six people in the hospital?” He countered. “I’m not saying that this is being handled well- somebody screwed up by creating the restraining order, but now we’re up to our chins in this and we can’t act rashly.”

“Rashly?” Ruby laughed sarcastically. “My son’s in prison for no reason.”

“It’s not my fault he nearly killed two of our own.” Bishop raised his hands in a casually defensive manner.

“He’s not in there because of the fight.”

“Luke, we know you aren’t the enemy. That’s why we came to you first.” Dean tried to remind them of their actual obstacles.

Bishop leaned back in his chair. He was one of the early recruits with a legitimate military background. Unlike so many people in their complex world, he’d always had a simple pragmatism that Dean & Ruby could both relate to. He hated bullshit, though in recent years his age had forced him into more of an adviser & diplomat role, which called for something bordering on finesse. At least they could count on him to be reasonable, if not the unwavering force they’d previously known.

“This situation is new and, like I said, people are scared.” Bishop framed his understanding of the situation. “I don’t know who made the restraining order, but I’m not surprised it happened. Vessel politics get people nervous- especially us aging humans.”

“Worried the kids are gonna mess up your hard work?” Ruby mused.

“Kids these days…” Bishop said mockingly, then looked at Dean. “You know how it is.”

“Don’t lump me in with you guys.” Dean said unamused by the thought.

“You’re right, you aren’t like them. You’ve got a personal interest in this and maybe that means that you aren’t first on the list for them when it comes to working on the issue.”

“So other officers are just going behind my back?” Dean asked.

“You know how much we hate conflict, of course they’re going behind your back.” Bishop shrugged. “Maybe if we all get lucky we’ll die off before we have to acknowledge that we made mistakes?”
“Optimist.” Ruby muttered. “Well, it’s come to a head. What kinds of dumb ideas are we up against?”

“I don’t think it’s too nuanced. He’s vessel to an Archangel and he’s sexual active. This is the first time we’ve had that sort of risk since…” Bishop glanced at Dean.

“You don’t have to tiptoe around me. We all know I can’t have any more kids- hell, I wasn’t much of a risk before my injury.”

“I’m just saying, it seems like a narrow issue. People are scared of another Archangel vessel popping up who knows where in nine months.”

“Are they just drawing the line at Archangels?” Dean asked. “The more this question floats the more likely we’re gonna get the question ‘What about seraphim vessels?’ and more.”

“I haven’t heard anything about the seraphim or any other castes.”

“Yeah, well my money is that the seraphim are gonna hear about this and they’ll want to know the policy for their vessels, and so on. I cleared his brig, but if Alex spends much longer locked up- and especially for being a vessel, the gossip’s gonna spread through the choirs like wildfire.”

“Same for the demons.” Ruby added. “Whoever it was, they picked the wrong vessel to make their target. It had to be one of the only vessels that’s a demon. That’s not gonna play well with the black cloud crowd.”

"This isn’t a species thing.” Bishop speculated.

“If he was human would he still be in the brig?” Ruby asked pointedly. “No one ever tried to reign in Dean.”

“That’s not even a real comparison.”

“Yeah, well it’s the only one we’ve got, so get ready to address it anyway.”

“He’s in the brig because he nearly kill a few of our own soldiers. It’s not because he has black eyes, he’s dangerous.”

“He isn’t dangerous, it was a misunderstanding.” Dean stated. "He’ll cooperate if he’s treated half decently.”

“They have him in warded cuffs.” Ruby clarified.

“To be fair, he could melt through the cell bars in a second without the cuffs.” Bishops countered. “It’s a reasonable precaution.”

“The cuffs are hurting him.”

“The cuffs are inconveniencing him- like prison is supposed to. They’re just keeping him from using magic.”

“Don’t start talking with authority about stuff you don’t understand.” Ruby warned. “He passively uses his powers all the time. It’s cutting off some of his senses. It’s like keeping him blindfolded, but worse.”

“Fine, I’ll admit that I don’t get how magic works for your kind- demons or witches, but angels & demons can tolerate warded cuffs- witches tolerate warded cuffs.” Bishop sighed and scratched at
his greying beard. “If it’s a real problem then I’ll try to get some momentum on it, but he shouldn’t get special treatment just because of who his family is.”

“It’s not special treatment.” Ruby tried to cut back on any hostility in her voice. “He’s different than humans or demons- they’re affecting him differently.”

“Okay-” Bishop was interrupted by a knock on the office door. Anael entered, then closed the door behind her.

“The situation with Alex is a problem.” Anael offered in lieu of a greeting.

“Fuck, how did you hear about it?” Ruby groaned.

“It’s on pirate radio.”

“How much time do you think we have before Hell finds out?” Dean asked Ruby.

“None.”

“I’m getting a lot of pressure to request that Alex be extradited to Hell.” Kaylee was on speakerphone in Anael’s office. It was agreed that the inner circle should have a strategy talk before calling an official meeting among all the senior officers.

“We’ve been hearing that idea floated up here too.” Ruby confirmed.

“Half of the officers hate the idea because they think he’s gonna get off without even a slap on the wrist. The other half are happy about him being stuck downstairs for awhile because they know that’ll keep Nasrin out of the picture.” Dean explained.

“If the demons want to punish their own, that’s their prerogative. We’ve made that accommodation since our initial alliance.” Rachel offered.

“He’s part human too.” Dean noted. “Anyway, sending him to Hell creates a million new problems.”

“Speaking of Hell related problems,” Kaylee interjected. “In any official capacity, Crowley’s gonna be the one representing Hell on this. If I don’t publicly recuse myself it’s just gonna make more drama.”

It was bad enough that she also technically held rank in the AFE. She was known for having a finger in every pie, which often helped diplomatically, but occasionally hurt. This whole situation screamed conflict of interest.

“Ignoring the political complications for a moment, what’s a standard punishment in Hell for his charges?” Cas asked. “Is there a practical problem with Hell or is it just the appearance of nepotism that we have to be concerned with?”

“He hasn’t really done much that would show up on our books- related to this incident, the rest of his life we won’t even touch.” They could hear Kaylee flipping through pages. “Yeah, he had some wrathful violence, but it wasn’t premeditated and he was trying to protect Nasrin. It’s a really minor infraction. Even if one of the guys he beat up dies-”

“They’re all expected to live.” Dean reminded her of the prognosis.

“Hell doesn’t take a snapshot in time when you get sentenced. If you start a domino effect of shit,
you suffer for it. That’s part of why Hell is intrinsically unpleasant, causality’s a bitch.”

“Okay, so what’d he be looking at if he was anyone else?” Dean shrugged off the impractical lecture.

“That’s a whole other problem, if he was anyone else and we had jurisdiction on him he’d already be dead. Our whole scale for non-harvest punishment assumes the prisoner will survive nearly anything short of me executing them.” Kaylee muttered some Abyssal under her breath. “I’d have to consult with advisors, but who’s gonna want to torture the prince of Hell? We all respect order, but nobody wants to to put their ass on the line by holding the whip.”

“You don’t make penance anymore, do you?” Ruby asked.

“Please, you put Lucifer & Alex in a popularity contest down here, it’s a landslide. The Luxia are shitting themselves as we speak. No one down here wants to do it.” Kaylee sighed. “If it’ll finish this thing I could do it, but only if we need to- as is I can’t justify it on the merits.”

“You’re not gonna have to do that-” Dean started to reassure his niece.

“I’m the end of the line down here.” Kaylee spoke firmly. “Someone has to keep order if that’s what it comes to. Hell can’t give out free passes.”

“This is probably a moot point. Many of our angels will protest any form of corporal punishment.” Anael warned. “Most of the sceadugenga already want to break him out.”

“Please tell me that cooler heads are keeping them in check?” Dean groaned.

The political significance of the sceadugenga breaking Alex out of jail wasn’t lost on anyone. The entire choir had been imprisoned by the AFE during Lucifer’s campaign and over half of them had been freed by Alex at the Battle of Grand Junction. Since then the sceadugenga had been particularly fond of Alex and to some proximate extent demons. The choir’s multifaceted disgust with the current situation may have been representative of many factions’ feelings, however the sceadugenga were more prone to drastic & rebellious measures.

“Some of the virtues that were at Grand Junction are working to calm them, but the longer this goes the worse it’ll become.” Rachel advised.

“Neither of them did anything extraordinary under those circumstances.” Radomir, Hael’s widower commented. “They should serve a week at most and then we all can get on with our lives. We have bigger problems than some brawl, I don’t care who it is.”

“The fight doesn’t matter. It’s the ‘why’ that matters. This whole restraining order is ridiculous. Nobody gets to send our army into somebody’s bedroom.” Ruby looked around the room. “I’m pretty sure every one of us has had sex in violation of some backward law or edict. We can’t let this thing set some precedent for all vessels getting clamped down on.”

“I’m not saying it, but they’re gonna say it-” Bishop chimed in. “There’s danger leaving the vessels unregulated. You’ve got to be ready to talk about the harm-”

“You want to talk about harm?” Asked Mahem, a Crossroads demon, who oversaw half of the AFE’s intraplanar contracts. “My girlfriend is a vessel. If Nasrin gets exiled, what’s to stop someone from trying to reassign me back to Hell? Surely I can read provisions just as well in the depths? -And she doesn’t even want to host Isocael. Her brother’s fine with it, but he’s infantry- if he gets killed without having kids and Isocael’s current body takes too much damage, what then? Are they gonna force her to say yes to the angel or a kid?”
“Mahem, we hear you.” Ruby tried to reassure.

“I like Isocael, I do. But if I didn’t, I’d kill zir rather than risk it.” Mahem’s voice shook, caught somewhere between anger & shame. “Nobody’s dead yet, but if this goes wrong it’s going to go bad fast. Demons, we… we’ve worked too hard to get our families for someone on our own side to take them away now.”

“We all have.” Rachel agreed as she touched her barely noticeable belly, which contained her second child.

Dean & Cas looked at each other. Ever since they’d had Dylaniel, they’d known that their child would be the subject of debate. He’d face environments that weren’t prepared to accept him and thus provoke change that could be painful & potentially dangerous. But now, their child wasn’t the only one in danger- hundreds of kids, maybe a thousand adults, were suddenly aware of their exposure for the first time.

“No one is going to take our partners or our kids.” Dean said with conviction. “Alex’s imprisonment is purely symbolic, we could get him out in seconds. The reason we aren’t is because we can’t solve all our problems with a coup.”

“Hundreds of angels were imprisoned when Lucifer was free.” Anael reminded them all of the real harm that had once been done by their people against their people.

“It was horrible, but this time it’s different.”

“Because this threat isn’t imminent?” She asked Dean.

“No, because over half their army is waiting to see how much dignity a single vessel is going to get.” Dean sighed. “We lost too much of our leadership in the fight with Lucifer. If we start undermining what structure we do have, it’ll fall apart. We need to give everyone an out.”

“Let’s hope they take it.” Kaylee commented. “If not… I’ve got 100,000 ready to go anywhere you need them at a moment’s notice.”

“100,000 troops, you’re serious?” Bishop asked, alarmed by the massive & undoubtedly mobile force.

“Hell is serious.”

Ruby returned to the brig to visit Alex. There were about fifty demons and sceadugenga angels milling about the street outside. Inside the brig she found Tora & Salviel standing guard by his cell, but she noted that they were watching for outside threats, not trying to keep Alex in. Tom sat on the floor outside the cell, playing a game of chess through the bars with his little brother. Ruby briefly squeezed Tom’s shoulder before hugging Alex as best she could with the bars in her way.

”Are they gonna let me out?” Alex asked as he got up to stretch his back. There were shadows forming below his eyes and his customary smirk was noticeably absent. Ruby couldn’t tell if his slightly disheveled appearance was from the stress of the situation or from nearly 20 hours of wearing the warded cuffs. She wanted to take a pair of bolt cutters to the damn things, but Dean had warned her against doing anything that might jumpstart a breakout.

“Eventually. The assault charges aren’t really gonna go anywhere and everyone knows it. They’re just trying to hold you until they can figure out a party line on the whole vessel bloodline thing.”
“It’s my fucking life and they’re arguing about who I get to date!” Alex paced and hit his cuffs on the wall. "They won’t even let me out of these things- the humans don’t get it, I can’t feel the world anymore and they think it’s fine."

The muscles in his upper body tensed. He struggled like a man bound in a straight jacket for several seconds, then yelled in frustration before falling to his knees.

“Alex, you have every right to be angry, but you need to calm down before you hurt yourself.”

“They locked up Nasrin, locked me up, they took my fucking powers- and they took my wings!”

Ruby noticed Salviel shift uncomfortably at the mention of having his wings taken. Not being able to manifest his wings was an unexpected side effect of the warding on the handcuffs. She hoped that none of the angels outside heard him. The last thing they needed was for pirate radio to broadcast that Alex had, by angelic standards, been maimed.

“Come over here, Lex.” Tom requested as he scooted closer to the bars. Alex crawled across the concrete floor on his knees with his bound hands. When Alex was within arm’s reach, Tom drew him into an embrace and continued to hold his younger brother. “Nasrin & you are gonna get out. You’re gonna touch magic again. You can fly over the damn base if you want.”

“I know it’s tough, but if we don’t resolve this carefully right now it’s gonna make everything harder for you down the road.” Ruby explained.

“Does dad know?” Alex asked after taking a few seconds to collect himself.

“Not yet.” Ruby confessed. “Once we know how this is going to shake out I’ll tell him, but for now-”

“I get it.” Alex let her off the hook. "Where’s Kay?"

“I asked her to stay downstairs or at home until the vessel issue shakes out some more.” Ruby hesitated, then added. “It’s safer that way.”

Ruby suspected that her brothers knew that Kaylee snuck around with guys occasionally. When she would eat breakfast at the bunker, Kaylee took her birth control pill with her morning coffee. Despite her casualness at home, it seemed that she’d been discreet enough in public to not catch any ire. But that didn’t mean that her mere presence on Earth during this mess wouldn’t cause others from taking a closer look at her social calendar.

“What about Dyl?” Ruby could see Alex calming down and thinking more tactically.

“He’s at home. There’s… less of a freak out about him. I don’t know if that’s cause he’s only 13 or if it’s because he’s part angel.” She admitted. “I keep hearing that you being part demon has nothing to do with it, but it’s not like anyone’d tell me if it was the case.”

“How’s Nasrin?”

“She’s still in custody.”

“She didn’t do anything wrong.” Alex sighed, tired of having to keep saying it.

"We have people with her to make sure she’s being taken care of.” Ruby reassured. "Listen, the last thing we want is for her to be redeployed to some bottomless pit or sent off to some human city."
"I’d find her.” The romantic sentiment reminded Ruby painfully of Sam. Alex even had the same paradoxically sad & hopeful puppy expression.

“Alex, you going to a human city…” Ruby couldn’t remember the last time she’d seen Alex without his horns. She honestly wasn’t sure if he’d put away his horns while visiting a human city. He could be diplomatic, but the eyes & horns had become an essential part of his identity over the years. The idea of hiding them to accommodate conservative sensibilities might be so offensive to him that he’d accept the danger it might cause. "We want to keep her where we can watch her to make sure she’s safe.”

"Safe?” Alex sat up in renewed alarm. “You think someone’d kill her for dating me?”

“I don’t know. Maybe? If it wouldn’t cause a riot at this point.” She didn’t even know who was trying to screw up the relationship, let alone how strongly they felt. “But if I was trying to be the bad guy here, I’d just quietly sterilize her.”

Alex’s face went slack at the thought. He clearly hadn’t been considering the seriousness of the situation.

"They can’t do that!”

“I had Anael give her a once over- Nasrin’s fine, and we have guards protecting her.” Ruby reached through the bars to hold his hands. “There’s gonna be a hearing on the whole thing. No one expects the actual fight to be discussed for more than a few minutes, but your relationship is gonna come up. We need to make it obvious that restricting vessels’ personal lives is dangerous- but not in an us threatening them way. It’s fear that makes people do stupid stuff. They need to be able to trust you, so you need to keep it together, even if some things are said that offend you. You understand me?”

“Yeah.” He nodded solemnly. “I understand.”

As Alex was being escorted into the meeting room where the hearing was being held, he saw Nasrin. Her pale green shirt and khaki pants were scuffed with dirt, presumably from the fight a day earlier. Unkempt black hair hung around her dim face. She was also handcuffed and being escorted out of the opposite side of the room by a guard.

“Nas!” Alex called out to get her attention.

He ducked down while twisting his torso to break the grip his guard had on him. After dodging a lunge, he leapt onto a chair, then a table in order to clear a half wall separating the room. He stumbled while landing, but managed to stop himself from falling over entirely.

Nasrin elbowed her guards off of her and ran to him. He put his cuffed wrists over her head, then pulled her to him in a hug. Her hands cupped his cheeks, unable to embrace him in return thanks to her own bindings.

“I’m sorry.” She said as a tear rolled down her cheek. He wanted to wipe away the tear, but couldn’t reach it, so instead he pulled her closer to him and she buried her face in his chest.

“Don’t worry.” He whispered.

One of the guards grabbed his arms. Alex glared at the man and started trying to figure out how to headbutt him while still holding Nasrin, but Ruby stepped in. She pried the guard’s hand off her son and stared daggers at him. Unlike Alex & Nasrin, she had her full range of movement.
“Back off before something regrettable happens to you.” Ruby pressed the guard’s index & middle fingers backwards, just short of them breaking before releasing him. She looked up at the panel of senior officers. “This is ridiculous. There’s no point in keeping them from being in the same room. It’s not like they’re gonna have sex right here.”

Despite his eyes being solid black, Ruby suspected that Alex rolled his eyes at her comment. Nesrin looked away from everyone in embarrassment, then Alex started whispering reassurances to her.

“This hearing is about an assault on several soldiers who were acting in accordance-” One of the officers started.

“Let’s cut the crap. Somebody- maybe one or more of you, doesn’t want them to fuck. That’s why somebody made up a restraining order to keep Nasrin away, but they didn’t consider the massive can of worms that it just unleashed. Now we have to get this settled before it blows up- So let’s all be adults about this and talk frankly.” Ruby paused for a moment to see if anyone was going to interrupt her, but instead they gave her the floor. “Just because he’s a vessel doesn’t mean he’s property- he’s a person with the same rights as anybody else.”

“Having to adhere to social rules doesn’t make you property. There’s a tradeoff between doing whatever we want and acting in a way that keeps us all safe.”

“If he’s desperate for a partner, there are many better candidates.” A second officer suggested while trying to avoid making eye contact with Nasrin.

“She’s his girlfriend.” Ruby actually had no idea how the couple categorized their relationship. “It’s not like he’s indiscriminately fucking half a base.”

“Is it really wise to allow- it’s just he’s a vessel to Lucifer, that line is… problematic.” Commented a non-vessel human officer on the panel. There was an audible shuffle in the hall of dozens of people sitting up at the statement. One of the elephants in the room had been broached. The question was whether or not anyone dared to address whether vessels would receive different treatment depending on the value of their angel.

“Fine, you know what, we went there- This isn’t about Alex, it’s about all the vessels, all the nephilim.” Ruby redirected the discussion away from such a granular analysis. They needed to stay a larger united front. “You can’t imprison people for having consensual sex.”

“This is an issue of long term security. The human population has dropped so much- fifteen years from now we need to have assets available and angels are our heaviest hitters.”

“You think not having enough unprotected sex is our real problem?” Ruby jabbed.

“If we don’t figure out some way of controlling this, what’s to stop Heaven from stealing lines?”

"Good judgment. Let the vessels know what’s at stake and they watch themselves.” Ruby answered.

“He’s a seventeen year old. You really expect him to pick a trustworthy partner?”

“Nasrin isn’t properly vetted-”

“What, she’s good enough to trust with his life but not with his sex life?” Ruby cringed internally at the thought that maybe there were less rigorous standards for his personal safety.

“It’d be different if this was just about sex, but it’s about the future of an Archangel’s bloodline.”
“Alex isn’t get roped into an arranged marriage or whatever you’re proposing.” Ruby could feel herself starting to raise her voice, so she took a breath before continuing. “It’s his life and his choice.”

“This isn’t just about controlling the lines, it’s about maintaining order. If we don’t have rules, then individuals might take matters into their own hands.”

“Is that a threat?”

“No, it’s a fear.”

Most of the family sat in antichamber while other people offered testimony that wasn’t directly related to Alex. Tempers were running high after the first hour and it was decided that there was too much of a chance that an outburst could hurt the greater issue. Dean stayed behind to watch all the questioning, ready to object to anything if needed.

Dean quietly sat in the back of the meeting hall watching the testimony for over eight hours. It seemed like everyone had something to say on the matter of whether vessels & their bloodlines would be regulated. Half a dozen vessels expressed concern about their personal rights before it was decided that they’d be there all day listening to every single vessel making the same argument. A few humans & demons warned that there’d be hell to pay if their partners were persecuted. Several angels said that taking away even part of a vessel’s volition is a breach of their sacred consent-based relationship. To Dean’s surprise a handful of angels supported some control of the bloodlines, fearful that they would find themselves trapped on Earth without form.

He listened to the testimony, watching the other officers watching him. Everyone was waiting for him to put in his two cents and everyone knew where he’d come down. A few years earlier he would’ve carried more political weight than half the panel combined- the AFE was his baby after all, but lately it’d left him behind, propelled forward by its own momentum. Now he was more an officer emeritus, and he was completely washed out by his own conflict of interest on the subject. Yet everyone was still waiting for him to share what was surely anger at the imprisonment of his nephew.

After the last speaker went, Bishop gestured, inviting him to come up to the front of the room. Dean walked up and instead of sitting at the provided table, he leaned against the side of it. This wouldn’t take long, the day had been too long already.

“I think this is dumb & offensive, but I guess this conversation was inevitable, so I’m not gonna yell or whatever you might be scared of.

I’ve given a lot to our cause: over twenty years of my life, my brother, my niece, my hearing, my body… My son is 13 years old and right now he’s off learning how to kill because collectively he’s been asked to take my place. He trains at least six hours a day, every single day because he has this terrifying sense of responsibility about his role as The Sword. And while he’s doing that, you’re all sitting here trying to figure out whether he’s worthy enough for you to let him have that small-."

Dean shook his head. “You know what, it isn’t small. Love made the angels fall. Having choices and rights- it’s vital. Dylan’s already given his childhood to this war. He’s planning to give it his adulthood too. And you all are sitting around debating making him give more because you don’t know if vessels understand the importance of what’s going on?”

He didn’t have the energy to even humor a reaction. Without waiting for questions or comments, Dean went to find his family in the other room. He sat down next to Cas and wrapped his arm around his husband. His nephews were trying to lighten the mood by joking about scrying on the
deliberation. Nasrin leaned against Alex, trying to sleep to whatever extent possible. Ruby whispered an ominous conversation with Tora & Joseba on the far side of the room.

After a few minutes, Bishop fetched everyone for the determination. Alex was asked to come up front for a few questions. He stood before the eighteen officer panel with a righteous dignity.

