There are stars on the sky

by Clah

Summary

In a world devastated by the war hope is found only in tenuous moments that can be erased by the tiniest breeze. Dean and Castiel found that fragile trust on each other, but the existing cruelty in this new era shatters and destroys even what seemed intangible. When Dean is slaved, forced to fight against unknown enemies, day after day, with untrue promises of a better tomorrow; when there is only anger and fear left behind, the need of returning to his anchor in Castiel's arms is what keeps Dean sane.

Until he lost his memory.
He wakes up with a thundering noise smashing his ears. It's like being inside a ocean, pressing his body in every direction, locked in an endless place, not knowing how you end up in there. With his lungs craving for air he takes a deep inhale, opening his astonished eyes. This is a unfamiliar place.

Dark. No air flowing. No lights. Just blackness that embraces like a cold blanket alongside a nasty odor, a strange smell resembling wet sand on a rainy day. Those memories though, of rain, sand, and what the sound of drops of water does when tinkling on the ground are merely impressions from a simple mind. It could be the thoughts from an infant, looking with curious eyes at the world as just trying to discover its mysteries, describing with sensations what he sees, for words are a mere concept not mastered yet.

An infant, yes, he feels like one, trapped inside this hollowness, this unfamiliar room of gray cement walls. Like a child he is, deprived of a clear vision, unable to move his limbs as an excruciating pain is pulsating in his muscles, while he hears voices from strangers, depending on someone to bring water and food, to give him a bath, to dress him, to nurse cuts and wounds he doesn't recall receiving.

He is a child lost in hell.

His body shakes with the cold breeze reaching the aching skin as a door opens. A man stands there, looking at him. When he doesn't move the man groans, entering the dark room now illuminated by this strong light beam. For a moment, he thinks this is his savior. This man will drag him out of this place and save him from the emptiness of his head. So he waits; he accepts this truth, opening his arms in an invitation. His shirt is squeezed by fierce hands, ordering the feeble body to stand up. He does it, tripping, with his feet being dragged on the floor; scraping the wasted pair of shoes. Pushed towards this clarity he falls on his hands and knees. The door closes behind, and the man - not his savior - is gone.

The floor is made of an orange sand. It's a bright light now that blinds him. Shouts and yelling are coming from somewhere – everywhere – ordering him to stand up, to grab a weapon, to open slices of flesh on the other person standing in that circle with him.

His ears burn as blood runs to his skull. His eyes can distinguish forms, colors, faces; he can point and identify every object or living being, but there's no recognition of where, what, or even who he is. There's just a void. There's just darkness in his head.

The moment he stands up the audience screams in jubilee, brawling names; the same name over and over. Is it his name? Or is it the name of the person on the other side of this field that glares at him with big frightened eyes?

A bell rings. There's a rush of movement. His eyeballs hurt when he turns them from one side to another in order to accompany a rapid pair of feet advancing. On his opponent's hand, there's a small knife, and he is no more than a boy. This makes him wonder if he is too a boy. He can't see; he doesn't know how he looks like, or how old he is. Only one certainty emerges from the depths of his mind, and it is that the boy is there to attack him.

Displayed on the floor, there are a bunch of weapons of different sizes and shapes. One particularly draws his attention. It is a bone-like blade of fading brown color resembling an old artifact; its
handle is covered with black leather and, despite the odd ancient look. The blade is sharp like thin canines capable of tearing muscles in one blow. This is his blade, the one he is used to.

His hand goes trembling to it, craving to feel the blade again, because he knows he is expected to act in his role while in that Arena. He needs to have a weapon so he can fight; because this is the only certain pumping in impulses; he is made to fight, to hurt, to murder.

The moment the blade is gripped by his palm the boy urges forward screaming a loud shriek, trying to empower himself with strength. But it does nothing. The bone-blade is shaking in his hand, but soon it is held with a firm grasp as the boy comes. His body moves by itself, trained to respond in athwart instincts against the enemy. The boy runs with the knife, but he has no posture, coming with spread arms, chest exposed, and all he needs to do is to dodge the first blow, twist his ankles so the boy passes right by his side. Huffing in desperation, the boy comes again. But his attacks meet only air. When the boy is panting and sweating with all hope abandoning his chances of living, he lifts the bone-blade stabbing the boy above the ribs.

The kid opens his eyes within pain and surprise, putting one hand over his belly, having yet to be dropped on the ground so he can squeal. However, his assassin doesn't let him go. He wraps one arm on the boy's back to keep him steady, piercing the bone-blade in again, and again, and again. The boy struggles, gasping incoherent clemency sounds, spitting red, trying to escape, but the clutch is solid as each blow enters his flesh, effortlessly cutting the skin, dragging threads of red liquid and slices of muscles, bile and fat, weakening him, killing him. The boy is already dead by the sixth stroke, however his attacker doesn't stop there, going on as the skin's slashes on the boy's belly, are uneven like a maze of scars spread everywhere, and the meat in there only resembles of what once was part of a human body. The killer feels the small frame limp on his hold, arms boneless swinging midair. He let go, seeing the boy lying in the Arena lifeless. There's a buzz in his ear, a convulsion on his stomach, forcing him to throw up, but he refrains it.

Shouts and praises come from the crowd, thrilled by the show, even if it ended fast. They shout a name in whistles, clapping, and his eyes drifts dizzy around the people, looking for an escape, a way out; because he can't handle it, he can't stand being acclaimed by a killing. He feels sick. He did it, he killed, but it was him or the boy. The boy, just a boy, and he killed him. Wrong, this was wrong…

He starts panting. One hand pressing his head as it knocks in pain; his brain is going to thaw out. Then, the bone-blade is fiercely removed from his hand. There's the man from before pushing him in the dark room once more. He attempts to punch the man, but there's another one coming, hitting his stomach and making him crawl.

Back to darkness, in the grievous chamber he's curling into a ball, trying to conceal his form within himself, to gather what is left of him - what he still retains - because he is afraid that in the end all of him will disappear again. He can't let it vanish; he needs to focus on what he knows now, for anything that he senses; to hold it inside so it can't run away.

The crowd at the Arena still choruses a name, calling for him, wanting to watch another show, another fight, another kill.

This, he wants to forget; this pleasure rush roaming his nerves, the stupor of adrenaline that savored piercing the blade in the poor boy.

Both knees now come to rest on his heavy chest. The room is pitch black as the beam of light is covered by a massive door. The commotion outside becomes muffled, but an echo lies in the room as a continuous record of what he did, of who he is. It's the name – his name – in vigorous, stifled voices dwelling in his head as he faints into sleep.
“What do you think?”

The man is crossing his arms as he looks at Dean on the bed. He talks with a tall man, with a greasy dark hair, a prominent nose, slender features almost like a skeleton, and a lantern in hand directing the light to Dean’s eyes. His retinas contracts with the sudden luminosity, his arm comes to cover his face.

“His head is fine now, well, he doesn’t have a concussion anymore.” The skeleton man says.

“But why he looks confused all the time?” This guy has a dark blond hair; the structure of his face says he is maybe on his forty's. He plays with a coin in his fingers; the object goes from phalanx to phalanx without trouble.

“Probably he fractured something in there.” The skeleton man taps his head to show the place. “Nothing to be alarmed, his body still remembers.”

“Yeah, well, as long as he doesn't black out in the Arena.”

“Oh, no he won't, it's not that severe. A few days and he will be just fine”

“Will he remember?”

“It's possible. Depends on him, though. He needs to force it.”

“Well, then maybe he should stay clueless.”

“Indeed.”

They discussed as if Dean wasn’t even there. Dean. He still does not forget the name; his name. Somehow he is a fighter, a Neo Gladiator, as the blond man calls it, and one of the bests. Today was his weekly checkout, and for what he understands from their conversation, he was injured on his last fight, which leads to him being unconscious for three days, waking up with no familiarity with anything. However, now he was fine enough to get back to the Arena, after all, his reflexes still work.

The tall man with blond hair is called Azazel. His eyes are somehow a shady yellow color, real creepy. Azazel is responsible for taking Dean back on his feet for the fights, making sure he's in shape. If Dean refuses to do something, those are always moments he spends on the ‘special’ room, where another guy named Alastair beats the shit out of him, not enough to cause permanent damage, but on the proper places to make Dean agonize. So even if he can’t remember much, Dean complies with what these men want from him; and that is to kill on the Arena.

“Your next fight is tonight, so you’ll have lunch now. Prepare yourself after it.” Azazel explains while escorting Dean to his cell. “Did you hear me?!”

“Yes.” Dean replies with a shrill breath.

“Good. You’re not a complete dunce.”
They walk to his room-cell, and there Dean is pushed inside by Azazel. He locks the door whistling as he leaves the fighter alone. There’s a tray near his bed with a loaf of bread, meat and milk. He’s not hungry; better, he’s nauseated, but if he wanted to stand in the Arena he needs to be ready and strong. Despite his abhorrence over the circumstances, Dean doesn’t want to die, because there’s somewhere he needs to go. There’s somebody he needs to come back for.

‘A-ah! Dean!’

A husky voice erupts in his head calling him, moaning his name amidst the clatters of a wrecking bed. Tough legs are around his waist, hands clasping his large shoulders, as the body underneath Dean motions in ecstasy at equal haste.

It’s faceless, though, this person, this someone waiting for him to come home.

An earsplitting pain thrusts in his skull, forcing Dean to bend on his knees. He blacks out within a minute, as his head pushes away this thought. Someone waits for him. However, he doesn't distinguish who this person is and apparently his mind is not facilitating either. After half an hour he wakes up with a headache, the meat already cold on the tray.

Tired, he eats what he can, going under the sheets, so thin it is that he can barely feel any heat, to sleep for a while. Soon there will be a guard shoving him in the Arena. Soon Dean will be called on to kill again, and he just can't think about this at the moment, for his body is aching sore, and his head hurts like hell.

(...)
transportation were destroyed, confiscated or simply don't work anymore – blame on electromagnetic pulses and bombs – besides, specialists of any field are a rare thing to find. Basically, humans now live using few technologies, what is left and still works, keeping up with the truces around the globe, but everybody sleeps with one eye open.

Peace is a state of mind difficult to achieve. There is no TV's, free and safe time to just walk in a park, schools for kids, or even steady jobs. You just have to cope with what is left, or go insane. For this camp, the solution was to give the residents a live show on the Arena. In a world where only death makes sense, nothing more natural than to watch fighters killing each other's within a 'safe' environment and rules. To dramatize and fill with glory the entertainment, Dean and the rest are called Neo Gladiators – a fancy name for a gore battle.

In the last hours, that’s what Dean manages to understand of his situation. A chill on the spine tells him he doesn’t belong here, but he also needs more time to figure a way to escape. At this instant the only choice for him is to battle the guy on the Arena.

The fence finally opens and Dean runs towards the bone-blade holding it tight. He waits for the tall guy to move, however, he just stands on the other side, facing him. So this one isn't eager, huh? No problem, Dean can be the guy doing the first step. Walking slowly in circular movements, he gets nearer the guy – he's some inches taller, long brown hair and strong features, looking at Dean with intense hazel green eyes. Eyes which resemble something.

Shaking his head, Dean feels the same piercing pain of this morning creeping to his brain. There’s something about this guy that’s different; that holds his bone-blade back from stabbing. Swallowing hard, ignoring the discomfort, Dean comes closer, and closer, until there’s one foot of distance. His head is going to explode.

“Dean.”

The guy calls his name with a strange familiar voice. Does he know this guy? Who is he?

“What…” Dean rambles, pressing one hand against his temple to prevent the intense itch.

“Be ready. We have a plan.”

“‘We’, who?!” He asks a bit harsh, waving the bone-blade tactless on the air, which brings a frown to the guy’s face.

“Just run when I say so.”

Dean is panting, hands quivering, looking around to find anything suspicious. The crowd is getting bored, demanding the match to begin. On a particular reserved area, four men are staring at him in an analysis. Alastair, Azazel, the tall skeleton doctor who looks like Death itself, and the last one is seated with hands laced on his lap. He has a dark blond hair, lines of expression all over his face and a stubble. He watches them with a crooked smile as in admiration with the scene, but before Dean can think of something else an arm grabs his shoulder forcing him to move.

“Now Dean, now!”

The guy in the Arena shouts leading him towards the other side of the field. It's only when his head stops pumping that Dean hears it: gunshots, screams, cars running nearby while this guy – that knows Dean – is guiding him out of here. Askew he can see Alastair and the others giving orders to contain the attack, but everything was simply a distraction. Once the show in the Arena is over everyone is running to all places without course, trying to hide. It makes the perfect diversion.
“Ash is in the truck on the left, common Dean! We have to hurry”

He wants to ask, to understand, to identify this person, but his brain is almost flying outside his head. There are so many screams, sounds and voices, faces passing by in blurs, that all Dean can do is control the urge to vomit. On some jiffy he let go of the bone-blade, but he couldn't care less. This guy is saving him, so Dean needs to follow his lead. There are people aiming guns in his direction. Dean widens his eyes ready to die, but the bullets are focused on the captors behind him, who have pursued them all the way.

“Turn around Ash, turn, turn!” The guy yells to someone on the front seat.

The truck is suddenly rotating as the back door unlocks and Dean envisions a guy with dark hair and white clothes holding it open. His savior jumps in, stretching a hand for Dean to catch, and he grabs it, entering the vehicle, rolling to one side as others come up as well. The truck begins to run outside this camp.

Dean is breathing hard, so as the rest of the people in there. His savior sits down, giving orders to the driver – Ash – as a blond girl smiles at Dean.

“We finally found you!” She says pleased.

“Ya gave us a lot of trouble mate. Jo even cried” A guy with a partially shaved head, holding a machine-gun tells.

“That was you, Benny.” She counters.

“Thank God you're alive, Dean.” The tall man with long hair completes, panting, as they were running like crazy seconds ago.

“Sam was planning this thing for five days! Luckily the guards at Luc's camp are stupid.” The blond girl said.

Not comprehending one distinct thing, nor recognizing any of them, Dean rubs his face nervously, starting to gasp.

“Are you hurt somewhere?”

This time Dean turns to confront the deep voice talking. It's the guy with dark mussed hair that was holding the doors of the truck open. His features show a great concern, but what leaves Dean in shock is the bluish eyes contrasting the raven strands falling on his temple, the thin stubble covering the jawline and dry plush lips looking so soft.

“… No.”

It's all Dean manages to answer, almost without air – both from the running and the proximity of this guy invading his personal space.

“Good.” He breathes out in relief. “I was so worried, Dean.”

That’s when Dean is really disordered.

The guy not only cups his face, caressing it with his thumb in a tender dabbing and intimacy, but also advances his mouth to encounter his in a firm kiss. Dean is motionless; eyes enlarging its size, and with no response at all. The guy’s lips are really soft, though; not so arid, but velvet, keen to sensation and sinking into the kiss, even with Dean’s chapped mouth.
The blond girl is whistling while this Sam and Benny just laugh and roll eyes at the display of affection. He does not have any idea of what to do, how to accept this alien touch, so Dean reacts within the bewilderment of his mind, placing his hands on the guy’s chest and pushing him away, causing his back to smash at the truck wall. Dean is hyperventilating, as the guy stares through narrowed blue-eyes full of confusion and concern.

Jokes and smiles abruptly stop. Everybody is observing Dean with muddled aspects. No one says a word, until the dark-haired guy speaks in a weak voice:

“Dean, what’s wrong?”

The pain in his head comes back. Dean presses both sides of his skull to cease it, but with no result. The people in there start to get closer, wanting to help somehow, but all Dean can see is the dark-haired extending a hand, desperately waiting for an answer. The blue-eyes mien then, turns into a speechless anguish, when Dean parts his lips to ask the guy:

“Who are you?”
Dean wakes up on a bed all around white sheets, and a blanket covers his body in a cozy warm. He blinks a few times putting two fingers between his eyes, because a headache pierces insistently. Getting rid of the comfy bed, he starts to wander around the unidentified room, but… In a way this place doesn’t seem so strange at all.

There’s something about the mode things are displayed on a dresser, the clothes arranged at the wardrobe – some of them are from old bands no one listens anymore. The whole lot else fogs him vaguely with an odd familiarity. This is his bedroom. He decorated it, he put those things here; like a few photos. Breathing sharply, tripping, he grabs the frames with quivering hands. It’s an old photo, about ten, maybe twelve years ago. That’s him and the tall guy from yesterday drinking beers at a bar while laughing happily. Dean recognizes him, this guy with brown long hair, this… This… Sasquatch… Bitch… This…

His little brother.

Holy shit, he has a brother!

Dean inhales with wobbly legs. Pressing firm his eyes, he stumbles, sitting on a chair. That’s why the guy – Sam – was on the Arena. He elaborated a plan to rescue him from there. Distraction, gunfire, all at the moment of a fight where everybody headed for, making the camp less guarded against an invasion. ‘Clever boy’, Dean thinks as his head stops spinning.

So he can remember. It only hurts – a fucking lot – to twitch his brain. But he can handle it. He knows more than yesterday. Also, he sure as hell remembers that kiss.

Shit, a guy had kissed him. From the reaction of his brother and friends - because they can only be friends - Dean and that… Guy already kissed before. However, nothing triggers inside his skull this time.

Sighing, Dean puts the photo back in place, opening drawers, finding clothes, objects that bring vanished reminisces, but nothing too deep. Frustrated, he goes to the window, seeing a bunch of people walking outside. There’s houses made of wood like cabins on a holiday camp.

Sam is coming with a tired face walking to the porch and knocking the door entering his room with caution as if Dean was a scared animal.

“Dean.” He begins lifting both hands in a submissive gesture. “I know that you’re probably confused right now, but you have to listen to me. My name is-”

“Sam.”

“Sa- what did you say?” His eyes are narrowing.

“Your name. Sam. You’re my little brother.”

Sam exhaled sounding relieved, walking to Dean and giving him a solid hug.

“You remember! Thank God! We thought you lost it Dean! You-”
Getting away from the embrace Dean pushes Sam with a gentle force. His brother ducks his head, still looking muddled by his reactions.

“What’s the matter?”

“I…” He blinks turning his neck.

Concerned, his brother crosses his arms, patiently waiting for Dean to look back. When he does, his eyes are lost looking past him, and there’s no doubt left: Dean is in trouble.

“Sam, I…”

“You don’t remember anything?” He asks in a frail, yet docile voice.

“Few things.” Dean shrugs. “There’s some images… Like… Motionless photographs on my head trying to tell me a story, but I can’t put the pieces together. I saw our pictures there and it triggered something, but…”

“But there’s nothing new, huh?”

“Yeah…”

Sam sighs, more worried than sad.

“Man, what they did to you there?”

To this Dean scoffs, thinking about what that Azazel guy and the skeleton doc discussed:

“During a fight, before you guys came, I was hit on the head. They said I had a concussion, and my memory got… Shuffled; lost.”

“That’s… Horrible.”

“They said I can remember, with time. But to be honest, wherever I try it hurts like a bitch, and I’m not sure how to turn on the buttons.”

“And what you figured so far?”

Dean sighs, patting his hair.

“I remember mom and dad. They are… Gone right?”

His brother confirms it.

“Oh… I… Our old house, a school where we went for a year, cars I had worked for money…” He breaths in for instant, flashes and explosions, sounds of crying and the vague image of civilians fighting against each other are darting his mind. “… The war.”

“You know ‘bout the war?” Sam furrows his temple, feeling heavy.

“It destroyed the world, right?”

“Almost all of it, but yeah.”

“Man, this sucks.”

Sam snorts agreeing, picking on the tip of his nose.
“Anything else?”

Dean shakes his head.

“Not much. Impressions, stuff on the dresser that I put there, some faces and names, but… That’s all.”

Nodding again, Sam sighs, clapping his palms on the sides of his legs, sitting down.

“I will help Dean. Jesus, everybody will help you. But maybe Cas should take a look at your head first.”

“Who’s Cas?”

Dean frowns at the name. It doesn’t bring anything, not even a reaction; however the fright in Sam alerts him:

“Shit Dean, you don’t remember Cas!” Sam bursts.

“’Course not, genius! My head is a blank!”

“Shit… Shit! This is terrible!”

“Will you tell me what’s going on or am I going to punch you?”

Sam grunted. At least his personality was intact. But how could he go and tell everything to Dean? Especially about Cas? Fuck! Cas will be devastated once he knows Dean doesn’t…

“Maybe you should sit.”

“I’m okay standing up.”

Sam sighs again, crossing his arms.

“You have to pay attention Dean. Before you were captured and forced in that… Atrocity, you lead us; I mean our camp.”

“Me? I was the leader?”

“Well, you and I, but you did most of it, organizing raids, collecting materials, helping maintain order.”

Vague images float his mind. He using a gun, driving a pickup, running towards storehouses, collecting gas for the generators, commanding people to do the job, which normally he only deals with selected one’s – Sam, a guy named Ash, Jo, Benny….

“Yesterday… Was Ash, Benny and Jo. They’re our friends… urgh!” He holds his head again, sitting abruptly on the bed. Sam comes to help, but Dean shoves his hands in the air for him to back off. “They were there on the truck, with you and…”

“And Cas.”

Sam completes, making Dean raises his head to look at him:

“Right, you said that name before, but I…”
“His name is Castiel, but mostly we call him Cas. He’s a nurse; works on the clinic we built one year ago to help people around here and…”

There’s hesitation, and even if Dean can’t quite remember everything yet, he recognizes the tension on his brother:

“Spit it out Sam!

Gulping, he takes a deep breath, locking visions with Dean.

“You and Cas are… Together.”

“Together?” He frowns.

“Yes.”

Dean narrows his eyes, a little in shock as he thinks adding one to one, until he lifts one shaky hand in the air:

“As in… Together, together?!”

“Exactly the way you’re imagining. Why you think he kissed you?”

“Shit…”

It was too much to process. Sure thing while Sam talked traces and subtle memories popped in Dean’s head, like Jo and Benny, some responsibilities he had over the camp, raids, and all, but even after hearing about this… Castiel guy, nothing came up; his mind is oblivious about him.

“I know this must be difficult, but you can take things slow with Cas, I’m sure he will understand…”

“I can’t do it.”

“What?”

“Sam, I can’t… Be with him.” He gestures, hands making circles in the air as if this was going to explain everything.

“What you’re talking about, Dean?”

“Dude, I don’t remember him. I won’t pretend we have a relationship.”

“But… What… Dean this is ridiculous!”

“Why?”

“Because you just don’t go and end something like this!”

Dean shrugged, looking skeptical at Sam.

“I can’t fake it.”

“Listen to me: you will remember Dean! You are already doing it!”

“Yeah, but I’m not gonna imagine there’s a ‘relationship’ Sam, I can’t… You are honestly telling me that I should deceive him?”
“… No.”

“Then you got it.”

Sam was incredulous. Was his brother really going to be a dick about it?

“And what if you remember later??” He asks more rashly than he intended.

“What if I don’t?”

Sam rubs his face in frustration. It was impossible to argue with his brother – he could piss him off even without his memory functioning one hundred percent. Huffing, he walks to the door.

“Come with me.”

“Where we’re going?”

“To see Cas.”

Dean gave a sharp look at him, snorting;

“Hey, he’s the only one with medical training to treat your head. Just suck it up.”

Dean scratches his nape, following his brother. This is not going to end well.

(…)

They walk to a cabin not far away from Dean’s. Sam tells him to wait a while, since Castiel is still unwarming of his situation and this could be a shock for him. Dean huffs agreeing, sitting on the porch. People walk by saying hello as his brother talks to this Castiel. He’s getting impatient, though. What’s so important they’re discussing in there? And about him! Dean gets up, walking to the door when he hears muffled voices:

‘He is debilitated.’ That’s Sam. ‘He remembers some but… About you Cas.’

‘He forgot about me.’

Dean hears a louder and coarse voice that belongs to anyone but his brother. This tone carries an unsettling melancholy that causes his stomach to coil.

‘Dean needs… Time.’

‘I’ll examine him. Don’t worry Sam. I can be professional.’

Suddenly there’s silence. Then footsteps coming to the door and as it opens Dean pretend to stand up but it’s obvious what he was doing. Sam only nods for him to enter, and once he does there’s a blue gaze meandering him.. The guy blinks, licking his lips, opening his mouth two times before saying anything.

“Hello, Dean.”

“Hi.” He answers fast, feeling uneasy in that place, with that intense stare. Luck thing his brother is
in there. “You’re… Castiel, right?”

It’s a mix of hope, sadness, sympathy and anger coming from the shine of these blue irises watching him.

“Yes. You can call me Cas.”

“Alright. So, Cas you’re the doc here… Wanna check out my head?”

Dean goes with sarcasm and jokes to run away from uncomfortable situations. Cas twitches one corner of his mouth, but that’s it. Sam only coughs crossing his arms.

“Please, seat.”

Castiel points to a chair beside a table, where a few items are displayed: a stethoscope, syringes, bistoury, gauzes, a small red hammer, Band-Aids, one lantern, flasks of medicine and a pressure measurer.

“I will check your reflexes now; to be sure the damage caused by the concussion is out of risk.” Castiel tells him lifting the little hammer.

“Okay.”

Cas puts one hand on his shoulder on what Dean thinks is to leverage since the guy needs to curve his torso to reach his knee, but as the grip remains gentle, like a fondle, he snuffles on the chair feeling uncomfortable with the closeness. Castiel seemed to notice it, for he releases his palm mumbling a feeble ‘sorry’, and then starts to hit his knees.

The tests advances with Castiel using the lantern on his globes to make sure Dean follows the light; a movement of his finger; reading out cards for eyes exams, all that simple stuff. For one brief moment, Cas places both hands on each side of his head. Dean tenses again, but apparently he’s looking for the place where he got hit: near the left side above the ear. Dean wants to feel the scar, but apparently so as Cas, since he keeps stroking lightly at his hair. It’s… Nice. The tenderness in his fingers massaging his scalp. There’s a coughing coming from Castiel, as he puts his hands in his pockets pretending to search for something, but not before mumbling another ‘sorry.’

This guy clearly is distressed, to be near Dean - for the benefit of what Sam explained - unable to touch his… Lover? Dean scratches his nape with the thought, swallowing hard.

“I believe whatever caused your memory loss did not affect other functions, nor you’re in any danger. You’ll be fine, Dean.” Castiel tells him calmly in professionalism, after hearing his heart with the stethoscope.

“This’s great. Thanks Cas.”

The guy smiles staring Dean as he rests one hand again on his shoulder, gripping gently, his gaze softening.

“It’s nothing Dean, really, I…”

Dean gets up, freeing from the touch and hearing a stammer trapped in Cas’s throat. Castiel nods in silence; his head ducking in acknowledgment while stepping back. It’s a dick move, Dean knows it, but the whole ‘no restrictions to personal space’ thing is getting on his nerves.
“So, can I, like, walk around camp now or something? See if anything triggers?”