“As you in love with her?” Asked one of the officers.

“I don’t see how that’s any of your business.” Alex said flatly, causing Ruby to beam with pride and Dean to softly facepalm. “Isn’t that half the reason we’re here?”

“Fair enough.” The officer conceded. “For better or worse, the role of vessels has been brought to the forefront. You understand that there are many risks involved with not imposing some sort of structure?”

“I accept that risk- you know what, I choose to take that risk.” Alex forced as much emphasis into his words as was humanly possible. “I’m going to live with my choices, hers, yours, all of theirs, and you’re going to live with all of ours. Because we live in this world together and we need each other. So I’m sorry, but you might have to trust some teenage demon to not fuck everything up- the same way I’m stuck trusting you not to fuck this decision up.”

“You can understand the reasoning behind the concerns we voiced, right?”

“I understand them, but I don’t agree them being the top priority. You & anyone else can keep trying to reason with me, but some things can’t just be about reason. It’s about what’s right.” Alex stood a little taller. “Earth isn’t Heaven. Earth isn’t Hell. Freedom may be a little dangerous, but it’s the best thing Earth has going for it. Freedom’s worth the risk.”

“You’ll be able to live with the consequences?”

“I guess we’ll find out.”
5/15/2020

Sa’dah excitedly babbled at Dyaniel, who quietly watched her. At a little over a year old she knew about two dozen words, but that didn’t stop her from talking up a storm. No one was quite sure how many words Dyaniel knew because he seemed perfectly content to observe. The spectacle was half cute and half exhausting to sit through for more than ten minutes.

“Do you know what she’s talking about Dyl?” Ruby asked from her seat a few feet from where the infants were playing on the living room floor. Dyaniel didn’t look up at her, he was either transfixed by Sa’dah or had given up on auditory input minutes earlier. “Riveting conversation you two are having.”

Ruby was taking her turn watching the kids more or less on her own. Dean had reluctantly agreed to join Cas in attend a meeting with the east coast officers- after two years of 80% personal leave it was about time he started weaning himself back into command. Bobby was visiting some old friends, & Sam was giving Kaylee a lesson downstairs. Tom had been around earlier in the late morning, but she hadn’t seen him recently. That left her closely monitoring the Sa’dah & Dyaniel alone while listening for Alex potentially getting into trouble in his room.

“Ma.” Sa’dah carefully stood up and tried to walk to Ruby, who dragged a pillow along the floor ready to break her daughter’s inevitable fall. She made it three feet before she tumbled onto the pillow.

Dyaniel attempted to follow Sa’dah, but when he stood up he leaned too far forward and immediately started teetering.

“Dyl, you don’t have your wings out-” Ruby started to warn, but it was too late. She slid a pillow under him as he fell forward. Most of him landed on the pillow, but his knee hit the hardwood floor and he began whimpering. “Don’t cry. You’re okay.”

“Mom.” Dyaniel said between sobs.

“Oh Dyl.” Ruby sighed, unsure whether it made sense to even correct him- especially with him being upset. “I’m going to hug you, okay?”

“’kay.” Dyaniel managed.

She picked up Dyaniel’s favorite blanket, then wrapped it around him in an act that was nearly
swaddling. It was the easiest way to hold him without risking stressing him even more. He mostly let her hug him, but Dean & Cas were the only people who could consistently make skin contact with Dylaniel without agitating the boy. Wrapping him in the blanket soothed him enough that by the time Ruby got her arms around him, Dylaniel had stopped crying. She held him for a few more seconds before venturing into delicate territory.

“Dyl, I’m sorry if this doesn’t make sense right now, but maybe when you get older- I’m not your mom.” His bright blue eyes stared up at her. He was completely unreadable. “You have a dad & a xe, not a mom. I’m Ruby, I’m kinda like your aunt because Sam is your uncle. It’s like the other kids call Sam dad, but they call your dad Dean. Do you understand what I’m saying?”

Dylaniel watched her for a moment, then nodded. She couldn’t tell if he actually understood her or if he was just trying to give her the answer she wanted to hear.

“Can you say Ruby?” He looked away from her. “That’s okay. I know you’re trying.”

He nodded again. She hugged him a little tighter, then released him to continue playing with Sa’dah, who was crawling in circles around the play area. Dylaniel dug through the toys and found his treasured soft plastic Batman. He scooted along the floor back to Ruby, then held to out to her. She accepted the toy.

“Thank you, Dyl.”

“Thank you.” He replied.

“You know exactly what’s going on all the time, don’t you?” She asked the nephilim, who just blinked up at her.

Ruby heard a floorboard behind her creak. She turned to see Alex with an armful of sticks, candles, & Kaylee’s plush toy jaguar. He froze, uncertain whether to try hiding the goods, lying, or some other technique. Eventually, he settled on smiling in an attempt to be as cute as possible.

“You want to tell me what you’re up to?” Ruby crossed her arms and raised an eyebrow.

“Not really.” Alex’s habitual honesty didn’t stop him from being as evasive as a Crossroads demon.

“And that’s your first clue you shouldn’t be doing it.” She extended a hand. “Give me the cat- and my candles. What were you going to try?”

“I want to make a small specter.” Alex confessed while handing over the toy and the candles.

“Sweetie,” She sighed through a sympathetic smile, then looked down at the toy. “that spell doesn’t work with a toy cat- Those spells can be dangerous. Where’d you even hear about it?”

“Tommy was talking about it.” Alex’s eyes lit up at a thought. “He was talking to a girl! I saw him scrying her! He wants to kiss her!”

“You’re not dodging this.” Ruby warned. “We’re gonna talk about casting safely-”

“But I didn’t do anything yet.” He pouted.

“First of all, don’t put ‘yet’ on the end of the sentence. It’s not doing you any favors. Second,” Ruby held up the candles. “you know you’re not supposed to play with fire.”

“Candles are little fires.” Alex explained with a shrug. “I only got in trouble for big fires.”
“Little fires start big fires.” She looked down at the toy cat and frowned. “Do you know where Tom is?”

“He said he was gonna fish.” Alex offered eager to move the discussion away from himself.

“Can you watch Dylaniel while I go talk with Tom real quick?”

“Okay.” Alex agreed, hoping for some mitigated punishment based on good behavior.

Ruby picked up the highly mobile Sa’dah rather than leaving Alex to supervise both of them. Sa’dah seemed a little confused to be leaving Dylaniel, but within seconds became distracted hugging her mom. Ruby carried her out to the piers.

Tom was fishing off the end of the third pier. A wicker basket held two whitefish. He was painting his nails fascia while waiting for bites on a cast line.

“Can we talk for a minute?”

“Sure, what’s up?” He was too busy finishing off his left hand to turn away from his work.

“Alex says he overheard you talking about summoning a lesser specter.” Tom looked up at her with his brow furrowed, but he didn’t deny it. “I just caught him getting ready to try blood magic on Mr. Whiskers.”

“Shit.” Tom groaned, then hastily recapped the nail polish in order to give her his full attention. “Sorry, I didn’t think anyone was home when I was going off about it yesterday.”

“How’d you even find out about it?” She didn’t remember bringing any books on blood magic home from Hell.

“Morrison gave me some books.”

“Morrison?”

“When I visited his coven in Kalaupapa.” A month earlier, Tom had gone on a weekend trip to visit one of Morrison’s covens. It had been over a decade since he’d seen a full coven in action. In theory he might someday lead a coven, but the only way that could happen is if he became accustomed to coven dynamics again.

“So now you’re talking blood magic, trying to impress a girl?” Ruby asked as Sa’dah started grabbing at her necklace.

“I-” Tom shifted awkwardly. “Morrison made it sound like I was a big deal.”

“You know what’s a bigger deal than talking blood magic? Being able to do it.” Ruby suggested. “You’re probably the best student I’ve ever had, but we’ve got a little ways to go before you start using life & death in your spells- and it looks like you’ve got a hell of a ways to go in terms of treating the subject with respect.”

“I respect it- I do.” Tom assured.

“Killing for the craft is a huge responsibility. It’s not about bragging rights. Non-witches might be quick to judge you for it and lesser witches might be quick to emulate it- like your brother.” Ruby paused to let her words sink in. “We keep our strongest cards close to the chest. I don’t care how amazing the girl is… What’s her name?”
“Moira. She’s seventeen and she can already transmute minerals & some plants.” Tom smiled wistfully despite his scolding.

“That’s pretty impressive.” Ruby agreed. Sa’dah grabbed at Ruby’s closest breast for a moment before Ruby mimed biting at her tiny hands. With Sa’dah distracted by a giggling fit, Ruby turned her attention back to Tom. “I can help you figure out a better way to woo her, but first you’re gonna help me explain to Alex why he shouldn’t start bloodletting all the dolls in the house.”

“Fuck.” Tom sighed.

“Tell me about it.” Ruby put her hand on Tom’s shoulder, then added. “I’m serious though, about you being my best student. You’re gonna do incredible stuff and younger than everyone else- that’ll get you all sorts of witchy girls.”

“Thanks mom.” Tom rolled his eyes.

“Can you help keep an eye on Alex until your dad gets back? I’ve got my hands full-”

“Mom?” The sound of Kaylee calling for her inside their cabin interrupted her.

“Holy hell-” Ruby lightly tugged Tom’s earlobe. “Okay, Casanova. I’m gonna check on Kaylee. You pack up, then come on in, help me sort Alex out and keep an eye on Sa’dah & Dyl.”

“I’m catching dinner.”

“I need some backup- one more fish, after that you’re just making leftovers.”

Kaylee was supposed to be in Hell with Sam for at least another hour. They’d started having lessons, which recently included going into the Pits and dealing with prisoners. It was a worrying, but important part of her education. The fact that she’d abruptly come home didn’t bode well.

Ruby returned to their cabin in search of her oldest daughter. When she entered cabin, Alex was standing precariously on the back of a chair, trying to access the top shelf of tomes in the living room bookcase. She hooked her free arm around his middle and pulled him down.

“Watch your cousin.” She instructed as she dropped Alex next to the nephilim.

“He’s not going anywhere.” Alex offered in defense of his actions as Ruby waved her free hand in acknowledgment while hurrying around looking for Kaylee.

She found Kaylee sitting on the floor next to her bed. The 10 year old was wearing black boots, tending to indicate that she’s visited the rougher & messier Pits of Hell. She gently kicking a cricket ball from one foot to the other.

“You’re home early.” Ruby sat down on the bed, inviting Kaylee to explain the situation to her.

“I told dad I wasn’t feeling well.”

“Is that true?”

“Yes & no.” Kaylee nudged the ball across the floor away from her. “I can’t do the stuff dad does.”

“Which stuff?” Ruby asked while Sa’dah started wriggling impatiently. “Do you mean powers or ruling?”
“Both.”

“You’re still learning. It took him a long time to figure out how to do everything.” Ruby reassured. “And even if it turns out that you can’t use powers as well as him, that doesn’t mean you can’t do great things. I can’t use powers and I can still keep people in line.”

“But I’m supposed to be like dad.” Kaylee muttered. Ruby repositioned Sa’dah, then tapped Kaylee with her toe causing her to finally meet her mom’s eyes.

“You’re not supposed to be like anyone. You’re just you and that’s exactly how it’s supposed to be. Everyone who says otherwise can go to Hell and then you can flay them for insubordination.” Ruby offered with a little smile. “Knowing how to be a smart leader takes time & a good teacher, which you have. And you don’t need powers to get respect.”

“How do I get respect if I’m not strong?” Kaylee held her hand out toward the cricket ball. It very slowly starting rolling back to her, but halfway through her hand dropped to the floor with fatigue and the ball stopped rolling.

“Powers don’t make you strong- magic doesn’t either.” Ruby answered while running her fingers through Sa’dah’s hair as she sleepily nuzzled Ruby’s neck. “Being strong is… getting back up when life knocks you on your ass and doing what you know is right even when you know it’s gonna be hard.”

“I’m on my ass.” Kaylee pointed to herself laying on the floor. “How do I get back up?”

“Tell me what got you down?” Ruby switched over to running her fingers through Kaylee’s hair.

“We went to a dungeon… I thought I could do it, but I can’t- dad told me he threw up the first time he saw a dungeon too.” Kaylee scowled. “But I’m more demon than him…”

“And your dad was more than twice your age- he’d killed people by that point in his life. You gotta stop being so hard on yourself.” Ruby thought for a moment, then tried another approach. “I promise you did something awesome today. Can you tell me something you did that you’re proud of?”

“I taught Garm a new trick.” Ruby could her a little more enthusiasm in her daughter’s voice. “Dad said that it takes trainers months to get the hounds to listen like they do with me.”

“See, the Abyss is listening, you’ve just gotta find your voice.”

“And not throw up.” Kaylee added.

“Does the thought of cleaning & cooking fish for dinner make you feel sick?”

“No.”

“You’re miles ahead of your dad.”

“No wonder I’m tired.” Kaylee muttered while staring at the cricket ball.

“Want to help me put the tikes down for a nap?” Ruby pointed to Sa’dah, who was already drooling all over her.

When Sam arrived home, he opened the bedroom door to find Ruby in their bed with Sa’dah dosing on her chest. On one side of her, Dylaniel was sleeping wrapped in his blanket, with Kaylee
flanking the two year old while she also slept. On the other side of the bed, Tom had been reading a guide to casting basics to Alex, who fell asleep within minutes of the lesson. After losing his audience, Tom decided he might as well take a nap rather than risk being assigned any additional chores. And subsequently Alex had somehow ended up sprawled across Tom’s torso.

Ruby used her free arm toward the center of the bed to gesture for Sam to come closer. He carefully climbed into the gap between Ruby & Alex. Laying on his side he kissed Ruby’s cheek.

“I blame you for this.” Ruby whispered to him.

“Of all the things I’ve ever been accused of, this one I’ll happily confess to.” He grinned. “But you have to admit the kids take after you.”

“Just their charm, wit, sense of adventure-”

“Humor.” Sa’dah cooed softly in her sleep, rustled, then woke up just long enough to grab Sam’s collar.

“Now you’re trapped too.” She smirked at him.

“Good.” They kissed for about a second before Alex shifted in his sleep and kicked Sam in the ass. “They definitely take after you.”
Prompt: "It was just one devil's trap"

Chapter Notes

anonymous asked:

Re-reading J&F. There's a scene where Dean and Ruby have to wake Tom up and Dean asks how long he's on bedroom duty, ruby says 2 more visits and Dean says "it was just one devils trap." Can we have the backstory to that?

7/23/2012

Ruby was picking up clothes when she entered Tom's bedroom. She only made it a few feet in when she hit an invisible barrier. After a second of experimenting with moving in different directions she looked up. There was a crudely drawn devil’s trap on the ceiling, a couple feet out of arm’s reach.

“Kaylee!” She yelled for her two year old daughter, who peeked in the doorway. Kaylee eyed the trap warily. “Starlight, I need you stay where I can see you.”

“We gonna play?”

“I can’t move, so you need to play right there.” Kaylee looked back into the living room where all her toys were. She started to walk out of Ruby’s view. “No, wait! Come on, starlight. Stay with mom.”

Ruby sighed with some small measure of relief when Kaylee entered Tom’s room and began playing with one of his action figures. She was the only one home with Kaylee at the moment. In theory there were a handful of people around the camp, but there was no telling where they were or how long it would take for Sam or Tom to come home. As much as Kaylee tried to listen to her, the toddler would eventually get bored and run off to do who knows what.

“That’s my good girl.” Ruby reassured. “Now don’t worry, but I’m going to yell so that someone comes to help me, then we can go play.”

“You yell angry?” Kaylee asked with a concerned expression.

“No, I just need to be loud because I can’t move. I’m not angry.”

“You stupid fucking idiot!” Ruby punched Dean in the face.

“What the fuck?!” Dean cried out as he clutched his face and rolled across his bed. His legs tangled in the sheets while he was trying to get away from her in his groggy state. When she climbed up onto his bed to chase after him, Dean tumbled out of it onto the floor. He started throwing shoes at her as he scrambled backward. “Are we fighting? Why are we fighting?”

“You’re in camp like one day and there’s a devil’s trap on Tommy’s ceiling.” Ruby stood on the bed, towering over him with her arms crossed. “Two guesses what happened.”
“Shit.” Dean rubbed his throbbing cheekbone. “He was asking me about hunting at dinner. He wanted to know if we use magic at all, I drew out the trap and a few wards. It wasn’t like it was a lesson or anything, I just made a quick doodle.”

“Where’s the doodle?”

“I let him keep it.” Dean leaned his head against the wall in embarrassed defeat.

“He’s eight- what did you think he’d do?”

“I didn’t think-”

“No shit.” Ruby took a deep breath. “What else was on the paper?”

“Nothing dangerous.” Dean raised his hands in forfeit. “I’ll get it back.”

“Yeah, you will. Put some pants on. I’m not going back in the cabin alone until it’s cleared of traps.” Ruby hopped off the bed, walked to the door in order to give him some privacy, then turned back to add. “You’re my bitch for the foreseeable- You’re gonna talk to him about this. And if this ever happens again I’m gonna punch you in the balls so hard that Cas feels it.”
6/13/2010

Sam was sitting by himself at the kitchen table in his pajama pants & a t-shirt. He wasn’t doing anything other than waiting & watching. Across the room from him, the doors to the nursery & Tom’s bedroom were ajar, just enough that he could see the crib & Tom’s bed.

Ruby came out of their bedroom wearing one of his shirts as an improvised nightgown. She opened her mouth to say something, but he held his fingers to his lips, then nodded at the sleeping children. As quietly as possible, she pulled out the chair next to him and sat down.

“It’s 1:30. Are you coming to bed?” She whispered.

“No… not tonight.” He hoped that she couldn’t see the worry that was probably written all over his face.

“What’s going on?”

“Kaylee’s six months old… that’s when Azazel…” Sam shifted, uncomfortable with admitting such an irrational fear.

“Azazel’s dead. She’s safe.” Ruby reassured.

“I just… I don’t want to leave them alone tonight.”

“I don’t sleep. I can keep an eye on them.” She put her hand on his arm and caressed the inside of his wrist with her thumb. “You should get some rest.”

“That night, when Azazel came, he killed my mom. My dad was asleep until it was too late.” Sam took Ruby’s had in his. “I’m not sleeping tonight- I just can’t.”

She squeezed his hand, then held it to her lips for a delicate kiss.

“Let’s see how quietly I can make us a pot of coffee.”
Prompt: Young Kaylee fascinated by pregnant Ruby

Chapter Notes

Anonymous asked:
I kind of want to see young Kaylee FASCINATED with her pregnant mother. Like when she's pregnant with Alex, and Kaylee is enamored by it

8/05/2014

“There’s really a person in there?” Kaylee asked as she dragged her index finger along Ruby’s round belly.

Sam & Ruby were laying in their bed at the end of a quiet summer day when Kaylee came in for her bi-hourly check on her little brother. It’d been cute the first ten times, but after a week of her chronic visits they were on the verge of just inviting her to sleep in their bed. Per custom, she’d climbed up on their bed, sat between them and began asking questions about babies.

Kaylee had been constantly following Ruby around since she started showing. The fact that Ruby was unwilling to teleport while pregnant left her fairly immobile and subject to the adorable nuisance. As a result, Sam tried his best to field questions and run interception while he was home. It was a sweeter form of penance than he was used to.

“Sort of.” Sam replied. “It’s more like a very small person, that’s what babies are.”

“Hello, baby.” Kaylee put her hands around her mouth, trying to direct the sound into Ruby’s belly.

“I’m not sure you should do that.”

“Does he not like it?”

“I guess I don’t actually know, but how would you feel if you were trying to sleep and someone started talking through your bedroom door.” Sam suggested as an analogy.

“He’s sleeping? Does he have a bed?” Kaylee leaned to one side in order to get a different angle view.

“No, I don’t have a bed in me.” Ruby sighed. “It’s just warm and squishy inside people.”

“Is that why demons like being in people?”

“It doesn’t hurt.” Ruby admitted.

“What’s he like?” Kaylee put her palm on Ruby’s exposed belly.

“We’re not really sure because…” Ruby glanced up at Sam, who shrugged, uncertain whether it made sense to tackle the delicate subject. “Well, he might be a little different than you.”

“Why’s that?” Kaylee’s brow furrowed ever so slightly at the thought.

“When your mom & I made him-” Sam started.
“When you sexed?” Kaylee asked.

Sam turned a shade pink, but didn’t let whatever embarrassment he felt derail him. They hadn’t yet had the full sex talk, just enough to explain that it was a thing adult couples did in private and sometimes it makes a baby. Undoubtedly they’d get into it more, but Kaylee mercifully had never pushed the topic towards logistics.

“When your mom & I had sex and made your brother, we were in Hell. We don’t know if him being made in Hell is going to make him different.”

“Different like how?”

“We’re not sure, but we thought we’d mention it to you, just so you don’t get surprised.”

The truth was that Sam & Ruby were both mentally preparing themselves for their son to look inhuman. Despite Ruby’s speculation that there were no distinctly demonic features for Kaylee to inherit, their daughter had demonic quali. If there son being conceived in Hell really did affect his appearance, they expected it to be something along those lines. It was hard to imagine having a child continuously running around with horns or black eyes, but they’d find a way to accommodate him if necessary.

“When is he coming out?” Kaylee asked as she put her ear to the belly, to listen for any signs of activity.

“Maybe another month, it’s not exact timing. When you were born, you arrived about a week before we were guessing.” Sam hoped to stave off any expectations of keeping a precise calendar.

“I was in your tummy when I was a baby?” Kaylee smiled at her mom.

“Yep.”

“I don’t remember that.”

“Do you remember being a baby? Ruby raised an eyebrow.

“No, that’s why I asked.” Kaylee clarified. “Was Tommy in your tummy when he was a baby?”

“No, he was in somebody else’s tummy.” Ruby answered matter-of-factly. “Two of my friends made him.”

“How many babies are you gonna have?”

“There’s just the one in there.”

“No, how many more babies are you gonna have?” Sam & Ruby shared an uncomfortable glance. Neither of them wanted to be the one to answer, but they had a household policy of trying to address the kids’ questions. Ruby reached over, grabbed Kaylee and rotated her until she was facing Sam.

“Um… That’s a tough question.” Sam started trying to figure out how to respond while Ruby grinned mischievously at him from behind their daughter’s back. “Your mom & I haven’t talked about whether we want to have any more kids after your brother. Even if we did want another kid, it’s not really the kind of thing that is guaranteed to work.”

“You & mom should have sex more.” Kaylee suggested.

“I’ve been telling your dad that for years.” Ruby teased, but the joke was lost on the four year old.
“Don’t make fun of me.” Sam said as he entered their bedroom. Ruby eyed him uncertainly from the bed until he held out the small bouquet of white orchids & red hibiscus. She shifted Kaylee to her offhand, then accepted the offering.

“Why do I want to make fun of you?” The six month old grabbed at the flowers, but Ruby kept them out of reach, careful not to destroy the gift within seconds of receipt.

“Because I don’t know what I’m doing.” He smiled meekly, then sat down on the bed and took Kaylee off Ruby’s hands.

“I don’t know what you’re doing either.” She smelled the bouquet before looking up at Sam, who was trying to keep their daughter on his lap, away from her brightly colored prey. "Did I do something or is it just my lucky day?"

"A bit of both… It’s Mother’s Day. I thought that flowers are… I’ve never done this before.” A grin spread over Ruby’s face and a small chuckle escaped her. "I know it’s silly."

"No- no, I like them.” She cradled the bouquet. "I don’t think anyone’s ever given me flowers before."

"Why’d you laugh?"

"Because I’ve never done Mother’s Day before either.”

Sam leaned forward and caressed her cheek. His hand wrapped around the back of her head, gently pulling her to him. They kissed softly, then more passionately. When they stopped, Ruby closed her eyes treasuring the blissful moment. Sam kissed her forehead, then barely dodged her head jerking up suddenly in surprise.

“Fuck! Kaylee don’t eat the flowers!”
Chapter Notes

I forgot to post this one awhile back. I wrote this while killing some time in the waiting room at a hospital.

Dean woke up in the recovery room. He could see the curtain drawn around him, partitioning his gurney from whoever else might be coming out of surgery. He saw the surgeon sitting on the right side of his bed. Her mouth moved, but he couldn’t hear anything. Despite rationally knowing that this was how it was supposed to be, he was hit by some sort of primal fear. His heart start pounding, but it began to calm when he felt a soft warm hand take his left one.

Cas was sitting on his left side, holding his hand reassuringly. The angel was watching him attentively, trying to sense any changes in Dean. In that moment of helplessness, Cas’ vigilant blue eyes were more comforting than they had ever been before.

The surgeon held up a handwritten note that read “We’re going to test the damage to your right ear before we install the implant. If at any point you can hear something let us know.”

Dean nodded. She started fiddling with something on the bedside table, but after a second she looked toward the curtain, startled by something. She said a word or two to Cas, then rushed out of sight. Dean tried to see where she went, but Cas gently held him to the hospital bed.

“What’s wrong?” Dean felt like he must’ve drawn out the words too long and hoped that they were at least discernible. He felt a wave of embarrassment at Cas’ expression of pity.

Cas’ lips moved, then he watched Dean, trying to tell if Dean had been able to read the words. He rotated his chair to get more light on his face, then pointed to his lips and tried again. Dean had only ever had to use lip reading to supplement his hearing, but without the sound he was at a complete loss.

It was surreal to not be able to hear himself crying. He closed his eyes and covered his face with his hands, shutting out the world. After a moment Cas’ soft warm hands pulled down his own, then wiped the tears from his cheeks. Cas delicately lifted Dean’s chin, imploring him to open his eyes. When he finally opened his eyes, Cas signed “You O-K. I O-K.”

Dean struggled to sign with the IV in the back of his right hand, but he eventually managed “S-C-A-R-E-D.”

Cas squeezed his hand again before touching the shaved patch of skin behind Dean’s right ear, then signed “S-O-O-N home.”
Kaylee, toddler of the Crossroads

Chapter Notes

Inspired by my two year old goddaughter.

“Cocoa please?” Kaylee eyed the glass jar of cocoa nibs sitting on the kitchen table next to Ruby.

“No, your dad’s making dinner right now.” Ruby replied while barely looking up from replacing the battery in a clock. Kaylee played with her dress for a few seconds, then tried again.

“Yes cocoa?”

“No, I told you like two seconds ago.” Ruby stared at the toddler, a little surprised she had to repeat herself so quickly.

“You told no, I told yes.” Kaylee shrugged with false innocence. “No know what to do. P’obly yes is good. Yes is good.”

Kaylee nodded in agreement with her own suggestion then reached for the jar of cocoa nibs. Ruby grabbed the jar and placed it on the opposite side of the table, out of Kaylee's immediate range. Kaylee giggled before trying to make herself look as sweet as possible.

“Are you being a little sneak?” Ruby raised an eyebrow.

“No know you talk ‘bout.”

“Sam.” Ruby called out, drawing his attention from where he was sautéing a variety of vegetables. “I think she just tried to con me.”

“What?” He leaned out of the kitchen to see what was going on.

“Yes is good. Makes sense.” Kaylee tried the reason with her mom once again.

“I gave birth to a Crossroads demon.” Ruby gestured at the two year old then to Sam. “This is on you.”

“I don't know what you're talking about.” Sam raised his hands innocently.

“Don't know you talk ‘bout.” Kaylee agreed and raised her hands mimicking her dad. As she turned to leave in protest, she took the long way around the table, deftly grabbing the jar of cocoa nibs before hurrying off to her room.

“Okay, so maybe the petty theft is on me.” Ruby conceded.
“Alright you little rose wrangler, remember to stay where I can see you.” Ruby didn’t really know why she felt the need to keep reminding Sa'dah, even before she turned two she would take instructions to heart.

She casually carved a scrimshaw totem while watching her youngest daughter run around behind the cabins. The toddler climbed on top of a small log, then hopped down and giggled at the way her lavender dress puffed up from the sudden descent. After repeating the hop a dozen times, she crawled through the foot tall grass looking for bugs to name. With Sally, Johnny, Ali, Mani, Danny, & Beebblebee all given lengthy backstories, she moved on to smelling- but never picking, the flowers in her little garden.

From the very beginning it was obvious that Sa'dah had a special relationship with nature, and plants in particular. The first signs were the wild roses that had bloomed outside her nursery in the middle of winter when she was a few days old. When she was six months old, she fell asleep in the grass and the next morning bluets started growing in that spot. Unsure of what else to do, Sam & Ruby partitioned off a patch of land behind their cabin to be her designated garden. When she was about a year old they started encouraging her keep her agricultural efforts in the garden as a way of learning to control whatever she was doing. In general it worked well, though one time while Dean was juggling watching both Dylaniel & Sa'dah alone for an entire weekend, he’d ended up having his cabin’s fireplace destroyed by some fast growing roots. Everyone knew it was an accident, Sa'dah never damaged a single thing on purpose.

“How’re your flowers doing?” Ruby asked, though the answer was always the same.

“They’re happy flowers!” Sa'dah shouted excitedly, then continued her patrol. She inspected her thornless roses, asters, harebells, and bloodroots. At the end of the row she squatted down and stared thoughtfully at a tiny new sprout emerging from the ground. "Mom, come see.“

“One sec.” Ruby put down her project and got up to look at one of the million random things that Sa'dah found too fascinating to not share.

“New one sings prettier.” Sa'dah said with authority while pointing at the new plant. Ruby got down on her hands & knees to see what had taken root. The plant was a two inch tall cluster of bright orange vines with a few diminutive red leaves. She’d never seen a plant like that- on Earth.

“This one sings prettier?” Ruby asked anxiously. Sa'dah insisted that the plants in Hell had a much nicer sound that the plants on Earth.

“Yes, very pretty.” Sa'dah replied with a proud smile, head held high.
“Sweetie, this is a very nice plant, but I’m not sure if it’s supposed to be here.” Ruby could see Sa’dah’s face scrunch up and just hoped that her little hazel eyes didn’t start watering. She wrapped her arms around her daughter, sitting her down on her lap. "Hey, you didn’t do anything wrong. I just think that this plant might be happier in Hell."

"Why?” Sa’dah leaned her head back, reclining against her mom’s chest.

“Because some things do better on Earth and some things do better in Hell.”

“What’s better on Earth?”

“Well… your roses” She pointed to the plants as an example. "or humans."

“What’s humans?” Ruby bounced her knee a little while trying to think of an explanation that a toddler might understand. In general they didn’t distinguish between species at the camp- actually, it wouldn’t have surprised her if Sa’dah thought everyone was a demon.

“Humans are a type of person. Your brother Tommy is a human. Your uncle Dean is a human. And your grandpa’s a human too.”

“Boys humans?” She asked while playing with one of her sandy blonde pigtails.

“Them being boys doesn’t have to do with them being human.” Ruby thought for a moment, struggling to find an analogy. "It’s like dogs & cats. They’re two different species, but they both have four legs & a tail."

"You humans?” She reached up to cup Ruby’s chin with her small, soft hand.

“No, I’m a demon. I’m from Hell. See how I can do this.” Ruby blinked her eyes black. "That means I’m a demon."

Sa’dah giggled then turned her eyes black to match her mom. She looked around her little garden with a smile of pure contentment. Her ribcage expanded in Ruby’s arms with a deep sigh.

"Is pretty.” Sa’dah commented on whatever strange magics and qualities her demonic vision gave her.

“It’s very pretty.” Ruby agreed as she kissed the top of her daughter’s head. “Now that you mention it… it’s actually beautiful.”

"Is human…” Sa’dah fidgeted a moment, struggled to think of how to express herself. "Be human sad… is bad, tough?"

“You want to know if it’s hard being a human?” Ruby suggested, a bit thrown by such a philosophical question at such a young age. Though she was her father’s daughter and it was a very empathetic thing to wonder.

“Yeah.”

Ruby thought about the complete mess the world had become recently. She’d barely been out in the human world in the last four years. After a particularly deadly attack by anti-alliance demons, half
the states in the U.S. weren’t considered safe from xenophobic retribution. With the Templars gaining more momentum from the rise in religious extremism, she just didn’t want to be exposed to that element—either physically or emotionally. It was definitely a bad sign when Dean chose to travel all the way to India to commune with non-AFE humans. All in all, she didn’t blame the humans, she felt sorry for them.

“When you get older things get more complicated and sometimes that makes it hard. Humans live on Earth and right now things on Earth are really complicated.”

“They come to Hell.” Sa'dah offered with a nod. ”Make happy."

"Most humans don’t like Hell."

“But pretty song trees and monkey birds.” Sa'dah said whiling tracing the bee shaped patch where she’d torn her dress two weeks earlier.

“The monkey birds are called imps.” Ruby corrected out of habit, then added. "Humans just aren’t happy in Hell, it’s not their home."

"Home makes happy."

“Yeah, home usually makes people happy.” The corner of Ruby’s lip curled up as she looked around the camp she’d call home with Sam for twelve years.

“Home is Hell? Is Earth?” Sa'dah asked uncertainly.

“Some of the family can’t go to Hell. That’s why our home’s on Earth.” Her eyes drifted over Bobby’s cabin and the cabin Dean, Cas, & Dylaniel lived. "Home is wherever our family is together."

Chapter End Notes

Fun trivia:
- Sa'dah was being literal in Hugs when she told Dylaniel that she made the petal for him.
- In 2039, L.A. is nothing more than a five mile diameter field of wild roses.
“We are not naming the baby that.” Ruby shook her head, then stretched her sore back as best she could.

At eight months pregnant she felt more than ready to have the kid already. Her belly was large & unwieldy. Its roundness was occasional made irregular by the baby pressing an elbow or limb outward. She laid on the motel room bed, gently prodding a lump of what she guessed was a foot.

Sam sat next to her on the bed, scrolling through lists of baby names on his laptop. It’d become his new obsession. The truth was that she didn’t have really strong feelings about what to name the baby- the whole kid thing was Sam’s passion, but she enjoyed teasing him and he seemed to appreciate her engagement in anything baby related.

“What’s wrong with Grace?” He asked a little defensively.

“You’re kidding, right? It’s such a soft & fluffy human name.”

“Please don’t tell me you’re pushing for a demon name.” She could tell by his tone that there was ample ground for messing with him without the risk of true alienation. Sometimes he made it too easy.

“Oh yeah, well what’s wrong with a demon name?” She pouted in a gesture that he might’ve recognized as jest if he’d bothered to look away from his computer.

“We’re on Earth…” Sam hesitated. "I just think a human name would be better- you don’t even have a demonic name.""

"How do you know Ruby isn’t a demonic name?"

“It’s a noun.” Sam muttered, partially distracted by something on his screen. "Red gems.""

"Bael is a verb.” She suggested for contrast. For a second the statement barely registered, then he looked over at her.

“Bael, like the Prince of Hell?” Sam asked as he closed his laptop, suddenly very worried about how they’d ended up discussing Bael among the list of possible baby names.

“Prince is a misnomer. He was a Visdemon- okay, I think he was technically an Arch for like a month-”

“Bael isn’t even spelled like the verb bail.”

“Well yeah, not with the English written language.”
“You’re cheating.” He said, though she could see him relaxing somewhat.

“You’re not playing the game hard enough.”

“I can play, just give me some ground rules.”

“No dead relatives, that sort of thing creeps me out.” She said, surprised that she’d allowed some real sentiment to work its way into the conversation.

“I wouldn’t want to do that. I didn’t know my mom at all and my dad was a complete ass.” Sam’s face dimmed a bit as he undoubtedly thought of Dean, suffering somewhere in Hell.

“Hey,” Ruby put her hand on his bare chest. "the kid’s the future, the past’s… the past."

"Yeah, I know."

“Speaking of, no exes. The last thing we need is to be hearing everyday is the name of the first person to gag on your dick.” Her hand slid down to his boxers and played with the waistband.

“Wow, thanks.” Sam blushed at what she hoped was a fond memory. "Thanks for that."

"So what’s that knock off the list?"

“Amy, Jessica… Sarah, Madison…” Sam’s face scrunched up at a thought. "What exactly counts as an ex?"

"Oh the list just keeps going?” Ruby grinned up at him. Someday she’d pry out the juicy stories.

“How about you? What names do you disqualify with the exes rule?” He gently tucked a loose strand of hair behind her ear.

“Aamir, Abdur, Delaide, Aidan, Ali-” Ruby ticked the names off on her fingers.

“You’re just going through the alphabet.”

“You want me to do it in chronological order?”

“I get it, you’ve been with a lot of people.” Sam said as slid down the headboard in order to lay next to her. "You know it doesn’t bother me if you’ve slept with a lot people over the years."

"Years? That’s just the ones I fucked last week.” He rolled his eyes.

“Cute.”

“You’re not the only one that thinks I still wear this meatsuit well.” Ruby swept her hand across her bare body.

“Trust me, I know how lucky I am.” Sam whispered as he leaned in to kiss her. As they kissed, he moved closer to her, then stopped when he bumped into her belly. For a second he thought about moving to the other side of the bed so that they could have sex, but more than that he just wanted to enjoy the sweet little moment of peace with her.

“I’m not saying yes to demon names, but across the board, what names do you actually like?” He asked as he placed a hand on her belly.

“Off the top of my head… Phenex & Xaphan.” She half-shrugged apologetically. “I don’t interact with a ton of humans.”
“Last I checked you didn’t interact with a lot of demons either.” Sam pointed out. "Are those boy or girl names?"

"Phenex was a guy, but Xaphan didn’t have a gender, so I guess that could go either way.”

“What happened to the no X’s rule?” Sam smiled slyly at his joke.

“Wham wham wham.” Ruby stuck out her tongue. "A human name is fine."

"Are you sure?"

"Yeah.” Ruby pointed at him. "Just not Grace- or Faith."

"Harmony."

“I will take this kid to straight to Hell if you try something like that.”

“Chastity.” She punched him in the shoulder. He leaned in to kiss her again, but first whispered in her ear. "Let the torment begin."
Prompt: Ruby trying to get baby Kaylee to sleep

Chapter Notes

Anonymous asked:
I NEED RUBY UP WITH KAYLEE IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT SINGING TO HER AND TRYING TO CALM HER DOWN PLS

Hi Non,
I tried to write this scene with Ruby primarily singing, but I was having trouble figuring out how to convey music other than copying a ton of lyrics or merely linking to some youtube videos, which made it a really short ficlet. Here’s what I managed instead.
Hope you like it :)

“Please go to sleep.” Ruby held Kaylee to her chest and bounced the seven month old gently. “I can do this dance all night, but you’ll probably be happier just falling asleep.”

“Come on, I don’t know what’s wrong.” She looked down at her crying daughter, then blinked her eyes black. Ruby touched her forehead to see if she was warm or clammy. “Please don’t be serious.”

If things turned desperate she’d call Dean in order to get ahold of Cas, or if worst really came to worst, she’d take Kaylee to Hell to consult Morrison. Demons didn’t have healers as such, but the Archdemon of the Maji seemed like a reasonable starting point to check for potential ailments to her demonic side.

Kaylee let loose a little burp, then immediately started crying less emphatically. Ruby sighed and reverted her eyes back to normal.

“Okay, so maybe it’s not an emergency… your uncle Dean would be proud.”

Despite the improvement, Kaylee was still rattled & fidgety. Ruby tried to think of a song to sing to lull her to sleep. She tried a chorus of Hey Jude, but that didn’t entirely stop the tears.

“Your dad’s the one that knows all those songs.” She closed her eyes and tried to recall a soothing song. So much of her music was harsh or lively. Normally Kaylee seemed to enjoy her punk music, but it was probably just too much for the infant to take right before bed.

“Okay, maybe not singing… There once was a great silver wolf.” Ruby howled, startling Kaylee into temporary silence.

“She roamed the winter wilds. A bleak & bright endless forest of snow.” Ruby carried her daughter to the window to see the moonlit trees.

“One day she stumbled upon a group of three hunters. The first hunter watched through the falling snow for his prey, so she crept up silently behind his back and pounced on him.” Ruby lurched her body, making Kaylee smile through her tears.

“She bit his throat & ate his eyes.” Ruby snapped her teeth a few times. “Then she was the one who watched through the falling snow for her prey.”
“She saw the second hunter laying traps, but her reflexes were too quick and before he could finish preparing, she pounced on him.” Ruby lurched her body again, earning a small giggle.

“She bit his throat & ate his brain.” Ruby pretended to nibble at the top of Kaylee’s head. “Then she was the one who laid traps.”

“She saw the third hunter listening for his prey, so she set a trap. In the distance through the falling snow she saw a rabbit. With the meanest look she could make she glared at the rabbit.” Ruby scrunched up her face in a snarl. “The rabbit got scared and then ran away. When the hunter turned at the sound of the rabbit fleeing, the wolf pounced on him.” Ruby lurched once more.

“She bit his throat & ate his ears.” When Ruby snapped her teeth, Kaylee mimicked the act. “Then she was the one who listened for her prey.”

“She rode a little farther and heard some crying in the distance. When she went to investigate, she saw through the falling snow another hunter. He was hurt & crying, lying half buried in the snow. When she approached him, he looked up at her big black eyes and wasn’t scared of her.” Ruby blinked her eyes black.

“The hunter told her ‘The world is cold and it’s hurt both of us. But you’re strong and maybe you could survive this.’ The hunter unbuttoned his shirt, exposing his chest.” Ruby put her hand on Kaylee chest.

“The hunter said ‘take my broken heart and maybe at least it can make yours whole.’ The wolf had never heard a hunter be so kind. She could not eat his heart because even broken it was bigger than every other hunters’ in the world. She curled up on the hunter’s chest and warmed him throughout the winter storms. And when summer finally came, they hunted together with two strong & happy hearts in their chests.”

Kaylee was already dozing. Ruby carefully lowered her into the crib, then draped a blanket over her. She watched her daughter sleep for a few minutes until tiny snores came for her. The soft sounds were almost a mewing noise.

“You’ll get the hang of that howl someday.”
I was double checking something and realized that I just left Dean, Cas, & Dyl with their asses beat at the end of chapter 60. So I decided to write a little follow up to it.

Dean laid on the concrete floor hunched over Dyaniel’s body. Blood trickled from the ten year old’s ear and bruises were already forming on his wrist, around his shoulder, & on the side of his head. His eyes were shut and he wasn’t moving.

“Dylan, wake up.” Dean whispered to him. He reached out his hand to touch his son’s face or to check his pulse, but he was scared to move his head & neck. “Come on, baby boy. Please wake up.”

He closed his eyes and tried praying for help even though rationally he knew no one could hear him. Careful not to touch Dyaniel, he tried to get to his feet, but as soon as he lifted his torso a crippling pain shot through his back and down his body. His legs didn’t want to do more than drag. He looked around at the dilapidated factory and started crying.

“Help! We need some help in here!” He yelled, unsure if there was a single living person within 100 miles. His eyes drifted to the hole in the wall where the door had been. “Is anybody out there?! …Cas?”

He lowered his head to the ground and just cried silently while watching Dyaniel’s chest rise & fall. Between each of Dyaniel’s breaths he was holding his own. After a seemingly endless amount of time, Anael ran into the storeroom, then knelt beside them.

“Save him.” Dean said even though he knew that she was already in the process of healing Dyaniel.

The boy’s eyes opened and looked around the room. Despite being healed, he didn’t try to get up, he barely moved at all. Dean wrapped his arms around him hugging him tightly. Anael caressed the back of Dean’s head in a gesture of comfort while healing him.

“Anael,” Dean’s voice faltered as he looked passed her to the exterior room. He held Dyaniel’s head to his chest, trying to subtly cover Dyaniel’s ears. “Is he out there?”

“Lucifer?”

Dean shook his head a little, unable to speak.

“Castiel’s injured, but alive. I wanted to make sure you both were okay first.” Dean nodded through his tight throat and a few tears of joy. When he tried to sit himself & Dyaniel up, Anael put her hand on his chest to keep them both laying down. “I’ll bring Castiel to you. You don’t want to take Dyaniel out there.”
“Who?” Dean’s heart dropped imagining the possibilities.  

“Gabriel.”

Anael moved the three of them to the beach house their family sometimes used on special occasions.  It wasn’t particularly off the grid, but Lucifer had found them once before through intense warding.  At that moment it was more important to be someplace full of happier memories.  

Dean & Cas sat on the beach, their son positioned between Dean’s legs so that he could lean back against his dad’s chest.  To Dean’s surprise & concern, Dylaniel didn’t protest being anxiously held.  Dylaniel hadn’t spoken or even really moved much since being healed.  

“Dylan, I need you to do something for me.” Dean ran his fingers through the boy’s hair in an attempt to comfort one or both of them.  “Can you let me know that you can hear me?”

Dylaniel nodded without taking his eyes off the ocean, then took his dad’s hand.  

Cas put his arm around Dean and rested his head on Dean’s shoulder.  Dean buried his face in Cas’ hair, smelling the familiar scent, kissing him softly.  They sat there silently watching the waves for almost an hour before Anael returned to tell them it was safe to go home to the bunker.

Ruby & her three kids were waiting for them when they arrived.  Ruby cried while she hugged & kissed Dean.  When she embraced Dylaniel, he actually leaned into it.  Dean gripped Tommy’s shoulders and took a moment to appreciate that he had survived the last few days before wrapping his arms around him.  Alex nearly broke some clavicles with his horns because he went in for hugs with such enthusiasm.

After the reunion, Dean & Cas tucked Dylaniel into his bed.  Dean stood in the bedroom doorway watching his son sleep while Cas went to repair the minor damage that Lucifer had done to their own room.  Ruby walked up to him and Dean pulled her close.  She held him back.  

“Don’t go down to see him.” She warned in a painfully soft voice.  “He’s not him.”