“Maybe you should rest for another day.” Sam suggests.

“Nah man, I need to work, do something, or I’ll explode in boredom.”

Sam and Castiel exchange some kind of accomplice glare, causing him to frown.

“Right, I, uh… I’ll check some supplies with Chuck and give the news before you finish your exams.” Sam states, going to the door.

“But, I already finished here.”

“I think Cas has another test for you, right Cas?”

“I… Right.” He hesitates, coughing a little.

Dean looks from his brother to the nurse, snorting. This was just too easy to be true. Not only he has a lacuna on his head, now he will deal with an ‘ex’ he doesn’t even remember? How more fucked up his life can be?

“See you later.”

Sam leaves the two alone. Dean inhales making a memo to punch his brother later as he turns to Cas, seeing the guy adjusts the medic apparels on the table but not really picking anything up. He’s wearing a white coat over a blue T-shirt and jeans, like one of those casual doctors, hair a mess, as if he just woke up, matching the stubble on his jawline. Dean pouts his mouth not sure of what to do or say, clasping his hands together as he changes his weight from feet to feet.

“So, you’re gonna fake exam me or just talk already?”

Dean says at once because he doesn’t do these little games. It made Cas tenses his shoulders, spinning on his heels to finally face Dean. His eyes are somehow wet; lips half parted and desiccated, holding in a choke. For a brief second his features causes Dean to shrink.

“You don’t recognize me… At all?”

Castiel queries, but it’s more of a certain than a doubt, something he needs to hear Dean saying. Shrugging, Dean rubs his nape for a second time, not sure of what to tell this guy with so much optimism and loss in the same phrase.

“No. No, I don’t. I know you expected-”

Suddenly, a pair of lips smashes on his, arms around his neck, and a warm body clashes with Dean’s in a desperation never before imagined, in a demanding - no, a frantic need - where Castiel kisses him, kisses this man who once would be thrusting him against a wall, would bite his ear, travel firm hands over his chest and lift his thighs to englobe his waist; a Dean that would devour him in every aspect.

However, today this man is long gone. Dean doesn’t reciprocate the avid kiss, he doesn’t even move. His mouth remains closed, arms rigid on each side, inexpressive eyes looking down at the man’s lips smacked on his, but there’s no emotion there, not even hate – nor nothing.

Castiel gulps hard, letting go of Dean with eyes shut. Their lips unstick and Cas goes one step back. The minute he lifts his head is to see Dean rubbing one hand over his mouth to clean it, and that’s
just… Cruel to watch.

“I’m sorry.” Castiel whispers, ducking his head and moving away.

“No harm done, I guess.” Dean nods, not eyeing him, but it doesn’t tranquil anything.

“In those days you slept, or when you woke up today… Was there a glimpse? Some… Impressions, maybe?” His questions gain a more reserved and medical manner, however Dean notices the tremble in his voice.

“Basic stuff, I guess. ‘Bout camp, what to do, what not to do. I remember my childhood and Sam, Chuck, Jo, Benny, Ash, Garth, Ellen, Bobby.”

“You essentially quoted your close circle of family and friends.” Castiel points somewhat sarcastically.

“Yeah.” Dean snorts.

“And that’s… That was it? No one… Else?”

“Pal, look, I’m sorry to disappoint, but I really have no memory of you; or ‘us’ for what Sam told me.”

“Oh…” Castiel stammers, hands inside his pockets. “You know?”

“Yes.” He answers sucking air with his teeth.

Castiel inhales deeply, not sure of how to proceed. Dean knows who he is by strangers, of what they told him. But for Dean it’s the same as zero. Gathering all the courage he can get, Cas gazes at him with what Dean can read as optimism, talking with a shuddering jaw:

“Dean, what we have… It’s significant. And I want you to remember. Most likely I want you to remember everything. Including us-”

“Look man, I get how hard it must be for ya,” Dean interrupts him with a sharp breath, waving his hand in the air. “Don’t get me wrong, you're a decent guy. But I'm not into it. If I was before, there’s nothing to be done ‘bout it, because I don’t remember you. I don’t know you. And I can say for sure I feel nothing for you.”

It’s a punch on the face, stomach, limbs, and all that builds Castiel as a human being. Cas’s whole body feels numb, out of this realm.

“Because of your injuries…” He tries to regain some confidence, but Dean doesn’t allow him to.

“Man, for real, if this thing we had was as incredible as you say, I would've felt something. But I don’t.”

“Dean-”

“I’m grateful for ya saving my ass, really. But that’s it. So, I'm sorry, but for me we are just acquaintances who live in this hell trying to save what is left of the world. There is no more ‘us’. Don't put up your hopes.”

Cas doesn't.

Somehow, before their talk, Castiel had imagined the imminent outcome. He and Dean were so
comfortable and… Right, that Cas just waited for reality to claim this happiness, to destroy it the same way the war did with any trace of joy he manage to save. Dean is his brightest one, and of course, his time would come to lose him.

Even so, he is unable of doing anything at all but stare. Castiel opens and closes his mouth inept to say anything else that might persuade Dean. It's over. It's simple as that; it's what Dean’s eyes are telling him. He and Cas are no more.

Castiel does not show any tears for his own pride, and because something in him seems so broken, that crying sounds like a foolish requite he isn’t allowed to. The miserable mien is all he permits himself to. There are no sobs or begging, only one imperceptible tear on the corner of an eye. He's not desperate, he's not weak.

Pursing, Castiel nods. The small tear dries, and all he says before turning around to leave are empty words clouded on an emotionless mask.

“Thank you for the honesty Dean. I… Wish you recover soon.”

Once he leaves, he closes the door, running to his clinic where he can be alone for a while, collapsing on one of the beds. Not crying, but fainting from what he believes is the death of his soul.

Castiel can do it, he can leave Dean; sure thing. It hadn’t been this long, the beginning of their relationship. Cas is capable, he is strong, he must be.

Because Dean is already too shaken by the past events on that Arena to endure someone nagging him, harassing about memories he doesn’t have and imposing something he doesn’t want. No, they already did enough of this in the fights. And Dean is right: maybe he will never remember Castiel. They will be forever acquaintances, but no more intimate. The smell of fresh mud, and rain that comes with Dean every afternoon when he returns home from a supply run, or the way Castiel grabs on the pillows to smell it once the leader leaves just to pretend they are together in bed for a little longer.

There will be none of it, no more.

Someone knocked at the door three times. For one second Cas lost all air, for it could’ve been Dean saying he was sorry – he always does that after acting stupid with him. In a jump Cas got out of bed, smiling a little, but it soon faded as he saw Sam on the door.

“Hello Sam.” His voice becomes weak, fading with his momentary happiness.

“Hey Cas. I just…”

“I’m alright Sam.”

The younger Winchester let his shoulders drop. The blue eyes were red on the corners, a little flushed either. Sam inhales sharply:

“No Cas, you’re not. I just can’t believe he did that to you!”

Castiel breathes deeply now, re-thinking of what Dean told him, using his own knowledge to ponder over the situation. He goes back to bed, sitting on the mattress:

“Perhaps it’s for the best.”
“He remembered me, our parents and friends, things about camp. He can remember you too!”

“All of those are from a long term memory. We are… Were together for three months, only.”

“That’s a long time!”

“Not for the memory, it all depends. It’s easier for the brain to remember past years and lifetime experiences than something new.”

“What?!” Sam exclaims “No! Not you too, Cas!”

“I’m simply making a clinical analysis. Dean may as well never recall me.”

“But it’s not impossible!”

“Sam, I… If that’s what Dean wants…”

“What do you want Cas?!”

With that the smaller one just smiled weakly, not wanting to show his true feelings in front of him – although Sam could tell by looking.

“After what he suffered for almost two months on Lucifer’s camp, oblige to fight and kill, being wounded. I want him to feel comfortable, safe and happy. With or without me.”

“Cas…”

“I’m tired.” He cuts Sam down. “It was a long day.”

Sam said nothing, nodding before leaving his clinic.

“I’m here if you need me Cas.”

Castiel lifts one side of his mouth, still too devastated for anything else:

“Thank you, Sam.”

The door closes with Sam still there trying to process everything that happened. Not only they have to deal with a decaying world, immersed in a pointless war, but now this? Having his brother rejecting this single piece of happiness, ripping the only thing Castiel had of good?

It was heartless, it was like seeing Dean returning to those dark days where there were only the mission of saving people in front of his eyes; it’s seeing his brother becoming a killing machine with the single purpose of survival.

No, that can’t be right. Castiel was the one who pulled Dean out of this pit. And is the only one capable of saving Dean again.

(…)

Sam didn’t even try to hide how angry he is with his brother as he removed Castiel’s things from their shared cabin, since he was unable to enter the place without feeling pathetic. Dean is back
only for two days and already did so much shit! Sam went to his brother's bedroom, but he couldn’t just grab Cas’s stuff and ignore what was happening around camp.

People started to ask Castiel how Dean was doing and all he could do was fake smiles and wave reassured hands for them not to worry. But inside, when he heard those inquiries about a man Cas wasn’t together anymore – and no one yet knew – it hurt like a thousand needles piercing at once. Sam loves Dean, and can understand his reasons. But this doesn’t make him less of a dick.

“So that’s your answer?! You will leave him?!” Sam shouts during their discussion over the same topic while Sam puts Cas’s shirts inside a bag.

“Sam…”

“No! Dean, this is unhuman!”

Dean shrugged, looking not a single bit sorry for his actions, neither his brother's words.

“I don't do relationships. I don't know what happened to me, but I'm not gonna just ‘make-believe’ this-whatever it is!”

“What about your job?!” He yells. “Will you stop doing that too?”

“Work is work, it’s practical. And I remember a few things; I mean our family, our friends, but I have nothing about him.”

“You just don't remember you like him.”

“I also don't remember eating shit; this doesn't mean I’ll start eating now.”

“That’s-Stupid!”

Dean sniffs, finishing adjusting his jacket:

“I’ll make things complicate I have feelings.”

“But you do Dean!”

“No, I don’t. Maybe before, God knows why, but now I can’t even consider this! Seriously, Sam? A dude?! I was fucking a dude?!”

“God, I can’t believe I’m having this conversation with you again.” Sam presses two fingers on his temple, too tired for hearing his brother’s queer panic.

“What? We talked ‘bout feelings after a sleepover while I was brushing your hair?!!”

Sarcasm; typical. Dean may have lost his memory, but sure as hell he can still piss his brother immensely.

“You’re unbelievable.”

“And you’re too relaxed about it.” His brother sighs.

“Really, I’m not gonna talk again about your big gay freak out.”

“Fuck you!” Dean retorts, closing his fists.
“Very mature, Dean.”

“Stop talking like you’re the king of reason.”

“That’s because you are being a jerk!”

“Sam, I need to work with what I have. I don’t remember him.”

“Dean, you will, with time.”

“Or maybe I won’t. My head is clear now and I had a few insights, but after two days they ended.”

“So you will just leave him?”

“I’ll give him a closure, because for me it never started.”

“You had a life together!”

The punch was meant to hit his brother face – Sam knew it. But Dean chooses to hit the wardrobe beside him. Sam’s body jolted and he widened his eyes in shock, but couldn’t form a single answer.

“I’m done with this talk Sam.” Dean says in a low voice and eyes lost in a deep fog of anger “It’s my call, not yours. My head, my memories, my choice.”

Sam looked at his brother is disbelief, his eyebrows raised to the forehead as if Dean was speaking some kind of insanity – in Sam’s view it seemed crazy enough.

“You can’t do this, Dean…” He mumbled one last time; but it leads him to another disappointment.

“For fuck's sake!” Dean snarls, smacking his fist now on the table, hearing the sound of wood cracking “Do as I say at once, Sam!”

It’s the tone of his exasperated voice that causes Sam to move his jaw and snap the bone of it. Dean looked so furious, with this hate boiling inside him as if he had nothing to fill the emptiness inside him, the one caused by the war, the loss of so many friends and family. This hollow that grew and root in Dean, Sam knew very well through these years. It was the same hole that haunted their father when their mother was found dead at the house. They were too young to even understand what death meant, that they would never see or feel the tender touch of their mother again. But Dean, somehow gathered the small amount of memories he had of her and buried them.

The loss bittered John to the core of him. And their father ended pushing his grief to Dean, who absorbed it; this inexplicable rage that only matured and burgeons like a tumor during the war, used to kill others while trying to survive.

Dean hasn’t shown this glare of pure distrust and lack of hope to Sam in a long time. However, at this instant it’s right there inside his green orbs, this shine that carries death and sorrow. For some reason, losing Castiel’s memories also made Dean lose the small portion of faith he regained these past years.

Losing Castiel made Dean resemble more of John.

“I don’t want to hear it anymore. So you shut your mouth and do our job! That’s why we are here for!” Dean utters ending the conversation.

And no-one spoke about it again.
Castiel left Dean alone just like he asked for. Of course he never imagined the nurse to be friends right away and get over whatever they had in a blink. Yet Dean needed to see him every morning to check his injuries. Castiel always showed up really quickly, not saying a word, patched new bandages on his arms and chest – always tensioning his jaw – analyzing his head, leaving in less than ten minutes. Not that Dean had anything to tell him. But things could’ve been better. After all, the guy didn’t seem this bad and also helped in the rescue.

Nothing clicked on his memories either, so Dean for once got used to the idea he would never remember the nurse. Internally, he thanked for that. He can’t imagine how it happened; for him to be with a dude. It must’ve been a hell of a breakdown.

Perhaps, Dean thinks, he was kind of a dick with the guy, but still he couldn’t care less. It was for the best, to give him a conclusion. Those fights, the Arena, his injuries, it was all too much to consider having someone now – who, by the way, he doesn’t recall a bit.

And a guy, for all the things he could forget Dean is somewhat thankful for not having any kind of traumatic memories of it.

Being with someone is definitely not what he wants – it’s not what he needs. If Dean can choose, the only thing in his mind worth saving is the years of training with the marines. His father was one, and of course Dean wanted to follow his steps.

He learned everything he needs to survive in a country after a devastating beginning of the war. And what he learned was enough and everything to make sure these bastards on that camp keep living their not so miserable lives without the traumatic need to kill.

The strength to cope with that, the ability to live in warfare and the mastery over a large variety of guns is all there in Dean’s memory, and it will always be what he only requires to survive.

He sure as hell doesn’t need to split his thoughts over a ‘companion’, lover, or whatever this shit it. There’s the job, and only the job in his existence to make it worth.

Although, after the treatment of his injuries are over, it’s infuriating when the nurse doesn’t look at him for the next five days. He avoids anything related to Dean, giving instructions to Sam of how to handle his headaches, teaching exercises that his brother can make to drive his memory into a trigger. But that’s it. The guy doesn’t even appear after dinner.

Gossip starts to spread and in no time all camp knows Dean and Cas are not ‘Dean and Cas’ anymore. He sees from far away Castiel receiving complacent looks and pats on the back. It frustrates Dean immensely, for he can’t stand pity looks – he just hates them.

Nevertheless, this afternoon, Dean is sick of the glares and the ice treatment, losing his patient with people and even shouting at a group to make them stop staring at him. The explosion made Sam and Jo surprised, to say at least, but Dean merely walked away and left the place not looking at anyone.

Before coming to his cabin, however, he gives a glance over the nurse’s cabin, seeing Castiel walking towards there, stopping the guy in the middle of his walk. He turns his face and sees Dean, showing the leader a quick stunned mien, but it’s soon replaced for a blank expression.

“I need to talk to you.”
Dean says, but Castiel doesn’t responses, only agreeing to walk to a more private place. They stop behind one single cabin, where only few people wander. Resting his back on the wooden fence, Castiel crosses arms, vision locked in a peculiar stone on the ground. Dean sighs. This man can’t even look at him. But maybe it’s better this way, not facing each other. He searches for a way to begin his speech, but before his brain can formulate something, a rough voice comes first:

“What is it that you want?”

Castiel asks, raising his orbs, and… Dean was right. This would’ve be a lot easier without eye contact. Coughing, he puts both hands on his jacket, speaking in a harsh tone.

“You probably don’t wanna talk to me anymore, and I get it. But, well, we are going to bump into each other every freaking day. It’s stupid to turn around pretending we don’t exist. We’re adults; we have responsibilities.”

Whoa, Dean can’t remember the last time he talked so deep to someone besides his brother. Maybe he did in this last year erased from his mind. He hears a huff coming from Castiel, and Dean is frowning. He thought he was being reasonable and even polite. He means it, they can’t behave childish.

“Your suggestion would be?”

Cas talks coarsely, through a tip of amusement, as if in disbelief of the conversation they’re having.

“I…” Dean stops feeling his tongue dry. It’s not so common for him to have people talking back in exasperation; mostly because he’s the one who’s always angry. “I think we just need to be polite. We can be…”

“Civilized?” Interrupts Cas.

“Yes.”

A silence falls upon them. Nothing else to be added, only hums, and thinking, heads nodding with a quiet agreement.

“Dean.”

Castiel breaks the peace making Dean look at him. His features are serene now, mixed between relieve and gloom. Dean breathes in and out, and for some unknown reason he hates himself a little, since he was responsible for that troubled feeling surrounding Castiel; and Dean doesn’t’ like to cause trouble but to solve them – it’s what he was trained his whole life to do.

However, he can’t help it. He can’t be attached to someone he can’t remember, to fabricate a relationship where he can’t give anything in return – when he believes there’s nothing in him to give, anyway. It is unsettling, he recognizes it. But it’s better than lies, it’s better to cut the strings now.

“That’s a yes?” Queries Dean, as Cas didn’t continue.

Sighing, blue orbs drifts to him, the arms crossed are tightening even more.

“I… I understand. You’re right, we should act as the adults we are.”

Relived, Dean lets a huge amount of air escape his lungs.
“But I can’t… Not now.” Cas adds.

“It’s fine, take your time man.”

Another moment of silence cloaks the hidden back door of the cabin. Ellen’s cook can be smelled from the dining hall. Probably many families are gathering inside for supper, and soon Sam is going to look for his brother so they can share a table. Still, there’s something missing, an itchy that doesn’t leave Dean’s head, forming a yarn of words clogging his throat.

“Cas, I…” He rubs his nape, watching the ground. “It’s nothing personal, okay pal?”

Shaking his head, Castiel turns to him:

“It’s not your fault Dean. You… You were slaved, forced into fights. Those… Brutes are the ones to blame.”

Shrugging, Dean rubs the tip of his nose.

“Yeah…”

“It happened, it’s in the past, there is no need to mourn about it, and we…” He breathes in. “We will keep living at our best.”

Dean doesn’t answer, only agrees with his head. They will keep going, keep struggling, because that’s the best they can do now.

“Thanks, Cas.”

“You’re welcome Dean. Have a nice day.”

With that they leave, both men marching in separate ways.
While Dean is walking around camp people talk to him as they’re old friends. He can’t deny it’s a distressful feeling, to be recognized and respected by so many when he only did what he was supposed to. Dean didn’t answer them back, but walks away to the training fields near the small lake a few meters from camp.

There he grabs on a gun for the first time since his return, and yes, that’s the feeling he’d been looking for, something he is familiar with no matter how his brain is messed up. Dean was born to have the cold metal warming on his hand, to feel the recoil stiffen his arm’s muscles when the bullet fires on a sparkle of tiny points of light – like a firework – aiming at the target and hitting it on the right place.

Dean enjoys the smell of powder that stays on his digits, moreover, he enjoys when he hits the middle of the dummy, its head, everything a one hit death. Perfection.

War, killing, the cold blood; this devastated world was built for men like Dean, for the ones who can adapt. He can’t trust in Sam to do what he does, he’s too naïve. It’s better to have only one brother doing the dirty work. Let Dean be tainted, let him be the one to die on a battlefield, and because this is the certain Dean is most sure of: his life will end with a gun or a knife in hand.

What his brother told him can’t be true. He didn’t soften because of someone, he couldn’t; it wasn’t in his right since he was eight and his father gave Dean his first gun to shoot at anyone who tried to get near his baby brother. He doesn’t need anything else but the cast-iron certainty of a gun on his belt to do his job; to protect Sam and these people on camp… To do what no other can.

He shots on the training field for about an hour, satisfied with the humming that is left on his ears. Dean didn’t have another headache or incoherent thoughts over people he doesn’t even remember.

Dean doesn’t need his memory back. He just needs a gun.

(...)
“Castiel is a kind person.”

A voice nearby says making Dean jolts in surprise, and the machine on his skull stops again. It’s… Jess? Yes, the small blond girl who is with Sam. They’re friends. Yes, Dean remembers it, in tiny flashes of memories; they drinking, playing stupid games at an old bar, Jess laughing. It’s a few, but he remembers.

“Hey… Jess. He’s a doctor, right?” Dean finally asks, seeing the woman nod.

“He helps with everything. But his steady job is in the infirmary. He was a nurse back in the days, you know? Then he started MED school, but the war made him quit one year after. And we never found a doctor with full degree wandering out there. But Cas is smart, he treats diseases and injuries like a pro, even studying by himself with old books. It’s so nice seeing a guy like him committed. We need some normality here. Castiel gives it to us.”

Dean nods, looking at what now he recognizes as the clinic. A flame of respect grows in him. Apparently this guy, this Castiel, is one of the most important people in the camp. Jess touches his shoulder before leaving, and the affection doesn’t startle Dean, on the contrary: it makes him thinks of all the times Castiel touched him there and was obliged to step back due Dean’s discomfort. However, pondering now, Dean can’t distinguish that sensation as being something unpleasant.

It’s far from that.

Shaking his head, Dean continues his walk getting away from the clinic, but Castiel’s name comes on every mouth he encounters on his ramble, someone always talking about the nurse, as if Castiel somehow pursued him:

“Castiel have gentle hands, he never hurts you.” A little girl playing on the swings says.

“He gave me his supper for three days when I got too sick and weak.” A woman states from her doorway.

“I hurt my back and Castiel carved a staff for me.” The old man speaks, holding his cane with proud.

“He can’t handle a gun, but with a bistoury? The guy can save your ass.” Benny tells him after lunch.

“Once he ran out of the camp to help one of ours who had fallen meters away from here and couldn’t walk. Really badass.” Ash mimics the tale as he narrates the whole story to Dean.

“If you call him, he will come to help. He’s simple like that.” Chuck says, as he hands another document for Dean to sign.

“He’s very serious, like, all the time, but when he smiles you know it’s for real. He did that once, when I made burgers. I swear I could see a glowing light in his eyes.” Ellen laughs at that, leaving Dean ponders if Cas’s eyes could be even brighter.

The list of compliments kept going along the day. Dean marvels if this guy is a kind of a saint – or an angel. Nevertheless, it’s Charlie, a red hair girl who caught his attention.

She’s new here, came with a few people from a ruined camp one month ago, so Dean never really talked too much with her, although he can tell she’s nice. Charlie says she misses a lot the computers, internet, games and the high tech stuff, but she helps with any electronic device they
find, and she is really helpful. That, and because of what she tells Dean.

“Cas is funny because he’s quite the innocent type. Watch out for the way his head tilts and he frowns when he doesn’t get what we’re saying. Hilarious and cute!”

Dean is intrigued.

That very same night he sits with his brother, Jess, Jo, Benny, Ash, Chuck, and the red-head Charlie on a table at the dining hall. The atmosphere today seems light around Dean, and everyone thanks for that. Ellen made a delicious soup today, accompanied with bread, a luxury nowadays.

He’s having an agreeable evening, people being comprehensive about his recent injuries, but not nagging nor making him crazy with a lot of questions and complacent looks, and he thanks them for that.

As they chat and have fun, Dean hovers his eyes over Castiel from time to time. He now eats dinner with everyone like always, sitting near the fire, heating his fingers from the cold night while finishing supper, when Charlie starts to evoke and recite old movie lines, remembering amusing scenes and quoting characters. People nearby laughs with reminiscences of an easy time; a better moment in everyone’s life.

It’s when Castiel does just like Charlie said: frowning, his head angling to one side, eyes narrowed in a visible lack of knowledge. Maybe he doesn’t get it, or watching movies wasn’t his thing, but the way he reacts to Charlie’s jokes is natural and childlike.

It’s... Endearing.

All of a sudden, Dean’s hand doesn’t ache for the weight of a gun on his palm, but rather he wonders what it would feel like to have strands of black hair running through his fingers. And he is too entertained by that idea to even realize it had formed on his head.

(...) 

At some times of the day Dean feels his head twitching with a strange headache. He forces this pain, since he knows it’s some locked memory tugging and baying to be freed, and he needs to pass the discomfort to catch what’s trapped in his mind. This sting is like a bad hangover or some soreness similar to that.

Walking near the wall around the camp helps because it’s a calm place where only guards and raid groups go. Dean calmly marches with one hand in his temple massaging it, saying grumpy ‘hellos’ to a few people. Then he is suddenly too tired, resting his back on the warehouse near the entrance of the parking lot where the trucks unload. Breathing hard, Dean shuts his eyes, leaving each arms fall on his sides. This is not working, it doesn’t matter how strong the puncture raises; his head refuses to go deeper. Dean needs something denser, another trigger to ignite-

“Cas, don’t do this to yourself…”

“He was right, Sam. I am a person easy to forget.”

Slowly, he slides to the corner of the warehouse. Sam and Castiel are talking proximate. Scowling, Dean follows the voices, seeing his brother loading some boxes from a car while Cas helps him.
“Cas, that day… We were all pressed to the edge. Dean was lost; he didn’t mean any of it.”

Sam says, arching his eyebrows and crossing arms. On one side Sam understands why his brother doesn’t want to pretend he is in a relationship with someone he can’t recall. And it isn’t Dean’s responsibility; he was forced into the fights that broken his head. However, neither Castiel deserves this; a man who was in pieces since his disappearing, who searched for him margin to madness, hunted over all places in this abandoned lands until finding Dean. But deep inside Sam is certain that his brother still has something of Cas confined in a maze of unrecognition.

“Then tell me:” Castiel says, bringing Sam back from his speculations. “Why he remembers you? Or Jess, Benny, Chuck? Why he remembers about the war and his job, this place, but does not recall me?”

“He’s in recovering, you know it. Took him a while to put the pieces together. And he doesn’t distinguish a lot of things from camp yet; maybe he’ll never remember!”

“And perhaps he’ll never remember me.”

Dean pretends he’s not eavesdropping, but eventually his chest releases air when apparently their conversation is over, with nothing further to add into the topic. They depart carrying some boxes, with Sam stroking Cas’s back, and Dean has more questions than before.

About what day they talked about? Did he want to - like Cas said - forget about the nurse even before his injury? If so, why?

Dean tries once more to recollect this talk and fuse it with the headaches using that pain as a trigger to evoke new memories. He’s disappointed when nothing works, frustrated enough for the day. He goes to the shooting ground to practice in dummies, until the anger is out of his system. Hours and nights passes by with Sam and Cas’s talk stuck on his head, yet he continued in the zero zone.

Faster than anyone felt, it’s been two weeks since Dean’s homecoming. Chuck talks to him from morning to afternoon about obligations, what Dean had planned altogether with Sam, the inventory. It makes his mood even worse, causing Dean to yell at people and startle the few who cannot recognize him as the same leader they had before – the attentive one.

Dean huffs in frustration, not wanting to be compared with a ‘previous version’ of himself, yet he can’t even deny that it intrigues him if he is really acting with this much of jerkiness – and how that other Dean behaved and knew about the camp and the ones living here.

It’s almost lunch time, however Chuck and Dean still review some ideas to expand their territory, building more houses, change the course of a river so they can have direct clean water. None of it brings any memory back, but Dean sure can picture himself scheming these notes. Maybe he adds or remove a few details, but always with Sam and Chuck’s approval. But the truth is, he hates this kind of work, however, since he’s the ‘leader’, he needs to check things similar to this once in a while.

After eating, he goes for a break, because he needs to walk over camp, see if something else prompts in his head. He starts to remember a few names, but nothing else; it’s just a bunch of tags deprived of any significance to him. Sighing, he sits on a bench, spreading his arms backwards. Kids are playing in the mud, others run in hide and seek games. A guy cleans his doorway; a woman walks with a dog. The camp is not big, full of threes and a playground, but sure thing they have something good growing in there within the chaotic world. Dean feels proud of the way things developed, apparently, with his help. He had done something right, at least.
The clinic is just three houses from his vision, not that Dean was counting. But then again, he sure was looking when he sees Castiel leaving. His feet move involuntary, pondering if it would be a good idea do say hello, after all, they agreed to a truce. However, he barely lifts his body and stops as a blond man walks out of the clinic right after Cas.

They’re enthusiastically chatting. The nurse smiles a little, nothing noticeable, just pressed lips lifted on a corner, but still, it’s the closest thing to a smile Dean sees in him. The other guy is… Extremely close, one hand pressed in the middle of Cas’s back, shoulders bumping here and there, the blond giggling. This giggle irritates Dean.

Castiel turns, so he is facing the guy. The blond removes his hand to put it in his pockets while listening to Cas saying something. Dean wants it to be a reprimand from his liberties and uncontrollable hands, but he doesn’t have the smallest idea of why he wishes this.

But then the blond is laughing, so as Castiel. It was not a fight, they were merely talking, and after a moment of inconstant smiles Dean’s sees it. The blond lifts his hand to Cas’s forehead, removing a strand falling there. He puts it back in place as Castiel cleans his throat in a tiny discomfort.

It pulls the trigger. Something in Dean’s mind molds in a smog image.

A bed.

His bed.

He is half naked.

Someone on his side.

There’s smiles, touches, and jokes.

Dark hair falling on that face lying with him.

He gravitates his hand up, fixing the strand back in place getting closer, and then he kisses soft lips.

Dizziness strikes with a sharp thud, poking behind his cranium, stabbing his skull in excruciating blows and compelling Dean to sit again, pressing both hands against his head in an attempt to stop the pain, the flux of memories, the lack of air burning his trachea as if scourging oil were forced to flow down his lungs. The chest weights a thousand times more, like iron, drowning him to an annulled space.

With weak legs, he runs in staggers, getting away from there, from Castiel and this man, from these reminiscences that hurt and comfort at the same time.

Knees on the ground, Dean crawls pressing one palm to his temple, hissing with the agony, ears resounding, until his ribcage doubles it’s mass leaning him to the dirty ground. Green orbs are drifting frantic, guiding him to darkness as a hoarse voice calls his name worriedly, until he faints.

(...)

The place Dean sees is foggy and spectral, full of shadows, impressions, echoing voices
resounding like thunders on a storm. He allows his eyes to hover around the place, yet no figure or concrete form gains a solid aspect.

There’s a person, though, the same one he saw in bed with him. It has dark hair, a frame similar to his but inches smaller. This ghost holds a coat in his hands as if it was a sacred object, running its fingers over the fabric.

“I’ll clean it, Dean.” The echoing voice says, looking at the ragged green coat in his hands. “I promise.”

“Dude, I told you before: don’t sweat it.”

Oh. That’s his own voice speaking in what Dean understands is a memory imprisoned in some kind of a disordered dream.

“This coat… You lend it to me, therefore I must return it.”

“It’s yours.” The dream Dean retorts with no second thoughts.

“What?” The faceless guy appears confused for a moment. “Dean, I cannot-”

“Oh, just take it! I have another jacket.”

“Chuck already gave me new clothes…”

“Then accept it as a gift.”

The movements, voices, and the way these ethereal bodies talk to one another makes the Dean watching this scene feels as an audience of a movie he stars. But the smaller one with dark hair remains partly unseen. But he notices how he strokes the beige trenchcoat in awe, with attention.

“You need it more than me.” Dream Dean states. “Besides, it matches you better.”

The guy with dark hair snorts.

“It does not.”

“I swear it does!”

The watcher Dean observes these two idiots talking – one of then he, himself, of a distant past – unable to not think how he looks more… Content, how these two figures of his past seems close and friendly.

“You’re a liar Dean.” The guy finally says, folding the coat in his hands. “A good one, though.”

“Hey, I say what I see: this thing is really better in you.”

“And how many times do you intend to tell this lie?”

“Until you believe in it.”

The guy with dark hair chuckles.

“You’re uncorrectable.”

Dream Dean crooked one side of his mouth.
I’m adorable.

Both bodies exchange a glare for a few seconds, but that inside this reverie seems like long minutes for the watcher Dean, who does not understand what is happening, neither why he and this mysterious guy remains in a small distance, a gap that could’ve been trespassed by any minor touch. Perhaps if Dean walks over there, becomes part of this scene he will be able to catch a foretaste of who is this guy.

His legs are moving towards the foggy gray apparitions as his hand stretches in a try to hook at something there, to grip this memory. The sensation is like flying, his body floating in every step while the tip of a digit touches the fog of the unknown face, experimenting, trying to dissolve him into a familiar person. It’ painful, intolerable at some point, but Dean insists on it, forcing to remain floating to the direction of the gray ghost, to reveal his face, to-

There’s a pull, unexpectedly, twisting the mist and turning the specters in a dense smoke that dissipates like a cigarette blow, vanishing to every side of this memory, but in no place for Dean to catch. He shouts to no one, screams that only he can hear in this space of nothing, and soon his short flying experience causes him to enter in a free fall towards a black void.

(...)
“You should rest for the day.”

“I’m fine, man.” Dean replies a little harsh, but noticing the nice burning of the weight of Castiel’s hand has on his shoulder.

“Perhaps, but if you desire to not faint in the middle of camp I suggest that you repose for an extended time. Chuck has already been warned.”

“You told him I fainted?”

“Balthazar did.”

Frowning, Dean stares at Castiel waiting for a continuation. As the nurse figures, Dean probably is lost with the names, and he finally explains:

“He aids me in the clinic as my assistant.”

“Was he the blond guy with you earlier?” Dean asks without reservations and; wow, could he be more subtle?

“Precisely.”

“Your guys seemed pretty close.”

Fortunately Castiel didn't felt the tension in his words, just sighing with a tired mumble, insofar looking at Dean’s board.

“Balthazar is a quick learner, although his manners are quite…”

“Direct; with no boundaries?”

A little more tact perhaps or you can just die with your bluntness Winchester.

“Something like that.” Cas refrains a weak smile on his lips, as if somehow the conversation amused him. “You should sleep now.”

“Nah, I’m okay, seriously, if I stay here I’m gonna get worse than walking around.”

This makes Castiel chuckle.

“I know.”

He knows. Of course he knows; what doesn’t he knows about Dean? It’s kind of scary, being acknowledged by someone you have no memory of. By the way, Dean notices how since their conversation Castiel never once tried to mend things with him. He have just accepted it, gave him space and everything he asked for. It… Kind of hurt a little, that Cas didn't fight more for him.

Or maybe… No, it wasn’t exactly like this.

He’s just familiar with Dean, enoughto not chase a subject once he had made up his mind. Because Dean Winchester never regrets his decisions, never goes back, never cries over spilled milk. He did what he should have done, and if Castiel didn't bring the topic back again, it was because he comprehends Dean.

So yes, he can be upset and hate some of his choices, but Dean never goes back on what he did in the past. But he can’t stop thinking in how he pushed Cas away.
This thought drifted inside his mind for some time now, eating him little by little, appearing in the involuntary way his manners eased around the nurse. It’s all abnormal and Dean doesn’t like it; he doesn’t like how someone can affect him this much. Swallowing hard, Dean closes his fists getting up from the bed.

“I’m going to my cabin; I think I can take a nap.”

Castiel is writing at the board in his hands, listening, but not looking at him. It makes Dean uneasy.

“That’s a good idea, Dean. I will inform Chuck.”

The blue eyed man… That’s how Dean first referred to Castiel.

Now it's strange not to look directly at the indigo iris. After the agreement between them the nurse talked more with him, but it is still a cold, strict to business kind of conversation.

Not that Dean was bothered by it – no, not at all. It was his choice.

(...)

The morning after his collapse, Dean sneaks out of his cabin, avoiding Chuck because he always comes by this time of the day to give lectures and pest him with every little detail. Seriously, if Ellen wanted to use more rice on a recipe, let the woman do it! They can decide over these things by themselves.

So tired and bored, he walks towards a path behind the cabins. The place they built here was actually a vacation camp before, used to receive tourists in the forest-like region, so it has a lot of trails leading to rock formations, huge trees and a lake where they got their supply of water.

The sun is rising with the yellow color of a bright dawn; something that even Dean knows is a rare thing nowadays. With the bombs and attacks the atmosphere became denser within the years. A sunny day meant the world is in recover.

When he thinks about it, Dean can’t remember a night he saw the sky with stars. It’s a shame some of the kids can’t appreciate the view the way he did with his brother sometimes on a car hood in the middle of a highway.

Lost in these thoughts Dean heard too late the buzz near his neck.

“Son of a bitch!”

He curses, putting one hand over the place he felt a burning sting. He runs towards a tree getting under its shadow rubbing his hurt skin.

“You’ll just get it worse.”

In a jump Dean turns around and sees Castiel wearing a big amount of clothes that covers his body, also with an improvised net on his face, probably made of a tennis racquet.

“What the hell?”

Looking closer, Dean sees a white box near the nurse, a glass half full of a gold gooey liquid in one hand and a spray in the other. It doesn’t need more for Dean to understand what the sting on his neck was.
“You have a hive?! Why the hell you have this thing?” He shouts rubbing at his neck even more as Castiel shrugs.

“This camp originally was a vacation area, and the hive a recreation activity. It was almost dying, though. I revitalized it, since honey is a fine ingredient to use in handmade medicines, especially to treat colds.”

Dean opens an ‘O’ face at him.

“Besides, I find it relaxing to take care of those little animals.”

“Dude its bees.” Dean makes an odd face at him “They sting and does nothing more than fly around from flower to flower.”

"Bees are important to the existence of our world. If the war had killed them, we would not be able to survive for so long.”

“Bullshit.” Dean snorts.

“It’s not.” Castiel replies. “Bees are responsible for fertilize the forests with a different variety of flowers that attracts other animals as well, generating a perfect cycle of creation.”

“Uh… If you say so.”

Dean shrugs, rubbing at his neck again, cursing when his hand hit the sting and the pain increases.

“Let me.”

Castiel says, going away from the hive and removing the net from his face. He gestures for Dean to take off his hand and starts to stroke around the red area where the tip of the sting still is inside. Castiel takes a long minute to analyze the place, his fingers placidly touching in small circles. Dean coughs, troubled, stirring Castiel back to reality.

“My apologies. I’m going to squeeze it out, do not move.”

Dean nods, feeling Cas putting his thumbs over his neck, then starting to press them as if he tried to join one to another through his skin. He bites his lips, he mumbles curses, his feet are swinging from side to side when Castiel finally remove the nasty thing. Dean takes a sharp inhale, pressing his palm in the sore zone.

“Thanks.”

Nodding, the nurse looks at his hand, then at the hive, thinking for a moment. It gives Dean a strange discomfort due the silent, which is broken by Cas’s strong voice as he points to the glass in his hand.

“Do you want to try it?”

The question that Dean was expecting is not that. Actually, he doesn’t figures what he expects, period.

A foreigner reason made him agree, warming his hands in the pockets of his jeans as they sit under the tree with a considerable distance from one another.

Dean has a spoon in his mouth with his tongue swinging the metal from one side to another. Castiel keeps his eyes on the honey, trying very hard to not touch or move near Dean. As the days
passes by, it become easier to let Dean go. Not less painful, but more acceptable.

“This shit ‘s pretty good.” Dean says after a while as Castiel nods in agreement.

“The properties of the honey are well conserved like this.”

“Sure is.” Dean slurps the spoon, holding it in his hand. “Ya know, are bees really that important?”

“Yes.”

“But they’re so… Small.”

Shrugging, Castiel looks towards the hive, rotating the glass on his hands.

“I guess this carries a valuable lesson.”

Dean frowns at him, still playing with the spoon.

“What lesson?” He asks.

“That even trifling creatures can change the course of fate.”

With a smirk, Dean replies to that.

“I don’t believe in fate.”

“Ah, yes. ‘We trace our destinies’.” Castiel says as one hand quoted in the air the last part.

“Exactly!”

Smiling, Dean turns his face for the first time to see Castiel, becoming a speechless being with the sight. There’s an amusement gaze in Castiel, his blue orbs looking at the hive, but Dean realizes Cas’s eyes aren’t watching the bees; he’s staring beyond it.

He looks to the past, Dean notices, where this same conversation probably happened between them.

Remaining static while he looks at the hive, Castiel part his lips, not brave enough to stare at Dean, not even daring to move, because he’s using all of his strength to stand still so close to the leader, and not be a nuisance to him. So he talks to cease the tension. “For a long time I blindly trusted that each one had their paths to follow; that God had drawn individual lines for everyone, so at some point we simply received the revelation of our purpose.” The nurse pauses, looking at the bees again. “Regardless of the fact I believed in these assumptions throughout my whole existence, now I see we are the ones liable to mutable, progressing towards the forthcoming. It’s not purely an element of divine intervention, but of faith and will to change.”

“Wow. That’s a speech.” Dean chuckles with a small tone of irony “What made you change so much?”

Castiel smiles fondly, not darting his vision away from the hive, enjoying the flight of a bee around it that goes inside the box. His mouth opens, not bringing to an end the thought that crosses his mind.

“You did.”

There’s not a word to express Dean’s chest shrinking, the acrimony on his mouth at the same time
a sweet chill run in his spine. What Cas says it undoubtedly, sincere.

Dean wonders how he can influence someone in such a profound way. To cognize that he was the one, at some point, responsible for a change of heart this big. It can be definitely a reason for one to be in a lack of words.

Dean brings his legs near his body trying very hard not to display his distress to Castiel, who admires the bees in a completely different state of concentration.

They stay together for the morning in quietude, departing when it’s time for Cas to come back to the clinic. He tells Dean to go ahead, since he needs to remove his vests, and as the leader walks back to the camp he doesn’t notice how his head turns around to watch Castiel over his shoulder until he’s too far gone to see anything else.

The anger that Dean had built in the past weeks seems so insignificant now.

He walks back to the camp with a troubled sensation behind his eyes. He just needs to rest for a while and get rid of the fucking migraine that started to grow in his head the minute he left the path of the bees.

Dean grabs the pommel of the door of his room, massaging with two fingers his temple. He enters his cabin, and when he does, Dean is welcomed by the ghost of a person – the same person he doesn’t recognize from his head, but that is there, drifting around the place as a blurry specter, but still walking in this place, knowing where to touch, as if this is his “home”. Also, Dean scents a nice smell of food coming from the table, although there is nothing there.

“I was waiting for you.”

The ghost says, and holy shit, this is some crazy vivid dream. Dean can’t even distinguish what’s real or not, he just knows that these… Images appearing in front of him are fragments of his mind trying to bring back something from his past, something that was forgotten. And in the middle of this illusion he can see himself – his former self – walking in there and answering the mysterious person.

“You know you can eat without me.” The Dean from the dream says.

“But I like to.”

It’s the same person from the memory of the green coat, Dean recognizes as he watches this person putting some fantasy plates on the table, settling a nice atmosphere for them, and it’s just… So domestic and simple that for one second Dean forgets about the war. He and this dream of his former self.

And then it’s as if he saw through the eyes of that mirror like image flashes of faceless enemies he had killed, dragging him away from this idea. Home is where you can survive, nothing else. Dean waves his hand in the air, pressing his head again, but the dream doesn’t wears off, insisting on showing more to him.

“I wish we had met before the war.” Dream “he” says.

“Why is that?” The other one asks.

“So this wouldn’t seem so strange to me…”

“But being with me?”
“Being with someone at all.”

“Dean...”

The person comes closer, and the Dean from the present observing this scene seems to be without air. The way this person hugs the “him” from this memory is so solid, it’s so true and unique... It’s for him and him only, and Dean doesn’t quite perceives when this feeling started, but he is craving for this sensation, to sense again what it is to be hugged like this. It had been so long... Or at least he doesn’t know about the last time he felt another body close to his, how he allowed it to happen.

His fingers felt cold.

Nonetheless it’s right there, in front of his eyes. However even if he stretches his hands towards this ghost welcoming him, there’s nothing palpable there, and this memory seems so frustrating and warm at the same time.

“I’m not going anywhere...” The person says on the tip of his ear, brushing slightly his lips there.

“... I’m not the kind of man you expect to build a life with...”

“I don’t expect you to be anything but you.”

“Why? I’m a mess!” Dream “he” jokes a little, and the other person smiles.

The Dean watching the memory thinks he likes this wide and sincere smile.

“I know. But I like to help fix your mess.”

In this reminiscence, those two specters look at each other’s eyes not caring at anything else that could exist besides them. It’s just them in the room.

“...s”

Dean hears his past-self saying one single letter, a whisper, and it’s familiar. It’s a word he used to say a lot, it’s right there and yet he can’t... He can’t hear it! This thing, what it is?! A name... It’s a name, he is sure of it. He is saying this person’s name. Shit, why can’t he hear it?! Why can’t he just fucking discover who this person is!

“You will get tired of my shit one day.” Dream Dean says, seeming defeated, stopping the motion of his legs.

“I can’t... Not even if I tried.”

He and the person gaze once again, and even if he sees only a blur, Dean knows they are making all that gooey crap he hates – and yet it seemed okay to this past self of him to act in a chick-flick movie. It’s so cliché and awfully sugary, that the watcher Dean thinks he is going to vomit. But then at the same time he is filed with a boiling aching on his chest. If he could only see more, discern more...

With a gasp, Dean wakes up in his bed, panting and sweating, not even remembering how he got under the sheets.

Dean stares at the now uninhabited places of his bedroom, getting away from the sheets and running towards the cabinet, the wardrobe, drawers, everywhere, anywhere, trying to see if there’s a forgotten hint, something left in there for him to get a better glimpse of that memory.
He searches for any of these impressions in his mind, but the dream is gone, he is wide awake now, and the vivid experience only left a tingling touch of that person on the back of his skull, a heat at the skin, of an embrace he can’t sense, but he knows… He knows it was right there in that cabin.

“Who are you?...” Dean mumbles to the walls of the empty place, wondering for how long he will continue to have this same question flipping off from his tongue.

How long until he can find this person again.
To know you

Already sick of the lessons from Chuck, who mourns over his lack of improvement, but especially because of the new thoughts regarding Castiel - that Dean does not want to have at all - he decided to go to a raid the day after. He says it will be for the best because he needs to do something or he’ll become insane. Besides, he doesn’t want to wander near Castiel and his ‘friend’ Balthazar. Strange how this proximity of them bothers Dean considerably.

Sam is concerned like always, however Dean may have forgotten some of the past years, but he sure does remember how to handle a gun with his eyes closed.

The trip is simple and fast, with their destiny set to a destroyed town, where they can try to find supplies. They stick with a direct strategy: four go inside the store, grab the materials, and head back to the driver, Ash, in that case, waiting for them. Maybe they'll encounter people there, so they need to be swift.

The drive takes one hour, and just as predicted, some groups are spread in the town, lost in the middle of a firefight. However it can be their chance to go in unnoticed.

Sam, Dean, Benny, and Jo run together towards the back of the building while Ash distracts the groups by honking the car a few meters away from them. It works, but minutes are passing by, counted on their fingers. They load food cans, pasta, bags of rice and some dry meat. Chuck said something about toilet paper too, and Dean remembers to search for medicine in the cabinets.

With all in hands the four of them checks the outsides. Jo gives a clear signal, and like in a marathon they ran to the meeting point. Dean is pleased with today’s mission. Maybe he will do fine; maybe he can do it, take care of a camp. Little by little he becomes sure of it. If people trust him, if people want him to do the hard work, he will accept it; because no one else can. It’s his responsibility, his job.

Ash is sitting on the truck just waiting with the engine purring. Dean throws his bags on the back seat, and then helps Jo and Benny to get up, feeling proud. The adrenaline of the combat field fills his pores and guts. He likes it, the thrill of a running for survival, knowing he's the best, that he’s a fighter. He fights. Like in the Arena…

His head blows with a solitary string of pain.

Another. ‘Please, not now!’ Dean pleas in his head, pressing one palm over his temple.

*Thump, thump.*

It’s coming; it hurts; it stings like a hangover, expanding his mind to another realm; to the maze inside his head.

*Thump. Thump. Thump.*

The truck is gone; the town is left behind altogether with Ash, Jo, Benny and Sam. He’s in a dark room that smells like a sewer, the scent of moss and humidity irritating his nostrils. Dean scoffs, covering his mouth when he hears it; the screams coming from the body attached to a table in front of him.
“Do it.”

Alistair commands, holding a knife for Dean to take.

“No.” He retorts, as the torture master grabs the back of his hair, pulling it, and then nailing the tip of the knife on his forearm. Dean grunts with glued lips, not wanting to scream.

“You know what Lucifer had ordered us to do, Dean. Now, obey.”

“That wasn’t the agreement.” He retorts. “I fight in that fucking Arena, that’s all.”

“Well, things changed. Lucifer wants you more... Sharp, I guess.”

“Sharp?” Dean scoffs. “For what?”

“Oh, my little lamb. You are his enemy from the very first begging, since that day he meet you and your brother, when he got himself exiled by your friends, it’s all he can think about.”

A chill takes over his spine, making Dean think about Sammy. His eyes shut down in disgust, nausea filling his stomach, ready to vomit.

“Common, Dean. We need to pluck information from this guy. And I’ve already taught you how to do it. Slow and careful. Painful enough in the right places. You can do it.”

Dean knows because it’s the same treatment Alistair had given him in the begging. When he agreed to play by their rules and make others suffer instead of being him the one tortured and beat, the instruments of torture became his. It was a weakness what he did, however it was for Sammy, to protect his brother. He was there because of his own choices, and it was pointless to deny it now.

Shaking hands grabs the knife from Alistair, halting the jiggle as soon as he has the handle on his fingers. He approached the guy, wanting to puke when he sees the fear in his trembling eyes.

Alistair is the one doing the talking:

“Dean here will be your new entertainer. I’ll ask, I wanna hear the truth, and for every lie you tell me, Dean, well... He will do his magic.”

The guy stirs, trying to rip the ropes, unable to do so. This attempt of escape obliges Dean to cut a thin line on the inside of his arm. The skin separates in a red fissure with blood being dragged from it. The guy screams muffled by the cloth on his mouth.

But the cut is just the beginning. Dean takes the salt from the table, altogether with a small forceps. He places the metallic instrument inside the cut, rotating the winch below it and making the tool work; opening little by little and enlarging the slice into a hole of muscle and fat. There’s more screams.

He pours the salt on the exposed cut. It burns, he knows it; slowly and tormenting like a fire of hell.

The guy writhes and cries. Dean doesn’t even know him, only that Lucifer wants the information this man has about supplies.

When he’s done with the first step, Alistair smiles, running one finger at the guy’s temple.

“Well done Dean. Now we’re getting somewhere. Let’s start with the questions again, shall we?”
The torture, the pain, the headache, it all seems to happen in a frame of seconds inside Dean’s head, for a moment later he’s on the side of truck again, with Jo screaming at him to keep going, to continue and get up so they can move.

“Get your ass over here, Dean!”

The blond extends a hand for him and Dean grabs it, bending with an urge to vomit. His brain pulsates as if he’s going to have an aneurism. It’s when he notices Sam is not with them, but still running on the field. Dean ignores all the pain and gets up, looking back to help his brother, when a loud shot erupts from the ghost town.

Nothing.

There is nothing else happening in front of Dean’s eye but the vision of his brother standing with a hand over his chest. Then birds hidden on threes flee, other animals dashes towards the woods invading old buildings, and amidst the wild sounds, pops of guns firing, there’s a cry louder than everything else:

“Sam!”

Dean screams jumping from the back of the truck, running a few steps and falling on his knees beside his brother. Benny comes as fast as he can to help. They manage to carry the heavy body of a grow man almost crawling. They sit on the truck; Sam’s head rests on his brother’s lap as he tries to not doze off inhaling in low breathes.

“Don’t sleep, you son of a bitch! Don’t sleep!” Dean howls at him. Blood on his clothes, stained forever in red. Dean’s hands are painted in scarlet ink, pressing the hole on the right side of Sam’s chest. It continues to come out, though; the warm liquid dries while his brother becomes pallid.

Ash manages to get them back in less than an hour. Benny is yelling with his head out the top of the truck for the gates to open. The desperation in his voice does alarm the guards, who remove the chains in a hurry. Ash doesn’t even stops in the parking area, he just moves forward telling people to get out of the way. He stops in front of the clinic, with Castiel already on the outside, two other guys by his side with a hammock.

The truck’s doors are open, revealing Sam’s wide body spread on the floor; his brother holding him tight. Cas wastes no time. He hops inside the vehicle, crouching, as he listens with the stethoscope a very weak heartbeat. There’s a bullet hole pierced through the chest, but the projectile it’s still inside. Too much blood was lost, he’ll need a transfusion, and Castiel hopes there’s enough in the small bank they are able to keep, because he doesn’t know how long it’ll take to perform a delicate surgery in a room with scant resources.

“Save him!”

Dean implores to Castiel with unsure eyes. The nurse lifts his head to stare at him, seeing a man near a collapse, the man he will always love; even without receiving his affection back. An urge to replace that mien with the intense smile only Dean knows how to build makes Cas gesture firmly:

“I will.”