Dean closed his eyes at the thought of what must be occurring in the basement at that very moment.  He hadn’t wanted to go down, to see what had become of Sam.  Part of him never wanted to see.  There was something so tempting in pretending that Sam had really died, having the last time he saw his brother- his actual brother, be when Sam saved him & his son.  He wanted to remember Sam as the hero that he was, not some tragic figure… but he couldn’t fool himself.  No matter what he did, he’d always know that his brother was down there and eventually he’d be guilty, mournful, or foolish enough to try to see him- Ruby already had.  

“What’s wrong?” He whispered.

“No.” Ruby answered.  “You?”

“No.”

“We were worried he’d killed you.” She touched the bloodstain on his collar, then her eyes lowered.  “He tried, didn’t he?”

“Sam stopped him.” They stood in silence watching Dylaniel sleep for several minutes.

“How… how close was it?”
“I’m glad Dylan can’t have nightmares.”

“Small blessings or whatever.” She smiled up at him sadly.

Cas came down the hallway with a grim look on his face. He was walking a bit too quickly and his eyes darted between them. Dean let go of Ruby, then closed the bedroom door. Before he could ask what was wrong Cas started.

“Is it okay if Miro stays with us for a while?” Cas asked both of them.

“What happened?”

“Hael’s dead.” Cas didn’t even finish before Dean was holding him. Cas clung back desperately and pressed his face against Dean’s neck.

“I’m so sorry, babe.”

“Is Radomir alive?” Ruby asked, knowing that if the answer was no Cas & Dean had just adopted a five year old daughter.

“Yes, but three of his sisters…” Cas didn’t want to say what they had surely already guessed. “He’s trying to make arrangements-”

“We can take her for however long he needs.” Ruby offered.

“Miro…” Cas hesitated. “She doesn’t know yet. She was with one group of kids and Hael went to check on another group when it was hit.”

“Where is she?”

“Visegrád. Rachel asked if I could pick her up.” Cas explained. “She’s trying to find homes for all the kids.”

“How many of them made it?” Dean knew that Lucifer’s side would go after the nephilim, he only hoped that they’d been fairly well hidden.

“They’re still checking.” Cas spoke with halfhearted optimism that Dean instantly recognized as the harbinger of bad news. “Rachel said 102 at last count.”

That was just less than half. In the seven years since they’d introduced Dylaniel to the world there had been 239 nephilim born. Eleven had died from natural causes and nineteen had been killed between the release of Lucifer & Sam saying yes. Then in two days they lost as many as 107… and the oldest ones had been too young to even understand that math.

Dean’s head was spinning at the discovery. His first thought were of the kids, but he helplessly started imagining what it meant for their angels. He had no idea how many angels had been killed, or how many humans. The magnitude of the situation was creeping into his mind, making him want to throw up.

“Cas, you go get Miro. I’ll go let my kids know what’s going on.” Ruby thankfully took charge.

“Dean, do you think Dyl would mind sharing his room?”

“We have plenty of bedrooms.” Cas pointed out.

“If Miro isn’t at risk for nightmares, then move another bed into Dyl’s room for now. They’re kids and they’ve just been through hell, they both need a friend.” Neither of them argued with her
reasoning. She put one hand on each of their cheeks, then reiterated. “Cas, go get Miro. Dean, go find a spare bed and some supplies for her.”

Cas returned with Miro five minutes later. Tom made her an ice cream sundae, then Ruby gave her a warm bubble bath while the sleeping accommodations were being worked out.

Dean gently touched Dylaniel’s shoulder to wake him up. The boy’s bright eyes opened suddenly and he looked around in alarm.

“It’s okay, Dylan. We’re fine.” Dean said reassuringly. “Your godsister Miro is gonna be staying with us for a little while. She’s had a hard time the last few days and needs a friend. Is it okay if you two have a little sleepover? She could stay in your room?”

“Okay.” Dylaniel nodded.

“I’m gonna put this monitor,” Dean held up an old camera baby monitor. “up on your bookshelf, so that if either of you get scared or need anything, your xe or I can come and help you right away, okay?”

“Okay.” Dean patted Dylaniel’s leg then started to get up, but Dylaniel stopped him. “Dad, should I be scared?”

“Not anymore.”

After helping tuck Miro in, Dean carried the receiver half of the monitor into the bunker’s entryway and looked down at the map table. He picked up a black marker, then flipped on the long range radio. As the news broadcast listed off the damaged or destroyed cities he marked them or crossed them off the map entirely. He ran out of ink before he ran out of cities. The dry marker was thrown in the wastebasket, then a few seconds later the radio was thrown on the ground.

Ruby found him sitting on the bottom step of the staircase holding a bottle of whiskey. He dragged his thumb along the edge of the label for the hundredth time that night before he finally looking up at her. With a sigh he put down the unopened bottle.

“Do you think we made the right choice?” Dean asked quietly. “With everything that’s happened…”

“Our kids are alive.” Ruby replied. “I’d personally burn down every city & town on Earth if that’s what I had to do to keep it that way.”

“We lost so much. I just don’t… I don’t know what to do.”

“Go find Cas- cry, snuggle, fuck, do whatever you feel like you need right now.” Ruby picked up the baby monitor that was sitting on the step beside him. “Right now, I need to pace the halls for a few hours making sure the kids are okay & sleeping. If that’s not enough of a load off your mind I’ll give you the monitor back, but you’re human- you’re gonna need some rest yourself.”

“I don’t think I could sleep right now if I tried.”

“I’m pretty sure you know a guy that could help you out with that. Here.” She pulled a talisman out of her pocket and handed it to him. “It’s a dreamless sleep talisman. Hold it in your hand.”

“And I’ll sleep like the dead.” He added while looking it over.
“Better than the dead.” Ruby corrected. “If Heaven is anything like I’m hearing from Hell, the soul queues are backed up into the veil. I guess you could call your girlfriend if we really want to know what’s going on.”

“Like Tessa has the time to answer a summons right now.” Dean shrugged. “No one’s trying to drag me back on base yet, so hopefully that means the healers are moving the ball instead of the soldiers.”

“Hopefully.” Ruby agreed. “Well, with every plane battered or stuck in gridlock, I don’t see any reason why you shouldn’t go to bed. They’ll pass the soldiers the ball again soon enough.”

It only took ten hours for the AFE to send Anael to collect him. She sat across the kitchen table from him as he had a minimalist breakfast of a bowl of cereal & about a dozen pills. He wore his pajamas & grey bathrobe in silent protest of returning to work. Taking the hint, she had framed the conversation as an update rather than asking him to come back first thing. After updating him on the current repairs to their surviving local bases, she turned to the international status.

“Global communications should be coming back up in a few hours. AFE’s will probably go live before the humans. We’re lending them some of our people, but obviously our bases are our top priority and most of the humans won’t let our people deep in their infrastructure.”

“I don’t blame them.”

“Once comm is back up we’ll have to give an official story & update on various topics.” Anael paused a second before continuing. “With the death of so many of the nephilim- there are rumors that Dyaniel was killed. People need to see that he’s alive… that you’re both alive.”

“I’m not gonna put him out there like this.” Dean rubbed his face. “You know what he’s like normally. He can barely deal with people without all this- now… I don’t care if the world wants to see him out and smiling-”

“People are going to panic if they think something happened to him.”

“Then let them panic!” Dean hit the table, knocking a glass of water off the edge. “Let them do whatever the fuck they’re going to because something did happen to him! He’s my son and he doesn’t owe them anything!”

He looked down at the pieces of broken glass that now covered the kitchen floor. Anael was visibly tense, but not frightened. There was the sound of running and Alex poked his head in the doorway to make sure everyone was alright.

“I dropped my glass.” Dean said before realizing that his nephew had almost certainly heard the yelling after the crash. “We’re fine, I promise.”

“If… If you say so.” Alex let him off the hook, then went back down the hall.

Dean grabbed a dustpan & small broom, then started collecting the larger shards.

“Dean, I know you’re upset, but we’re trying to pick up the pieces while there’s still something left to salvage.” Anael continued. “If we wait too long we’ll lose everything… Contrary to popular belief, we haven’t lost everything already.”

Dean swept up the mess while Anael watched him process the situation. He leaned the broom against the wall in its original corner, then went to dump the glass. The sight of the delicate thin
garbage bag & the jagged contents of the dustpan made him sigh. With his luck the bag would be shredded and the whole thing would just be made worse. He placed the full dustpan on the table, then sat back down.

“I don’t want to go out there.” He wasn’t mad, he was depressed. “My brother stopped Lucifer and how many effigies of him do you think are burning right now?”

“Sam never cared what people thought of him.” Her reassurance made it sound like Sam was dead. Dean’s helplessness & guilty flared.

“And where was I?” He shook his head. “Where was I while the world was falling apart?”

“You did the right thing. Anyone with half a brain knows that.”

“They’re gonna crucify me.” Dean groaned. “They’re more than entitled to.”

“You & Sam aren’t the only ones who didn’t come out a hero. Almost everyone on all sides looks bad.”

“Cold comfort. If the world lives long enough to get another history book this’ll be the Battle of Poor Choices.”

“Kaylee came out of this a hero.” Anael offered. “A lot of people saw her fighting Lucifer. The other officers are gonna ask her to lead North America.”

Dean couldn’t help but smile at the thought. The AFE had never had a demon head one of their regional armies. The fact that she was so closely associated with someone who was at that point probably considered a war criminal brought it to a whole new level of absurdity.

“She’s Queen of Hell now. They’d never allow a demon with that much independent power command of an entire army.” Dean dismissed the idea, not because of a lack of confidence in her, but instead because of a lack of confidence in everyone else.

“Demons won a lot of points defending bases & cities. She’s been showing that she can lead under trying circumstances.” Anael countered. “We need some new leadership, both in thinking & in blood.”

“Out with the old.” It felt like it was long overdue, yet strangely unsettling. Having a young son & living with immortals occasionally tricked him into forgetting how quickly he’d be handing off some sort of legacy.

“She’s gonna need your help. We’re all gonna need your help. You’re the best there is at running the AFE, no matter what anyone- even you say.” Anael leaned forward imploringly. “Please be the bigger person and forgive us in advance.”

“Fine, you’ve got me.” Dean conceded. “But Dylan isn’t some political puppet. I’m not gonna let him be dragged out before he’s ready.”

“That’s fine. We’ll find a way to work around it.”

“One last demand,” Dean was looking at the shards of glass in the dustpan. “Where you found us after the attack, on the floor there should be the pieces of a shattered blade. I want those.”
Prompt: Destiel Fluff

Chapter Notes

Anonymous asked:
Can I get some destiel fluff? :-)

Author comment:
I wasn’t sure if you wanted something set within the Job & Family story or not. So I made it fairly stand alone, but I’m also going to adopt it as a Deleted Scene for J&F. Hope you like it :)

After over three years of hunting together, Cas was getting better at interviewing witnesses, but Dean still took the lead. In more than a decade of experience, he’d nearly seen it all. This left him quicker on his feet and much better at interpreting other’s behavior. So Dean found himself doing almost all the talking while interviewing the possible victim of a haunting on a routine hunt.

“I’m sorry I look like a mess.” The victim fixed part of her hair while topping off Dean’s cup of coffee. “It’s been hard to get my beauty sleep with all the recent problems.”

“Don’t apologize, you look lovely.” Dean smiled across the kitchen table at her, then proceeded with his questions. “Does anyone else live here with you, Ms. Hays?”

“No, I’m single.” She put her hand on Dean’s arm, gently stroking the back of his hand in the process. “And please, call me Janet.”

Dean was painfully aware that his boyfriend was sitting right next to him and just hoped that Cas understood this sort of miscommunication was somewhat normal. He pulled away in what he hoped was a casual manner, then shifted uncomfortably. It took him a bit too long to recover from the unprecedented situation.

“I’m sorry, I thought…” She nodded to his left hand, which lacked a wedding ring. “You have a girlfriend, don’t you?”

“I…” Dean flustered a bit. “I have someone.”

She stared at him for a few seconds. He felt like he might have blushed despite trying with all his will to keep his cool. Her eyes widened subtly, then she inched ever so slightly away from him in a move that he tried not to take as a personal insult. She partially covered her face in embarrassment.

“Oh my god, I can’t believe I just did that.”

“It happens all the time.” He lied. This was the first time since getting together with Cas two years ago that a woman had overtly hit on him. “But if I wasn’t already seeing someone…”

His attempt at complimenting her fizzled out as he realized it was missing its mark. Her brow furrowed and she huffed a bit, uncertain how to react. The rest of the interview was as brief as possible and she had them see themselves out.

“That was awkward as hell.” Dean muttered once they got back to the privacy of their motel room.
“Why was she angry at the end?”

“I don’t know.” Dean took off his jacket, tossed it onto a chair, then started unbuttoning his dress shirt. “She probably thought I meant she looked like a man or something. I don’t get people sometimes.”

“Should I have done anything?” Cas sat down on their bed to watch Dean undress. It was still early enough in the day that they might go out after changing into casual clothes, but with Dean so visibly upset there was a fair chance they’d just stay in.

“I don’t even know what options there are, let alone what’s a good one.” Dean slipped off his shoes, socks, & pants then crawled into bed.

“I could ask Sam or Ruby what they would do?” Cas offered before starting to strip down to his boxers in solidarity.

“Twenty bucks says that Ruby would break somebody’s face or mount Sam right there- anyway they don’t have our situation.” Dean moved to cover his head with a pillow, but settled for hugging it while he watched Cas in turn. “Ruby’s a woman and they’ve got a kid.”

“Does them having a child make their relationship more respectable?”

“Maybe?” Dean’s face scrunched as he weighed the pros & cons. “Some people would give them shit for having a kid without being married, but luckily those people are dying off. But yeah, I think them having a kid helps.”

“Do you want to have a child?” Cas asked as he climbed into the bed next to Dean.

“Whooa- Cas that’s…” He stared at Cas, unsure what the actual question meant. “I wasn’t suggesting anything. I’m not interested in having a kid anytime soon- I don’t know if I’ll ever want one… And with you being a guy, I haven’t even thought about how-”

“I’m sorry.”

“Don’t be sorry. This stuff is complicated.” Dean rubbed his neck. “I never thought I’d be in a relationship. I never thought I’d be having talks like this.”

“It’d be more convenient if my vessel was female.” Cas’ eyes drifted away from Dean. Dean threw his pillow aside and slide over to be only inches from Cas. He positioned his head to be looking up at Cas’ downcast face.

“It’d be more convenient for other people.” Dean reassured. “I don’t care. We’re fine.”

“But our relationship is more difficult-”

“Cas, this might be my first time dating a guy, but it’s your first time dating- it’s gonna be a learning process. It’s a little clumsy, but it’s the best thing that’s ever happened to me, so don’t go giving yourself shit.” Dean cupped Cas’ cheek, then kissed him.

They had sex a little slower & more deliberately than usual. Dean took his time going down Cas, teasing him to the edge. All while Cas was prepping Dean, he kissed him with intense penetrating kisses. Dean watched with profound satisfaction as Cas arched his back, breaking inside him.

When they were done, Dean lit a joint and laid back in the motel room bed. Cas rested his head on Dean’s shoulder, then wrapped an arm around him.
“I’ve been thinking…” Cas started after a long silence. “I don’t care what other people think of us and the legitimacy of our relationship. But I want you to know that I revere it- I appreciate that you ignore the propositions of others.”

“I don’t want anyone else-”

“That doesn’t mean I don’t appreciate it.” Dean half shrugged at the point. “Will you marry me?”

“Cas… you’re not serious?”

“I’m completely serious.”

“You’re like a million years old.”

“Is my age a problem for you?” Cas propped himself up on an elbow and stared at Dean in confusion.

“No.” Dean sat up, frightened by the turn in the conversation. “I just meant that I’m only gonna be around for a few more decades- I’m like a blip on your radar.”

“If you think that I really find you so insignificant-”

Cas started to get out of bed, but Dean tackled him desperate to keep him from leaving. Dean managed to grab him around the hips, knocking them both over. His face ended up pressed into Cas’ thigh, but he didn’t let go. He repositioned slightly to look up the length of Cas’ naked body to his unamused face.

“I didn’t mean that. It’s just that you’re so much bigger than this kind of stuff.” Dean faceplanted back into Cas’ flesh. “I mean…”

Dean didn’t know what to say. He’d never expected Cas to care about that sort of human custom-though in hindsight the angel was a diligent student of human absurdity. He felt like such a small part of Cas’ longer and infinitely more complex life, so much so that surely what they had was the equivalent of a fling, no matter how important it was to Dean. Dean had reassessed his entire identity at the discovery of how much Cas meant to him. And Cas had just… he supposed Cas had done the same for him.

“Babe, yes.”

“Yes, what?” Cas looked down at Dean warily.

“I’ll marry you.”

“I could be upset.” Cas didn’t try to physically remove Dean from his legs, so he was probably just trying to humor the range of human reactions rather than actually being pissed. “This isn’t the sort of thing where you get to say ‘no back taking’.”

“It’s no take-backsies.” Dean corrected as a usually helpful reflex, then bit his lip.

“I think the problem isn’t that I’m too old, it’s that you’re too young.”

“Okay.” Dean got up, leading Cas off the bed. He kissed Cas’ hand before getting down on his knees. “Maybe I joke around or say stupid shit half the time, but it’s because I don’t know how I could be this lucky to have someone like you love me. I’d be an idiot if I didn’t want to spend my life with you and even I don’t think I’m that big an idiot. Please just look passed all my fumbling
and see that I’m totally committed to us.”

“You aren’t an idiot.”

“I love you.” Dean looked up hopefully. “Marry me?”

“I asked you first. No take-backsies.” Cas offered Dean a hand up and kissed him.

“One more thing.” Dean added. “When we’re telling the others, leave out the part where I was begging naked on the floor.”
The silver goblet of blood on Sam’s desk hummed slightly. He glanced up from his weekly report on newly formed in-realm contracts and eyed it warily. Dean was calling, which almost certainly meant bad news. Interplanar telecommunications was such a frustrating process on both ends that it wasn't worth the effort to convey good news.

“Hey Sammy, can you check to see if a name is one of your prisoners for me?” Sam rolled his eyes at Dean’s continuing inability to refer to souls as inventory. The time adjustment made it too much of a bother to correct him over the call, so he made a reminder on his cell phone to talk about it once he got home. “I'm looking for... Gabriella Vargas Mendoza, age 28. She died two days ago.”

“What day is it up there?” Sam asked. He never could keep track of the slow calendar. Anyway, it wasn't like he had lots of appointments on Earth, aside from the occasional tea party with Sa’dah.

“May 1st.”

“One sec.” Sam replied. He literally walked down to the archives, pulled the entry index for a four month span from approximately eight months ago, checked for her name, pulled the complete file on her, & walked back up to his office before Dean could get bored enough to hang up. “She's one of ours.”

“Please tell me she's not messed up in the head or anything.” Dean didn't sound happy to hear that she’d ended up in Hell... granted it was a very unusual circumstance when they wanted someone to go to Hell upon death. He just couldn't tell if Dean had wanted her as a cooperative informant or someone to receive a little extra pressure.

“Her soul is completely gone, burnt out after about a week of work.” Sam summarized after reading her very small file. “What's going on?”

“Fuck... You might want to come up for this. We’ve got a goddamn custody battle.”

“She didn’t have any kids.” Sam said while double checked her lifetime records, but didn't see anything.

“No, the fight’s over her corpse.”

“What?” Sam rubbed his neck as he tried to imagine why he should care about a dead body. “I deal in souls, why do you want me coming up for the meat packaging?”

“Because right now there's a demon inside of the meat packaging and I've got an angel & a bereaved trying to evict her.”

“Don't call the body meat packaging, meat pops, bone bags, fittings or any of the other slang.” Dean warned Sam after he had arrived at Dean’s office. “I've had enough of a pain in my ass with this mess. The last thing I need is to have another fight over cross-plane slurs.”

“Fittings isn't a slur. It's when you're talking about the comfort level of the body.”

“I don't care.” Dean replied. “I mean, good to know, but right now I don't care- if it's the kind of thing that runs the risk of offending just don't.”
Sam nearly wanted to laugh at the idea that he couldn't finesse a conversation. He'd spent the majority of his life talking & willing himself out of unpleasant situations. Granted, in recent years his patience for his time being wasted had worn thin and Dean’s overall demeanor didn't bode well on that front.

“Dean, I can be diplomatic.”

“Sorry, it's just this priest is pissing me off to no end.”

“Priest?” Sam’s lips thinned at the mention of clergy, one subset of the human population that seemed extra sensitive to the whole King of Hell thing.

“Gabriella’s next of kin, her dad’s cousin or something.”

“Does he know she went to Hell?”

“No.”

“Well this is going to be great.” Sam sighed. “How are you explaining me being here if I'm not the holder of her soul?”

“I figured you'd want to help the demon stay in her body. King of Hell gets to play lawyer.”

Driva was a low level Raberian demon, a military grunt if there ever was one. She was the kind of demon that could be created & destroyed without ever seeing or being seen by a single Archdemon. So Sam wasn't surprised that she was initially dumbstruck upon meeting him.

“Hello, Driva.” He greeted her in Abyssal as he took the seat beside her in the conference room where the AFE hearing would shortly begin. She stared at him with that strangely demonic combination of fear, awe, & affection. He nodded to her warded handcuffs. “Are you being treated fairly?”

“Fairly?” She echoed back, not entirely capable of complex thought through her shock.

“Have you been mistreated because you’re a demon?” Sam elaborated. “It's for the good of the realm that you report any discrimination.”

“My guards were good to me.” She assured. He wasn’t surprised since Dean had been brought in on her case early. The elder Winchester might've been a former hunter, but the guy had become more open minded as a result of having half his family be demons.

“Can you understand & speak English?”

“Understand, a medium bit. Speaking, a small bit.” She said in English, then switched back to Abyssal. “I know enough for normal field work, but not as much of the delicate words.”

That meant that she probably knew most commands, profanities, & how to purchase drinks, but not enough to participate in any intellectual debates. He didn't mistake her lack of education for stupidity. In her life as a human she could've had any background. Though while in Hell, she’d received no training beyond how to be a soldier. And despite being deployed to Earth, the majority of demons didn't serve in integrated units, which made it harder for them to acclimate to the new environment.

“If you can't understand a word or two I can translate for you, but if you're struggling with whole
sentences then we'll need to get you a translator.” Sam offered.

“You shouldn’t inconvenience yourself for me, sir.”

“Hopefully this will be brief & straightforward, in which case I don't mind. Everyone suffers so the realm can thrive.” He smiled in reassurance of their shared burden, which put her more at ease.

He sensed her fawning over him. It was a very common reaction for demons. Aside from the conventional measures of attractiveness, he was often the first genuinely nice demon they'd met. It also didn't hurt that his was arguably the most powerful demon of all time. And female demons would often warm to him at the mention or reminder that he had children. He wasn't sure what factors were playing in Driva’s mind, but he made a mental note to avoid touching her or doing anything else that might send the wrong signal.