His voice is deep, with full certainty and confidence. Dean grasps tight for this assurance, putting all of his faith in Cas’s hands; in those blue eyes gazing unswervingly at him. Dean is not familiar with these eyes, this person... He forgot everything and only an odd sensation creeps on the inside of his nape since the first day he gazed at this blazing indigo. And this chill on the back of his skull
tells him he can believe in Cas; in his abilities. It’s a shudder he cannot describe nor understand, but it’s there, somewhere, inside him.

“Please…”

He whispers one last time as his brother is taken inside the clinic. Castiel does not look at Dean, he just runs over the door, closing it.

Green orbs collapse to the pair of hands over his lap seeing they stained in red. The tainted fingers gives a tremor, and under it there’s the jeans also marked with the carmine color, and then there is his jacket that will never be clean from this strong smell of death.

It brings Dean back to his childhood, to a part of his past his mind didn’t disremember.

Always he and Sam, the two of them, trying to survive without a mother and an absent father too wrecked from her death to pay attention to their sons. Dad wasn’t really there in their childhood, but the man guided them during the war. At least this much he could do. Maybe John was already used to the misfortune of this world, capable of adjusting to a chaos reality such in war. Unfortunately he died no longer after the beginning of it, simply leaving two sons with instructions on how to survive on their own. Above everything Dean needed to protect Sam. Sam is his baby brother, Sam is all he has. Instead, his hands are covered with the blood of his little brother.

If he was more attentive, if he wasn’t so thrilled by the action at the store…

If his head wasn’t so broken with shattered memories, if he wasn’t so stubborn, insisting to go on a raid… He should have noticed the groups approaching, anticipating all the disorder circling them. His fault, his blame, always he who corrupts; who breaks, who stains and kills. He carries death…

“Castiel will save him.”

A sweet voice drags him back to reality. Jess’s hands come quickly to cover his - her eyes watery – but only certainty emanate from the woman. Turning his eyes to the side he sees Benny, Jo, Garth, Ash, Chuck, Charlie and almost all of the people in camp nodding, murmuring in solid confidence their trust in Castiel. Everyone waits with prays, whispers of devotion. Both of his hands are shaking again, and pressing his eyelids as hard as he can Dean swallows hard. He doesn’t pray, however the very least he can do is to hope that... That if he is capable of taint with his touch, then maybe Castiel can purge everything…

Hours pass by, and with the night approaching quickly the families went back to their houses, waving weakly at Dean who only nods, and nods, and nods, with no voice or energy to respond.

It’s only he, Jess, Benny, Jo, and Charlie waiting outside. Dean is left alone, seated on the back of the truck in the same position of when they took Sammy.

Jessica is… Hanging in there better than he is. She cries, a lot, but in a silent sob. Dean respects her strength.

He feels his clothes sticking on the skin with the dry blood, however he couldn't care less. He wants his brother to be okay, he wants the world to stop so he can get out of this mess, so he can disappear; stop the killing, stop his poison spreading, he…

Doors open after midnight. The clinic was the only house allowed to have the lights on by this hour, and from the beam of bright coming from the entrance of the building Castiel walks to the outdoors. In one go, Dean jumps from the truck running at a frantic speed, breathing uneven with no landscape around him, only the vision of Cas guiding his steps. He stops in front of the nurse,
swallowing hard, for his throat is arid; voice quaking hoarse:

“Is Sam-”

“He’s fine.”

It’s all Cas says, simple words, but that turns Dean’s legs into water. He falls, sitting on the ground; head bowed, with no vitality left. Jess this time doesn’t suppress the happy tears, as Jo embraces her.

Dean presses his hands together over his lap, the junctions turning white and shaking desperately from relieve, from the fear leaving his body and the cry he holds back. Castiel crouches in front of him, placing one hand on Dean’s shoulder:

“Thank you, thank you…” He chants for the nurse, incapable of raising his head.

The gentle touch goes up and down his biceps assuring him. Dean sucks air through his teeth, gaining courage to look at Cas. When he does, he is abashed by a tender smile, comprehensive eyes taking care of him during his distress with nothing but a quiet sympathy.

Dean wants to hold him so bad.

“Sam is very weak.” Cas says catching his attention “He needs to rest for a month, at least. The bullet almost hit his heart.”

“Shit…” Dean mutters, his voice failing.

“That was the minor problem, though. The loss of blood gave me real concern.”

Dean frowns, shaking his head in confusion as Castiel explains:

“When a body does not receive the correct amount of blood for a certain period of time, there can be consequences.”

“W-what are you saying?”

“Unfortunately, I don’t know yet. Sam is still unconscious.”

“But he will live, right?”

“Yes Dean, he will.”

He drops his head again recovering air. Uncontrollably his hand meets Cas’s on his shoulder, grabbing it tight. The nurse opens his mouth, but nothing says, refraining his body to advance and expand their encounter, because Dean is in a fragile mess right now.

“Cas, thank you.” He says one more time.

Castiel nods, gripping at Dean’s shoulder, as if it was some kind of support for both.

“Sam is my friend as well, Dean. I’m glad he is alive. Now you too must rest.”

Nodding, Dean starts to stand up, missing the hand that was on his shoulder. He wants more of this, God knows why, but all he craves now is for this man to hold his hand again.

“Castiel!”
Balthazar comes out of the clinic throwing away a pair of gloves on a trash can. He is smiling, something that shakes Dean’s spine, even more when he comes closer to Castiel, hugging him, doing what he wanted to do.

“He’s stable! I yet cannot believe you saved him! You’re astounding!”

He praises the nurse, who pats lazily one hand on his back.

“Thank you Balthazar. Your help was fundamental.”

“No, you are the only one to be commended. God, Castiel. You’re amazing!”

Balthazar kisses him.

A frantic kiss with closed mouths, but still a kiss that makes Dean’s stomach starts convulsing. Eyes so wide with the view, throat parched, and his only force is to turn his head so he can’t look at it.

Castiel allows the kiss to happen for brief seconds, and then he presses his hands on Balthazar’s chest, leaning him backwards as he ducks his head.

“Sorry.” Balthazar says with an unapologetic smile. “I couldn’t resist, you know?”

The nurse sighs, seeing askew how Dean retracts his body.

“Your shift is over Balthazar, I’ll see you again tomorrow.” Castiel says, patting him on the arm to move away.

“I can stay if you want.”

‘God, please, no’. Dean thinks in a plea, biting his lower lip and dragging a metal taste from it.

“It’s my responsibility. Yours is to sleep and be ready for tomorrow’s patients. Go now.”

Balthazar pouts his mouth, but obeys, leaving, but not without stealing another quick kiss from Castiel. Dean breathes with solace; his hands are now hidden in his pockets, nails digging on his thigh.

“I- can I see him?!” Jess comes closer and asks, sobbing.

“Of course, but I suggest you go home first to fresh up, and please bring some of his clothes with you. I’ll be here, don’t worry.”

Jessica wants to confront the nurse and stay with Sam, however Jo leads her to the cabin, telling how Sam would like to see her with the best face as soon as he wakes up. Jess nods, still crying, but more receptive. The small number of people still there also departs, his friends beading goodbye since visits will be allowed only in the morning.

“Sam is sleeping, but you’re welcome to stay with him for a while, Dean.” Cas says.

Dean’s attention flies back to his brother, heading inside the clinic with Castiel. It’s a small place, but in the back room three beds are displayed, one with the huge body of Sam spread there – an old vital signs monitor is counting his frail heartbeats, altogether with some wires and plugs on his arm, pumping a bag of plasma in his veins.

“This place is well equipped.” Dean comments.
Castiel smiles fondly, and it just makes Dean breathless.

“When I started practicing here I told you I needed certain equipment. You went on raids for five months to find everything that the clinic required.”

Dean pondered over this for a while. Yes, that sounds exactly like something he would do. For the camp and… For Cas.

Castiel puts a chair besides Sam where Dean sits right away. He stares at his brother, still pale, but less ‘terminal.’

“Isn’t it against the rules for a patient to receive visitors while in recovery from a massive surgery?”

“It is, but you are never up to follow the rules.” Castiel tells him in a weak smirk, exiting the room.

Castiel leaves. The one who knows him so well, the first person that truly comprehends Dean – at least as much as Sam does. He looks at the door, alone with his unconscious brother, not certain of what he is thinking until it’s too late to refrain the line of thoughts: ‘But I don’t know you.’ Dean sighs with a palm rubbing his face. ‘I wanna know you.’

(…)

The next days are uncertain over Sam. Yes, he wakes up, but his legs are… Fragile. Castiel tells them it’s because of the blood loss and the anesthesia used in the operation. Since the blood wasn’t fully irrigated to his legs, some vases and nerves might have suffered a collateral effect, however, with therapy and intensive rest he will return to his old self in no time. Jess takes care of him all day long, as they act as a married couple – as if they weren’t already. It’s during the second week of recovery and the homelike environment that Sam actually proposes, trying to balance on one knee while holding a chair for stability. Jess cries with a loud ‘yes’!

Dean hugs her, welcoming Jess to the family. They decide that once Sam is walking again, they will have their marriage – it’s a silly tradition, but as Jessica told Dean, it helps to keep normality in their lives.

Sam and Jess are happy. They will be fine – forever, if Dean can say so. He is glad for them, really, although an icy sentiment of misery captures him.

This calm and familiar life it’s all Dean wanted, since he was young, since he lost his mother to a fire with four years old; since he had to work so hard with his half-drunk father to provide for Sam, all Dean ever craved for was a common life. He wonders if maybe he can have this contentment too.

These ideas always bring images about Castiel, which is strange and stupid, because Dean doesn’t dig dudes; it’s what Dean had told the nurse in the first place: that they’re only acquaintances.

Dinner didn’t seemed so appealing today. Dean barely ate half plate, going out of the hall with the excuse of seeing his brother, but instead he walked to his cabin. On the porch, his hand holds the pommel of the door, but it didn’t move. He breathed in a cold air looking around to see if anyone was nearby, and once alone, he turned around, with his feet moving on their own guiding the footsteps towards Cas’s cabin.
It’s a small one, with room for one person only. Sam told him they used to share his cabin. Was he really okay with that? How he permitted some strange to live every day in his private space?

Sam was different. They had to sleep in beds of different motels during their childhood because their father didn’t have a steady job, moving all the time. Besides, they are brothers, they knew each other. How Cas entered in his life in such a deep way? Did they talk about his past? About his mother? About his father? About the first time Dean shoot a deer with a gun or the first time he stole the life from someone; how he felt like vomiting, but hang in there to not give any shame to his father?

Those are memories Dean wanted never to remember; conversely though, his mind seemed to work against him in some kind of evil plot.

Sure thing, Dean cannot remember a single thing of the nurse, but glimpses about his crappy childhood, the loss of his mother, how he had to take control over the situation the times his father left him and Sam alone to go after “justice” for his wife’s death under not so legal means… This his brain somehow reminded in no time.

Bitterness seemed to adore Dean, getting attached to his soul and never letting go.

Unenthusiastic, Dean nothing did besides staring at the vacant cabin of the nurse. Empty, hollow, like the nothing crawling inside him; a void Dean wasn’t sure how to fulfil – but he’s certain that the nurse have something to do with it. Castiel possesses missing pieces for his holes.

Frustrated, he leaves with strong steps marking his path of anger, not seeing straight as he stumbles into someone.

“Sorry man, I-”

“You've learned how to apologize, I’m impressed.”

Balthazar said, keeping a smile on his face for too long, and Dean counted to one thousand to not punch him. Of all the people he could’ve run into...

“What do you want?”

“Easy there fearless leader, I am just passing by.”

“I thought clinic work is your responsibility on mornings.” Dean says not trying to hide his hostile tone.

“True. But Castiel asked me to take some things from his cabin.”

That scrunched something in his chest. Dean twists his face in a mix of sarcasm and loathing, snorting as he turns away incapable of not thinking how this man went to Cas’s lodge, walked around his things, feeling his presence in ghostly touches over the furniture; the smell Cas left there...

Dean sniffs before spinning on his heels to leave, or he might do something stupid, but it seems that Balthazar is looking for an excuse to fight.

“Did I ever tell the story of how we've found you?” Balthazar asks.

“What?” Dean frowns halting in place, turning to face him.
“When you were captured to fight in that Arena. Do you know how we’ve found you?”

“I don’t have time for this shi-”

“Castiel did.”

There’s a lack of qualm on his voice, something creep and full of lies, yet the way Balthazar speaks alerts Dean of what the man is about to say. He’s not going to like it. Dean’s fists are clinching, jaw tensioning involuntary.

“Basically, the day after your little departure, the pretty nurse in a Trenchcoat mobilized some people to search for you. Of course, everybody just assumed our fearless leader was ashamedly hiding after the fiasco of his last raid.”

Dean’s memories conjure a sour taste in his tongue. Departure? He was hiding? What raid he talked about? The coat… Dean remembers the foggy dream of a ghost talking, he and some unidentified person holding a green coat… Was it Castiel?

“But, your precious brother and minions followed Castiel’s assumptions that you were in danger. Stupid, right?” Balthazar grins, continuing his speech and breaking the moment Dean had to remember “Anyway, they looked for clues or tracks that could lead to you, and of course that demanded a commitment from everyone, even from the sweet little angel, Castiel.”

“The fuck you're talking about?!” The patient in Dean is long gone. He didn’t like the way Balthazar used the word ‘angel’, as if decaying Cas into a satirical perspective of his actions. Their distance got dangerously small as the leader fights back the single will of ripping Balthazar’s throat with his teeth. The man only shrugs, ongoing with his quick provocations.

“I'm saying what you already know. To gather reliable information nowadays there’s only one efficient method.” The blonde stops, arching his eyebrows at him.

“Informers.” Dean murmurs.

“Precisely. And can you name the one more desperate to find you? That would do anything to have our fearless leader back? If you say Sam, well, think again.”

“Oh, bite me.”

Dean bursts, finally walking away, not wanting to hear any more lies coming out of his mouth, because that can only be lies, constructed to mess with his already confused head.

“Castiel changed.” Balthazar continues, and for some indefinite reason Dean stopped, his back facing the man while he spoke “All the man could think of was finding you; protect you, even if it cost his own principles.”

The idea passed through his mind, but Dean couldn’t link an image of Castiel hurting people for his sake. He didn’t deserve it; to be put above others.

“He barely slept, looking for informers, day and night, from camps and wanderers at towns.” The blonde laughed in an unpleasant way, causing shivers in Dean “Hilarious thing was he used a bistoury!” Balthazar chuckled again, and Dean wanted to punch him even more “A nurse that said helping was his task used the same healing instruments of his job to torture.”

Dean breathed in on the edge to jump into the abyss of fury.
“… You’re lying.”

“Can you image it? His hand holding the small, sharp knife, cutting veins and nerves he studied to heal; but to cause harm instead?”

An unusual wrath drove Dean towards Balthazar. He held the collar of his shirt, shoving him on the wall of the cabin. Dean’s eyes are clouded with anger as the blond coughed with a grin, ignoring the pain in his throat.

“And he did it for you. He was a pure, obedient lam, and you bleed him.” Balthazar said between his teeth.

“Shut the fuck up!” Dean hits him again, hearing another cough as Balthazar’s hands come to clutch at Dean’s wrists.

“The truth hurts? Thinking your little angel is not as sacred as you thought?”

Picturing that Castiel could kill was not the problem. Knowing he stepped on his principles for Dean… That left an acid coil on his belly, as if bile was going to coming out any second.

“Let me tell you this: the guy is really dangerous when pissed off. Even I was scared of him.”

“That’s ‘cause you’re a piece of shit, spiting shit, and smelling like shit.”

“Wow, what a vocabulary you have.”

Balthazar’s back hits the once again. Dean curls his wrists over his shirt, causing the fabric to tighten, choking him a little.

“I told you to shut up.”

“You did this to him. You degraded Castiel…”

Dean clenched his teeth, lowering his head, but his eyes never stopped to stare deadly at the blond.

“And you think you have any right to be with him?”

“What I do or don’t, it’s not your fucking business!”

Balthazar chokes as Dean huffs near his face with a hot breathe hitting his cheek. It doesn’t matter, however, to be this infuriated with Balthazar.

Dean is not sure of what he is doing, what these feelings boiling inside are, and those things that never leaves his thoughts alone when the issue is Castiel. There’s the reluctance of accepting that at some point of his life he was together with the nurse.

Or better. Dean can’t picture he was once happy - for joy and colorful things aren’t meant for him. Dean, on the depths of his soul, comprehends he was never made to have true happiness; this kind of thing is for people like Sam and Jess.

Nevertheless, there’s Castiel filling him in every inch of his muscles, sensations and thoughts. With memories or not, it’s like his body craves for the nurse in a feral way. And he just can’t allow it to happen, not when his hands are so defiled; when Dean is a nasty project of a person.

Struggling to get free from Dean’s grip, Balthazar twists his hands over the leader’s; talking almost
in a whisper.

“Let me give you a tip, fearless leader: do Castiel a favor, and leave him be.”

One thing is Dean, for himself, choose to leave Castiel. Another completely different is let this little shit advises him about it.

Balthazar has his spine whacked on the wall in all the strength Dean can manage to put in the blow. The blonde chokes with saliva, with his throat stinging, not muttering a word until Dean lets him go, making Balthazar fall on the ground, and rubbing around his neck.

“I said… To shut the fuck up.”

Within the silent response, Dean leaves Balthazar. The man stand still, cleaning his clothes while he sees Dean turning away.

“Hiding from the truth won’t change it, Dean.”

Dean wants to go back and punch Balthazar, but he doesn’t, he can’t afford to lose his temper again, not now, not when feelings, weird ideas and a throbbing discomfort are sneaking to his ribcage.

In a long grunt Dean almost falls on the ground, crawling a few steps as he reaches the porch of his cabin and walks in. However the moment he does, his body collapses on the floor and curls into a ball, putting both hands on his ears, feeling dizzy as if some agonizing sound was piercing his tympanums, and then... Then he wasn’t in his room anymore – not at the present time, at least.

It happened in one afternoon, when Dean comes back to the camp feeling tired, for he just had a long raid, ran into some nasty people out there and had to exchange fire – people died, but luckily not one of their men. But still it was fucking awful, and he just wanted to crawl back to bed, maybe grab his four hours sleep and wake up to train some more shooting, because he was getting soft; he needed to practice.

But when he comes back to his cabin he doesn’t find any silent in there. Instead, Castiel welcomes him by grabbing Dean’s hand and pulling him inside hastily. Dean sighs, but allows it.

“Cas, what are you doing?”

“I have a surprise for you.”

Dean exhales a little loudly, because he is so not in the mood for any of this crap, but he counts to ten and goes anyway.

On the table he sees something very unusual: a radio. But not of any kind: it has a slot for a tape, and small sound boxes on the side connected by a thin wire.

“Cas?”

The nurse just smiles and pushes in a tape that was meticulously waiting over the table. Soon, the raspy sound of ‘Hey hey, what can I do?’ comes out in a bad reception, but he still recognizes it, and Dean is anything but surprised.

“I found this radio still working on one of the cars and asked Chuck if I could borrow it for a
couple of hours. I was lucky to find one of the tapes you said you liked.”

Dean frowns at the radio, half listening to what Cas said, half intrigued of how is it possible that the thing still works.

“What did you use to run this thing?” He dryly asks.

“Just a couple of batteries, but they were already drying out, so…”

“We can’t afford to use energy on stupid things, Cas!”

Dean sighs, running a hand over his hair, visibly impatient. The smile in Castiel’s face disappears.

“I know we can’t spare. I asked Chuck because he knows better, and he assured me those batteries had no use for him anywhere since they were almost spent.”

“Someone might use it, dammit. Maybe you can unplug this thing and see if there’s something to save.”

“It can’t.”

“Why?”

“… It was supposed to last for a song, maybe two, but I had to test it, so there’s a lot of battery wasted there and…”

Castiel shrugs, having that blank aspect of him on his face. He comes to the table, takes the radio and puts it inside a drawer on the left corner of the cabin. Dean can notice the frustration and the half pity look on his face, and he just sighs with no tolerance to deal with this emotional stuff. And he knows some of it is his fault for allowing this environment of a “home” surrounding them like that, to make Castiel comfortable enough to think this was ‘okay’. It’s war, they are surviving, nothing else.

“This is not an ordinary lifestyle anymore.” He almost snarls, but is able to keep his tone only a little bit low.

“I understand.” Castiel replies without the enthusiasm from before.

“Then you know that I got to do this, I have to be the soldier here.”

With a frown on his features, Castiel raises his head to face Dean, half in disbelief, half annoyed by what he just said.

“No you don’t. This is not a battlefield anymore.”

“It’s not an apple pie life either.”

“But it’s a good life.” He retorts “We are alive; we have each other in this camp. We are making it work.”

‘Making it work’, he says, and Dean almost laughed in his face, needing to hold it back as he scratches with a fingertip his forehead.

“These people still don’t know shit about what they are doing, or how to survive.”

“But no one is alone Dean, not even you.”
“Right, a bunch of guys who doesn’t even know how to shoot. Can you shoot, uh Cas? Can you?!”

“That’s not the most important thing—“

“Can you!?” He repeats, almost yelling this time.

Castiel sighs as he faces him, looking away from green eyes seconds later.

“…No.”

“Then period, I don’t have time for this shit!”

Castiel doesn’t utter a word anymore, turning around and staring at the radio. He slowly nods, going over the nightstand beside the bed and grabbing a small black suitcase, the one he uses to keep his most delicate medic stuff.

Dean follows him with his eyes, cursing internally and feeling so, so tired of arguing over an obvious thing.

“Cas...”

“It’s okay, Dean.” He says not even needing to hear another sentence “You are right, it was an unwise idea. I know we can’t exactly have normal lives anymore. Still, I just wanted to...” He sighs, and then raises his head, giving a dry smile to Dean “Never mind. And I really have clinic work to do now. I’ll come back for supper.”

Castiel exits the cabin without a second thought, leaving Dean behind to breathe loudly, sighing, and rubbing his face as he curses a thousand curses.

The fuck was he supposed to do? Pretend he was thrilled for hearing a song he sure as hell hasn’t heard in what? Nine years? Maybe more, Jesus... How much time has it been of war? He can’t even remember.

Walking back to the drawer on the back of the cabin, Dean opens it, and carefully takes the radio out, sitting over the table.

It’s an amateur engineer work, he sees. The wires are almost burned, a huge mess on the top of the buttons where a few got strapped out or cracked, and the cables connected to the batteries are almost falling apart. It’s a terrible job from someone who clearly had no idea of what he was doing. Yet Cas had managed to make the damn thing work to play the stupid song he likes.

He sighs, lowering his head between his arms and gets up, putting the damn radio over the table, not sure if he should just break the thing and get the batteries out.

Sleep time is over. He doesn’t feel tired anymore, and decides to walk for a while, until this sour taste gets off from his tongue.

The camp is the same as every day. This afternoon has more sun than usually, which makes children want to play until late People are walking here and there, taking care of their lives, talking with each other about what exists today to talk about: the weather, cleaning their houses, the kids. Ordinary and common, a life almost ... Normal; if you count that there are no more electronics and despite the ceasefire, anything could blow up in their heads at any minute. But until this doesn’t happen everybody seems to be just living their lives in the best way they can.

And it is exactly this thought that makes Dean feels like a big jerk.
What they are doing there, day after day, is not forgetting about the war, it’s not overlooking anyone’s responsibility. Each one is just trying to collect what was left in the dust and clean it up, fixing the cracks left in the world. What they are trying to do here is not merely to survive, but to regain what was stolen; it is to have a life back, or at least a small portion of it. It’s what Castiel wanted, to offer some of that normalcy to Dean.

However, the soldier inside him had to emerge and ruin the whole thing, making the nurse feel like an idiot for ever thinking about it.

What was he doing? Well, being the most stoic and stupid person to deal with.

Dean wonders how someone like Castiel can even stand him day after day, living on the same room. This time it’s Dean who must do something.

By the beginning of the night Castiel comes back to the cabin. His mien had not improved much. Perhaps the confined anger had passed, leaving behind only a sense of rejection about the small discussion with Dean since, deep down, he was right, and they should not spend any resource with trifles. The camp was lucky enough to have power generators, sure thing they have a huge responsibility to-

“Dean?”

Castiel almost whispers, frowning while he looks at the cabin that now only holds a dim light coming from a few candles spread over the table and drawer. Dean is there, in the middle of the show of small dancing lights, staring at Castiel, waiting for him.

“What is happening?”

The nurse asks, but Dean speaks nothing, just approaching Castiel and pulling him gently by the arm until the two are standing in front of the small radio that Castiel had fixed before. He can’t figure what is happening, and is even more astonished when Dean pushes the first piece of the scrap button of the radio, and then music starts to play, making Castiel look muddled. Dean chuckles a little from his reaction.

“There was no battery left…” Castiel says, but it’s only in pure awe that he does.

“I may have asked Chuck if he had an ‘extra almost not working’ battery.”

Dean explains with the hint of a smile on his lips, however Cas is pensive, taking a few seconds to gather back his line of thinking.

“But I thought that—”

“I love Led Zeppelin.”

Dean simply declares, and then Castiel looks at his face for two seconds, seeing something like gratitude stamped on those green irises.

Besides, when Dean starts to approach their faces leaning his forehead on his, putting his hands in the nurse's waist to swing slowly in the rhythm of the melody, Castiel closes his eyes and gives a half smile, allowing the air trapped in his throat to hit against the warm skin of Dean's cheeks.

None of them need to speak anymore, because really, the vibration of guitars, the raspy voice of the singer coming from the music told them everything else. Dean’s fingers seized the waist of the smaller one, with the gap between them being enough torture to endure. He holds Castiel as if he
were an anchor, what keeps him steady; the one that could destroy Dean’s barriers and ease some of the remorse, anger, and responsibilities he had, altogether with the weight of the world on his back.

Dancing with Castiel was nothing, but having him every day of this wretched reality made Dean believes that he is not as miserable as he thought.

And during the last few minutes that the battery lasted, they just shifted slowly from side to side, savoring each other’s existence, relishing on the lull, on the moment, so brief and unreal, but that seemed to last for years.

It made them think that perhaps there’s still a bit of life to live in this dead world.

The gasp that Dean exhales almost chokes on his throat. He feels dizzy, hot, nauseated, rolling on the floor to get up. Panting, he reaches his bed and rests his head on the mattress, breathing in small and quick puffs of air.

This is the first migraine he has that turns out to be a big part of his memory, but better than this: it’s the first time he remembers Castiel…

Widening his eyes, Dean scratches his hair with one hand as his pupils wander from side to side without direction.

He remembered… His voice; touches and an amazing smell that made Dean weak and strong at the same time… It was all Castiel. And he knows that there is much more imprisoned in his brain.

Dean can’t sense anything further, but he just knows, and it’s insane, because he just can’t believe what Balthazar just told him, not now, not like this… Not with this dream.

He just can’t see the same Castiel from these memories murdering, killing… And all for Dean.

Was he this cursed to stain someone like Castiel? To transform a bright human into something nasty and vile?

He can’t… He just can’t believe in it.
A few days later Dean is again drifting. Nothing appeared for him anymore, any memory or thoughts. It was gone from his mind, everything but the damn headache.

He starts walking at the camp on one afternoon without a direction until he stands in front of a bonfire. Few people gather in there to heat up from the cold November. He sits on a trunk, rubbing his hands while pensive. The fire is dancing, warming the surroundings, while everyone calls it a night heading back to their homes. Not many minutes longer the area is clear of people and Dean lifts his face with no much of a surprise when he sees Castiel approaching in quiet steps and a blank face; this man he once knew, but now was only a stranger, yet he felt linked to.

The nurse seems so serene. How a man like Castiel… Or better, can a man like Cas, vowed to help others, really carry a fury capable of torturing? Killing? For Dean’s sake? Dean doesn’t recall this… Omnipotence on him.

However it is always in the small seconds when they speak, spending a time that’s longer than what is humanly necessary staring at each other, that he can see a glimpse of it, of a wild blaze dancing like the fire deep down in the blue of Castiel’s eyes. It’s a flame disguised as a spark that gives a hint that maybe yes, maybe Castiel can truly be fearsome… And where that came from? Why Castiel had to learn to be like this; to be someone like Dean? The leader shakes his head, feeling dizzy with the amount of thoughts and words slipping in his mind.

No other memories of Castiel cracked the walls in Dean’s mind, but for the first time he wanted them to.

“You are very contemplative today.” Cas says, waking him from the daydream, stopping by the side of the fire, and eventually joining Dean on the trunk, not staying too close, of course.

“Guess I’m tired.” Dean lied rubbing his eyes.

“You need to find somebody else to take care of your brother.”

“Jess is with him. And Sam is reading all the books he can find.”

“That’s good. Is he eating? Exercising his legs?”

“Yes, I made him do it.”

“Excellent. And you?”

“Huh?” Dean mutters, frowning a little.

“You, Dean. Are you taking care of yourself?”

Dean scoffed.

“Why such interest in my health, Cas?”

“Because sometimes the caretakers give more trouble than the patients.”

“Jesus, I’m fine.”
He starts to get up, but Cas holds his wrist, forcing him to stay in place. For about one minute – not that Dean was counting, not at all – they exchange glances with only the sound of the fire cracking the wood logs as a soundtrack.

There’s a warmness climbing Dean's chest that he knew it was not coming from the bonfire. It’s a different heat sensation, and oblivious to what he was used to, squeezing his ribs and making the pulsation inside him to rush without rhythm, and even though it was winter there were a constant perspiration spreading on his nape. Every little reaction was shaking his body as a whole, and all because of a simple touch from a finger of the nurse at the skin of his wrist.

What Castiel was doing to him?

Dean’s head was spinning with insane ideas, wanting to lean on, to end the gap separating him from this man. His mind is buzzing with doubts and confusion. ‘I don’t know him, I don’t know him.’ He chants to himself, over and over, trying to recover the power over his actions.

“Your pressure is 15/10.”

Castiel says with a serious mien. It breaks whichever spell that was cast in Dean. So… That was it? He was examining Dean?

Right, of course he was. A nurse after all, concerned about a grow up adult who, for what Castiel thinks, can’t take care of himself. Huffing, Dean pulls his arm rudely, grabbing a log and tossing more of the firewood to burn.

“I didn’t ask for an exam.” Growls him in a snarl, hearing a soft sigh coming from the nurse.

“You never do.”

The log in Dean’s hand receives a tight squeeze. His nails enters in the irregular lines of the wood without him realizing how strong his grip on the thing was. Spinning on his heels, Dean stares at Castiel, allowing the fire to take back his place as a live being who englobes the two of them in one unique atmosphere. There’s a mix of longing and grief in Castiel’s voice, similar to the first time he saw Dean after his rescue from the Arena, but there is also the pitch of worry on his intonation that seems to come from a distant reminiscence of his own... Of a memory about the two of them that belongs to Castiel.

It’s just makes the confusion in Dean deeper and harder, full of questions, but deprived of answers to every doubt emergent in his brain, starting to get in an amalgam of question after question.

In what level Castiel knew him? What are all the secrets stored in the mind of the man before him? Those parts of Dean that he would never show to any other person. Little details and impressions that seemed so alive in the words coming out of Castiel’s mouth and in the way he looked at him ... Yes, the same gaze he shows now, as if the blue sea could cross the layers of Dean’s irises and gaze directly into his soul. And it happens in one millisecond, everything came to Dean’s head, the words that Balthazar have said. Were they true? All that Castiel had done for Dean. Would Cas do it again? Stain his hands with blood; fall from his own beliefs for Dean even after all the suffering the leader had put the man through? The way Castiel changed deeply because of one man... What kind of blind faith is that?! And Dean just hated himself for it.

“Stop it...” He mutters, shaking his head.

“Dean? What’s the matter?” There he goes again, with the worries.

“I said stop it!”
He shouts, throwing another log to the bonfire with all his strength. It hits the fire with a cracking sound, raising sparks, disquieting Castiel a little. He frowns, looking at Dean, tilting his head not knowing what to do.

“I don’t need you babysitting me!” Dean yells beginning to ramble into incoherent thoughts.

“I am not babysitting you, Dean.” The nurse answers with all the authority present in his deep voice.

“Of course not!” He snorts in sarcasm.

Sighing, Castiel turns his head down seeming tired.

“I’m only worried-”

“Don’t!”

In three fast steps Dean comes closer to Castiel, and grabs a hold of his arms in a strong grip. Dean tosses the smaller body at the snow floor, hearing a choke coming from Cas. He presses the nurse against the ground pinning him there, wanting for him to comprehend; to be afraid and run away from Dean, because he couldn’t endure Castiel's gentleness, not when he is such a brute, not when he brings a full load of destruction to everywhere he goes.

“Don’t treat me like that!” Dean roars with gritted teeth, voice hoarse and eyes in wrath. “Don’t pretend that you fucking care!”

Castiel’s face turns into a mix of complaisance and hurt, looking at Dean with his big blue eyes that never leaves his gaze, saying lastly.

“But I do, Dean.”

“Why?! You can’t-You shouldn’t! I’m an asshole; I’m a mess!”

Dean doesn’t deserve tender words or kind actions. Dean can’t stand a soft touch, because for all of his life touches were only meant to open cuts, to break bones, to remove blood from a body until it’s lifeless. It’s how his father raised him; to be a man in all levels. It’s the reason of why he handled the war so well.

Hands are made for punches and carry weapons, not caresses. His head should be strategic, not a misunderstanding of ideas and images of a dark-haired man hovering in his mind every second of the day; his chest must burn with fury, not sympathy. Dean is cursed, he’s poison. And Castiel should be scared of him; he should run away from this venom before it’s too late, before he too is infected by it.

“You’re a fucking idiot, you know that?!” Dean yells, his clasp stronger now, it’ll probably leave bruises on the nurse’s white skin.

Swallowing hard, Cas gives a small hiss, but never stop to stares at him, inhaling, filling his chest to find his own power to speak as a small cloud comes from his mouth caused by the cold.

“I know I am.”

He breathes out in compassion, not letting go of the green eyes, which now moves hastily with hesitancy from side to side.
Castiel is a fool; the greatest unwise, reckless human being, Dean ever met. He’s going to drown, suffocate with all the rottenness Dean has, and strangely, none of that scares him. He isn’t afraid of Dean.

And then dry lips are kissing Cas.

Where it was… Where has it been this whole time? It spreads through all of Dean, the feeling of something missing finally returning home. It was right there, Dean thinks, waiting, craving for him.

There is so much more, right? More than memories and ideas, there was a tingling never allowing Dean to rest, and it only made sense that Dean was there now, that they were kissing as if his whole life was inert before, something palpable but not quite precise, waiting for when it would finally be complete. The emptiness in Dean was waiting for this small moment to be filled like one single thing once more; with Cas...

Dean kneads his mouth over Castiel’s, who matches the rhythm after the abrupt shock, shifting on the ground as his hands are still under Dean’s grip.

It’s hard, anxious, and needy, with tongues melting over the humid flesh. The nurse feels the heavy body over his aligning; chests bumping and heating through the icy winter, clinging on each other until they are capable of breaching through the innumerous layers of skin.

Legs entwined on the surface covered in snow. It’s freezing, chaotic and wets their clothes, however none cared about it. Dean moves with vaguely automatic gestures, absorbing Castiel with his tongue; savoring and catching what he is offering, everything for him and to him.

Dean is enthralled. A sweet flavor fills him with a resemblance of ‘home’; an anchor, one identifiable place where he belongs and no existing creature can steal this from him, from this man - from Cas.

One hand continue to constrict both of Cas’s wrists as his other dance in curves over his neckline, skimming the layers of cloth, discovering the warmth of the belly, until Dean finds the hem of Cas’s shirt, leading his palm under it and forming scratch marks on the nurse’s abdomen. Cas merely moans a pleading sound over the kiss with his slacks becoming too tight around his groin, and he seeks with his hips for more friction.

It’s just a lonely instant - Dean keep telling himself - after the whole lot that happened to his brother, of what Balthazar had revealed to him; after the half-truths and unclear stories, Dean is feeling frail, broken, so he needed to touch someone. And Castiel was just there, taking care of him, being attentive and so, so enticing with that pair of pale plushy lips.

The memory Dean had of him and a person in his bed days ago, the dark-haired specter holding the green coat, the slow dance that they shared with a broken radio, and mostly after he watched Balthazar kissing Castiel… A weird, possessive sensation, nurtured in him, growing at every instant he wasn’t with the nurse. He didn’t want to share Cas’s attention to anyone. And it was senseless, bizarre even, because he didn’t remember much of the man, but there's always this frequent disorder ongoing on his stomach that makes him act deprived of rationality.

Whirling his tongue in Castiel’s wet flesh; such hotness thawing him, padding a hollowness he didn’t even know was there. Perhaps he and Castiel truly had something good, something he misses…

In a jolt, Dean’s eyes widens, and he parted his lips letting go of Cas, sitting abruptly on the snow.
His temple starts to hurt, his head tingles, and the worst is the look of misunderstanding in Castiel, watching him amidst glimpses of expectation.

“Dean…” He mumbles with rosy, swollen lips from the kiss, and seeing this sweet flesh move is not helping Dean’s senses.

“I.”
Dean shudders with nothing else to say, getting up quickly and running away from that place, from that blue glare; from himself.

He runs and runs with a cold breeze engulfing him, leaving Castiel behind, not wanting to look back, pretending that nothing happened, that he didn’t felt a shiver taking over his body; a thrill at his spine while kissing Cas’s velvet lips, or the arousal that budded in his core.

Such cowardice of him, to run away and hide, yet it’s exactly what he does.

Hands are trembling as Dean tries to reach his cabin, but instead of climbing at the stairs to his room, his feet turn around, leading him to the back door of a group of houses. It’s probably half past five, so people are gathering on the dinner hall, however, there’s bonfires placed there to bring some light to the night.

There’s a three cut on the ground with chopped trunks nearby, probably to be used as combustible. It’s a lonely place, perfect for Dean giving some order to his mind. He sits behind the tree; gasping and immediately revisiting the moment he felt the impulse to kiss Castiel. A mouth dried by the cold weather, chapped, but soft against his. Dean lifts one hand to ghost over his lips, closing his eyes, tracing the path of heat their tongues made, while a warmness travels through his chest to his lower belly, irradiating in his pelvis and within seconds the swelling on his pants is so tight that Dean needs to palm it to cease the burn.

An involuntary moan escapes from his throat as he throws his head back. One hand grasps the volume and the other still brushes his mouth seeking the flavor that Castiel left there.

‘No, I can’t!’

He reprimands himself, but clumsily opens the button of his jeans.

‘I shouldn’t!’

Cold fingers pass the waistband of his boxer, taking hold of a solid erection that shivers with the icy breeze.

‘I don’t know him! I don’t like him!’

These thoughts come and go with the same excuses that are dissolved in each new pump he gives on the hungry length, with the thin skin on the red tip covering and uncovering it in every thrust, as pre-come is used to slick the motions of his palm.

‘Cas is a strange!’

He hollers inside his skull, biting his lower lip to not scream.

‘Cas is no one!’

Dean clings to these lies, but none of them is able to mislead the twitch over his scarlet cock.
Cas is-

His legs are struggling to not move over the snow.

'Cas-

The name is the only word echoing in his mind.

'Cas-fuck!'

Blue eyes, sweet lips, a hasten motion in the throbbing cock.

'Cas-

He’s close.

'Cas!

The cold doesn’t even bother anymore.

“Cas!”

The last time he thinks of the name it’s not only a thought, but a yelling, his voice coarse calling for the man he just jerked off to as white spurts of thick come coats his hand.

Small fog spheres blurs his vision as Dean puffs; stagnant lost on his high, however soon his eyes went wide in realization.

“…Shit.”

He mutters smacking the snowy ground in a fist. Dean rubs his face, scratches his scalp as confusion takes control of… Everything.

Words are forming in seconds, less than that; concepts in a mix of feelings and impressions that Dean cannot control, breathing erratic; hands closing around the snow with a blast of thoughts running in his head.

‘I don’t know him; he’s a strange; a dude! God, his lips are soft… No, Castiel means nothing; he’s only somebody else in this camp; Cas is a strange. I don’t like him; I don’t do dudes; I don’t want him! The calm touch; his sweet words. I can’t have it, this sympathy; this care…’

Dean runs a hand over his face scratching it, feeling dizzy and nauseous.

‘I don’t remember him; Cas is so attentive, but then again my hands are so dirty; corrupted. There’s death in me… Why Cas wants me? Do I want him?! I can’t, my hands are filthy; I carry destruction. Castiel is the name of an angel; do angels save people? Can Castiel save me? I don’t deserve to be saved. I killed, I tortured; I did what they asked me to. Cas's lips kissed my rotten mouth; he’s gonna rot with me. I can’t let this happen!’

His breath comes and goes in sharp intakes, as if not enough air is on the atmosphere to feed him.

‘I killed so many, Cas… I did what Alistair told me to do. I tortured; I’m a slaughterer. No soft touches for me; only perdition awaits; there’s no salvation, I’m damned; Castiel… Just like an angel’s name; the blood in my hands; these hands touched him; I tainted him; I’m condemned to hell; no need to be saved; pain and blood, torture, murder; I enjoyed it. I can’t be saved. The suffer, the hate; Castiel can’t save me; consuming, boiling, and burning; please Cas, save me!’
The insistent buzz on his skull returns in full strength. The logs creep loudly in the bonfire and the heat increases. Approaching fast is the night, and looking at the orange light in the sky Dean hears a crowd calling for his name, branding it as in a prayer. He holds his head unable to suck in air, trying to not allow his mind to pull him back there, to that place where he doesn’t want to return, bringing Dean’s steps again in the Arena – to that sickening memory.

“It’s simple, even a brute like you can understand. You go in there, you fight, only one goes out. You refuse and we have our ways to... Persuade”

Azazel talks like a sneer snake, spreading poison on every word. Dean has one purple swollen eye closed, cuts near the joints of his fingers, not enough deep to make him bleed to death, but thin to crack open in abrupt movements, a little present from Alistair, after he refused to kill yesterday’s opponent. The worst part is, Lucifer ordered a public execution – the man’s head was chopped off and hanged on one corner of the Arena, as an advice for future rebellions.

Dean spits a ball of blood, knowing one of his ribs is broken. However the worst is not that; because not only Alistair slashes near the nerve system – where it hurts more – but he also poured salt over the lesions. It’s like burning in the hellfire.

For three consecutive fights Dean refused to kill or even pick a weapon. It was bad for the show. He received scars for five lifetimes, however, he stood still.

That until this day, were he would have his fourth fight. One hour ago Dean was with Alistair in his little torture playground; his wrists constricted in steel chains that carved his flesh. He thought one eye was lost, because Alistair rubbed a blade on the eyeball to dry it off and caused Dean to feel a scratching pain, as if sand was on it every time he blinked.

Under his nipples, he had small incisions, filled with an acid liquid that corroded the fat, but not as much to leave permanent scars. Basically, Dean was wrecked, weary, and yet he didn’t agree to fight.

Nevertheless, there were plans for him, revealed that afternoon after Alistair’s torture. Lucifer came personally, wearing a white dress shirt, looking somehow worried when staring at Dean. A gentle finger lifts his chin almost as if he cared to feel sorry.

“Enough with these games, Dean.” He says with concern “You don’t have to suffer anymore.”

“Bite me…” Dean manages to answers; his throat scorched.

“Don’t be like that, I’m here to help.”

“Yeah, right…”

“I’m going to speak truly to you. I wanted your brother.”

This caught Dean’s attention, an icy chill taking over his sore body. “Since the day the two of you sent me away to forgotten lands, and let me say, this was an overreaction, when I was simply providing for my camp.”

“By killing others.”

“It was part of the process. But, as I was saying, since that day when I first saw Sam, I knew he had, I don’t know... Something familiar. My desire for him hankered on me as if we were destined to one another.”
“This’s sick, you bastard…”

“Oh, please, you’re misunderstanding. I want to have someone to follow my steps, since my little brother, whom I thought would choose me, preferred to leave.”

Dean snorted, grinning.

“So you see Dean, I have a legion of people to rule, not that I can’t handle it, but, of course it would be easier to have my own kin to aid. Unfortunately, Gabriel ran away, Michael defiance me, and Castiel well, the little brother was lost in purpose since our father’s depart.”

“Then you slaved him.”

“No. That was a mistake from my guards; they didn’t know who Castiel was.”

“Sure thing they didn’t.”

“I have no reason to lie, Dean. I’ve always been honest to what I wanted, do you know why?”

Dean tossed his head to one side trying to look bored, but a glimpse of curiosity spoke louder, making him stay in silent in wait to hear Lucifer.

“Because it doesn’t matter how the path heralds itself, I’ll be the last one standing in the final line. Deceiving you is unnecessary.”

“(…You will not win.”

“I already have. Not having Sam… Sucks, for the moment. But eventually he will come for me.”

“What do you want with him?!”

“As I said, there’s a connection between us. I can see in his eyes that Sam has a lot of me inside of him, just waiting to awake and mature.”

“Sam is nothing like you.”

“Perhaps not now, since he has a stubborn brother holding him back from everything he can be.”

“Shut up!”

Azazel snorted a laugh, crossing his arms while playing with a coin between his fingers.

“It will be an equivalent trade. A brother for another, as you stole mine from me.” Lucifer tells him, walking from side to side.

“I saved Cas, you son of a bitch!”

“Like I explained before, Castiel was wrongly captured. His own fault, though, for not staying with me, but I must admire his loyalty to his own beliefs.”

“Allowing your guards to abuse him?!”

Lucifer actually frowns, apparently hurt.

“That was unfortunate, which reminds me: thank you, for stopping those men to go any further.”

Dean scoffs. The two-face son of a bitch.
“But I will show you, Dean, how I am indeed fated to win.”

At the end of his decree, Azazel whirled from the room for brief minutes, increasing Dean’s apprehension. He came back with two young girls tied up, chockfull with bruises, dirty ragged clothes, mouths covered with gags and their eyes were wet, filled with a palpable fear.

“What are you doing?!” Dean asked, locking visions with the girls.

“Azel, please.”

Lucifer didn’t need to explain. Azazel grabbed one of the girls by her blond hair, pulling her from the floor and tossing the body against a table. She thrashed, trying to escape, but the grip on her scalp hurts. Also, the man pressed a small knife under her chin, making her scream a muffled beg to ‘stop’. Her legs were shaking by the time Azazel ran a hand over her back, and then palming the middle of her buttocks. She screamed more.

“Stop!”

Dean spit blood, struggling with the chains holding his wrists. They scratched new cuts, his broken rib ached, but he couldn’t stand watching this and doing nothing. With his desperate yell, Lucifer raised one hand and Azazel stopped, leaving the girl in tears over the table. He approached Dean with an apologetic mien, tilting his head slight to one side.

“You will fight tonight, Dean.”

His green eye widened, gazing Lucifer with anger, disgust, hating this man with all his strength.

“Fight, and for every victory I’ll free one girl from the destiny of, let’s say, serving the guards. Does it sound reasonable enough?”

“…I’ll kill you, you son of a bitch…”

“No, you won’t.”

Dean ducked his head, for he couldn’t feel any power left to resist, to find a way out. How can he deny? How could he live knowing that he was able to at least save some of these poor girls if he said yes? If Castiel were there he’d do the same thing.

Cas… What he will think about it? Would he hate him if he says no to Lucifer? Would he forgive Dean if he becomes a killer?

The girl yelled once more erasing the thoughts of these questions; he can’t ponder over this now, he needs to act to save them.

As Dean releases a thick breath that scalds his guts, he nods with his head weighing a thousand times more. Lucifer displays a serene smile, ordering Azazel to leave with the girls.

The chains are holding Dean up, the only thing maintaining him in place, for his limbs became lifeless, so as the glow on his green orbs. What had he agreed to do tonight on the Arena… He will have to kill; torture somebody else in order to save another. How pathetic it is to believe he’s to decide who lives and who dies. However if he doesn’t do something there will be more deaths, his included, and Dean cannot accept it, not when he has someone to come back. He needs to protect Sam from Lucifer; he needs to come back to Cas...

The massive door of the room opens as Lucifer leaves, but he halts at the doorway, turning his head to face Dean one last time:
"I'll break you, Dean. I'll turn you into one of us, and when your brother sees what you have become he'll beg for me to stop, and that day I'll have Sam. He will say yes to anything I ask in order to protect you."

Dean sees the light vanishing from the room with a single beam behind Lucifer, creating a shadow over his face as he leaves with one last statement.

“So you see Dean, as I said: in the end I win.”

The cold of the snow wakes Dean from the memory. Under his nails he can still feel the mud and dry blood from the Arena the first time he killed. The other guy was so frightened, staring at him with prayers of mercy, yet Dean closed his mind to whatever moral he carried, lurching for him and stabbing the man on the heart.

His hands are cold from clutching at the snow as his brain showed Dean this memory fragment. It doesn’t matter the reasons that guided him to the Arena; it would never justify his actions, nor end his qualm of conscience.

(...) 

For minutes or hours, Dean doesn’t discern how long it has been since he kissed Castiel and ran away like a coward, but his muscles are sore and the cold increased enough to bother him.

Rubbing his face with thick fingers sinking on his skin, Dean stood up a little giddy, walking with unstable legs to somewhere far away from this dark place his mind lead him to, stopping only in front of the porch of his cabin, but he falls before entering the door, pressing again his hand over his head as he sits near the door, closing his eyes in pain.

The sweet taste of the kiss mingled with the remorse Dean had stowed in his chest. He felt filthy, cracked, and it is like he’s dragging Castiel to decay, opening fissures on him the more he lingered by his side. Why he kissed him? What was he thinking? So many “what’s” and “why’s”, unanswered queries, chaotic feelings, and muddled sensations-

“Dean?”

It’s a woman voice. He looks up between his fingers, wrinkling his eyes and finds a brunet that was probably waiting there already, staring at him.

“Are you alright?!” She asks.

“I’m- fine!”

Lifting from the floor he stabilizes a hand on the wall, still shaky.

“Obviously you’re not. Como on, let me help you inside.”

Dean wants to refute, but the woman quickly opens the door placing his arm around her shoulder.
They walk to the nearest chair sitting Dean down.

“Thanks, uh...”

“Risa.”

“Right. Thanks, Risa.”

“No problem. Need anything?”

Shrugging, Dean rests his head over one palm, swallowing hard.

“Water, maybe...”

He means to fetch some for himself, but soon there’s a glass in front of him. Dean grabs it drinking in one go, feeling enhanced.

“You’re good.” He jokes.

“You have no idea.”

Risa licks her lips, not caring at the way she ogles at Dean. He cleans his throat, unsure of how to correspond in his current condition. If he wasn’t so lost, flirting wouldn’t be a problem. She’s smoking hot, and brunet. Dean always had a thing for brunets, like Castiel... Dammit! Not these thoughts again! The woman chuckles, setting a letter on the table.

“Chuck sent me to give you a list of materials for the next raid.”

“Oh, right.”

As he grabs the paper, Risa puts one hand over his, lowering her torso to face Dean. “Your head is really messed up, hm?” She says with a hint of amusement.

“What?” Now he’s really concerned.

“Nothing. I just wanted to see for myself, you know? Be sure you weren’t being a douchebag, pretending you forgot your hock ups instead of using lame excuses.”

“Again, what?!”

Dean retracts his hand staring at Risa while she slowly traces one finger at the wooden chair, talking with a velvet voice:

“It’s a shame you don’t remember our night together.”

Dean gulps, placing the glass on the table, feeling nervous.

“Look, Risa, I-”

“I’m not mad, Dean. Frustrated, I guess.”

“Ah... Why?”

The woman arches one eyebrow, not thinking twice before seating on his lap. Dean grabs her waist on reflex but ducks his head in a small confusion. Risa holds his neck circling her digits, getting
closer, swinging her hips and causing Dean to groan involuntarily.

“Because I was hoping to have you again, but you were with C-” She bites her lip before saying anything “Never mind that, you are here now, with so many things lost in your pretty head. Perhaps I can help bring some of it back.”

Swallowing hard, Dean presses his hands over her, but as much as he feels an interest rising on his pants, his mind is not focused. There’s just so much going on that his brain might explode.

“Common Dean. Don’t you wanna half an hour of fun, no strings attached? Relax a little bit?”

Oh, how Dean needs it; to not think about his job, the camp, or the fact he lost more than a year of his life. The Arena; these memories returning in pained migraines, the deaths, his hands dirty with blood and mud; fingers unsteady as they hold the bone-blade, cutting and piercing, jabbing and chopping, splitting and drilling; body after body, of boys, men, women; pricking and slicing in small pieces—

Risa kisses him with fierce. Dean chokes, rigid in place, with his thoughts turning into mists forms. In the end he allows the excitement of numbness take over, matching her kiss, his hands going up and down of her back, pulling closer, forgetting about everything else. They rock on the chair, Risa already removing her jacket as Dean licks her neck, playing with one firm and soft breast between his lips, then back to her mouth – not so appealing, though, he had better lips on his earlier at the bonfire. He brushed the thought away, palming Risa even more. It’s almost desperate the way Dean craves for another body to fill a hole that is opens in his ribcage every time he recalls of the iron fragrance coming from the blood he spilled.

Or mostly when he tries and tries to remember Castiel, unsuccessful.