“Things like this can grow and affect all of Hell if left unchecked.” Sam clarified. “I want to make sure everything goes well.”

To Sam’s surprise, three people entered the conference room as the opposing side. He'd expected Deushel, the angel, & Carlos Mendoza, the uncle, but it looked like another family member or friend of Carlos’ had been brought in too. Part of him didn't care, except that it felt like a cheap psychological trick, stacking more bodies on one side of the room.

Sam pulled out his cell and texted to Shola asking her to send along a translator & a bodyguard. Technically, he was perfectly capable of defending himself & everyone else in the room, but he decided that it didn't hurt to have someone he could leave with Driva if the process became extended. More importantly, he wanted four people sitting on Driva’s side to Carlos & Deushel’s three. Dean raised an eyebrow at the last minute arrivals, but didn't complain.

“How am I supposed to let Marco’s little girl be desecrated by some fiend?” Carlos Mendoza asked as his opening move.

It wasn’t the most elegant begining to an argument- not that Dean was going to be persuaded by fluff over content. The bigger frustration was that Sam so immensely disliked fighting against blind emotion. He was used to a certain amount of that in his work. People tended to get very emotional when they found out that they were sentenced to eternal damnation.

Mostly Sam was just tired of dealing with issues that rationally shouldn’t be issues at all. He’d been King of Hell for a long time, and while he found it generally intellectually & morally stimulating, it had also become routine at times. He knew it was his age making him take certain views & practicalities for granted, but he really wished everyone would just stow their personal baggage for the good of all the planes.

“I understand that this is an upsetting topic, but please don't throw around the word fiend.” Sam interjected. It wasn't exactly a slur yet, but some of the younger demons found the term dismissive.

“But demons are fie-” Carlos started to counter.

“We're not calling humans monkeys. So I think you could return the courtesy.”

Sam assumed there was a 50% chance that Dean had rolled his eyes at the whole referring to humans as monkeys, but he didn’t want to bring any attention to his brother by checking. It was little comments like that, the ones that made Sam less human that annoyed Dean the most. The rest of the three planes might not feel strongly about Sam being somewhat human, but Dean still cared. Unfortunately, sometimes it was important to emphasize the presence of demons in the room and
that was undercut by any form of verbal distancing.

“Is fiend seriously off limits?” Dean asked Sam, a little surprised by the linguistic discovery himself.

“Used like that it is.”

“Since when do demons care about hurt feelings?” Deushel, asked coldly.

“It’s a matter of respect.” Sam clarified for the less civil people in the room. “We do more than our part and we expect a little dignity for it.”

“Okay, fine. Padre, let’s watch the language.” Dean said. Sam could see Dean make a note on his tablet, presumably to inform all his subordinates to avoid yet another word.

“I'm the one who's been wronged and you're making me watch my language?” Carlos stared at Dean.

“First of all, I kinda thought keepers of the faith are supposed to be okay at keeping their cool.” Dean warned. “Second, how are you the wronged one? I thought Gabriella’s the victim in all this.”

“Supposed victim.” Sam corrected. “Driva is arguably the real victim here. She is the one in handcuffs for no reason.”

“She stole Gabby’s body.” Carlos complained.

“You can't steal what nobody owns.” Sam stated. “Prime condition dead bodies are a resource to the community. That's a policy decisions for the public good.”

“And what about her wishes? She was a good Christian girl and her body can't be laid to rest?”

Sam pursed his lips at the implication that she’d gone to Heaven and not burying her body was somehow harmful. Through his own edict, the higher ranking members of Hell’s bureaucracy were required to keep the identity of inventory confidential except for official business. The last thing they needed was to receive hundreds of thousands of summons each month from distraught humans trying to locate their dead. They already had half of the Crossroads parsing the routine grief from the potentially valuable clientele.

“Her death rites will be logged with the AFE & in our records. When the body is no longer in use we’ll see that it's disposed of according to her wishes.” Sam gave the canned statement. It was paragraph 29 on the waiver every AFE soldier signed when they enlisted- but Gabriella wasn't a member of the AFE, she was just fair game.

“Disposed of?!”

“Disposition, it’s a technical term.” It was taking a lot of his energy to keep himself from rolling his eyes. “It's not like we're going to throw her body in a trash can.”

“Okay, you know what, we’re taking a break and everybody's gonna try to calm down. We’ll start up again in twenty minutes.” Dean said, cutting off any further comments. Carlos walked out of the room in a huff followed by the others. Dean got up from his chair and leaned over to whisper into Sam's ear. “Sidebar, Mr. Diplomat.”

“You've gotta be nicer to these people.” Dean said once he closed the door to his office. The elder Winchester flipped the switch activating a vent fan in the corner of the room, then went to lean
against the wall below it. He pulled a joint from his pocket, lit it, took a hit, and skillfully blew the smoke straight up into the vent. He was clearly not thrilled to be spending the afternoon in that potential circus either.

“I've got one of mine cuffs. They want to restrict our topside access because they think some pile of flesh & bones makes a person. I'm not punting or playing nice. They're talking about our rights.”

“Within the AFE you're completely within your right,” Dean gestured at the metal trash can across the room and Sam telekinetically moved it over so Dean could flick his ashes in it. “but I can't stop everyone else from getting pissed about you taking their dead.”

“Well, if they give us enough time we'll reunite some demons with their old bodies.” Sam’s voice turned a little snarkier than he’d meant. In hindsight it’d been almost a month since he’d eaten, including Hell time of course, and he might’ve been a tad hungrier. He started digging through Dean’s bottom right desk drawer looking for the eternal stash of snacks.

“Fuck, don't say that.” Dean groaned. “Nobody wants to imagine their sweet old grandma coming back as a demon, especially riding her old corpse.”

“We wouldn't do that, elderly women's bodies are too prone to osteoporosis.” Sam muttered while opening a small bag of pretzels.

“Are you trying to be cute?” Dean shook his head and took another quick puff. “Come on, man. Dylan’s birthday is in two days. I've got three reports to get through before I can go home, on top of this shit- just cut me a break.”

“It just seems like every few months we have some new drama because people don't want to adjust with the times.” Sam complained. “Things are changing- they've been changing forever-”

“No, they haven't.” Dean rubbed the back of his neck. “How old are you?”

“I don't know.” Sam admitted.

“You wanna try guessing within a hundred year ballpark?” Sam could see where this was going. “It's only been a decade or less for most of them.”

“I'm not expecting miracles, just open mindedness.”

“I'm tell you. Just don't expect a lot of these people. Please don't be cute. You're just gonna piss them off.” Dean put out the remainder of his joint before digging through his desk. He put saline drops in his eyes, sprayed himself with a small amount of deodorant, then sniffed himself.

“You're about to walk back in there high and you think I'm going to be the one to piss them off?” Sam offered a few pretzels to Dean while trying to decide how effective the scent cover up might be.

“Well if they wanted me to do this clean they should’ve waited a few days for my calendar to clear. It's not like the body is gonna decay with a demon in it and we could pull her from combat until this gets worked out, but no- they've got to do this now.” Dean bemoaned while rubbing his right temple, a telltale sign of an impending migraine.

“Just postpone it.” Sam suggested.

“I don't want anyone swooping in one this and taking it out from under me.” Dean explained. Sam appreciated the fact that he obviously knew how significant the implications were. “Anyway, I
figure there's like a 50% chance you'll piss them off so much that they walk out in the next hour.”

“Don't tempt me.”

Sam spent the first fifteen minutes of testimony post-recess mostly listening to what the other side had to say. It wasn't particularly interesting or threatening to his position because of its lack of particularity to the case as hand. Carlos’ argued banked heavily on religious outrage, which was fine with Sam. In a fight about theological, ethical philosophy, or interplanar physics, Sam felt more than capable of destroying a random clergyman of 18 years.

The strange part came whenever Gabriella was brought up… because no one seemed to want to discuss her specifically. He'd been expecting a sob story involving dozens of childhood photographs. Maybe that tactic hadn't been adopted because no one was sympathetic to the fact that Sam had kids and the general public didn't know Dean had an almost three year old son? But regardless it felt like an easy & safe play, an understandable go-to for a grieving family.

The flip side to the unimpassioned pitch was when Sam finally got pulled into the argument. Due to the confidentiality requirement that wasn't widely known outside of Hell & those few who had found themselves desperate enough to reach out to demons for intel, he couldn't even freely answer many of the questions that might be thrown his way. He didn't mind stonewalling some of the aspects of the discussion. The inner workings of Hell, shouldn't have to be paraded out every time someone complains. That being said, there were a few things he wished he could've volunteered in order to shut down the dialogue early.

“And Hell would've liked to have gotten a pure soul like hers, wouldn't you?” Carlos ended some rant with that problematic sentence, then stared at Sam expectantly.

“Was that a serious question?” Sam asked, triggering Dean to purse his lips in either annoyance or an attempt to stifle a smile.

“Yes.” Carlos said, though Sam suspected it had actually been a rhetorical end to a directionless argument. He should've just left Carlos hanging, awkwardly staring at Sam, waiting to see if he could really go the longest without blinking. But Sam was growing tired of all the substanceless dancing… unfortunately he couldn't give a substantive answer.

“I am not at liberty to disclose the disposition of individual souls to interested private parties.” Sam recited, making all the non-demons in the room look at him in confusion.

“Do you know something about her death?” Deushel asked, joining the conversation for the first meaningful time.

“I am not at liberty to disclose the disposition of individual souls to interested private parties.” He repeated.

“What are you talking about?” The angel leaned forward in her chair with growing curiosity.

“Mr. Mendoza is an interested private party.” Sam explained. “I can’t disclose that sort of information at his request.”

“Am I an interested private party?” Dean asked.

“Are you asking in your capacity as an officer of the AFE?” Sam tried to lead Dean to say the right words to release him from holding his tongue.
“Yes.” Dean nodded in understanding that there was some hurdle Sam had to clear. “As a commander of the Army of the Free Earth, I’m asking you to disclose any information that you know about Gabriella Vargas Mendoza. Is that good enough?”

“Her soul went to Hell.” Sam said, relieved to finally get that put on the table and torpedo Carlos’ sense of moral indignation. “She departed her body .2 seconds before Driva entered it. As a soul of Hell, she had no sensory or spiritually connection to her body.”

“If you know where she is we can just ask her what she wants.” Deushel suggested.

The new attack made more sense than a simple appeal to emotions. The AFE had heavily backed principles of individual rights & dignity as part of its support for the angelic fall. Deushel probably thought this appeal would be a direct hit on Dean because of his strong association with the angelic rights movement - and it probably did resonate with him, but the fact of the matter was that everything had to be considered within the greater context.

“Allowing deceased souls to make posthumous decisions about their bodies is a minefield of ethical & practical problems.” Sam countered.

“How do you mean she isn’t accessible anymore?”

“We lose roughly 20% of our souls within the first week of death.” Sam took a moment to double check that he hadn’t accidentally referred to the souls as inventory. “Only about 60% of souls become demons - sometimes much less depending on several factors.”

“What do you mean she isn’t accessible anymore?”

“Your people killed her?” Carlos oversimplified.

“She was destroyed in the natural course of death.” Sam corrected. “Her soul went through the same treatment as every other and unfortunately like many before her, she didn't make it. Now I'm sorry for your-”

“How dare you!” Carlos snarled. “Where do you get off pretending to care?!?”

Sam was beyond done with the situation. He could tolerate an inconvenience to his already full work schedule. He could tolerate having one of his people slightly disrespected by a system ill
equipped to deal with demons. He could tolerate poorly thought through & emotionally charged attacks. He could tolerate a lot, but the suggestion that he didn't care about a young woman who had died was too much right then.

“She wore a lilac wedding dress & her wife Heather wore a peach dress.” Sam shot back. “Their first dance at their wedding was Maps. They bought a small farm outside of Redding, California where they raised chickens. Then Heather’s ex-boyfriend began making threatening calls and unannounced visits. Two days before their third wedding anniversary, Heather’s car was found on the side of the road. On the night of the anniversary, Gabriella made a Crossroads deal- her soul as immediate payment for the safe return of her wife.”

There was an uncomfortable silence as everyone contemplated the person whose body they were arguing over. Sam watched Carlos & Deushel for their reactions, but neither of them knew how to respond.

“She was a good person.” Deushel stated as some sort of synthesis or corroboration of Sam’s story.

“She was nothing to you, but some inherited blood & grace. You don't even know if I made that story up.” Sam said. Carlos turned red in the face, but he didn't respond. “What's your relationship like with your other vessels? And when was the last time you'd even seen ‘Marco’s little girl’?”

“I don't have to explain myself to you.” Carlos said.

“Fine, but I have to explain something to you, so don't interrupt me this time.” Sam prefaced, then restarted his original point. “I am sorry for your abstract loss, whether it's grief or pride or shame that's moving you, but that is the way the system works. You're perfectly entitled to dislike it, but it doesn't change.”

“Maybe it should.” Deushel commented.

“It's the policy of Hell that any exterior attempt to disrupt our internal procedure will be considered an act of war.” Sam warned the angel.

He didn't actually think that anyone would try anything, yet it was part of his job to maintain Hell’s strong & defensive character. So the occasional threat of excessive force went a long way towards avoiding actual effort. Dean knew it was largely for show, so he didn't feel bad setting Dean up to be the good cop or the equivalent.

“The AFE can’t back any play against Hell.” Dean raised his hands in forfeit, distancing the AFE from any potential conflict with its largest supplier of manpower.

“Fair enough, how about we call it the acts of independent terrorists.” Sam corrected.

“You don’t have civilians in Hell.” Carlos tried to support Deushel, but was completely out of his depth.

“Don't pretend to know anything about the Abyss. Our society is diverse, cultured, & older than any existing human civilization. If you don't check yourself very soon, you may find that your wrath & pride earn you a one way ticket to a very difficult education.”

“Are you threatening me?”

“I don't send people to Hell. I wait for them- and I have more time & patience than you.”

“Alright, we’re taking another break for you all to cool down!” Dean pointed his finger back & forth
between both sides. “We're taking ten, then we're switching it up. Deushel, you'll get your chance at testifying and we'll see if we can all stay adults for more than a half hour.”

“I will not let my vessel be violated.” Deushel stated once the second recess was over.

“You fucking kidding me?!” Driva exclaimed, causing Sam to subtly shake his head at her. He didn't want her impassioned words to suddenly press them back into heated territory so quickly.

“You are possessing my vessel without her consent. That is a violation of the most sacred right of a vessel.” The angel appeared legitimately horrified by the idea.

“She's dead.” Sam replied flatly. “There's no soul or grace left in the body. It's no longer a vessel.”

“And why do you get to decide what makes a vessel?” Deushel asked.

“I don't. It's true that we don't have a universally accepted definition, but the fact remains that you can't use the body, at least Driva is making it serve a purpose.” Sam gestured to her.

“It's not about functionality, it's about reverence for the dead.”

“Reverence for the dead includes preserving the living.” Sam suggested. He considered explaining that the message stretched beyond some sentimental meaning. If there was an excessive wave of inbound souls, some of the inventory would likely be destroyed due to the inherent limitations of their infrastructure… but he decided that wouldn't be a very productive avenue of thought.

“Like you would know about having respect for the dead.” Deushel jabbed.

Sam didn't physically react, but he cringed internally at the angel's misstep. She'd just insulted the beloved King of Hell in a room containing several demons who were undoubtedly grateful for the respect he's given all of Hell's people. Driva & the two other demons stood up, ready to fight for his honor. He appreciated the sentiment, though he wasn't thrilled about the possible collapse of the hearing through violence. Anyway, he was more than capable of killing Deushel if he really felt so inclined.

“Everyone calm down.” Sam said, causing the others to lower back into their seats. “I've died before. I live & work with the dead. If you still doubt me, then I invite you to come to Hell and watch how I operate. You might need to stay for several months to see the full range of my work, but you would be my guest.”

He smiled at Deushel. The last place the angel would want to go was Hell. If the Abyss was unpleasant & sickening to human, the place was potentially toxic to angels. The four angels who had died in Hell rescuing Dean hadn't been slain by their own blades or Knights. They had been worn down and torn apart by weapon & weathering auras alike.

“You know I won't go down there.” Deushel replied.

“Then I hope you won't pretend to know what goes on down there.”

“It's a good body. I like it. I'm branded in already. Do you have any idea how hard it is to get settled?” Driva chimed in with her only real point.

“It's not about you, it's about her.” Deushel countered.

“It wasn't about Gabriella two minutes ago when you were making it about yourself & your vessel.”
Sam pointed out. “What this really is about is policy. We can't start making exemptions for perfectly good bodies. We'll lose half our new troops if there’s the ability for next of kin to cancel posthumous possession. It is the policy of Hell to relocate the body away from family & friends in order to avoid these problems and in general it works.”

“It doesn't work when you go to bury your family and there's no body.” Carlos snapped.

“Many dead don't have bodies left, but you can still mourn & celebrate them without endangering the world. Maybe you should try getting to know her widow.” Sam suggested, quieting the room.

“So what I'm hearing is that we have a soulless, graceless body already in the possession of a demon. One side is asking me to kick out the demon because there's a chance that the soul might've not wanted this to happen- but we can't know because no one here knew her well enough to make an educated guess and the soul is gone entirely.” Dean summarized. “And the other side is saying that shouldn't even cut it because as a practical matter, we need the bodies. Am I missing anything?”

“This is disrespectful of humans.” Deushel offered.

“Maybe, maybe not, but that's not really what I'm here to decide.” Dean corrected. “I'm just trying to figure out whether the AFE will pull a demon out of a body in this situation.”

“They're your subordinates, you can prevent this from happening in future.” Deushel suggested. “You can stop this.”

“Technically, so can any human that feels really strongly about not having their body posthumously possessed. Just throw a ward on and make sure the body’s on the pyre or circled in salt.” Dean suggested. “It's not my job to force my people bend over backwards making an alternative solution to a problem that rarely happens and already has a fix.”

Sam made a mental note to ask Dean not to spread word of the preventive measures too broadly. As much as he might be fine with the occasional use of the approach, but having it applied widely could lead to some disturbing complications.

“AFE will not exorcise vessels of one off allied or enlisted possessors. That being said, if Hell takes any organized effort against a neutral human territory,” Dean looked pointedly at Sam. The caveat was extreme enough that they shouldn't have trouble avoiding it. “then the AFE will have to reevaluate its partnership with the plane.”

“Understood.” Sam happily conceded.

“But what about Gabriella’s wishes?” Carlos asked.

“We don't know what she would've wanted. If she really hated the idea of her corpse being possessed, she could've warded it.” Dean mused. It was a decent enough argument for inferred intent, though Sam had consciously avoided using it. One of the last things he wanted was for 99% of humans to go get anti-possession tattoos. “We're done here.”

Sam immediately returned to Hell with the other demons in order to avoid any amendments to the decision. He debriefed Driva, then reported to the High Council.

Afterward he returned home and spent a few minutes playing with Sa’dah. He had to put on a fake smile to hide his distress while he helped put her hair up in bows. The thought that someday one of his kids might be possessed was unsettling. He remembered the lingering feeling of violation that had resulted from Meg possessing him when he was younger. Despite the unpleasantness, he also
knew that someday any of his kids might become full demons and be in need of vessels.

Beyond the war effort, finding a body was the only way for a demon to interact substantially with the Earth. As much as he tried to make Hell a home to demons, it was still intrinsically off putting. To keep Earth integrated, a home to humans & demons, they needed to be able to take bodies. Sam hugged Sa’dah a little longer than usual before starting their tea party.
Dean & Jeremy walked all the way around Broken Arrow Park three times, then the two blocks back to Jeremy's apartment building. It was almost two in the morning and they hadn't seen another person in at least an hour. Dean had felt guilty calling so late, but he needed to get away from the bunker. Once again he'd let Jeremy take the lead on the conversation, content to just listen to anything far removed from the turmoil of his life. Though there was only so long that they could tiptoe around the circumstances of their meetup.

"Do you want to tell me what's going on?" Jeremy asked when they got to the front steps of his building. "I'm guessing you didn't call me at midnight on a Tuesday just to hear me ramble about annuities."

"I'm having a rough time and I needed… I'm not sure." Dean hesitated. He barely knew the guy. They'd only met a night or two earlier, but Jeremy was one of the only people he knew that wasn't neck deep in the apocalypse drama.

"Do you want to talk about it?" Jeremy offered with a sympathetic smile before breathing into his hands to warm them.

"My… my half-brother," That was probably the easiest way of conveying the complicated family relationship with Dylaniel. "he was in an accident."

"I'm having a rough time and I needed… I'm not sure." Dean hesitated. He barely knew the guy. They'd only met a night or two earlier, but Jeremy was one of the only people he knew that wasn't neck deep in the apocalypse drama.

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"My… my half-brother," That was probably the easiest way of conveying the complicated family relationship with Dylaniel. "he was in an accident."

"I'm sorry," Dean could see sincere concern in Jeremy's eyes. He suddenly felt a little less guilty about messing up the guy's night. "Are you two close?"

"I only got to know him recently. He's younger, about twenty." Dean remembered the bleak & bloody scene, then covered his face. "I saw him. He's a mess. I don't know…"

Jeremy cautiously wrapped his arms around Dean. It was strange to have someone he hardly knew-I quick little fling from a bar, trying to comfort him. But at the same time he was just grateful for whatever comfort he could get. After a moment Dean hugged him back.
“How can I help?” Jeremy asked quietly.

“I don’t think anyone can help.” Jeremy let go of him a bit and leaned back in order to look him in the eyes. Dean felt a bit embarrassed to be standing there, awkwardly burdening someone with his own problems. “I'm sorry. I shouldn’t have put this on you.”

“It's okay. I was kind of hoping you’d call- just under better circumstances.” Jeremy's eyes flicked down bashfully. “Maybe this is a little… Do you want to come in? I can make you some coffee or... you can crash on my couch if you don't want to go home.”

Dean hadn't been considered actually going into Jeremy's apartment at all, but the suggestion that maybe he didn't want to go back home struck as painfully true. The thought of going back to the bunker, it just felt like too much. He’d have to go back and face everything eventually, but he wanted an escape so badly, even for just another hour.

“Some coffee maybe.”

“Sorry about the mess. I don't usually have people over.” Jeremy said as he tossed his keys into a red ceramic bowl of loose change & thumb drives on a bookshelf by the door. “This machine brews the best coffee, but it’s so slow to warm up.”

“It's okay.”

Dean looked around at the small studio apartment. The furniture was minimal & modern, but bright flashes of personality made the place warmer. A large canvas depicting a red & purple sunset hung on the wall above a sleek grey couch. A dozen issues of magazines like the Economist & Foreign Affairs, three thick manila folders, a laptop, & a used glass tumbler sat on a maple coffee table. The kitchen consisted of little more than a fridge, a stove that seemed to only serve the function of being additional counter space, & a professional grade coffee machine. He could see the corner of a queen size bed peeking out from behind a four panel room divider of white & red paper framed with maple that matched the coffee table.

“I know it's 2am, but I don't have decaf.” Jeremy warned as he took off his jacket and started fiddling around in the kitchen.

“That's fine.”

“Make yourself comfortable.”

Dean looked through the bookcase that had been right next to the door. The top few shelves were packed with classic literature that Dean had never read, most of which he’d never even heard of. But the bottom shelf held a small record player and a collection of vinyls. Dean flipped through the selection, which was almost entirely jazz.

“Feel free to put something on.” Jeremy invited from the kitchen. “The neighbor on the right is deaf and the couple on my left are out of town.”

“Nina Simone or Miles Davis?”

“Surprise me.” Dean grinned at the challenge, then put on Cannonball Adderley. Jeremy glanced over at the unexpected selection. “That's a cheap trick.”

“You told me to surprise you.”
Dean strolled around the apartment listening to Autumn Leaves. This was a civilian’s home. It'd been so long since he'd been in one- at least for long enough to make himself comfortable. He wasn't on a job. He wasn't drunkenly having a one night stand. He wasn't even working a cover. He leaned against a narrow section of kitchen counter that was the equivalent to a table and watched Jeremy wash a few coffee mugs while the coffee machine was heating up.

“Serious question,” Jeremy warned him. “Do you want to talk about your brother or should I distract you?”

“Distract me.” Dean replied after a few seconds of guilty deliberation.

“Do you like jazz?”

“I haven't listened to any in years.” He wasn't exactly sure whether the answer was yes. It just wasn't something he ever considered. “Most of the time I stick to classic rock.”

“Rolling Stones?”

“AC/DC.”

“To each their own.” Jeremy shrugged as he dried the mugs with a tidy dishcloth, then folded and rehung it.

“You don't like the rougher stuff?” Dean asked, a bit confused by the idea of not liking more visceral or cathartic music.

“Life is tough enough. I like music that slows you down.”

“Yeah, I noticed a lot of cool jazz in your collection.”

“You do know your jazz. Aren't you the mysterious one.” Jeremy grinned at him, then leaned against the counter opposite Dean. “Tell me about your secret life as a jazz club owner.”

“Not quite.” Dean hesitated for a moment before confessing his actual source of exposure. “A year or two after high school, my family lived outside of Hermosa Beach for a few months- my little brother was still in school, so we tried not to move that much. Anyway, there was a club I used to go to most nights, they didn't card and the jazz scene doesn't see a lot of bar fights.”

“I can see it now, a bright eyed youth, out in the world on your first adventure, dipping your toe into the shadowy night life. Wooing women and drinking…” Jeremy circled around to Dean's side of the counter while he chewing his lip as he tried to settle on a guess. “an old fashioned.”

The prediction felt so innocent & pure, it was sweet that someone might think he could've ever stumbled into a brave new world as peaceful as that. He hadn't lied to Jeremy about the evenings at the club. He was trying to just be himself and the thought that Jeremy saw him in such a light made him feel more like a real person- not just some two dimensional womanizing hunter, but secretly he was a more complex man. Not only was he allowed to be more, someone admired it in him.

“Manhattan.” Dean corrected.

“So I need to buy some sweet vermouth?”

Dean leaned in and kissed Jeremy. Jeremy fumbled with the coffee mug that he was hold, attempted to put it down without turning away from the kissing, and dropped the mug to the floor. Neither of them even checked to see if the cup was broken. Dean lightly nibbled Jeremy's lip. Jeremy’s fingers
slid up the back of Dean’s neck, into his hair, sending that incredible tingling down his spine.

Dean gripped Jeremy’s shirt, pulling him closer. They bumped into the wall and knocked into a painting. Jeremy redirected them away from the wall and its fragile artwork. Dean's left leg ended up between Jeremy's as they tried to move, causing them to stumble. Jeremy landed backwards on his bed, accidentally pulled Dean down on top of him. Without hardly missing a beat, Dean kept kissing Jeremy while reaching for Jeremy’s belt.

“Stop.” Jeremy said after pulling back, breaking the ravenous kiss.

“What?” Dean whispered in surprise, heart pounding in his chest that was resting on Jeremy's. He was pinning Jeremy to the bed, legs intertwined, both partially hard.

“You're upset.” Jeremy gently pushed Dean a few inches off of him. “I’m not going to take advantage of you.”

“But... I'm…” He wasn't sure what he was trying to say- what he'd been hoping for.

“I’m saying no.”

Dean looked down at this guy who’d been nothing but nice to him- Jeremy had tried to take care of him, he still was. The truth was that Dean had gotten caught up trying to drown himself in any sort of distraction or comfort. He was in deeper than he'd meant and the fact that Jeremy had to have been the one to say no- not once, but on some level three times made his stomach knot.

“God, I'm so embarrassed.” Dean climbed off of him, rolling onto the bed next to Jeremy. He could feel himself turning pink.

“Please don't be.” Jeremy reassured. After a moment of awkward silence he rolled in his side to look at Dean. “You want to hear embarrassing? One time I went on four dates with a guy before I found out he was straight. I thought his girlfriend was his sister- all you white people look alike- anyway, I went in for a kiss, but realized I messed up halfway through, so I faked passing out. I accidentally hit my head for real on a table on my way down and was knocked out cold.”

“You're kidding.” Dean was trying not to smile at the bizarre mental image.

“I woke up in an ambulance.” Jeremy chuckled. “According to the discharge nurse it wasn't the worst ER kiss story she'd heard.”

“Not a kiss, but I once passed out drunk while eating a girl out. I nearly suffocated.” Dean offered, then rolled onto his side to watch Jeremy laugh uncontrollably to the point of tears for a whole minute

“That sounds like the worst way to die.”

“Maybe for you.” Dean teased.

“Thanks for taking no for an answer.” Jeremy smiled and softly touched the back of Dean's hand.

“Anytime.”

They stared at each other for a long while before there was a beep from the kitchen. Jeremy sat up a little faster than Dean had expected- he was almost a bit flustered.

“The coffee machine’s warmed up. I'll be right back.” Jeremy said as he walked towards the small
kitchen. Dean tried to watch him, but he was already nodding off.

Dean woke up in his shirt & boxers, snuggled up with a similarly dressed Jeremy. For a moment he was so startled by the minimal clothes that he wanted to hop out of the bed, but he remembered that nothing had actually happened. He'd just been too exhausted after a difficult day's emotional roller coaster and ended up falling asleep before Jeremy had been able to make him some coffee.

He reached over the edge of the bed to check his cell phone. The shifting made Jeremy unconsciously reposition, almost spooning Dean. He moved slower so as not to wake him.

“Where are you?” Sam’s text was only from four minutes earlier.

“I panicked. Needed some space. How is he?” Dean replied.

“About the same. You ok?” Sam answered after a few seconds.

Dean looked over his shoulder at his sleeping companion.

“I need a little more time, maybe 2-3 hours. But call me if anything changes or if I can help somehow.” Dean sent the text, placed the phone on the nightstand, then fell back asleep.
Dylaniel was in his office at the Lansing base. He’d just gotten back from a three day mission with most of his team. After taking a quick shower he invited over Nordael. She’d been on his team for almost a year, nearly his entire career beyond training, but had to miss the mission due to temporary reassignment when another officer needed more angels of the virtue choir for a different mission. When she arrived, the two of them split a bottle of merlot while lounging on the office’s small couch recounting their separate adventures.

After Dylaniel described a particularly perilous fight, Nordael smiled at him, leaned in and kissed him. Her fingertips slid up his chest to caress the skin just above the collar of his shirt. He placed his hand on her shoulder, then gently pushed her back a few inches.

“Is something wrong?” She asked.

“I…” He felt embarrassed and he wasn’t entirely sure why. She was probably his closest friend beyond his family, he shouldn’t have been so anxious around her. “I don’t know.”

“Is it my vessel?” Nordael glanced at her female form. Her vessel was conveniently attractive with dark eyes, plump lips, ample curves, & her black hair done up in braids. “She has a brother that is considered quite handsome, if you prefer-”

“I don’t know if that would help.” Dylaniel looked at Nordael’s clothed chest trying to see if the thought of her topless would inspire him, but the only thing he felt was guilt at his disinterest.

“I know that you have responsibilities with your grace.” She took another guess at what was bothering him. “I wouldn’t do anything to compromise that.”

“It’s not that.” Dylaniel reassured. “You’re my friend. I trust you.”

Nordael looked at him with a level of affection that somehow made him feel worse. She leaned a bit closer to him experimentally, then put her lips to his. He slowly tried kissing her back even though his mouth suddenly felt incredibly dry. His body was horribly rigid and his heart was pounding.

“Stop.” He whispered after almost a full minute. She immediately looked up at him with visible concern. “I’m sorry.”

“It’s okay.” She comforted, though he thought he could hear the disappointment in her voice. “Is there anything I can do?”

“I’m not sure.” Dylaniel admitted. He closed his eyes for a moment trying to regain his focus- it was just another exercise, it was just new & he was nervous. “I’ve just never done this before.”
“I can get another vessel, if that might help.” Nordael suggested, then looked at him for some sort of response. Unsure of what else to try, he nodded. “I’ll be right back, okay?”

“Okay.”

She disappeared. Dyaniel rubbed his face, then looked down at his own body. Despite not being particularly enticed by the situation he was partially hard. He wondered if it was the result of his adrenaline, mere physical stimulation, or some sort of hormonal exchange in the trading of saliva. After a few seconds hesitation he started touching himself, hoping to get some small measure of pleasure and maybe give himself a bit of momentum. He didn’t want to disappoint Nordael.

Nordael returned wearing a young man probably only a few years older than Dyaniel. He was slightly muscular with frizzy black hair and the same dark eyes & plush lips as the previous vessel. He must’ve been the brother that she’d referred to earlier. Nordael glanced down at the fact that Dyaniel’s pants were undone and a subtle smile grew on the angel’s face.

“Is this vessel better or worse?” He asked hopefully.

“It’s fine.” Dyaniel answered. He couldn’t articulate what he was feeling. The male vessel was rather handsome, but Dyaniel wasn’t any more excited than he had been by the female vessel.

Nordael climbed back on top of him, watching Dyaniel for any objections. He leaned down, then kissed Dyaniel again.

Dyaniel reached up experimentally. He tried cupping Nordael’s cheek & the back of the angel’s neck, but the unnecessary skin-to-skin contact just made everything worse. His hand moved down along Nordael’s shirt, feeling his chest through the fabric. Not knowing what else to do with his hand, Dyaniel continued downward. Nordael enthusiastically ground, pressing his own clothed forming erection against Dyaniel’s hand. Dyaniel tensed, causing Nordael to break the kiss.

“Are you sure you’re okay?” Nordael asked.

“Yes.” He lied.

Nordael moved down Dyaniel’s body and knelt on the floor. He slowly started pulling down Dyaniel’s pants. When Dyaniel didn’t stop him, Nordael slid down his boxers, then grabbed the nephilim’s dick. Dyaniel gripped onto the edge of the couch as Nordael took him in.

Dyaniel leaned his head back and stared at the ceiling. In some ways it felt good, but it was also deeply upsetting. It was too intense in almost every way imaginable. The contact was more invasive than anything he could remember. He felt mortified & confused. Before he could think of what to do Nordael let him out and looked up.

“Do you want me to keep doing this or I could climb on top of you?”

“I don’t think the oral sex is working.” Dyaniel answered. He wasn’t sure how else to describe the feelings that it instilled in him. It was hard to imagine that any other sexual act would be an improvement, but it was even harder to imagine anything worse short of physical pain. He didn’t understand what he was supposed to be feeling, but he knew he hadn’t achieved it and that made him feel even more guilty.

Nordael stood up and took off his pants & underwear. Dyaniel stared at Nordael’s erection and thought about how attracted to & aroused by him the angel must be. The disparity in their relationship was more than a bit unsettling. Nordael leaned forward against the couch, then noticed that Dyaniel was blatantly looking at his dick.
“I assumed that you’d prefer to penetrate me, but if you’d rather that I penetrate you I could do that.” Nordael offered in a move that Dylaniel found both dizzying & strangely considerate.

“I don’t know what I’m doing. I don’t know what’s right.” Dylaniel managed, then thought of one solid thing that might give him some foundation in this foreign territory. “What would make you happy?”

Nordael smiled down at Dylaniel as he started to straddle him. The angel pushed himself down onto Dylaniel’s hard & still slick dick, then started rocking back & forth. The head of Nordael’s dick slipped under Dylaniel’s shirt and rubbed awkwardly against his abs. Nordael held onto the top of the couch, but arched his back with visible pleasure.

Dylaniel’s heart was hammering so hard that he thought he might pass out. He wasn’t sure if that was supposed to happen, either way he didn’t like it. The contact was too much- the smell of sweat & pre-cum- the taste- the panting- the pressure. Everything was too much. He didn’t feel like he was in control and he didn’t know the right way to stop it. It was taking all of his willpower not to just shoved Nordael off of him, but he didn’t want to hurt him or their friendship. Nordael shifted, causing the tip of Dylaniel’s dick to hit a point that made Nordael ride him harder as his eyes rolled back.

“You’re incredible.” Nordael moaned as he clenched around Dylaniel and came onto Dylaniel’s chest. Then he looked down at Dylaniel for the first time since shortly after he’d started riding him.

“What’s wrong?” Nordael’s eyes widened, nearly horrified by something that Dylaniel couldn’t really process.

“I’m fine.”

“You’re crying.”

“I’m sorry.” Dylaniel whispered, unsure what else to say.

Nordael hastily climbed off of Dylaniel and waved his hand cleaning up the mess. He grabbed Dylaniel’s pants and helped cover him.

“Please don’t tell anyone about this.” As soon as Dylaniel asked he knew it was an unnecessary statement. They both were well aware that they weren’t supposed to have sex. Dylaniel was supposed to stay a virgin until an appropriately vetted partner could be found for him.

“I wouldn’t do that to you.” Nordael assured. He reached out to touch Dylaniel in an attempt to provide comfort, but hesitated to do anything that might make the situation worse. “I’m so sorry. What did I do wrong?”

“I’m not sure. I think I’m the problem.” Dylaniel said. Nordael draped a blanket over Dylaniel, then sat attentively on the far edge of the couch.

“No, I shouldn’t have done that.” Nordael shook his head and refused to meet Dylaniel’s gaze. “I just thought that there was something between… I misjudged the situation. I should’ve seen that you weren’t enjoying it and just stopped.”

“I wasn’t clear… I was trying.” Dylaniel sighed. “I know I’m supposed to enjoy that, but I… I don’t want to do that. I don’t want to do that with anyone, even with you, and you’re my friend. I care about you.”

“I…” Nordael hesitated, visibly devastated, but in that moment Dylaniel wasn’t capable of reading
the emotions on the angel’s face. “I care about you too.”

“I don’t know what I’m supposed to do when they give me a partner.” Dylaniel said, causing Nordael to dim even more. “I have to be able to do this- it’s my responsibility… I don’t want to let them down.”

“Is there anything I can do to help?” Nordael asked uncertainly.

“No.”

“Should I leave?”

“No.” Dylaniel said as he pulled the blanket more tightly around himself. Nordael sat back on the couch, settling in for as long as Dylaniel wanted company.

“I know that you have duties for your grace that you’ll eventually have to perform,” Nordael pursed his lips. “but in every other context you shouldn’t have to endure that. You aren’t a thing to be used. You can say no to people, even a friend.”

“Thank you for being my friend.” Dylaniel offered after a long silence.

“It’s not hard.”

“Yes it is.”

“No, it’s really not.”

Chapter End Notes

I debated whether or not to have Dylaniel admit that he’d had sex during the game of Never Have I Ever in the epilogue. The fact that he’d had sex had always been one of those things I’d known, but wasn’t sure if I’d ever post or address. Part of me wanted to leave it a secret unless explicitly asked by a reader whether it was the case or not. The other part of me wanted to give him the chance to continue confiding in others & opening himself up more.

I decided to post the scene because I don’t want to be dismissive of his experience by leaving it unexplained- only mentioned in a lighthearted scene in the epilogue. In its ambiguity his admission might get a laugh, but the truth is there’s a reason that he doesn’t want to talk about it.

I had/have a few concerns with the scene, but I’m not sure how possible it is for me to be comfortable with such an uncomfortable thing. I didn’t want the interaction to come off as him being asexual because he’d had a bad sexual experience, but rather he’s asexual & non-physical and that made sexual contact a very unpleasant experience for him. Another really weird part of this whole thing is trying to depict a sex scene that’s meant to be not sexy and yet not overly aggressive or violent. I’m not really sure if the tone comes through or not, but that’s what I was going for.

*I have a hard time calling it sex because it I feel like it’s in that weird grey area of succumbing to peer pressure & dubious consent.
Chapter Summary

I’d like a deleted scene where the King of Hell Sam from job & family gets his ability to teleport.

Sam was taking one of his strolls through the Citadel, stretching his legs and observing the various happenings of the heart of Hell. He’d just finished an impromptu meeting with a handful of Visedmons and the Archdemon of the Arbris caste regarding the latest census data. The meeting was dull—a quality in a meeting, which he’d quickly grown to love in his new capacity as King of Hell. Despite still being something between a novelty and a celebrity, he was able to dismiss the routine demon stranglers who followed him about. It was his advisors that he had less success shedding.

At that point, having Mir escorting him was a given unless Sam explicitly requested privacy. Shola routinely hovered about, ready to assist him in whatever respect he needed. Crowley preferred to spend most of his time downstairs primping and preening his largest investment. Then there was Morrison, who’d only risen to the rank of Archdemon shortly before Sam had taken the throne and was desperately trying to get his own projects in order… and all too often seeking resources or indemnification from Sam.

“We really need to figure out what powers you have.” Crowley reviewed an enchanted notepad that was only decipherable to him as walked beside Sam. “Rumors have been circulating about what you’re capable of. As much as the tall tales of you flying or breathing fire are good for a laugh, it’d probably be best to control the situation.”

“Breathing fire?” Sam’s eyebrow arched at the mental image. “They do know more or less physically human, right?”

“Most people only know what they choose to believe,” Shola observed.

“Vindication is overrated and overvalued, which is why it’s an excellent product to sell,” Crowley offered as a lesson to either of his pupils.

“Yes, we all know about the unreliability of feeble, thirsty minds.” Morrison waved his hands at the unenticing tangent, then took a few quick steps to be able to look back at Sam and speak to him directly. “I think the more important issue is determining the full range of your powers.”

Their party entered the throne room and Sam gestured for the dozen aides to leave them. After the hall was cleared, Crowley tilted his head pointedly at the large double doors. With very minor effort Sam waved his hand, telekinetically closing and locking all the doors in the room. He was getting better at sealing rooms, but he hadn’t yet developed Crowley’s paranoid inclinations. With their privacy secured they got back to the discussion.

“I can physically manipulating demons, reading demons’ emotions, sometimes telekinesis, sitting on the Seat,” Sam listed off as he sat down on his throne. “I did this burning touch thing on some angels just before I came downst—”
“To Hell,” Crowley corrected as part of Sam’s continuing education when it came to fitting in. “Downstairs” wasn’t a phrase that treated the realm with sufficient respect, but he was in the habit of using it at home.

“Before I came to Hell,” Sam amended, earning a nod of approval.

“So this ability was like smiting,” Morrison suggested.

“I wouldn’t say smiting—.” Sam pursed his lips, uncomfortable with the angelic association. It felt like a cruel bit of irony that he’d prefer being tied to demonic things over the heavenly sort. Though circumstances had clearly changed in the last few months—Earth months, he reminded himself.

“But it has the same effects as angelic smiting?” Morrison pressed.

“As far as I can tell,” Sam shrugged. “Luckily, I haven’t seen much smiting up close.”

“You might consult with your angel friend,” Shola offered.

“If your affinity with the Abyss really is the result of your bond with Lucifer it stands to reason that you might have angelic powers,” Morrison continued.

“We shouldn’t be marketing him as having half a halo,” Crowley warned, then added, “we can suggest he’s Lucifer’s chosen, but the rest of Heaven stays out of this.”

Sam had to admit that at that point splitting his affiliation would be dangerous. Much of their platform had been focused around the preservation and restoration of Hell. His presence as a divine monarch, crafted to fit Hell itself had given the demons loyal to him extra wind in their sails. To distort the narrative by suggesting that he was something more nuanced and related to Hell’s most feared enemies… that would definitely cause problems.

“You can decide how best to phrase everything for public consumption, but internally we need to have a full understanding of what we’re dealing with,” Morrison rebuffed the idea that his work would be confined by anything, even political necessity. “I’ll bring two of my assistants up to speed on the situation, then we can begin the first stage of experimentation.”

“Experiments?” Sam asked. He was all for learning more about what he could do, but for some reason he hadn’t expected anything so formal as to require the scientific method.

“Assistants?” Crowley stepped forward, edging Sam’s worries out of the conversation. “We should try to keep this as confidential as possible. The last thing we need is for gossip to spread if this goes balls-up.”

“I understand.” Morrison gave a half-bow to Crowley that was so insincere in its respect that Sam had to stop himself from rolling his eyes. “It’s a matter of security to the realm.”

Mir slowly glanced between Morrison and Sam at the mention of the security of Hell. A wariness simmered below the surface of the mute Knight—a wariness that Sam deeply appreciated. Sam gave Mir a reassuring little nod, causing him to relax slightly.

“What was that about experiments?” Sam asked Morrison at his opening.

“I’ll need to do extensive studies on you. You’re a completely unfamiliar species of Abyssal.”

“Exactly how extensive?”
Morrison’s brow furrowed as he thought for a long while before settling on, “quite extensive.”

“Is this really necessary?” Sam asked while eyeing the collection of surgical tools and calipers that were resting on Morrison’s equipment cart.

He was seated on his throne, but he wasn’t bothered to wear his formal long-jacket. His jacket and shirt had been removed to allow for another one of the seemingly endless experiments. The throne room had been cleared and the doors closed after a handful of demons had stopped to gawk at the sight of his bare chest. Only Morrison and the ever vigilant Mir remained.

“It’s important for us to know—“ Morrison looked up from his work to meet Sam’s face for the first time in what had to have been hours of poking and prodding. “This is for your own safety.”

The Archdemon took a scalpel from the cart, then very carefully sliced into the back of Sam’s forearm. After assessing the incision, Morrison cut a bit more in order to achieve some sort of ideal uniformity. Sam grimaced at both cuts, but didn’t explicitly complain.

“Can you at least give me a warning next time?” Sam said through gritted teeth.

Morrison glanced up from measuring the wound and his shell lightened slightly in surprise at Sam’s pained expression.

“Oh, that hurts,” Morrison said, more to himself than Sam.

“Yes, being injured hurts.” Sam scowled.

Mir took a step closer to watch the infliction of damage on his king. Without commenting on the move, Morrison repositioned to put Sam and the throne between them.

“Well, of course it does.” Morrison shrugged off the implication that he didn’t know what he was talking about. “I meant, well…. I’m not trying to hurt you. It’s a new dynamic we’re having to consider.”