Even though, he had collected new memories from the nurse. The way he smiles, his rough voice filled in a coil of concern and care, his perfume; an aroma Dean senses enclosing his air in a massive intensity; or the way his body gets tailored over his, fitting, as if it belonged fused to Cas. And what he had done with the nurse? Demanding his touch, forcing him down into a kiss, knowing he was being a jerk to impose such a thing, aware that Castiel wouldn’t resist; nonetheless Dean was still unable to control the urge to have him, to taste his touch, feel the skin against his own; and…

Dean stops, clasping his fists on Risa’s waist, making her cease the rocking waves on his lap. Dean flickers his eyelids, hovering dulled green orbs to nowhere, breathing in extensive, hard puffs. It’s not right. Not with her, not with anyone else.

The person Dean craves for appears on his mind in a watercolor portrait, smiling sincerely in beautifulness; a pair of blue eyes that speak a thousand words without even requiring to utter anything. Dean breathes in a slurred voice, for his mind is disordered, so many things misplaced, however, his muscles and nerves desired the very same person he rejected due stubbornness, for being uncertain and doubtful; and now this was lashing him back in the face. Dean doesn’t want Risa or no one else.

Dean longs for Castiel.

“Risa, I can’t-”

Dean turns his head sideways, towards the half-open door of his cabin, and when he does, green eyes double its size when meeting blue ones. His face turns pale as Castiel watches Risa’s naked
breast rubbing at Dean, straddling his lap, their bodies panting from the previous action. The nurse is distraught, as if his entire world crumbled in insignificant shards made of him. Cas holds in a choke, bowing his head with incredulity, and then running away.

“Shit!”

Dean shouts, pushing Risa away as the woman curses, grabbing her clothes and also leaving.

He tries to catch the nurse, but he was nowhere to be seen in camp. Perhaps his cabin? Or the clinic?! That’s where he heads anyway, a luck guess, or maybe fate, but whatever it is he’s right, for as he opens the door, confused glares from the patients goes to him, however ignoring it all he dashes inside a cabinet, and sees the nurse turning around in a jolt to face him – his eyes absent and bitter.

“Cas, please! Listen to me!”

“No Dean, no!” He counters with an exhaustion huff “I’m… I’m just tired.”

“Cas…”

“I’m not babysitting you, as you ‘quoted’. You’re a grown man; you can make your own choices, but please do not pretend you’re sorry.”

“Wha-Cas, of course I-”

“We’re done, that’s what you said to me.”

The truth whacks Dean in the face, causing his legs to shake. Those words he once said to Castiel, somehow seemed so, so wrong right now…

“And I accepted the fact that I would never again be with the man I…” Cas hesitates, causing Dean to froze with the words he was about to hear “I would never be with you again. Because they took you from me in that Arena.”

There’s grief in his voice, a sharp breath made of guilty, remorse. Pain, there’s just pain in him.

“But it was fine; I only wanted your full recover, your wellbeing. But… The way you watched me afterwards, or how you are constantly close… The kiss… You know what I want from you, but I have no clue of your intentions!”

Dean is an insignificant ball of shame, inept to say, to move, blink or even breathe.

“I comprehend you’re confused; I do not blame you for what others did; your injury, the captivity; but it just… It just hurt too much!” Castiel back off the tears. He clogs a cry, his throat scorched, and voice grainy with a soggy tone “Then please, enough with mind games, enough with it all.”

“Cas-fuck! I’m not toying with you!”

“Then tell me what you want!” He shouts, causing Dean to gasp.

“I-I don’t…”

How can Dean clarify things when his own mind is missing things? Wanting; not wanting Castiel, pushing him away, kissing him; Dean is in a much more appalling mess than Cas is. His legs try to go forward, yet his feet drags him back. The nurse waits as he looks around formulating an answer,
however, Dean nothing has to bid but misunderstanding and half-apologies. Closing his eyes, Castiel swallows.

“Enough with everything please… Leave me be Dean, it’s all I’m asking.”

Downed, Dean dares to take a step closer, but Cas lifts one hand in the air to halt him. Dean holds one of his wrist as the other clasps the fabric of his jeans.

“Cas, listen-shit, it’s not what you think! I-Risa was-We…”

“Why do you even bother?”

“What!?”

Shaking his head, Castiel pulls his hand away from him:

“Why are you excusing yourself? You and I… We’re not anymore-So why you are here?”

“You’re the one that followed me!”

Castiel widens his eyes, not believing in Dean’s accusations. Of course he followed Dean after the kiss. Their closeness since Sam’s operation made Castiel jumbled, reading all the types of gestures Dean made as a chance for his recovery. However he still didn’t remember a thing; Cas was long gone inside his mind, tossed away, like nothing.

The nurse purses his lips, looking down and shaking his head. It’s too much, too painful, it’s killing him little by little, being so close and not touching, seeing his hand hovering over the air as his fingers feel from the distance the heat emanating from Dean, but never, never approaching him...

“…Just go, Dean.”

He blinks, staring at Castiel in total disbelief. What is he doing? What does he want to explain so badly to Cas? That he didn’t mean to hook up with Risa? At some point he wanted it, to feel another body warmness, but… But she was just not the right one.

“No, Cas, hear me out…”

“I’m begging you, please… Leave.”

Blue irises are mixed with the red color, as tears forms on the corner of his eyes. Dean is apprehensive, what Castiel is asking him – suppliant – it’s all of what he said in the first place when he came back, his own words used against him, however right now everything he wants is to go back in time and undo the madness that his life has turned into. So he can be with Castiel again.

The nurse is wounded, inconsolable, in pain only by being near him. Dean wants to get closer, to embrace him and push away all the wounds and uncertainties between them. But he sees that Cas has his arms holding each side of his ribcage, with such strength, making Castiel look like a statue made of glass, that might break if they remain on the same room any longer. Dean feels his guts swirling in discomfort. He is responsible for this, for hurting Castiel. How could he ever expect any kind of comprehension; or forgiveness? He didn't merit any of it.

For Cas’s behalf, then, because Dean is the one to blame for his misery, he swallows down his selfish wants, obviating his will. Dean closes his hands in fists, feeling the tip of the nails digging
his palms. He won’t force anything else, not for now… However he will not give up.

“…I’m not done.”

It’s his last statement to Cas, who only shakes his head, stiffly closing his eyes. Dean holds his breathe, rubbing his face as he turns around, leaving Castiel alone at the cabinet. He hears a muffled sob once the door is closed, fighting against the urge corroding his chest to come back inside and hold him. The adrenaline accumulated on his veins pushes him outside the clinic to run, to go away, and to let the agony dissolve in the pores of his skin. His legs sprint through camp, marking footprints on the snow; blows of white air leaving his nostrils and agape mouth, as he inhales the cold air like sharps blades passing through his lips.

Dean stops, panting, breathing asymmetrical for half an hour later. What was the point of going after Castiel? What he could’ve said to amend things?! After all the mistakes he had done, how can he possibly expect that Cas will cogitate compassion?!

Why Castiel was there to see it… After the kiss Dean can imagine how confused the guy was – and optimistic. But Risa was in his cabin, eager to make him feel good, to give him what he needed: comfort. And Cas watched it. Fuck! The look on his face, the way his features modeled in melancholy. Dean’s chest clogged with a disquieting anguish. It’s not that he wanted another body to warm him up. Something hidden deep inside him urged for the touch of thin hands to rub his back, stroke his hair; a pair of hands to slide in his ribcage while waking up in the bed together, just like in that memory. His entire being was craving for Castiel.

One resilient impulse throbs in his head again. Dean hisses, trembling, marching to his cabin, but he falls on his knees on the porch, not standing this kind of pain anymore.

It comes in waves; recent memories of the warehouse. Sam talking with Castiel about something that Dean had done before being captured by Lucifer. What did he said to Cas? Did they fight? They argued? About what? Sam says everybody was shocked that day, when he left the camp. Something big happened... But for now –now everything on his head is Castiel’s sadness, or the kiss they shared at the bonfire, the pliability in his plush lips, the way his body stirred in accord to Dean’s without restraint, as if Dean reminded of how to align with the smaller physique... It was intense and scary.

Dean feels the left side of his brain burning, whoever he didn’t let go of the sting this time. He wanted to remember, to push it. Every time something related to Castiel popped on his mind these headaches got worse. There was a bigger picture there, on the maze inside his skull, and Dean was determinate to find his way out. He breathed in for long minutes adjusting to the pain, focusing on the things he knew.

Castiel is a nurse, working at the camp. He’s gentle, caring, but firm in his decisions. He has the utmost deep blue eyes Dean has ever seen, his lips are moist and soft, his tongue is devilishly delicious. And Dean had wounded him many times...

Another stab of pain approached. Dean presses both hands on the sides of his head, cringing his teeth.

No, not now, not another blackout, not yet! Focus! Remember it, remember more, remember him; pull the trigger.

“It wasn’t your fault Dean!”

The voice echoed in his mind… He knew who it was. Castiel’s voice was impossible to not
recognize. There were images forming on the back of his brain, forcing its way to the surface as if the scene was happening in front of his eyes, like a movie. More Dean, focus a little longer, don’t let go yet. Soon the pixels started to glue one to another, becoming a clear vision; Dean was watching a film inside his head.

The dining hall was somewhere nearby, with sounds of whispers and small talk reverberating in the air, however, no voice seemed happy. On the outside of the building there was a fire lit up, but no one was there to watch.

It smelled terrible, as if rotten meat was being cooked there. Trunks were placed in a way to form a bed. On the top of it there was a body. Someone was being cremated.

This was not a bonfire, it was a funeral pit.

Dean tripped on his feet, marching towards the fire. He left the dining hall and everyone in there to mourn over the dead. In one of his hands was a bottle half empty of whiskey. He stole it from Ellen’s personal storage, but he couldn’t care less. This person in there, this boy, God! It was just a boy who died because of him.

With three long sips of the whiskey he rubbed his mouth with the back of his hand, hissing as the alcohol hits his empty stomach. Dean’s eyes were blurred, not focusing on anything. The buzz in his ear caused an unpleasant feeling, and then he heard someone calling for him. A man.

Was it Sam? No, the voice was familiar, but it wasn’t Sam. Who? He looked over his shoulder to see it, to tell them to fuck off and mind their own fucking business. If he wanted to drink until he passes out, that’s exactly what he was going to do. He breathed in, ready to shout at this person, his chest stuffed, but them he let the air go. Because Castiel was walking towards him.

“Dean, please come back.” He pleads with a concerned mien, his hands lifted in a gesture of caution.

“Leave me alone!” Dean shouts drinking more.

“You know that I can’t do that.”

“Sure ya can, Caaass. Just… Turn ‘round ‘n eat widh ya friendshys.”

Castiel sighed taking one step closer.

“You don’t have to do this.”

“Shutd the fuck up!” Dean yells. “You can’t look at me and pretend you don’t blame me! Everybody else does, and they’re rightd!”

“It wasn’t your fault Dean!”

Dean has to laugh after hearing this. With a thumb he sratches his temple, giving a weak smirk.

“I lead them toh their very firstdh fucking raid! And they died ‘cause I wasn’t paying attention.”

“People know the risks…”

“Four boys died Cas… Kevin; Samandriel, Claire. Even… Even Adam… He was such a good boy… I looked at him and saw a little brother, just like Sam, and now… Now he’s on that pit;
burning!"

Castiel put one hand over his shoulder to reassure him, to give something to hang on.
"These boys, all of this... It's terrible; awful. No one likes funerals Dean, but you can't' carry the blame of the world on your shoulders. Others were in the raid too, and they came back."

"You don't get it…"

"I know how you feel about these deaths-"

"No, you don't!"

He shouts twisting his arm, so it leaves Castiel's grip. Dean throws the empty bottle on the fire. The glass explodes in tiny pieces. Castiel blinks, trying to hold Dean’s back, but before he can even move there are arms pushing him backwards against a three. The nurse grunts within the impact, but doesn't give up.

"Dean, please! You have to calm down!"

"You know why I can’t let go?” He asks with his lips close to his face, a voice similar to a manic, reeking of alcohol “Why I can’t walk over this like everybody does?”

Castiel’s eyes double it sizes, looking terrified at this man. Dean squeezes his arms, so much that it hurts; that it’ll leave marks later.

“Because it should have been me in there! ME! The worst fucking leader of this camp who can’t’ even bring back home these boys! I’m a walking disaster! Everywhere I go there's just death!”

“Please Dean, don’t do this to yourself.”

“I must die, I need to die Cas.”

“No..."

“I wish I could trade places with them…”

His hands fall from the grip in Castiel without energy. Ducking his head, Dean looks at the ground, his lips parted, face a complete void. If he had paid more attention to the raids this week; if he had stayed by these boys's side. All of them could've been alive now. So young, killed by enemy bullets. And Dean had promised to protect them. His word equals nothing.

“I wish I could forget everything and everyone.” He says remembering each of their faces, right after being shot; the desperate looks grabbing into this life with all they had, however they still were taken away.

“Dean…” Cas holds his wrist, but Dean’s mind is far away from him now, thinking, and thinking.

“But I can’t… I can’t forget what I did! It’s all in here!” He taps a finger over his head. “And it will never go away.”

Taking a deep breath, Castiel, against a better judgment, comes closer again. One hand rubs Dean’s hair, combing it back in place as he stares the ground, to nowhere, with a couple of vanishing eyes.

“For what it’s worth Dean, I will always be by your side. You know that, right?”
Dean shakes his head, as if to scare these ideas away.
“I want to forget everything.”

“I know.”

“Forget this place, forget the responsibilities; the people... Their faces.”

Cas frowns, placing one hand on Dean’s nape. The leader turns to face him, with features serene and blank in a complete loss.

“Dean?”

“I want to forget you.”

Castiel lunches his head backward, removing his hand from Dean to rest it on his thigh. He blinks, pressing his lips into a thin line not understanding a thing. What Dean is saying doesn’t make any sense.

“Why?” Castiel asks, already feeling his hands shake.

“So I can’t bother you anymore... And you can go on without me. I can’t... I’m destructive, toxic...”

“Would it be easy for you? To forget me?” There is fear and anger on his voice now.

“It would.”

Cas lets go of is hands with an astonished mien.

Dean snorts, winging his body in an inhuman way. He was not himself, he was not being the Dean Castiel knew. He is looking at the fire mesmerized by it, eyes an emotionless fog; features absent, like a ghost.

“I mean, what was it between us? Me fucking you, feeling good every night, and that’s it.”

“Dean...” Cas swallows hard, with his eyes becoming wet.

“All I need is to know this. And forget you, babe? It would be easy. Like I always do with anyone, with my fucks, then-”

There’s a gasp, a motion. Castiel starts to walk away, incapable of hearing anymore of these... These lies!

He does not believe in Dean when he is saying those things, especially on an alcoholic condition, but the mere thought hurts him severely, to imagine Dean not recognizing him, or if he himself forgot about the leader...

Castiel will go away to give him some space, to not hear another hurtful word.

Dean turns his head then, to face Cas for the first time since he started talking shit. But he doesn’t see the man by his side anymore. The feeling of not having the nurse around to sustain him is disturbing.

What was he saying to this man he was so excessively in love? That he wanted to forget him?

Maybe yes. Maybe this would’ve been better; if Dean can’t remember Castiel. That way he can pretend it doesn’t hurt, that he doesn’t care about him.
Because it frights Dean, the fact that he can’t live without Castiel; that he can’t lose him. And what if he becomes another number? Another body to burn? Dean can’t even cogitate it, he just can’t. So he wishes to forget about him, to erase the pain, all of these stupid emotions overflowing. Emotions… It only complicates everything.

Dean is a soldier, and as one he must remain focused on the mission, and the mission only. There’s no space for feelings, or anyone. Not even Cas.

But then he sees the silhouette of Cas getting distant as the seconds passes by, and his stomach hurts again. As much as he wants to cease the agony, Dean just can’t let him go. Because he is weak. Dean needs his brother and friends, even if he is contaminated; he prefers to kill them slowly everyday than being alone at all. He prefers to poison Cas little by little and watch him rotten together with him.

Dean can’t lose Castiel, because without him he is nothing.

Trembling, he gets up, running towards Cas, clasping his chest on the back of the nurse as his arms wraps around his shoulders, holding him tight. Dean’s eyes are wet, the alcohol freeing any inhibitions with tears falling in the junction of Castiel’s neck. Dean leans his head there, inhaling his scent.

Cas breathes in, feeling that Dean is shaking. He sighs and slides both hands to hold Dean’s over his chest.

“It’s okay Dean.”

“Don’t leave me.” He begs with a shuddering voice.

“I won’t.”

“Don’t forget ‘bout me.”

“Never.”

Castiel turns around to face Dean, drying the tears on his cheeks tears with his thumbs and cupping his jawline, kissing him. Cas slowly pushes his tongue inside, stealing the pain from Dean, taking away the guilt he is feeling. He rests their foreheads together, then, Dean’s palms sliding down to the waist of the smaller one, as the fire is still strong burning near them.

“Do you still wish to forget me?”

Castiel inquires, and Dean opens his eyes to stare the nurse. He doesn’t want to forget, but deep inside he knows it would be for the best, to let Cas go, to give him a chance to meet a better person, because Dean soon is going to drag him to a black hole.

And this Dean can’t stand, losing his brother, losing Castiel. He needs them so fucking much.

So he doesn’t want to forget because he is pathetic like this.

There is no reply, just a head nodding to assure Castiel. Dean cannot forget him – even if in the depths of his skull he knows he should. With watery eyes, Dean smashes their mouths, drowning in Castiel, his taste, his perfume, his entire being, and only doing so he is comforted.
Back at the porch of his cabin, Dean opens his eyes with astonishment filling the green spheres. His head is burning, but it was the first time he remembered a full conversation without blacking out. It also lightens his thoughts, connecting these memories of what Balthazar have told him. A failed raid, his distress over it, the way he hurt Castiel.

No wonder Cas is so devastated. He must hate Dean; after what he said to him that day; on the way he treated the person who only took care of his injuries once he was back from Lucifer’s hands without memory. The way Cas’s face showed pain as he saw Risa on his cabin… How much more of a jerk Dean can be to the man who only wants his happiness? He feels awful, filthy, a piece of nothing. And more than ever he wishes to reclaim control of his own mind.
“Sam could you… Could you tell me? How I met him?”

Sam is on the bed with sheets over his legs to warm them up. He is still in recover, but is getting better. Dean comes to visit every day to check him out, make sure he eats and exercises, causing Sam to roll his eyes every time. However, those visits never lead to a small talk, or any conversation that flown into deep topics.

Jess told Sam about the gossip around camp over what happened with Dean and Risa, the fact that Castiel was miserable at the clinic, finishing his work earlier so he could go back to his cabin alone. Sam was ready to argue with his brother; but Dean was also depressed, if not worse than Castiel, making him postpone the discussion. Nonetheless Dean’s question is odd, so obviously Sam frowns putting down the book.

“Why do you wanna know that?”

Dean just shrugs. He doesn’t know why, really. But after that day at the clinic when he saw Balthazar pressing his lips on the nurse’s, the one he himself shared with Cas and… Everything else… He can’t help the way his brain started to machinate with thoughts about Castiel. His memory is still damaged. There’s nothing new, but there is always glimpses of Castiel in there, laughing, walking, hugging him, and laying down on his bed – their bed. And also there is the reminiscence of the fight at the bonfire… Dean needs to know more, needs to be certain that some part of him is really starting to remember Castiel. Then maybe, hearing about their story will help.

“Can you tell me or what?” He counters, sitting on the bed.

Sam sighs, adjusting himself with a little discomfort on the matters, so he can be face to face with Dean.

“Exactly how much you want to know?” Sam asks.

Weakly shaking his head, Dean swallows hard, not meeting his brother’s eyes.

“From the start, I guess.”

Sam scoffs, rubbing his nose. Yeah, like Dean was going to make it easy for him. But if he wanted to know everything, well, Sam could do it. Maybe helping both of them: his brother and Castiel. Thus, licking his mouth he parts his lips and begins the story.

“We went to a raid one day…”

One year ago

Dean was on his bed when Chuck came in a hurry, calling for an important meeting. Sam, Benny and Jo were already waiting for him in the planning hall. He tries to ask innumerous times what is going on, but all Chuck says is that they’re in trouble. Hell of a way to wake up. He opens the door before Chuck can do it. Faces in concern stares at him, showing anxiety. Jo is the first one to speak.

“Finally! Common Dean, we’re wasting time!”
“We need to be sure Jo.” Sam states.

“Oh, like what they saw wasn’t enough certainty!”

“It’s too risk.” Benny concludes.

“For Christ’s sake! Its lives we’re talking about!” Jo hits one hand at the table, startling everyone.

“Hey!” Dean shouted, as heads turned towards him “Can someone tell me what the hell is going on?”

“What’s going on?” Jo mimics him “I’ll tell what’s going on! That demon dick is what’s going on!”

Since the girl was clearly infuriated, not making any sense, Dean huffed, gesturing for his brother:

“Care to elaborate?”

“Two guards came from the morning patrol telling us some... Disturbing news.”

“What was it?”

“You remember Lucifer?”

Dean does. The guy is a devil who commanded a camp, miles away, but that somehow manages to cause trouble in a large area. They dealt with his raids crossing limits more times than he recalls. As each camp have a truce going on, they decided to mark frontiers, so further problems could be avoided. With monthly encounters, the leaders talk about new arrangements, but always being polite – mostly.

However Luc never played by the rules, ignoring warnings, going against their truces. They tried to reason, but the man was unbendable. Also, he developed an obsession over Sam since the first time they met. Finally, after acquiring no success with the peaceful way, all of the others five camps exiled him.

But after half year he was apparently back and with a new group of followers.

“How many?” Dean asks.

“Almost a thousand.” Chuck answers.

“And that’s not the worst part.” Jo cringes her teeth, getting up from the chair.

“There’s more?”

“The guards told us about one specify cargo a truck from Lucifer’s new camp was transporting.” Benny crosses his arms, pointing to one road at the map displayed at the table.

“Luc is making captives; ‘rescuing’ people, as he says, but…”

“Spit it out Sam!” Dean has his patient lost by this point, causing Sam to sigh.

“He is making them slaves.”

“...What?”
“He convinces these people to go back with him, promising protection, and then he selects the stronger ones for God knows why, as the others are turned into slaves.”

“That’s bullshit.”

“Ah, hello Dean? World is a chaos?” Jo says sarcastically.

“Well, fuck this. What are your suggestions, Jo? To go over there and hunt the guy down?”

“If we have to.” She answers back “We can’t let this pass by! We are not barbarians!”

“This will bring a lot of troubles…” Dean says trying to be tolerant, rubbing his temple, because he can only think about what a big incursion like this can bring to their camp. People are being slaved, fine, that’s terrible, but they also have a huge place to maintain.

“Dean, I don’t care if you are an insensitive brute; there was a time were saving people was more important to you than numbers!”

Jo is really push with Dean since they know each other for a long time; from before the war. And maybe Dean is being simple and logical, but there’s a limit to when one can be heartless.

Huffing, Dean scratches his nape. Number, Jo says. Well, they sure as hell might need a few extra hands.

“Alright. What you wanna do?”

“That’s what I wanted to hear.” The blond smiles.

“Jo wants to put an end to this.” Chuck raises one eyebrow that says: this is a bad idea.

“Of course! Luc is forcing people to work, torturing, even prostituting them.”

This seems to awake an ancient fury dormant in Dean, making him tenses his jaw. Even for him there’s a line of things he’s ‘okay’ with. Forced prostitution and slavery is something way beyond that mark.

“Our guards not only saw the truck carrying the ‘slaves’, but they also heard, you know…” For the first time the girl purses her lips, feeling disgust “Lucifer’s men were deciding who was going to be the first one to have their time with a few girls crouched on the floor. They ripped their clothes, analyzing their bodies, even looking at theirs teeth, before…” She gasps “It was horrible only listening to it.”

“I agree it’s terrible, but facing Lucifer, again? After all the trouble he made… We need a better plan.” Sam sighs looking at his brother. “It can be a trap.”

“We only have to free those girls.” refutes Jo.

“We can use more people helping around, Sam.” Dean says, interrupting Jo “Besides… I think I would like seeing Lucifer’s face when we are done.”

“Dean, we need to think…”

“No, we’re going, period.”

Scoffing, Sam rubs the tip of his nose crossing his arms in a visible irritation.
“Why? Because you said so?”

“Damn right. I’m the leader, aren’t I?”

“I thought we were in this together.”

“Except that I’m right and you’re wrong.”

“Like always, then?”

“Oh, shut your mouth and do as I say at once!”

“Okay! This is enough!” Jo yells, coming to stand between the brothers “Leave the family drama for later.”

Dean agreed, thinking he heard Sam saying ‘just like dad’, but choose to ignore it for now. He is the older brother, he is right and Sam will have to deal with it.

Despite the fact Dean was supposed to call for a meeting with the others leaders before doing anything, they have to prevent this car from reaching the frontier. A messenger is sent to alert the camps about his doings, for the urgency of the situation enforced him to act without consent. Dean can handle the consequences later. Fortunately he’s friends with almost every camp leader, and since they control a water deposit, the punishment won’t be impetuous.

Takes them only twenty minutes to organize and recruit a few people to accompany in the rescue operation. Chuck stays behind to provide a place for the new incomings. Before leaving, though, Dean hears a lot of whispering, the residents gossiping of how they don’t have much space to share. A woman is talking to him directly open, while Dean is loading his gun.

“I’m not here to give explanations.” He bluntly answers, making sure he engages his gun before heading to his truck.

She is taken abash, turning away from Dean with a hint of fear in her eyes. No one else complains.

The fleet, for what they know, is heading to a gas station where Lucifer stores some supplies. Once restocked, they’ll head back to the newly camp, going south. Two trucks are carrying people to be used as slaves. That’s their objective: go in, take them, and leave swiftly.

There’s a big truck with girls being dragged to it. They scream and are hit; clothes being torn as the guards probe their bodies with smirks. Dean signals for Jo and Benny to go there while he and Sam walk to another vehicle. They hide behind trees, hearing two other men talking joyfully, and their words make Dean wants to lacerate their guts.

“Common, how he will even know?” One of the guards asks.

“Dunno man, he’s like a devil, he can tell. Besides, orders are to take only women.”

“Girls are already too wasted from the others, besides this guy won’t say a word, sure thing Luc won’t notice if we play a little.”

“I didn’t know you’re a fag.”

“Hey, if it has a hole for me to fuck I don’t judge. And have you seen this guy?”

Dean’s stomach swirls. Human race was suffering from the war, dieses, infestations and killing, yet some men prefer to act as beasts, destroying what little is left. He grabs tight at his gun,
breathing, remembering himself to not shoot the bastards. They’re here only to free people in incognito. Breathe in, ignore their claims. Wait for the signal, wait for the signal...

“I’m going in.”

The taller man says, making Dean widens his eyes. He enters the back of the truck as his friend laughs, lighting a cigarette. Dean sucks in air, his finger trembling on the trigger. A scream erupts from the truck, suffocated by a loud ‘thud’, and that’s it. Dean signs with one hand to Sam, who is frantically shaking his head ‘this is a bad idea Dean’, he murmurs, but he doesn’t care.

Killing is part of this world, but this? This is unhuman, even for those who fight for survival in these destroyed lands. It’s not going to happen, not under his watch, because Dean has a small portion of him that still gives a fuck.

Cursing, Sam follows his lead from tree to tree, hiding where they can find cover, and a few feet away from the first guy, Sam launchers towards him, constricting his neck with his broad arms, choking the guard. At the same time, Dean stops with his back on the entrance of the truck. He breathes slowly; angling his head to eye the guard, who is standing up inside the vehicle as he talks with someone knelt in front of him, moving his head back and forth. The guard moans while rocking his waist to meet the guy’s bobbling.

“Now common, suck it well sweetheart. The more spit you put on it the easier will be to fuck your beautiful hole.”

Dean’s jaw tenses. He hears a sob coming from the guy being forced to swallow down the guard.

“And no teeth this time or you know, I won’t be nice anymore.”

The poor guy gasps sharply among slurp sounds as if he was holding a cry. He is tied and also: there’s a gun pointed to his head. The guard is in ecstasy, clutching the guy’s dark hair as he shoves his dick down his throat, fucking himself on his mouth.

“Hm, think I’m gonna cum on your face then fuck you later…” The guard groans, as the guy chokes another cry.

Holding firmly his shotgun, because the time is short, Dean sees Sam dropping with caution the guard he blacked out on the ground, looking around to give him cover. Sam nods to Dean, and he has his backup set.

Dean jumps to the truck, aiming at the guard. He turns around with his pants down on his thigh, dick throbbing on the guy’s mouth, gun in hand, and he tries to shoot, but Dean is faster. He kicks the guy’s leg, as their distance was little, then he pulls the trigger quickly, striking his belly and torso with two shots. The guard whimper, falling lifeless. The sound will probably alert his companions, however Dean is just too pleased. One less scum to deal.

On the corner of his eye he notices the guy with a black rag over his eyes, blinding him, with both arms stiff in front of his face to protect himself as he gasps disoriented. He’s covered in dirt, bruises and cuts probably from a fight. There’s a thick saliva dripping from his chin, his shirt is open, and where Dean sees skin - which is almost everywhere - there are injuries of sliced flesh, purple and black dots on his arms, his chest, legs. And his pants are ripped, as if a wild animal ragged it; the jeans ruined floppy on his thighs.

“Shit…”

Dean mutters kneeling in front of him. The closer motion alerts the guy, who starts to struggle,
waving his constricted hands in an attempt to hit this person he can’t see. Dean frowns dodging the blind blows, but this guy is really strong, so he needs to be careful.

“Hey, hey I’m here to help!”

Dean says, but the guy doesn’t buy it, using now his legs to move away. Snapping his tongue, Dean has to hold the guy on the floor by his shoulders. He screams a stifled cry in desperation.

“Look man, I need you to stay calm so I can cut this rope!”

The guy starts to puff, but somehow Dean’s voice seemed to calm him. He still curls into a ball, but is less aggressive, although Dean can tell that a wrong move will make him receive a hell of a kick.

“I have a knife.” Dean says and maybe that was the stupidest phrase ever ‘cause the guy is hostile again “Oh, common! I’m just gonna cut the ropes, then remove this rag, ‘kay?”

Gasping, the guy tenses his body, but allows Dean to do what he said. First he rips off the ropes, quickly seeing the guy sitting up to hold his own torso, in an attempt to hide his nakedness. Dean sighs, guarding the knife.

“I’m gonna take this thing off your eyes now.”

Dean puts his fingers under the fabric with a gentle touch so he doesn’t scary the guy even more, sliding it up and out of his face. When the cloth is removed his breathing is slower now, calmer, but his eyes are solid closed adjusting to the light. His fists go up in a defense position. Dean leans back sitting on his feet to give the guy some space.

“It’s okay buddy, you’re safe now.”

The guy takes a deep inhale, opening his eyelids leisurely, lifting his jaw with cautiousness, and then facing his savior.

For a second Dean holds a chest full of air, thinking only about blue.

This guy has big indigo blue orbs that shouldn’t belong to any human being. He stares at Dean with a palpable fear, like a deer ready to flee at any sight of danger, but there’s something more in there: gratefulness.

Dean can’t move or process any coherent thought. It’s like those eyes hypnotized him.

Licking his red and damp lips – from what he was doing with that guard moments earlier – the guy stammers; however his voice is still rough enough for Dean to be surprised with the deep tone:

“You… Who?…” The guy tries to ask, but even words are difficult to form.

“Name’s Dean, we’re from a camp nearby. Look, I can give details later, but trust me, we’re here to help.”

Swallowing hard the guy nods faintly, raising one hand to rub his mouth, where he seems to realize only now the drying spit. For the first time the guy starts to shake his body, covering himself wherever he can, pursing his lips and twisting his head to not look at Dean. He is ashamed. And this thought brings a new level of disgust to the leader, who can only hate those who made this guy – and any other – suffer.

“Shit…” Dean mutters removing his dark green jacket to put it around the guy’s quivering
shoulders “These son of bitches... Common buddy, let’s get ya outta here.”

Once he feels the warm coat covering him from back to waist the guy is less worried. With one hand supported on the truck he gets up, holding his pants, being followed by Dean’s eyes. He jumps out first, extending his arm for the guy to grab. Normally Dean wouldn’t be so gentle with a dude – or with anyone, period - but for what he’d been suffering... He can hold in his pride and manliness.

Moreover, there’s just something about the way those blue eyes shine that causes Dean to feel less... Stoic.

Grateful for the help, the guy reaches Dean’s hand with wobble fingers, but his hold is strong enough for Dean to notice that he put up a great fight against his captors, thus explaining the beating he received.

The sunlight makes the guy grunts, covering his vision. When he is standing on Dean’s side he sees Sam, giving a small gulp and swiftly hiding behind his savior, with a hand unsteadily gripping at his biceps.

“It’s okay, he’s my brother.” Says Dean, feeling his own arm shaking due to this guy’s quaking.

“Jesus, Dean...”

Sam mutters with a sad mien after looking at the guy’s condition.

“We need to go now Sam.”

“Yeah... Yes, you’re right, let’s go.”

Sam runs ahead with his gun aimed, for Dean is too concerned with this guy – who now he takes as his responsibility – to pay attention to anything else on their surroundings.

It’s no longer before they hear gunshots, Ash’s truck rushing towards them as Jo and Benny are on the back, firing against another group of guards. Dean eyes the guy, who is looking at the scene with wide blue eyes, and then grabs his arms to pull him together, running to the vehicle to avoid the crossfire.

“Move Dean, move, move!”

Ash yells, turning the wheels so the back of the truck is directed to them. Sam jumps first, rolling to the front seat to shot against the guards, as Dean goes up right next, extending his hand for the guy. He pants, falling on the metal floor, breathing hard and grabbing the coat at his shoulders and cornering on one side of the vehicle.

“Decided to finally join us, mate?” Benny teases, recharging his gun.

“Shut up and shoot.”

Jo laughs as they close the doors using the small windows on each side of the truck to aim against their attackers. Ash is fast though, leading the group away from the street, driving fast over a shortcut to outwit the guards. After one minute of silence they all feel safe enough to sit down and lock weapons, laughing.

“Wow, that was awesome!” Jo barks in a puff.
“It was stupid. But at least we practice our aim.” Dean says with a half-smile.

“Doesn’t matter. We saved some people today.”

Agreeing with Sam, Dean looks around the truck seeing six girls crying and mumbling ‘thank you’ over and over again. Jo goes to sit with them, to make sure they are all alright. He sees the guy he rescued with eyes closed, holding tight at his green coat on the other side. Patting Sam on the back, he walks to the guy, sitting next to him.

“Hey pal, how you’re doing?”

Dean asks and the guy lifts his head in surprise, facing him with a brighter pair of indigo irises. Licking his dry lips he ponders for a while, finally answering.

“I think… I never had been better.” He admits, taking a deep breath. His eyes get watery for the first time. “Thank you, thank you…”

“It’s okay, no need to thanks. It was the right thing to do.”

And after what he witnessed it really was, Dean believes.

“No one cared before…”

“Well, I do, but that’s just how I roll, so we’re cool, okay pal?”

He snorts a little.

“Alright.”

They stay quiet for some time; the guy finally puts the green coat on, closing the zipper ‘till the collarbone. The warmth is instantaneous.

“I’ll return your jacket as soon as I can.” He says with genuine concern.

“Shit man, don’t worry ‘bout it.”

“But you lend it to me…”

“It’s fine.”

“I don’t think…”

“Relax man. This thing looks better on you, anyway.”

There’s a glimpse of what might be another ‘thanks’ coming from his mouth, but the guy stops right way, nodding instead. Dean shrugs, rubbing his nape.

“Name?”

“What?”

“Your name. I can’t call you ‘pal’ all the time.”

“Oh. It’s Castiel.”

“What?”
“Castiel. It’s the name of an angel.”

Dean is ready to make a joke about it- the pun is right on the tip of his tongue: “did it hurt when you fell?” - but somehow, looking directly at those blue orbs, he is incapable of doing so. He looks too innocent and decent for this mess of a world, almost as if he wasn’t from... Earth itself.

Named after an angel, huh?

“Okay, cool.” Dean pinches his nose “Nice meeting ya Cas.”

The guy frowns, tilting his head at the nickname, but nothing says.

 “…Likewise Dean.”

Changing positions, Castiel tries to find a better way to sit without showing too much skin. However his jeans are so ruined that it’s an unmanageable attempt. He huffs, crossing his legs, using the jacket to cover any groin displayed areas. A shiver runs Dean’s spine after seeing his discomfort, just imagining what he went through with those guards, for how long they’d...

“I’m sorry we couldn’t come before these guys... You know? Had their way.” Dean says sincerely, staring at the floor with a glimpse of embarrassment.

“They didn’t.” Castiel answers “That guard, he was the first to... He forced it, but... You rescued me right on time.”

Dean spins his head to look at him with surprise.

“So he never...” Dean coughs “Get to, ya know? All the way?”

“He tried before.” Castiel turns to face Dean “But I bite him.”

Dean widens his eyes and tries to imagine the scene – the pain goes right to the middle of his legs, and he involuntary presses a palm over his dick.

“Ouch. I mean, not that he didn’t deserve it, but still... Ouch.”

That was the first time Dean made Castiel smile.

Sometime later, Dean understands that the first time he saw Castiel’s smile, he thought something like: holy shit... And it was right there that he was completely doomed.

Dean is incredulous. Castiel’s story was... It hurt just hearing about it. Kidnapped, raped, beaten... And Dean apparently saved him from this hell.

“Shit...”

“Yeah.” Sam agrees.

“You weren’t joking when you said we had a connection.”

“It’s more than just a connection Dean, it’s...” Sam sighs “Look, if you’re interested now, then you need to remember these things by yourself.”

Opening his mouth to argue, Dean looks at Sam without an answer ready, giving up to his
brother’s wits.

“But… How?”

“Force it, like you said you can.”

“What if… What if I don’t remember?”

“At least you’ll have tried.”

“Oh, right, thanks for the tip, bitch!”

“You’re welcome, jerk.”

Dean laughs, happy to know he and Sam manage to retain old habits – annoying one another with the names and pranks. Even when they were growing up with an inattentive father. Snuffling, Dean rubs a hand over his mouth, gawking at an empty spot on the cabin.

“Do you know why Lucifer wants you?”

A huge frowns appears on Sam’s face, as if Dean had gained another head. He parts his lips, and then closes it, too misplaced in the inquiry.

“Where that came from?”

Shrugging, Dean bends his torso on the bed, this time watching the floor.

“I… Remembered some things he told me when I was his prisoner; that he wanted to take you as his apprentice or something.”

Sam lowers his head, his jaw tensing the same way Dean does when distressed. There’s a long sigh catching his brother’s attention, who lifts his gaze towards him.

“Before I planned your rescue I was so infuriated that I went after Lucifer by myself. We met on a town south-camp.”

Dean stiffs on the mattress.

“… What happened?”

“He told me the truth; I mean, what he claims is the truth.”

“And?”

“That he needs loyal people following him, because he believes he’s the one that should command this world.”

“That’s… A pretty messed up idea. Sauron stile.”

Snorting, Sam arches his eyebrows and gives his brother a look that says ‘really?’

“How can you lost your memory, but remembers the references?”

“It’s a gift.”

Sam rolls his eyes, returning to his speech.
“Anyway. Lucifer is not stupid. He’s not immortal, although I think that’s what he sought to be. So he wants to have someone with the same vision he has to give continuity to his ‘work’. To spread the word.”

“What the hell? Does he think he’s god?”

“Maybe.” Sam answers with certain. Lucifer always appeared to them vestured in self-confidence and an ego capable of crushing you with the mere idea of it. Plus the fact he had conquered some power over the war since the military abandoned the country. He is crazy, but at the same time his reputation is not something to overlook.

“But why you?” Dean asks after pondering for a while.

“Because none of his brothers agreed with him.”

“And do you?”

“Of course not. But for some reason Lucifer believes in this, and thinks I can be of use. He says I can be something greater, but that-

The phrase stays hanging in the air for some while, which angers Dean – to have an important information being interrupted and hidden from him.

“That’ what?”

Hovering his hazel orbs over the room, Sam breathes in deep, finding courage to face his brother.

 “… That you hold me back.”

Dean nearly rises from the bed, but instead closes his fists taking a sonorous inhale. What Lucifer knows about them?! And how he has the nerves to say this to Sam? Anything Dean does is with the purpose of protecting his little brother. It’s not like he’s ordering him around, not like… What their father did; with rules and dictations. Dean is not like this… He is not…

“That day you meet him…” Dean murmurs more to himself than to Sam, but he has to know “What did he said?”

“Nothing much.” Sam shrugs, cleaning his throat “He offered to trade you for me, but I told Lucifer to ‘fuck off’, almost shot him, however I still needed to find you. So I lured him, saying I was going to think. That’s when I planned the whole thing.”

“The attack on his camp, right?” Sam nodded “How’d you find it?”

“Castiel did.”

A shiver runs his body imagining the words Balthazar used to describe Cas during his disappearing, the nurse torturing in order to find the runaway leader.

Feeling lethargic, Dean finally got up, being followed by Sam’s eyes. He marches to one side to another of the cabin, wanting to punch, slice, fight… But he blocks this drive.

He’s too tired; he has other things to worry about now. And Sam has Jessica. Groaning, Dean says he’s gonna rest for a while, holding the door open before saying one last thing.

“You’re nothing like him, Sam.”
His brother nods, acquiescing with a drained voice.

“I know Dean, I know.”

What else he could say? What else Dean could do, but to trust his brother? It doesn’t matter what people say, Sam is the real stubborn of them both, always fighting against dad’s orders, trying to solve things on his own, showing he was capable of doing everything by himself. John never let him go of his eyes. And for so long after his death Dean did the same, giving orders and obeying the last mission his father entrusted him: to take care of Sammy.

But for this Dean can trust him. Sam have Jess and so many others that care about him. The world has ended, but they are still here, they still have each other to count on. It’s all they need to know to persist.

It’s what Dean hopes is enough.

Giving a weak smile, he leaves then, closing the door behind him.

When alone, Sam does not open his book, much less try to move his legs, as he should in his still weakened state.

Instead his mind is traveling to the day he encountered Lucifer. If Dean knew what his little brother hides behind that serene face, he would be afraid.

Lucifer’s proposals, although he didn’t want to admit, left Sam balancing on a pendulum of uncertain.

Before his depart, Dean had been too stressed that week, due to the loss they went through in the raid. He was ordering Sam to do as he commanded, because he was right, period. Dean’s demands and his temperamental personality ascended. All camp noted, as the fearless leader had become cold and calculating, sometimes in situations where compassion was needed – he shoot a guy on the head because he was infected with a disease without warning anyone. It shocked the viewers, to say at least.

So yes, when Lucifer began to tell Sam all those half-truths of him being held back... A part of Sam believed in them; wanted to surrender to what they represented, to that freedom, so he would be able to conquer a space of his own where he could speak and be heard.

Without a doubt, Dean bossed him around, even quoting his father, John, on occasions, causing an immense discomfort in Sam.

Lucifer said he suffered the same fate with his older brother, who refused to see he was right. And Sam… He could be so much more without Dean.

Dean got captured by his own selfish actions because his mind was a mess.

Sam was ready to surrender himself in order to save Dean. To hell if he didn’t understand, but for the first time in a long life of submissive treatment he was going to have a voice. Not even Jessica was able to take this idea away from him.

However the one who brought Sam back to reality was Castiel.

During the days of wrath in Dean, not even Castiel could reach his brother, being pushed away, humiliated even, just to bear a regretful Dean at night on their cabin.
One day, in the middle of the camp, Castiel tried to make Dean stop the drinking by grabbing at the bottle in his hand and throwing it away. Dean closed his fists and was ready to deliver the first punch on Cas’s jaw, but a better part of him made Dean stop. However, the disbelief in Cas was tremendous.

But despite those fights and fears, the threats everyone could hear, full of cruel words, Castiel always received him back. The nights were theirs to mourn and love, and in the morning they’d start it all over again. When Sam had to make his final decision he asked Cas, with red eyes and uncertainties, why he does it, why Cas constantly takes Dean back.

“Dean would do the same for me. He fights for his family, dies for them if he needs to. However he believes no one will fight for him, or rather, that he doesn’t deserve to be saved. But he does. Dean is worth fighting for. I… Dean is the most righteous man I’ve ever met. He would sink in darkness in order to save others. How can I not accept a man like this back?”

Castiel words engraved in Sam’s soul like a hot metal marking him. The man had described every inch of Dean in these scares words, peeling him into his most primordial essence. What Lucifer offered him was a way out. But that’s not what Dean always have done for him, because you don’t give up on family.

On that same night, Sam planned a scheme to rescue his brother from the Arena.

Dean might not see it yet, how Castiel is the absent piece to his life – has always been. His mind remains clouded with canyons of missing memories forcefully stolen from him.

It’s been a while since Sam had prayed, for whatever force still watching over this empty and less than a half of a world. But tonight he joins his hands in a plea, closes his eyes and utters for his soul to ascend into the sky, asking for this God to protect Dean, to make him remember the one capable of filling these ruptures.
Dean observes the camp with no enthusiasm. What his brother told him, his story with Castiel… It’s so much more intense than what he imagined. The lights of the clinic are already off, so Cas probably is on his cabin sleeping. Dean moans with the thought. And of course he needs to pass through the nurse’s place, where he sees him talking with Balthazar. He didn’t intent to spy, but it’s exactly what he does, hiding behind a house on reflex.

“He’s a dick Castiel.” Balthazar utters, motioning his hands in the air “Don’t waste your time with him.”

“Balthazar, please…”

“I’ve always said that to you. He’s trouble, he’d hurt you, and now where we are?”

A burning desire to beat the crap out of this guy possesses Dean, but he sucks it in. It’s not like Balthazar is lying…

“My day was exhaustive. I will rest now.” Castiel says opening his door.

“I would never hurt you Castiel.” He says, holding his wrist “Please, just… Consider it.”

The nurse sighs, but nods in a weak smile, going inside. Balthazar departs as well after glaring at his door for some seconds, leaving Dean to think: what the hell was he talking about?!

Did Balthazar wanted to be with Cas?! The fucker! As if Dean would allow this to happen! Castiel is-

What? His friend? His lover? At the moment they’re nothing but the cause of misery to one another. Groaning, Dean rubs his face feeling numb, giving up to tiredness. His brother is right: he needs to remember Cas. There’s no turning back now, he can’t stand being the only one who doesn’t know things about himself anymore.

Dean runs to the dining hall where Ellen is finishing supper. He enters the kitchen marching to Ellen. The cooker takes her eyes out of the stew for brief seconds, and scoffs.

“Dinner is going to get ready in half an hour, boy.”

“I need a whisky, Ellen.”

She then really looks at him, leaving the spoon inside the pan, one hand on her waist as the other points at him.

“I’m not here to feed your addiction, boy. Now get out before-”

“Ellen, please it’s not that!” He shouts, rubbing his mouth “I just need it… Trust me.”

“What for?”

He sighs deeply, whispering to her:

“I need it to get my memory back. I know it sounds stupid, but I gotta try everything, Ellen. I
wouldn’t ask if it wasn’t important.”

She just stares at him with a frown, getting out of his view. Dean huffs, thinking that he will need to sneak in the kitchen later, but then a nearly half bottle of whiskey comes out of a shelf. Ellen still holds it while pointing a finger at him.

“I’m not gonna give you a speech about the trouble we have to find these things, because you’re the one who goes into supply runs in the first place, but I’m gonna tell you: this is better be put in good use, or I swear to God I’ll clout your head myself.”

With a renewed confidence, Dean nods to her.

“Thanks, Ellen.”

The thing Dean realized since his first headache during memory assaults, is that his head hurts as if he was on a hangover. So his plan was simple: get drunk, go to sleep and see if his mind works better boosted. He doesn’t eat dinner this night - anything to help getting stoned sooner.

He goes to his cabin, throws his jacket on the chair and sits on the bed with the bottle in hand. Drinking is something he always enjoyed. It helped to forget about his problems; and now he hopes it to do exactly the opposite. In a few quick sips he’s heading to half flask in less than an hour, already feeling the tinkle behind his ear.

Eyes are becoming blurred, fingers prickling, however he keeps drinking, until there’s only a thin brown line on the end of the bottle. The glass falls on the floor, not breaking, but bouncing, and Dean hits his back on the bed, covering his forehead with one arm. Lights starts dancing in front of him, sounds are becoming stuffy, and there’s an echo of just everything buzzing.

The same pain as of a memory trigger knocks in his head.

No longer than five minutes later his brain hurts like hell, and he’s on Morpheus lands, intoxicated, with images of a beautiful blue sky flying over him.

Dean remembers Cas talking to him without blacking out. That’s also because he’s sleeping and drunk when his mind works. It appears he can travel among memories just as a lucid dream. Bless be the powers of alcohol.

Sauntering through the reminiscences in his brain, he finds himself landing on the day they got back from their rescue of Lucifer’s slaves. The mist Dean walks in starts to turn into objects, spectral people, paths he can now clearly see and follow. He sees the camp. Chuck is talking about re-counting food and water, gathering new clothes, but Dean is not one tiny bit interested. He leaves this part of the job for his brother…

*After the rescue, the travel back to the camp was quiet, with everyone too tired to keep longer conversations. Not an hour later they are at camp, with Chuck greeting them, marshaling all the rescued ones to a shower and a change of clothes.*

*Soon, Dean, Jo, Benny, Chuck, Sam and his girl Jess comes to the table to discuss where everyone will stay.*

“I remember a small cabin is available, but I doubt six girls can fit in there without going nuts.” Benny tells them.
“We’ll need to recount all the food and water. Clothes ‘n stuff.” Chuck starts counting with his fingers, writing on the board in his hands.

“It’s fine Chuck.” Dean interrupts “We can make it work. Just find a place for them to rest, and tomorrow we can decide what jobs they can do.”

“So practical…” Sam mutters, but Dean chooses to ignore him.

“Fine, fine, I’ll see what I can do with the toilet paper supriment.”

“Anyway…” Jo continues in the line of thought “I can share a cabin, at least for a while.”

“I agree. I think the only guy can take the small cabin, then.” Sam says hearing no objection.

“I’ll stock a few things on his place, so no one complains about privilege.” Chuck goes to start gathering some stuff.

With all decided, they head out and Dean can finally breathe again. It was a long day. All he wants to do is to lie down, rest for a week, so he can do this shit all over again. Man, this ‘leader’ job sucks! Grunting, he rubs his face, resting his back on a wall at his cabin, closing his eyes.

“Hello, Dean.”

“Jesus!” He exclaims almost jumping, for he didn’t heard Castiel coming closer “Wear a bell or some-”

The sentence is lost midway when he looks at Castiel for the first time since his arrival a couple of hours ago. He bathed, shaved, and is wearing a white button shirt, black jeans and boots, with his body fully covered with a large beige coat. His hair is all messy, though, as if he just woke up. Also, without all the dirt on his face – wow. His eyes really pop out with the most bluish color Dean has ever seen.

“Man you look… Fresh.” Dean teases “What’s the deal with the Trenchcoat?”

“Oh, this?” He gestures to his vests “Your friend, Chuck, said I could have it, for no one wanted.”

“Hm. Suits you.”

Why Dean feels the need to say this is still a mystery, but frankly? These clothes really match this guy, in an almost perfect unusual way.

“So, uh. You’re okay buddy?”

Castiel shudders, crossing his arms as his weight changes from feet to feet.

“More than okay. I cannot express how much I appreciate everyone’s assistance.” He stops to sigh “For a long time I… It’s been days in their captivity… No one helped; there was no hope and…”

“Hey, hey, come here.”

Dean ghostly touches his shoulder, because Castiel is shivering, voice shattered, as he grids the beige coat over his elbows with white knuckles. Dean guides the guy inside of his cabin without even thinking about it. It was just something in Castiel… The man was like a wounded bird that couldn’t fly, and for some unknown motive Dean sought to put that creature under his hands… He shakes his head more than one time to brush away these thoughts.
Once inside his cabin, they sit at the table. Castiel closes his eyes controlling his breathing until it’s leavened. Dean merely waits.

“I’m sorry…” The guy mumbles after a while.

“That’s okay, Cas.”

“I have just… Saw countless people passing by and pretending not seeing it.”

Groaning, Dean rubs his face.

“The world is a chaos. I don’t judge ‘em, but I sure as hell don’t agree.”

Castiel gazes at him with a certain doubt and awe.

“Why… Why do you care Dean?”

“Uh… What?”

Castiel twists his head to a side, reformulating his thoughts, still clutching at his new coat.

“Sorry, I didn't mean to sound ungrateful. But I not even once met someone who would risk so much for strangers.”

Dean shrugs, scratching the stubble starting to itchy on his chin. He needed a shave.

“Guess I just give a damn, I mean,” He inhales deeply “I’m not pretending this will pass. We’re fucked, nothing is going to get any better, but we can at least not fuck the world even more.”

Dean sighs, remembering what Sam and Jo said before, that above everything they were still humans. He had to agree with the, but he wasn’t’ going to admit it. Rubbing his neck, he snorts.

“Here’s what I think; you have a situation, and all the odds tell you to do one thing to get your ass outta the crossfire. But it’s your call to be an asshole. ‘Cause there’s always a way out, no matter how fucked up the situation is, you can make your own choices. I chose not to be a jerk.”