Sam exhaled in exasperation at the Archdemon. As obvious as it was to Sam that the avoidance of pain among colleagues was a good thing, he had to admit it was an unusual situation given their environment. Having any sort of bedside manner was probably unheard of there.

“Not only are you not trying to hurt me, I’d appreciate it if you’d actively avoid hurting me.” Sam tried to keep his tone light and patient in order to put Mir more at ease.

“I suppose I could use some sort of local anesthetic,” Morrison mused. “I doubt we have any in the realm.”

“Somehow I believe that.” Sam rolled his shoulders in an allusion to a shrug.

Morrison held his forearm still while cautiously avoiding contact with the Seat. “Don’t move.”

Sam stared at the blood dripping from the gash in his arm. He wasn’t likely to make it back to Earth anytime soon and the best healers in Hell were hardly any better than human doctors. That meant that he’d probably end up with stitches.

“Ruby’s going to ask about the scar,” Sam commented.

“And?”
“I will wholeheartedly throw you under that bus.”

Morrison looked up to stare at Sam with a candidly unamused expression. “Does she intimidate you?”

“Professionally,” Sam offered as a compliment to her. “You might want to take her more seriously.”

“She’s my subordinate,” Morrison dismissed the warning.

“How much of a difference do you think that’s going to make if you piss her off?” Sam asked.

Morrison tilted his head, acknowledging the point, but didn’t look up. Below the Archdemon’s surface, a bit of thoughtful concern swirled as he considered the potential enemy he might be making.

“She always was unconventional—Not that the Maji mind unconventional. But ever since she was made, she’s been trying our aristocracy’s patience.”

“You knew her when she was turned?” Sam asked, always eager for stories about Ruby.

“Shortly after,” Morrison corrected as he began blotting the wound with gauze to collect a sample. “She was an interesting case. Within a few months of turning she’d managed to acquire a pass back to Earth—I still have no idea who she bribed or conned into giving her one. Anyway, she went on her killing spree for quite awhile before she was dragged back down. There was a small controversy over it. Some of the other castes thought it was a good bit of fun, but Maji aren’t supposed to work in wanton destruction. It’s unbecoming. Anyway, I was one of the Maji assigned to justify its educational value.”

“What?”

“It was deemed systemically simpler to invent value in the event rather than implementing the means to prevent that sort of waste again,” Morrison explained.

“Jesus Christ, is all of the bureaucracy of this place held together with masking tape?” Sam covered his face with his free hand. “I’m supposed to be in charge of this place at some point.”

“That’s why we’re taking all these efforts to get you acclimated,” Morrison replied.

“Like cutting pieces out of me.”

“I didn’t remove anything more than some blood.” Morrison leaned in closer to use the calipers again. “I don’t see any indication of advanced healing.”

“Can I at least get stitches?”

“Certainly.” Morrison threaded a curved needle, placed the point of it to Sam’s flesh, then stopped. “Oh, I should ask you if you’d like some local anesthetic.”

“Baby steps,” Sam sighed.

Morrison laid out five charts meticulously calligraphed in what looked like blood on massive sheets of parchment. The entire display consumed half of the jet black conference table in the High Council’s Chamber. He gestured to several cells on a particular data table.

“Based on an analysis of common Abyssal traits, I believe your traits follow trends along these major
castes groupings. Whether these traits are dominant or recessive is another matter—or whether they might be active—“

“Can you say it in plain English?” Sam requested.

“If you’d keep up on your homework, then he’d be able to say it in plain Abyssal,” Crowley muttered.

“You have me working for weeks on end. I’m doing the best I can,” Sam said defensively.

“You’re making excellent progress,” Shola assured.

“You’re coddling—“ Crowley started.

“I believe you can teleport,” Morrison interrupted, derailing the tiff.

After a few seconds of stunned silence, Sam managed, “teleport?”

“It’s an underlying ability of all Abyssal except for hellhounds.” Morrison gestured repeatedly at the incomprehensible charts to help support his theory. “It might take some cultivation—“

“Cultivation?”

“Your body is so human in its structure. In order to allow independent travel without causing damage, we might need to increase your fortitude, then simply activate the dormant trait.”

“What does that mean?” Sam didn’t like the talk of damage or fortitude.

“A Crossroads deal might be the easiest way to augment the contract that’s slowing your aging,” Morrison suggested. “I believe that if we were to make a few minor tweaks to the deal’s underlying structure—“

Crowley crossed his arms in front of his chest and interjected, “you’re trying to shift the blame to the Crossroads if this doesn’t work.”

“My liability doesn’t affect the odds of success,”. Morrison countered.

Sam watched Hell’s chief lawyer and doctor argue about malpractice.

“Would it affect me mentally?” Sam finally cut off the bickering.

“No, we should be able to activate this power without harming you, both physically and mentally,” Morrison answered.

“Do I need this power?”

“The freedom to get to your family without a talisman?”

Sam knew it was a cheap bit of bait. Though the knowledge that he was being manipulated didn’t make the prospect of being able to teleport home any less desirable. “Do it.”

“Try to teleport to that rug,” Crowley instructed as he pointed to a red rug on the other side of the sealed throne room.

Sam focused on standing on the rug. He could feel that strange pressure increasing in his head, like a
sneeze building up in the back of his skull. When it was nearly unbearable, it suddenly changed. Everything went black for a split second, then the throne room came back into view. He fell from eight feet in the air several feet beyond the rug. A quick, panicked burst of telekinesis saved him from a broken ankle or tailbone.

“His depth perception might be a problem,” Morrison noted as he scribbled away in a leather-bound journal.

“At least he made it roughly ten meters,” Shola observed.

“This shouldn’t be so hard,” Crowley groaned.

Sam stood up, rubbed his aching back, then gestured across the room where he’d come from. “I’m spontaneously moving from one point to another. How is that supposed to be easy?”

“Normal demons don’t have this much trouble,” Crowley commented.

“He’s learning,” Shola responded in a tone that was probably only non-confrontational because she was speaking to her direct superior. “Learning is inherently a process.

“It might be an instinctual reaction in turned demons,” Morrison mused. “If we increased the risk we might be able to force a smoother reaction.”

“You aren’t dangling me over a volcano or anything.” Sam raised his hands defensively, incidentally triggering Mir to stand at attention. He waved off his overprotective Knight, then pinched the bridge of his nose and began walking back to his throne. “I just need more practice.”

“You’re gonna kill yourself the first time you try porting to somewhere you can’t see,” Crowley speculated.

“We just need to work up to it,” Morrison countered with enough sincere optimism that Sam didn’t immediately blow him off as wholly self-interested. “After you learn to teleport to the rug, we’ll put a screen in between you and the rug. That way you know where you’re going still, but you don’t have to avoid a meter thick stone wall.”

“Being able to teleport would make it easier to defend you,” Shola commented with a glance at Mir, whose razor-thin mouth smiled at the point.

Sam leaned back in his throne and chewed his lower lip slightly as he considered the risks and benefits. For all the perks of being able to teleport, there was one that only he seemed to be considering. Someday when Kaylee was older she might be more capable of teleporting. If she wasn’t born with whatever intuition turned-demons seemed to have, then she’d be without instruction as much as he was then. More than anything, it was his job to protect her and guide her, and this was potentially an area where no one else could fill that role. He wouldn’t take reckless chances while practicing, but he’d do what he could. He needed whatever advantages he could get—his family needed whatever advantages he could give them.

Seven subjective months, four concussions, nineteen bruises, two broken wrists, and a broken ankle later, he was fairly capable of teleporting around the Citadel with relative ease. Occasionally, he’d appear a millimeter or so above the ground, but he’d learned to slightly bend his knees to anticipate the impact.

With practice his sense of direction had taken on an extra dimension: altitude. He had to maintain a significant amount of focus in order to react quickly enough to make corrections to his landing whilst
in the middle of teleporting, but in half a dozen instances he’d managed to bring himself out of the port even closer to the ground than he’d initially been targeting.

The true mark of improvement had been when Crowley had given him a small smile of approval after he’d come out of a port mid-step without missing a beat. The Archdemon was an advocate of those little artistic flourishes to help sell the still newly-minted King of Hell. It didn’t hurt that he could use a bit of telekinesis to help keep himself from flubbing those subtle touches. But despite his stylistic accomplishments, he was feeling anxious.

The next challenge was a big step, an interplanar teleport. He’d used a talisman to travel between his home and Hell countless times. Recently though he’d made the journey repeatedly in order to observe the sensations and feel out the additional dimensions of the travel. Part of him wanted to save that step to the end, but all of his demonic advisers agreed that interplanar travel to a familiar location was easier than jumping to an unfamiliar location on the same plane. Anyway, by that point he was already familiar with all of the territory in Hell that his side currently held and accidentally blinking into Lilith’s territory was its own horrible scenario.

“You don’t need to do this if you don’t feel ready,” Shola offered as an out.

“I’m not sure how I’m ever supposed to feel ready for something like this,” he replied. “At a certain point I’m just going to have to take a chance or this will have to be limited to just the Citadel.

“Well, you’ve impressed us all with how much you’ve accomplished—whether the others will tell you so or not.” Shola almost glowed with pride below her glassy shell. “If anyone can do this, it’s you.”

“Thanks.” Sam held the talisman to his cabin in his hand. “Now I just need to stop thinking about getting smeared across the planar divide.”

“If I may, maybe try thinking of something you want rather than something you don’t want?”

He nodded thoughtfully at her suggestion, then imagined seeing Ruby and their daughter—hugging them, holding them, Ruby’s soft kiss, the sound of Kaylee’s laugh. Home was only a moment away if he wanted it badly enough. He’d been in Hell for a subjective eight weeks, but in his heart it was much more.

Slipping the talisman into his pocket for safekeeping, he pictured the living room of his family’s cabin. It was his home, his sanctuary away from the threats of the world and the burdens of his role in Hell. While he was there, all he was was a father to an incredible little girl, and partner to a brilliant, beautiful woman. It was his peace and more than anything he wanted to be home with his family.

He focused on his home and closed his eyes. The now-familiar pressure built in his head, then released in a blur of sensation. There was darkness, the heat and coarseness of Hell, the weightlessness of the in-between, then the humid blaring chromatic-colors of Earth. After a split-second correction to meet the ground coming up below him, the scene came into existence around him.

He was in his living room and Ruby was sitting on the couch in front of him nursing the five month old Kaylee.

“Is something wrong?” Ruby asked at his unexpected early return home.

“No, actually….” Sam smiled at her, then opened his hands to reveal that he wasn’t holding a
talisman.
Prompt: Ruby's Perspective While Pregnant with Kaylee

Chapter Summary

Anonymous asked:
So we never really got Ruby’s thoughts while she was pregnant with Kaylee. I’d love a deleted scene that peers into her thoughts

Author's Notes:
This deleted scene exists in both timelines, since it exists prior to the timeline divergence. But I decided to put it here instead of the Deleted Scenes: Aftermath work in an act of deference to the 2039 timeline.

“Gimme your hand,” Ruby quickly told Sam as he was starting to get out of the Impala.

He stopped, sat back down in the driver’s seat, then offered her his hand with a confused expression. She placed his palm on her small belly, then waited a second to see if he’d missed the opportunity.

His eyes widened at the realization of what she was doing. When the baby shifted, a broad grin spread across his face and his elated chuckle suddenly made her periodic back aches a bit worthwhile.

“That’s it—That’s the baby?” His voice cracked slightly. He was such a softy.

“Congratulations,” she replied. “You finally get to discover how much your kid likes kickboxing.”

She nearly regretted referring to the baby as ‘your kid’ while he was experiencing movement for the first time. The swell of too many emotions was written all over him. He nodded, unable to find words to articulate the moment.

In a surprisingly tender move he cupped Ruby’s cheek, then leaned in and kissed her. They held the delicate kiss for several distractingly powerful heartbeats before Sam pulled back. An embarrassed smile flickered on his face as he avoided her eyes. She gently gripped his thigh in silent reassurance that he hadn’t crossed some sort of unspoken line with the candid display of affection. His hand touched her belly one last time before he climbed out of the car to run into the gas station convenience store in search of snacks and advice on a good back-road exit out of the state.

She absentmindedly touched her belly while watching him walk through the aisles of the store. He had a spring in his step. It seemed like everyday they got closer to the baby being born, the happier Sam was.

“Your dad is really excited to meet you,” Ruby said quietly, voice wavering slight from embarrassment.

She always felt like an idiot talking to her own belly. Sam had begun doing it occasionally ever since the baby had started moving, but she didn’t really get it. The kid barely had a nervous system let alone the ability to understand human speech. Maybe later on she’d feel differently, but at that point it was hard to feel like it was real. It was hard to feel that connection… whatever it was that Sam felt. Some sort of excitement and joy at least, even hope. She was happy for him, that he’d found something that could make him feel that way. He deserved some happiness.
Sam was her friend—her best friend in what had to have been centuries… at least that long. Granted she didn’t really make friends very easily. After becoming a demon those sorts of commitments with humans just took so much effort to build and maintain. But not so with Sam. She genuinely liked him. He was smart, funny, kind, and fucking like it was his last day on Earth. He made her smile and laugh, which had felt like a rare thing in her very long life. He’d endured her well and she’d learned to give him some of her trust, more than just her trust. She was giving him her time, patience, and care so that he could have a child. She wasn’t ready to say that she’d be willing to stay with him for long enough to raise a child, but for the last year or so she hadn’t really been fantasizing of going anywhere without him. She could count on him and it turned out that that was a really nice thing to have.

But in a little over three months, he’d be a package deal with a tiny, vulnerable human, his son or daughter. She supposed depending on how one looked at it the baby was also hers. It’s not as though Sam would’ve fucked comatose Jane Doe without her help. But at the same time…. She didn’t know how to explain it to Sam, but in a very real way she felt like the baby wasn’t hers. It was her meatsuit’s kid. This baby wouldn’t look like her or have a connection to her identity and history. She wasn’t her physical body and the kid was an accidental byproduct of a very physical process. She was a demon, beyond flesh and blood, but she didn’t even call Hell her home. How was she supposed to feel a connection to a newborn when she hardly had any connections across two planes that she had walked for lifetimes?

Sam tried so hard to understand when she’d tell him about Hell and what it was like being a demon, but he was a human. How could he understand something like that? If she didn’t end up having maternal feelings for the baby, would it really be feasible for her to stay with him? Would it hurt him too much that she couldn’t care for his—their child?

And having a child was just daunting… well potentially daunting. If she did end up deciding to stay with the kid, then she’d be staring down eighteen or more years of responsibilities. She’d invested a lot of time into projects before, but never with the regularity and attentiveness that childcare probably called for. She wasn’t sure if she was ready for that. By her best guess she’d died when she was in her late teens. At the time she hadn’t wanted to have any kids, to let them be born into that life. Now she was older, wiser, and her life was better. She had a partner, someone that she could count on—but that didn’t mean she was ready to have that responsibility and vulnerability. But Sam seemed ready. He was prepared to settle down and raise the baby by himself if he needed to.

In an odd way she really did want to feel closer to the baby, but she couldn’t tell how much of that was just guilt… which was alarming as hell. Guilt was one of those odd emotions that most demons couldn’t really feel, but she was apparently more than capable. For the last few weeks, it’d been gnawing at her at night while Sam slept beside her. She wasn’t supposed to feel guilt, especially about things like not being emotional enough. It wasn’t typical—granted as far as she could tell she wasn’t a typical demon. The fact that she was pregnant was evidence of that.

As far as she knew, there hadn’t ever been a child like that one—a baby born to a demon, maybe even part demon itself. For the most part she didn’t care that the child’s birth would on some level be a groundbreaking event for all Abyssal. Despite her species, she didn’t have any loyalty to Hell. Her loyalty was placed in her coven and Sam, and he was so infatuated with the baby that she sincerely wanted to protect it for him.

She was only just starting to show, but eventually it’d be obvious. If it really was some sort of half-demon baby, its mere existence might very well put her and Sam in danger. Of course Sam knew that. He was a sharp guy. It’s just that he’d embraced the risks associated with having his child—their child. It was a little disheartening for her to know that she’d embraced those same risks, but at that point it was still only for him.
She pulled the ultrasound photos from the glovebox, then began flipping through them. There was a subtle twitch and her right hand returned to her small belly. It was still just a squishy thing. Maybe someday she would feel different—she wouldn’t feel like an idiot talking to it. Maybe someday she’d feel a glimmer of the joy that the baby seemed to give Sam… but for now she’d settle for finding her joy in Sam’s enthusiasm.

“Ruby! Ruby!” Sam’s voice was close by and concerned. “You’re okay. Let go of the baby.”

She opened her eyes to find herself curled up as best she could in their motel room bed, clutching her large belly. Sam was in his boxers, sitting beside her with an almost terrified expression on his face. He gently took her hands and pulled her arms away from her abdomen. His hand touched her massive belly as he waited for some movement. After a few seconds there was a little shift and a tiny knee or elbow pushing out against her skin in protest. They both let out quiet sighs of relief.

It had been two weeks since Sam had been taken prisoner by the hunters and they were both still feeling the emotional strain from the encounter. She’d recently started sleeping for the first time since becoming a demon. And that sleep was full of nightmares of Hell, trying to rescue Sam from hunters, or a bit of both. Often in her dreams she was pregnant and when things became too much she’d try to protect the baby. But in reality she’d taken to unconsciously clutching her belly in her sleep and with her demonic strength they both feared that it might injure the baby.

“You can’t be having these nightmares,” Sam said quietly as he ran his fingers through his hair. He looked exhausted despite the lull in harassment from Lilith’s demons.

She hated that she was endangering the kid even if it wasn’t intentional or out of recklessness. She could feel the baby, knew how to identify its little kicks and headbutts. It would sleep, then wake up and seemingly do somersaults. Sometimes it drove her crazy, particularly during combat. Granted the kid probably wasn’t thrilled to be in combat —God knew Sam hated whenever that sort of bad luck befell them— But sometimes the kid was entertaining or at least… well, it was there with them on their journey. It kinda felt like a very dull companion that Sam happened to be exceptionally fond of… And for the third night, she’d almost crushed the frail thing.

“We could find a doctor, someone to get the kid out,” she suggested. Then it would be free of Ruby and all the dangers associated with riding around in her. Sam could take his baby back to the coven and begin his life of peace. And she… she would see how things unfolded. She could find out if that warm fuzzy feeling that seemed to fuel Sam would rub off on her. If not… then she’d need to reassess what she was doing, what she might actually want from the rest of her existence.

“It’s too early,” Sam dismissed the idea of medical intervention.

It was still about a month before she was due. There was a chance that the baby would need a hospital and that was potentially dangerous. There was a risk that the baby wouldn’t look human and they’d have to deal with containing witness, possibly through unsavory means. But even if the kid could pass as human, having it stuck in the neonatal intensive care unit meant that they’d be somewhat anchored to that location. In theory Sam could continue moving to lead away Lilith’s demons, but separating him from his baby just seemed cruel.

Ruby’s chronic guilt flared. She shouldn’t have been the one to be the baby’s mom. Her nightmares were the thing endangering the baby. She’d been through too much trauma and it might hurt the child. Maybe there was a reason demons didn’t breed? It wasn’t fair to Sam or the kid. But he’d wanted it and she’d wanted for him to get a second chance at his life, so she’d let them get into that shit situation.
“I’m gonna hurt it,” she sighed.

“We’ll keep looking for one of those dreamless sleep charms. There’s got to be a magic shop in the state that has one. It’ll be fine.” He repositioned in order to be spooning her, then wrapped his arms around her and took her hands in his. “In the meantime, you can just hold my hands while you sleep and I’ll stop you from holding your stomach.”

“I’ll break your fingers,” she warned.

“And I’ll wake you up with my cries of pain.” He rested his forehead against the back of her neck. “It’s going to be okay. We’ll get through this.”

A few weeks later, Ruby was sitting by herself in the Sioux Falls motel room waiting to hear from Sam. He had gone to clear an escape route for them after they’d been rudely awoken by a large group of Lilith’s demons teleporting into the city. He’d said he’d be back for her within thirty minutes. It’d been forty-five.

The baby kicked and Ruby choose to interpret it as a request for movement or action—to go find Sam and rescue him. Of course, unless half-demons were super powered in utero psychics, the baby had no idea anything was wrong. But sometimes when she was alone she liked to imagine what might the baby do or think or feel in a given scenario. It was never anything of long term significance. She never wondered about anything that was more than three years down the road. Yet occasionally she had thoughts like ‘someday, maybe this child will laugh with the same silly smile that Sam does.’ or ‘someday this child will see the same stars I saw as a child.’ So imagining the baby critiquing her current inaction came fairly naturally at that point.

She sat staring out the window, watching for any sign of Sam. While she watch, the clouds parted and she could see several stars in the night sky. It reminded her of the night when they had watched the meteor shower in the field together. The stars were falling, but so was Sam. She could tell even then that he was developing feelings for her, and despite knowing that she’d still snuggled under the stars with him. She’d ended up fully letting down her guard with him because for the first time in centuries she’d found someone she truly enjoyed being around, someone around whom she could just be herself. So she returned some measure of his vulnerability in that moment. She returned his kiss, his tenderness, his touch—lots of touching. Because when she was with him she didn’t feel alone.

Ruby watched the stars while counting out the weeks, then held her belly with a little more tenderness. She had given Sam the gift of watching the stars—his first moment of happiness in months. And the night had changed everything. It had given Sam a source of continual happiness, one that he’d hopefully continue to enjoy and cherish for decades to come.

They’d made a child together, because when she was with him she didn’t feel alone. Now sitting in the motel room, waiting to find out if he was alright…. She was scared for him and for their child’s future.

“We’ll give him another fifteen minutes… then we’ll figure something out,” she told the baby.

A tiny hand pressed against her belly, making a small bump. Ruby placed her hand on her belly to match it. In a painful moment she thought that at least he’d seen to it that she didn’t end up alone again. She swallowed her many confusing emotions, before getting up to grab her bag of spell components. There was work to do.

“It’s going to be okay. We’ll get through this.”
Prompt: Halloween Fluff

Chapter Summary

This is an old one that I'd posted on Tumblr and forgot to move onto here.

Anonymous asked:
Sorry it's last minute. Can I get some halloween fluff with Sam & Ruby & the kids?
Thx!

“What about a witch?” Sam suggested, betraying a little too much eagerness in his smile.

“Oh gods, you mean one of those awful pointed hat & ugly nose get ups?” Ruby rolled her eyes at the mental image. “I’m vetoing that.”

“Not ugly… I don’t know, I think it’d be cute.”

It had been a week before Halloween when Dean informed them that there was going to be a small trick-or-treating event on one of the AFE bases. The organization had finally gotten big enough that its members included a few hundred parents looking to spend the holiday with their kids. For the first time ever, Sam & Ruby had a chance to take their own children out to celebrate the holiday without many of the safety concerns of taking Kaylee & Alex out in public. The only hang up was that they didn’t have a ton of time to get ready.

“Starlight,” Ruby called down the hall to their daughter, who’d hurried off in search of inspiration among her toys. “do you want to be cute?”

“I want to be awesome!” The eight year old yelled as she ran back into her parents’ bedroom with her arms full of props. She dumped the toys onto the bed before climbing up to join her parents & younger brother.

“Well that doesn’t narrow it down much because of the transitive property of awesome.” Ruby observed as she passed a plush bat to Alex, who was sitting on her lap.

“I want to be awesome!” The eight year old yelled as she ran back into her parents’ bedroom with her arms full of props. She dumped the toys onto the bed before climbing up to join her parents & younger brother.

“Well that doesn’t narrow it down much because of the transitive property of awesome.” Ruby observed as she passed a plush bat to Alex, who was sitting on her lap.

“Crowley says I won’t learn about property til next year.” Kaylee corrected.

“Don’t worry about it. Your mom was just saying you’re awesome.” Sam reassured her.

“Well yeah, that’s part of the costume.” Kaylee stated with renewed confidence.

“I think we need to work on the whole modesty lessons some more.” Sam noted.

“Talk about mixed signals.” Ruby teased Sam, then turn her attention back to Kaylee. “Okay, what do you want to be for Halloween other than awesome?”

“And I can be anything?”

“Basically anything.” Sam clarified.

“Can I be a Knight?” Her dark brown eyes beamed at the prospect.
“Knights of Hell don’t have a uniform or anything, so you’re going to have to explain what specifically you want.”

“I want a big hammer like Mir and armor like Gallini and black wisps like Tora and a face tattoo like Faldo and—”

“Sweetie, tell you what,” Sam cut her off as gently as possible. “we’ll go talk with the fabricators next time we’re in the Citadel, okay?”

“Are they gonna make my costume?”

“If it’s gonna be that complicated, then yeah.” Ruby answered. “Your Dad & I can patch clothes, but making you leather armor is a little beyond us.”

“I get to play too?” Alex asked without looking up from his toy.

“Yep, what do want to be?”

“I’m a hound.” Alex grinned broadly.

“Like an Earth dog or a hellhound?” Sam raised an eyebrow at the possibilities.

“Hellhound.”

“Most people aren’t going to know what a hellhound even looks…” Sam started to point out the obscurity of the costume, before remembering that the point was for the kids to have fun. “Okay, I’ll try to make that happen. Any idea what Tommy wants to dress up as?”

“Well, when I told him about the trick-or-treating plan he asked if I could make him some darkvision eye drops.” Ruby explained.

“He wants to see in the dark?”

“And they temporarily turn eyes black.” Ruby added with a knowing tilt of her head.

A few days later, Sam stopped by Tom’s bedroom. He placed a large ashen grey box on his son’s desk, then waited for Tom to get to a stopping point in his book.

“I got you something.”

The fourteen year old lifted the lid to find a pair of gloves, a long leather jacket, & a matte black crown. The maroon leather jacket went down to Tom’s shins and had a pair of black feather wings burnt into the hide, extending the full length of the back. The leather gloves began at the wrist in a matching maroon, but faded to black along the fingers. The fingertips ended with black wooden claws. The crown was understated black wood, except for the pair of large ebony horns protruding from them.

“These…” He picked up the crown of horns and marveled at them for several seconds. “They’re great.”

“With all the costumes the other kids’ll be wearing, I thought that your brother & sister might decide to wear their horns or claws out tonight. I thought… maybe you’d want to join them?”

“Thank you.” Tom hugged him around the neck, like he used to when he was younger.

“You know that your mom & I love you just the way you are, right?” Sam said softly.
“I know.” Tom let go of him, then slipped the crown only his head. “It’s just nice to play at something different sometimes.”

Sam sat on the living room floor in the late afternoon on Halloween, lacing up the last piece of Kaylee’s black leather armor. Her miniature maul stood almost as tall as her shoulders, but she insisted that it not be any smaller. Rather than magically produce a trail of black smoke, she wore a cape of tattered black gauze. Her sweet face was half covered in an ornate fake black tattoo of her own design.

“So the people will give me candy because we’re visiting them?” Kaylee asked her dad.

“It’s a custom. On Halloween, you knock on their door while dressed up and say ‘Trick or treat.’ Then the people give you a piece of candy.”

“Do I have to trick them?”

“No, it’s supposed to be be an offer… or a threat.” Sam corrected. “It’s not a very wholesome holiday.”

“Halloween is supposed to be scary. It’s kinda the evil holiday.” Tom added from his perch at the kitchen table. He tapped his gloves’ claws on the table, marveling at the craftsmanship, picked up an orange, then started carefully peeling it. After performing the produce equivalent of a vivisection, he ate a few pieces and prepared two more oranges for the other kids.

“Do we have Halloween in Hell?” Kaylee asked.

“No, we don’t have any candy down there and it’s scary enough all year round.” Sam answered.

“Hell isn’t scary.” Kaylee said indignantly while hugging her toy maul.

“You’re absolutely precious.” Sam commented and gently patted her cheek.

“Watch out for the mutt.” Tom warned with a tilt of his head toward the couch.

Alex had crawled onto the couch and was angling to pounce on Sam’s back. His hellhound costume was little more than a grey, furry set of footie pajamas with a hood with floppy ears & red decorative eyes. Per Sam’s request the beast’s signature spikes & claws were omitted- Alex did enough damage without any additional melee weapons.

“Careful-” Sam barely started before the hound leapt onto his back and started pretending to bite his neck. He raised his hands in mock distress. “Oh no, not the hound!”

“I’ve got it!” Kaylee offered, readying her maul for a good strong swing.

“Don’t hit your brother.” Sam told her as he prepared to stop her while struggling to pry the menace from his back.

“He’s attacking the king and I’m a Knight.”

“Well, the king says don’t hit your brother, even if he is a vicious little hound.” Sam managed to grab a furry ankle, but lost his grip when Alex accidentally yanked Sam’s ponytail in the grapple.

“Tom, can you get him off me?”

“I’m enjoying the show.”
“Tonight you’re a demon, I get to tell you what to do.”

“Yeah, but how often do they actually listen to you?” Tom commented with a playful snarky tone that was surely part of puberty.

“Now that you mention it, the ones who are still getting a weekly allowance and teleportation privileges from me always listen to what I say.” Sam shrugged at the teenager. “It’s funny how that works out.”

“Alright, I’m coming.” Tom acknowledged while getting up and removing his gloves.

After having his youngest removed from his back, Sam went into the bathroom to redo his ponytail. He fixed his dark red suit, then studied his appearance in the mirror. Part of him regretted not picking the white suit in an homage to the Seat, but as far as he could tell a red suit was more traditionally associated with the devil. When he was done, he walked down the short hall to check on Ruby, who was changing in their bedroom.

“You ready?” Sam asked while unconsciously rechecking to make sure that his fake horns were still secured to his head.

Ruby walked out of the bedroom wearing a short white dress, a pair of fake white feather wings, & a gold leafed wire halo. She was a caricature of an angel, which bordered on inappropriately sexualized. With a playful bite of her lower lip, she winked at Sam.

“You’re gonna get us kicked off the base.” Sam couldn’t help but smile at her while offering the warning.

“Angels need to learn to have a sense of humor about themselves.” Ruby nodded at his stereotypical devilish goatee that he’d grown during his last stint in Hell just for the occasion. “Look at you.”

“I haven’t had to build my self deprecation from scratch over the last few years.”

“Yeah, the kids definitely helped you there.” She poked him softly in his belly button. “How long does this trick-or-treating thing usually last?”

“Dean & I used to go out for about an hour depending on what the threats were in the area.” Sam scratched his head. “I’m not sure how much of the base is set up for it. At least three of the barracks, but it could be more.”

“If you have a little time afterwards, before you go back downstairs… I was thinking we could finally answer the age old question, between good & evil…” Ruby pressed her body against him, slid a hand up his chest, & played with his goatee. “who ends up on top?”

“The one night we’re going to want to tuck the kids in as fast as possible is the one night a year they’re going to collect pounds of sugar.”

“Tell you what, after we get back, you & Dean do your best to wrangle & tuck in Kaylee & Alex. In the meantime, Tom, the rest of the coven, & I have some old school Halloweening to do.” She dragged her finger along her halo seductively. “After that, I’ll happily trade you tricks for treats.”

“I think I love this holiday.”
Kaylee twirled around in circles while staring up at one of the heavy, black metal chandeliers in the throne room. Since turning nine a few months earlier, her parents had finally given her permission to teleport to the Citadel at will with only a knight as a bodyguard. At breakfast she had told her dad that she wanted to visit him. He had agreed and later sent Mir up to provide her an escort for when she eventually decided to make the trip. But when she did teleport down in the afternoon, Kaylee suspected that she had come at a bad time.

When Sam saw Kaylee his lips had curled into a smile, though his eyes weren't nearly as cheerful. He'd picked her up in a hug, then spun her around, earning a delighted giggle. After putting her back down, he patted her shoulder and apologized for having to run some quick errand. His words were gentle, like he was at home, but he had chewed his lip and glanced at one of the side doors nervously. With an assurance that he'd be right back and a nod to Mir, he left the throne room.

She knew that he was planning something, probably another lesson. For the last four years she'd been coming down to learn about Hell and more recently how to rule. She knew that her dad acted differently around other demons—that he had to be professional. Part of being a leader was knowing how to be calm, collected, and thoughtful. He couldn't just act like her silly, sweet dad. He was the King of Hell.

Someday she'd have to be professional too. She might end up in charge and it was important that she knew how to lead. Eventually, she would have to put on the same act. Until then, she could still spin in circles and play while in the privacy of the Citadel.

"Hello, princess." Crowley greeted her with his usual half-bow as he entered the hall. "Are you here for a quick visit or something more?"

"I think I have another lesson."

Crowley raised an eyebrow, then looked around for Sam in confusion. "Did your pop say what you'd be covering? His schedule didn't look like anything I'd expect you to be dealing with."

"He didn't say…." Kaylee's brow furrowed. "I think he's upset."

"It's probably nothing." Crowley snapped his fingers, summoning a red rose into his hand, then tucked it behind her ear. "Whenever he's down, you're enough to cheer him up."

Perfectly timed, Sam reentered the hall. In an attempt to comfort her dad, Kaylee hugged him around the waist. He held her for a moment, then let out a soft sigh.

"Are you still planning on… meeting with Pomin?" Crowley asked Sam. The archdemon’s voice was skeptical and he nodded pointedly at Kaylee.
"Yeah. I realized that this might be the right time to start introducing that whole thing," Sam replied, earning a nod of approval from Crowley.

"I think I might stay then—just to watch." He didn't phrase it as an offer to assist because he didn't want to put Sam on the spot to approve or decline. He wanted to observe more than anything. This was not the time to play bad cop to Sam's good cop.

Sam knelt down so that he could look his daughter in the eyes a bit easier. He adjusted the tails of his red-blossom-embroidered, black long jacket to be more comfortable, then took her hands in his, trying to gather some courage.

"We're going to have a special lesson today. It might not entirely make sense now, but over time you'll get a better understanding of it," he explained to her. "You're going to watch me meet with a prisoner."

"A prisoner?" Kaylee asked softly.

She knew there was a war and occasionally she overheard her uncles or mom talking about prisoners of war, but her dad rarely talked about that kind of stuff. He ran Hell, which was where demons came from and there were a lot of demons fighting in the war. But her dad was too busy with Hell stuff to worry about the war.

"We have prisoners in Hell. There are different kinds—we can talk about all that later, but the prisoner I'm going to meet with today is a demon who got in trouble while on Earth. I have to decide what to do with him."

"Punishing souls is business," Kaylee summarized, checking to make sure she understood the lesson so far. "What's the punishing demons side?"

"That's the keeping order." Sam touched his chest, then hers, while explaining, "As the King or Queen of Hell, we have to protect that order."

She thought back to her dad grounding her and Tommy when they'd snuck out to have a bonfire after curfew. It had seemed like he had disliked handing out the punishment as much as they had disliked the extra chores.

"But you don't like to punish them, do you?"

Her question made him smile again, though his eyes were still sad. After a thoughtful pause, he held a finger to his lips, wordlessly asking for her to keep a secret. When she looked up at Crowley’s presence, the archdemon gestured as if to seal his lips, pledging his own secrecy. The sadness in her dad’s eyes lessened slightly at the act of confidence from his old friend.

"I don't like punishing anyone," Sam whispered. "I don't like hurting anyone. I'm talking about hurting people: humans, non-humans, human souls, and demons. But most people can't know that I
don’t like it. They can’t know that I care. Otherwise they’ll try to take advantage of me.”

“But… why do you have to hurt them?”

“Because right now I have power that comes with being King. It gives me benefits, but power carries a burden. If I didn't feel that burden I might use my power recklessly.” He pursed his lips. "That's one of the reasons I handle many of these meetings myself. I need to see the consequences of my choices…. You need to see the consequences of my choices.”

Kaylee reclined on the lowest thick branch of the Seat. She covertly dragged her fingertips along the black and silver embroidery that covered her red dress. It was a halter design, which she enjoyed because it allowed her to stretch her wings easily, though, at her dad’s request, she had put them away in preparation for the meeting with the prisoner. From her perch she watched the show with casual interest as a manacled demon was brought into the great hall by two guards.

Pomin was a Cruciare of neither high nor low rank. His entire existence, before and after death, had been uninspiringly average. Unfortunately for everyone involved, he was self-aware enough to know where he placed in the rankings. Ignoring the numerous petty infractions that had brought him to Hell, the man and the demon had always been afflicted with the dangerous combination of pride and envy. He had been allowed to serve the AFE because he was a capable enough soldier, but instead of being given to the AFE freely, he’d been sorted into the roughly 40% of demon troops that were on probation with considerable oversight by Hell. Everything about his service was unremarkable… except for recently being the sole survivor of an ambush.

When the prisoner was standing at attention before him, Sam began. “I'm told you were involved in coordinating a raid on one of Lilith's bases, but that the assault team was ambushed while taking positions.” He locked eyes with Pomin, adding to the gravity of his words. “We serve as part of an alliance. That alliance is based on trust: both in our loyalties and competence. That trust was violated and I need to understand what happened.” Sam paused for a moment. "Tell me."

Kaylee’s curiosity was piqued. She could feel the prisoner stir below his twisted, fracture shell. The sensation was strange. It felt sour and wrong.

"We were doing a raid on what we thought was a small supply cache,” Pomin explained. “But when we got there we were outnumbered three-to-one and we had humans on our side. They swarmed us. One of the hummies called for retreat, but I was the only one who got away.”

Kaylee noticed her dad tap his finger in annoyance at the use of the derogatory phrase, ‘hummies,’ but he didn’t say anything. She wondered if the prisoner knew that her brother, uncle, and grandpa were all humans.

"You sustained injuries?” Sam asked with cold indifference to the prisoner’s pain.

“Yes.”

“How?”

The prisoner flustered for a moment. His hands briefly touched his torso, almost as if to search his shell for the memory of how it’d happened.

"I was fighting a Torquen and another came up behind me.”

“And yet you escaped.” Sam’s posture was contemplative and somehow menacing in its stillness. He was sure that his daughter was taking notes from the sidelines. “You must be quite the skilled
fighter—to the surprise of your comrades, I imagine. Three of your former squad mates had filed complaints about your skill and demeanor.”

“I maybe had a few disagreements—“

Sam wanted to raise Pomin’s history of clashing with his peers in order to help lay some context for Kaylee, but that wasn’t the real culprit. It was routine for humans to complain about their demon allies. Unfortunately, the culture shock was a bit too strong still. In and of itself it was hardly evidence, but within a larger context it might provide some motive.

“You fought two Torquen…. If you aren’t that strong a fighter, then maybe you were just remarkably lucky. Rarely can luck make up for a record like yours, but we shouldn’t completely dismiss the possibility.” He’d directed that little reminder at Kaylee. They’d undoubtedly have a debriefing afterwards so that he could make sure she took away the correct lessons, but it didn’t hurt for him to highlight bits in real time as long as it didn’t undercut his tactics.

At the moment Sam was mostly trying to keep his prisoner off-balance. If he could run enough scenarios by him, then he would be able to sense flares of guilt, relief, or desperation as Pomin grasped onto lies to provide cover. Kaylee was probably observing the same whirlwind of frantic emotions in the prisoner, though she lacked the experience to know which patterns it represented.

Normally, he might drag the process out a bit more. Crowley occasionally referred to it as playing with his food, but it wasn’t anything so indulgent or satisfying. From time to time he could break an enemy’s will with words alone and, in the process, gather more intel. This prisoner might break, but the pattern didn’t lend itself to slowly peeling away his excuses and defenses. Dangling hope and baiting him wouldn’t be as effective as cutting straight to the heart.

Sam casually told the prisoner, “Luck or skill, both possibilities could be understandable on the battlefield. But here’s what I don’t understand: why do you think it’s a good idea to lie to me?”

Pomin’s cloud writhed in terror, but not the righteous indignation or surprise of an innocent. He opened his mouth, yet could only manage to mutter, “I….”

“You weren’t with your unit the night before your mission when Lt. Collins checked to see if anyone had spare body armor. The time for which you are unaccounted for coincides with an unauthorized entry into the local comm center’s storage facility. The inventory numbers indicate that a silver goblet was taken,” Sam explained. “If you think that Hell doesn’t have the bureaucrats to spare to run our own investigations, you’re sorely mistaken. So, tell me where you were the night before the mission.”

Kaylee could sense the growing concern inside the prisoner. He was trying to figure out a response, but there was an insecurity that well up below the surface. Sam held his hand out toward Pomin, removing his ability to speak, then placed a finger to his lips indicating that he wanted silence.

In a particularly quiet, serious tone Sam instructed, “I want you to carefully consider what you’re about to say to me, because it could spare you so much suffering. As is, I’m obligated to kill you. My hands are tied by the rules. It could be fast and painless or the slowest death we have to offer.”

After a long silence Pomin meekly said, “I told them. Three weeks ago I was off base with a few other soldiers. We went to a bar looking for some fun. After they shut down for the night the hummies took off, but us demons, we were screwing around out back….“

When he hesitated, Sam suggested, “You were intoxicated and were letting off some steam, when someone had a novel idea.”
“We were complaining and another demon joined us. I thought she was one of ours, the way she was bitching about the brass, but after a while she started talking up Lilith.” Pomin paused, staring at nothing. “When I learned about our mission I stole the goblet and called her. I told her everything.”

Sam nearly didn’t want to ask him why he’d betrayed them. He already had his suspicions, and if he was right it would open a can of worms full of new discoveries for his daughter. But the day was one for harsh lessons. She was getting older. Before long she would have to consider the many unpleasant aspects of their realm and its relationship to the other planes if she was ever going to understand what it truly meant to lead. She’d have to learn that even in an alliance there was inequity and that for all their good deeds, her people would still be regarded as something less than whole.

He took a deep breath, then asked, “Why did you betray the alliance?”

Predictably, Pomin huffed an exasperated laugh at the question. “The humans treat us like shit. We’re sent up there to fight with them and they won’t even look us in the eyes. We deserve respect—we deserve to be feared. They think we’re garbage—”

“So you decided to prove them right?” Sam interjected with a cold disappointment, silencing his prisoner. “You were hurt and wanted to hurt them back, but in the end you didn’t hit your mark. Six humans are dead. Five of their souls are already in processing—maybe you think that’s justice, but the ripple doesn’t end there. It doesn’t even end with your punishment here. Thanks to you, a demon lived up to the insults that you were railing against. You just laid that burden on the thousands of demons serving on Earth and all those to come. We have to be better than this if we’re ever going to receive that respect you supposedly want. Your pride and envy got the better of you and in your wrath you harmed your own people.”

Pomin stood in the center of the throne room, apart from every other demon there. For the first time he pulled his eyes away from his king and looked around the grand hall at the sixteen other demons. They were honored knights, archdemons, and visedemons... and they were all watching him, the man who’d just done their entire species a disservice. Not even the guards who had dragged him into the room stood by his side. Deep inside his broken soul the faintest traces of guilt bloomed, but, more than that, he felt isolated and lost.

Rather than force his prisoner to further defend himself, Sam decided to offer him a chance at some small measure of redemption. “What was her name? The demon who recruited you.”

After a moment’s hesitation Pomin answered, “Claylin.” He looked Sam in the eyes. “Three of the others who met her also turned, after we got to talking... about everything.”

Sam gestured for one of his assistants to be sure to document the next part. “Who?”

“Balfem, Xordonas, and Drebin Falsaem.”

Below Pomin’s shell, Sam could feel the cool, humming sensation of honesty breaking through the swirling mixture of helplessness and fear. In his many years as King of Hell he’d learned that often enough there was indeed honor among thieves, murderers, and sinners— Yet honor was often in short supply in those who had previously switched loyalties for their own self-interest, and what little they had was rarely saved for petty things like accomplices. There wasn’t a doubt in his mind that Pomin was telling the truth in his shame and desperation.

He waved over a second assistant, then told her, “Find out where they are and who their commanding officers are.” Once she had disappeared he turn back to Pomin. His expression was cold, a mixture of anger and disappointment. ” Beyond the harm you’ve committed on our realm ,
you betrayed ten people. Six of them put their faith in our people despite their better judgement and now they’re dead.” He glared. “If the humans had figured out that you conspired in this plot, I would’ve handed you over to them for whatever they felt was fitting. But they don’t know, and you’re entirely mine to do with as I see fit.”

Once the other moles were located he’d notify Dean in order to detain them discreetly. After the immediate danger was eliminated a report would be prepared, and he would give a translated copy to his brother. With a little luck they could snuff out the traitors without having it reflect poorly on the realm as a whole.

“You shouldn’t have been so selfish as to try surviving a betrayal like that,” Sam critiqued.

“Please, forgive me,” Pomin begged.

The prisoner glanced up at Kaylee and opened his mouth, about ready to plead for his life, to try to take advantage of there being such a young audience of one—to appeal to Sam’s emotions. But that was part of the lesson. Pomin didn’t understand that the Princess of Hell’s presence made it all the more likely that he would be killed. He was an example. Sam telekinetically forced the prisoner to face him.

“There’s a place and time for forgiveness. It’s rarely here and it’s not now.” Sam paused a beat to let that lesson permeate everyone’s minds. “But you gave information that will save lives and that won’t go unrewarded.”

Kaylee watched her dad rise from the throne and walk up to the cowering demon. He placed his right hand on Pomin’s forehead.

“This won’t hurt,” Sam said as the trembling prisoner closed his eyes. There was a pulse of energy, then Pomin’s shell was empty. It fell to the ground, cracking slightly on the stone floor before it was collected by the guards.

Sam took a moment to compose himself before turning to look up at Kaylee somberly. She climbed down from the tree, then approached him. Her small, soft hand took his.

“Are you okay, Dad?”

After a moment he replied, “I just wish that things could be different.”

"What do you mean?"

He wanted to say 'So that you wouldn't have to ask me that,' but was worried that she’d take it as criticism instead of pity. He knelt down and pulled her into a hug.

"I wish you had a better life."

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