An exhausted sigh leaves his mouth when Dean finishes. Through the years he witnessed all kinds of atrocities, things difficult to forget, or to not surrender into madness. But somehow he always resisted. He looks at Castiel, who never let go of his vision, staring with what Dean can identify as comprehension, gratitude, respect.

“Certainly, you’re a rare human being nowadays, Dean.”

He scoffs, feeling too exposed. Brushing the tension away – for Dean doesn’t believe he’s better than anyone, just less of a dick – he asks:

“What about you, Cas?”

The guy frowns.

“You enjoy calling me that.”

“What? ‘Cas’?”

“Yes.”
“Well I guess… It suits you? If you don’t like I can stop.”

“No.” He answers fast, feeling his cheeks burning, and cleans his throat “No, I… appreciate the name.”

Dean smirks, also because of the redness spread on the guy’s face, putting both arms behind his neck.

“So Cas, what’s your story?”

Blue eyes stare the bright green of Dean’s orbs as if in a chase of words. Castiel licks his lips, ducking his head as he remembers about the life before the war.

“My family and I worked together at our farm. We lived on a small catholic community, providing the town with our wheat plantation. My father was in charge; however for no apparent reason he left us to God knows where. We had only ourselves to look after. I have three older brothers… Or had.”

Dean nods in understanding, not forcing anything related to missing relatives. He has his share of loss as well.

“As the war began to spread in the country, we believed salvation was long gone, so we fled to one of the military camps stationed to support the bombarded cities.”

“We’re you from?”

“Pontiac, Illinois.”

“Oh.”

One of the first places to be condemned by the nuclear assaults.

“We survived the first year under military instruction; however my older brother was never one to bow. He defiance some of the rules, stationing they were ‘bullshit’.” Cas quotes the word with two fingers, and Dean almost laughs “He claimed military force was unnecessary, for they were already doomed, and we had to look for ourselves. Of course he only said that when the soldiers were in low number. No longer after, he succeeds in creating a riot, overcoming the militaries and taking over the place.”

“Wow, that’s somehow… Badass.”

Castiel tilts his head a little, but ignores Dean’s way of speech, simply nodding.

“At the time I believed in him but…” Castiel sighed, rubbing one hand over another “But things changed.”

Frowning, Dean leaned his torso forward; hands hanging between his legs.

“He…” Castiel breathed in “He tortured and murdered those who opposed him. It was unhuman. He said only the weak one’s would perish. The others should’ve learned from it. Michael, and he fought all the time. Soon after, my closer brother, Gabriel, left to march away from their battle, not standing those battles over the same thing. Mother tried to pacify, but without success. No longer after Gabriel’s depart she got sick with the plague, and died a few weeks later.”

“I’m sorry.”
“It’s okay.” It wasn’t, but life goes on “Soon, it became clear to all of us that the war was far from an end. The nation became unstable, the government shattered, and lastly, well. You know how the campgrounds commence to assemble.”

“Sure does, Cas.” He sniffs.

“My brother inspired our group to seek for a better location. He claimed ordnances along the way; most of it by force. The more he conquered, more he sought. Until Michael, as a final stand defied him, conducing to a combat between them and... His death.”

“He killed your brother?!”

“Yes.” Swallowing hard, Castiel blinks his eyes, letting them closed for a while, breathing in “I tried to reason, to stop him, but Lucifer had his personal philosophies.”

“Wait, wait, go back a little.” Dean straightened his body, suddenly aware of the name “You’re telling me Lucifer, the same dickhead that is slaving people; that captured you, is your brother?!”

Castiel directs a blank face towards Dean; his eyes wide open with confusion, lips partially parted and dry.

“Lucifer is... Responsible for the slavery?”

Shit. The guy was unaware of this. Dean rubs his nape again, feeling anxious, especially for he’s responsible for now to explain things to Cas.

“We’ve found out that Lucifer was doing it and went there to rescue the prisoners. He has a record ’round here, you know?”

“...I can imagine that.”

“Maybe he... Didn’t knew you were there?”

Castiel ponders, tilting his head while looking to nowhere.

“It’s possible. I left his camp five months ago, similar to Gabriel. I never effusively agreed with my brother.”

“Yeah, being slaved must be something to add on Lucifer’s list too.”

Castiel trembled as memories glide to him. Inside his mind Dean cursed himself, sighing to regain control.

“Sorry Cas. I didn’t mean to fright you with memories.”

“It’s... Okay. Lucifer’s intentions are preposterous. I never considered he would be capable of such a task.”

“...Sorry.”

“Don’t be. His deeds are his own doing. Moreover, you saved me.”

Dean coughs, gesturing one hand in the air while muttering ‘it’s nothing’. Castiel let a hint of a smile appear on his face, returning to his speech.

“I ran away the first time those guards captured me on the previous week, however my latter effort
was not so prosper as you saw for yourself.” His hands squeezes the Trenchcoat even more “It was also the first time they attempted to... With me...”

The shuddering was back to his body, and this time Dean didn’t think much. He puts one hand over his shoulder, tightening a comforting grip. Castiel trembles with the sudden touch, however soon relaxes his weight on it. His eyes were hovering the room, but are draw back to Dean, staring with frantic relief at his savior.

“You’re safe now, Cas.”

Nodding, he crooked a smile as Dean retreats from his arm. Cas’s hands falls on his legs, less tensed than before.

“I cannot express how grateful I am.”

“Hey man, don’t sweat it ‘k? You’ll help around; people will appreciate having more hands to work in here.”

Cas angles his head to one side narrowing his eyes in a muddle mien, parting his lips.

“This means I can... Stay?” Castiel queries in disbelief, and then Dean can’t hold it anymore, laughing.

“Of course man! You thought we were going to fling you guys back to the road?”

Castiel shrugs.

“I assumed we would be a nuisance.”

“Well, we sure as hell don’t have space, but we’re not heartless bastards. After all, what’s the point of rescuing you?”

“I guess you’re correct.”

“Great.” Dean clasps his hands heating them up, for the weather is really icy today. “Do you know where you’ll stay?”

“No.”

Dean gestures for him to follow. The empty cabin Chuck mentioned is only thirty three feet away from his. He opens the door to a one room place, with a bed, a small table with two chairs, one bathroom and a closet. It’s tiny, but Castiel enters in it looking around, touching everything in an almost sacred caution. Dean watches his awe not noticing the smile crossing his lips as he does so. When Castiel turns to face him they’re both smiling silly at each other, but the dark-haired man carries a greater appreciative look.

“Would it really be alright for me to stay here? Isn't there somebody else in greater need?”

Dean huffs. A guy who was slaved, almost raped and beaten is more than the definition of the word ‘need’.

“Told you Cas, the cabin is yours.”

This assurance is all that Castiel required to fully smile now, gums showing and all. Something in Dean’s chest aches, warming up with the view. What so little this guy had in the past for this small act of... Humanity, make him this happy?
“Thank you, Dean.”

The leader arches his mouth down, shrugging.

“It’s fine Cas, we-”

A violent cough breaks his speech, and Dean puts one hand in front of his mouth. His lungs burn and the force he is doing is so big that his head feels dizzy. Dean tries to gesture with one hand to the other that he’s fine, however Castiel doesn’t pay attention, surprising Dean by pressing an ear on his chest. Cas also grabs his wrist with two fingers, and the cough is too violent for Dean to stop or understand what is going on. When Cas lifts his head he’s only a few inches apart from the other, without boundaries of personal space, causing Dean to feel his cheeks warming.

“Your lungs are a little weak. Also, your pressure is a concern for being this low during a cough attack. Does the camp possess any anti-inflammatory medicine?”

Too many big words come out of Castiel’s mouth at once, and Dean needs to blink to regain some concentration.

“I-uh… Dunno, maybe Chuck can help- Wait a second.”

Castiel tilts his head again, which Dean starts to think is funny; adorable funny… What the hell?

“What you’re talking ‘bout?” Dean asks, frowning.

“The reason for your coughing is probably a minor infection on your lungs.”

“Okay. And you know that because…?”

“I’m a nurse. Was; before the war. I frequented med school as well for two years, but was impeded to continue.”

Dean blinks twice, for what he just heard might be an illusion, a joke his brain is tricking on him.

“You’re a nurse?”

“Yes.”

“With… Medical training ‘n all?!”

“Precisely.”

“Holy Mary, Jesus on a cracker!”

Castiel angles his head once more. Dean forgets about the cough, bursting a loud laugh as he straights his torso, pulling Castiel outside with him. The guy follows nearby; one eyebrow arched.

“Dean, where are we going?”

Turning to stare at Cas he smiles to the guy with the biggest grin he has, one that he probably does not show in a while.

“To tell Chuck the greatest news of this whole fucking year!”

No longer than three days, Dean and the others decide to build a clinic for Castiel. All camp is more than pleased about having a medical treatment. So as Castiel. The guy tells Dean every day
how happy he is to come back to his old job, helping people, doing what he’s believe he’s meant to. His presence brings back not only a state of normality around camp, but also of hope.

Dean wakes up wrapped around his sheets, feeling his mouth thirsty, a headache throbbing from every corner of his head. But despite all those sore sensations, Dean laughs loudly, cursing afterwards for having forcing the pain in his temple.

It worked. His crazy idea worked.

He graved every image and sensations that came from this memory. The way Castiel smiled to him, the small touches, his warm hands; it’s all coming back. Of course he swallows two aspirins after breakfast, but his mood has really increased.

From that day on, Dean takes one bottle from Ellen every night. It’s too much, and his liver will probably complain later, but Dean needs it to go into deep sleep and visit the Cas of his dreams – the man he’s learning to unveil again.

(...) 

On the second night, Dean has a collection of tiny visions from this past year. He doesn’t need to drink too much to get into them, which is also an improvement. However, seeing Castiel every day at camp unable to neither touch nor talk to him, and yet visiting his dreams with memories of a lost connection… It’s anguishing, propelling him to learn more of himself, to push harder the trigger. Because now he recalls how it is to feel hurt for not having Castiel.

Another moment that made Dean extremely irritated was seeing Balthazar next to Castiel at the clinic. He cannot even describe the feeling, but he believes it’s something similar to jump in a free fall towards a big endless hole, with a cold wind rushing through his belly, and a sense of nervousness that never goes away. Sometimes Dean sees the blond stealing kisses from the nurse, which infuriates him, but there’s nothing Dean can do, not now. He screwed this up, so he has to fix it, and the only way to do so is by remembering Castiel. Only then he will be able to confront him.

Only then Dean will be worthy.

Ten months ago

A commotion outside the clinic draws Dean’s attention as soon as he parks the truck after the morning raid. He walks, passing by a small crowd, trying to see what is making everybody else so frantic, until he spots Castiel, seated on the ground, his body curved over a little girl who is laying down. The nurse uses a small knife to open a cut on her throat. Blood floods to Cas’s hands, causing people to look away or squeal, but nothing distracts him from his job, continuing to move his slender finger in a delicate way in the little’s girl neck, as if he was holding invisible strings. Dean watches in awe, as he places a small transparent tube between his index finger and thumb, pressing it inside the cut. At the first moment, more red liquid comes out, however suddenly the girl takes in a deep breath, coughing.

Dean parts his lips, hearing Cas asking for help to carry her inside the clinic. He wants to follow
the nurse, but everybody is so thrilled by the scene, clapping hands, whistling and praising the guy that he has no chance.

“That was amazing.” Jess appears on his side, grabbing his arm gently.

Dean only nods, still in wonder, staring at Castiel’s back, unable to utter a word.

Thirty minutes later, Castiel goes outside the clinic to tell the mother she can go in to see her daughter. Apparently she had a big asthma attack, and since her throat closed, not allowing any air to pass, he opened a cut on the side of her throat for breathing. The woman holds his hands, darting inside in no time.

Dean waits for him to notice his presence. Once he sees Dean, Castiel lifts the corner of his lip, with a different kind of bright adorning his eyes. This makes the leader’s chest swollen and bumps faster.

“Hello Dean.” He greets him as usual “How was your morning raid?”

“Fine. Chuck ‘s all happy ‘bout the toilet paper we got.”

Castiel chuckles, as they starts to walk side by side to their cabins.

“Your day was pretty busy, hm?” Dean comments.

“Yes, the little girl, Tracy. She will be okay.”

“Cas what you did… It was awesome.”

Dean needs to tell him, even if numerous other people have already said the same thing, because it is so true; is the most amazing thing anyone’s ever done in that camp. And if Castiel felt his face warming, well, only he and Dean could see it.

“It was just my job.” He states, shrugging.

“Still, you saved that girl. You’re incredible man.”

Dean pats his shoulder taking a better look at him and, wow. His cheeks are really red. Trying not to admit he stares at Castiel longer than necessary, Dean continue to walk – his hand inexplicably glued to Cas’s shoulder, and not letting go.

Balthazar walks everyday with Castiel now. Even if Dean wanted to get near the nurse – his chest squeezing in remorse after seeing bruises on his wrists from where he griped him at the bonfire, forcing the kiss - the blond wouldn’t let Dean get a step closer; it’s like he’s acting as a hunting dog. If he could just explain things to Cas… Though he’s never good with words, causing his abrupt actions to speak louder, damaging everything around him. The purple color in Castiel’s wrists convulses something nasty in Dean.

Jess tells him to be patient, to not let his rage take over, for most of his problems starts this way.

“Jess, this is fucking bullshit! These… Dreams, and what happened in the Arena; with Cas back in camp, I-”

“I know Dean, I know. But you said yourself: you need to remember before trying anything.”
“You really think I’m right?”

“It’s the best idea you ever had.”

Dean nods agreeing with her. He can’t talk about these things with Sam, it’s already too complicated and crowded in his head to handle a hypercritical brother. Jess is good for this, because she listens without judging, but speaking her mind whenever she needs to.

Tonight Dean drinks vodka for a change, slurping the drink after a loaf of bread, just because Jess orders him to eat something. At nine he’s traveling back to unconsciousness.

**Seven months ago**

“Someone applied to be my assistance at the clinic.”

Castiel tells Dean enthusiastic over dinner. They started to eat together at the dining hall, or sometimes, like today, they brought food to Dean’s cabin, trying to avoid all the noise, appreciating the silent atmosphere.

“What?”

“He’s… A former acquaintance of mine.”

Frowning, Dean swallows his beef.

“What do you mean by ‘former’?”

“We used to live on the same camp.”

Dean stares at him, stopping eating.

“You mean… Luc’s camp?!”

“Precisely.”

“Shit, Cas! That’s a bad idea.”

“Dean, I can assure you Balthazar is of trust. We are friends, he didn’t agree with my brother as much as I did.”

“So why didn’t he left with you?”

“Lucifer can be… persuasive.”

They both knew what Castiel meant. Dean huffed, not liking any of it, but if Cas believes the guy is of trust, who is Dean to argue? Of course he would keep an eye open for him.

“You think he can handle it?” Dean queries, stirring at his plate.

“With proper training, yes.”

“If you’re his teacher, then the guy will be more than fine.”

Dean said without second thoughts while Cas blushed a little over the compliment, saying ‘thank you’ before eating another meat-ball. Dean liked, for some reason, to see the guy shy. A man this big looking timid over a compliment. It almost made Dean laugh if he didn’t consider it endearing.
And shit, there it goes again, his head thinking stupid things. He had some of these ideas, watching Castiel at the clinic, waving as he passed by, or the fact the nurse always gives goodbye to him before going to a raid, saying ‘see you later, be careful’, as also looking for Dean first thing at the end of afternoons.

They built a bond that even Sam noticed, telling his brother how good it was to see him stress-free. Dean told him to shup up countless time, but the truth is he really was. Castiel listened to his troubles over the camp issues, only nodding and paying attention; his advices were never of the judgment type. Spending time with him is always enjoyable.

“I expect Balthazar to fit in the clinic. He used to be an attorney.” Cas explains.

“What he wants with medic work? Haven’t Chuck found anything better for him to do?”

Castiel just signs, continuing eating.

Next morning, Dean goes to the clinic before his raid, since he knew Cas would like to see him before it. When he comes closer he sees that the new guy is there; a blond one, with a black jacket besides Castiel, as the nurse explains something in a book. However that’s not what Dean notices at first. The two of them are very… Close. Balthazar sometimes tries to touch Cas’s arm, or rests a hand on his back. The nurse shifts a little, but nothing says about it.

Dean feels his fists burning, aching for him to go in there and separate them - for no reason at all. He walks to them, but refrains the beating part and only calls for Cas. He looks at him beaming, giving Balthazar the book. The blond narrows his eyes observing Dean, but soon starts to read.

“Hello Dean, leaving already?”

“Yeah, raid today is all ‘bout toilet paper. Seriously, Chuck needs to ask for other stuff.”

Castiel chuckle, making Dean forget about his previous rage.

“I’m sure toilet paper is an important supply.”

“If you say so. Hey, that’s the new guy, hum?”

“Yes. I was teaching Balthazar the priority of patients.”

“Hmm, is he doing okay?”

“He’s in learning process, but yes he’s doing okay, Dean.”

“Good, that’s good.”

“Is something wrong?”

“…No” Dean rubs his nape nervously.

“Are you sure?” He asks, raising one eyebrow.

Shit, why the hell Castiel knew him so damn well?

“Just… Nothing. See you at noon for diner, ‘k? Bye Cas.”

The nurse waves at him muddled, going back to the clinic.
‘I didn’t realize that for learning you need to be all touchy.’ Dean wanted to say that, but it sounded stupid even on his head.

Chuck was excited over the tons of toilet paper that Dean found for him, thanking enough for a lifetime. Castiel patiently waited for the leader near the trucks parking lot, with his and Dean’s food wrapped on plates. He chuckled, seeing how Chuck almost hugged the pile of rolls.

“Chuck is in love with the toilet paper.” Dean mocked as he got near Cas, making the smaller one grins even more.

“Impressive. Was the raid problematic?”

“Nah, we run into another group, but we traded a few things instead of going into a barrage of bullets.”

“That’s a relief.”

In Dean’s cabin they ate a thick bowl of soup tonight, not that spicy water people liked to call chicken soup; today Ellen put real meat in the menu.

“How’s the clinic? New guy cut someone’s finger already?”

Dean mocks, but Castiel tilts his head in confusion.

“No, he didn’t.”

“Relax Cas, just kidding. So... Really, how was it today?”

“Not so crowded, which gave me real time to teach Balthazar.”

“Hmm.” Dean played with his soup now, not wanting to face Cas. “You guys stayed there alone?”

“On my cabinet, yes. Why?”

“’s Nothing...”

Castiel frowned, noticing a strange discomfort emanating from Dean. There was something in there he is hiding.

“Dean, if something is wrong you can tell me.”

The leader rubbed his nape, leaving half soup on the plate. He licks his lips, hovering his eyes on the room, as his voice appeared stuck.

“Just; I don’t know, do you think the guy is good for the job?”

Finally, he burst the question that was eating him alive.

“Balthazar is a quick apprentice.”

“Right, ‘cause that all he’s eager to learn...”

“I don’t get that reference.”

Dean jumbled on his chair feeling uneasy, until his mouth couldn’t endure being closed anymore. He just let it all go:
“Don’t you feel, I dunno, uncomfortable with him?”

“With what?”

“Well… A guy being so close, touching ‘n all, for example; isn’t it, I dunno, strange?”

In the next second, Castiel straightens his back in his chair. He sighs with a odd expression on his face, almost as if Dean’s question hurt him somehow, as if it brought him back to a time which he did not like to remember.

“I feel uneasy, yes, for Balthazar and I are friends, but I… Don’t dislike another man near myself.”

Dean frowns. His head is almost angled in the way Cas does when he’s confused, and Dean ins trying to understand the meaning of those words. Until a bulb of light appears on top of his head. Suddenly his cheeks are burning, his stomach dropping, and ding, ding, ding, a revelation appears in front of his eyes. He scratches the back of his skull timidly, unable to face Cas.

“Ah… Uh… So… You’re, uh… With dudes?”

Wow, that was really smooth. Castiel stiffs his body even more, feeling a tension running through his spine. So many times he had conversations like this; friends lost; his family’s disgust. It was not a new thing, this kind of aversion. Castiel should have gotten used to it. Even in a post-war world, some things just don’t change. However hearing Dean sounding so distressed disappointed him.

Sighing, Castiel pushes his plate away, not hungry anymore.

“If you feel displeased about it, I can go-”

“No! No, Cas, of course I don’t-Jesus!”

Dean rubs his face over and over again trying to form coherent words that wouldn’t seem disrespectful, because really, there was no problem there, on the contrary! Shit ... shit, what he was thinking in a time like this?!

“I just wanted- If you’re fine, I mean; to make sure you…” He gestures with his hands not knowing what to say. “That you’re not… ‘Cause you know, with what happened with you and, shit! Shit, this came out wrong! I’m sorry Cas, I wasn’t trying to make you remember- Fuck, what I’m saying?! I-”

Suddenly on the middle of his babbling, Cas chuckles. Dean stares with a huge query on his face – which is red-hot in embarrassment.

“I appreciate your concern, Dean. Thank you.”

It’s all Castiel tells him, shaking his head. Dean gulps nodding, holding his spoon inside the plate again, ducking his head.

“… Yeah; okay, good.”

Not that good. Dean couldn’t say half the things he wanted, but at least most of the damage was avoided.

“Balthazar is harmless.” Castiel says to bolster. “Also…”

He ceases his tongue for a moment, his globes falling on the other side of the room, ignoring what
he was about to tell by drinking more soup. Dean narrows his orbs, however nothing says; he already made a fool of himself. They ate quietly, in their mutual enjoyment of each other company, however after the third slurp the nurse is brave to conclude his thoughts, speaking almost in a whisper as a secret only for Dean to hear:

“Also, my interest is not on him.”

Dean doesn’t sleep that night, imagining who could’ve been the one Castiel has an eye on.

If Dean knew that very same day Castiel interest was on him, he would’ve kissed the nurse in a blink, spare them of this senseless dance around each other. Of course, this scenario only happens in imaginary lands.

The thing is, he remembers not getting a tiny bit disgusted or troubled after knowing Cas’s preferences. In fact it filled him with expectation. Strange how he craved unconsciously for the guy, and currently was incapable by his own error to be with Cas. He always screws things so easily that it must be a talent.

The bottle of vodka is empty, so he goes for the rest of the whisky. It’s dangerous, but further than needing to dig memories he wants to wrap himself in an unreality world just for a second, going quickly to that place inside his head where he still has Castiel all to himself.

**Six Months ago**

Not only Sam, but Jess, Benny, Jo, even Chuck appeared to work on a plot, saying how Dean is easy to treat nowadays and less tense over small things. He believes it’s just an overreaction from everybody. Worst is the fact they all alleged Castiel was responsible for his mood improvement.

Sure thing he’s way soother, but it’s not exclusively because of Cas. Okay, maybe the guy helped a lot. He endures Dean bad temper every day, eating together, hearing his stories, even the silly ones, laughing over stupid jokes. He patches Dean up when he comes back from raids with wounds and more scars to carry, and not once Castiel nagged about how reckless he was, like his brother always did.

Sam always tells him that Dean looked like a maniac wanting to get killed, running into the crossfire. It’s true that he always felt attracted to the danger of the job, but Dean didn’t want to die – not on purpose, at least.

And Castiel never once complained or gave him a speech. The only time he said something was when his belly was cut, bleeding a lot from a fight with another group. It didn’t caused permanent damage, however all and sundry repeated a million times how stupid it was the way he just jumped against a guy holding a knife. He listened to all his companions mourning over the episode, noticing how Castiel pursed his lips while covering his belly with gauzes. Huffing, Dean rubbed his neck wanting to leave the clinic and just be on his own, not needing to hear any of this. It was reckless, sure, but the guy was with a tiny knife! For fucks sake, injuries are part of the job-

“Please, be more careful next time, Dean.”

Cas says disturbing his anger and turning it into something warmer. The nurse squeezes his hand, the slim fingers running over his wrist, and then Cas smiled dimly, looking sad for his injuries; knowing that Dean had to do it, but wishing for the leader to come back in one piece. Dean felt so small for worrying Castiel, as he was the one who always had to fix his broken bones and cuts –
never complaining, not even once.

Dean tried very hard to not do stupid things again, which Sam noticed, of course.

“You and Cas are really sticking together, huh?”

Sam says to Dean one particular day after returning from a morning raid to find medical equipment the nurse had asked. He just shrugged, rubbing his nose.

“He’s cool.”

“Yeah, I know. Guy’s really a helping hand.”

“Tell me ‘bout it. Half these people would’ve been dead.” Dean remarks, making Sam laugh.

“Common, it’s not that dramatic either.”

“No, I mean it Sam. The guy is really good.”

Sam looked at Dean for a while, analyzing his features, the way his lips twitches up when talking about the nurse, or how his voice gained a different tone; not harsh or stoic, like the usual Dean, but more… Light.

“You really got attached to him.”

These simple words resounded as if Sam told Dean the most amazing discovery of the world.

“I kind of feel responsible for him, Sam.”

Indeed he does. Dean saved Cas in the first place, found a suitable job for him. If the guy screwed up his name is the first one to appear. But, of course there was more to their closeness than a life debt. And Sam recognized it.

“Uh-uh, it’s not that Dean. You and Cas have something.”

“Something?” He frowned, edgy. “The hell you mean?”

“Nothing, just what I see.”

“Oh, please, share with the class!” He retorts, sarcastically. Sam sighs, not wanting to fight.

“Dean, I’m happy, that’s it.”

The honesty in his voice made Dean felt uncomfortable. He cleaned his throat, less distressed, putting both hands in his jacket’s pockets and looking to everywhere but his brother.

“‘Bout what?” He asks, with a hint of curiosity.

“Because you’re more… Peaceful. I mean; the war, the camp, and all the responsibilities. You took everything to yourself, not even asking for help. Of course I appreciate that, believe me, everybody does. But it always bothered me that you never appeared…”

“What?”

“Content.”

Dean huffed.
“Am I a fairy now? Glowing ’n stuff?”

“No, but you’re more like the Dean I knew before the war.” This left Dean speechless. “I’m not saying any of this to make you think too much, or feel uncomfortable, but Castiel, somehow, brought you back from the dark place you fell these past years… After dad was gone.”

“We’re friends.” Dean said almost in a whisper, as a reassurance of what he believes; or tries to. Sam only smiled, patting his shoulder.

“Just know that whatever you have with Cas it’s nice, good, and I’m happy for you. Don’t ever doubt that.”

“Whatever.”

For a while, Dean looked quizzed, feeling nervous. What his brother is talking about caused his brain to think too much, and he hated when this happened. He spent the rest of the day shooting cans behind the parking until he didn’t felt the urge to deal with his thoughts.
It’s somehow strange for Dean to wander around these dreams. Every morning when he wakes up flashes of the night before kept clicking here and there, and the more Dean sees Castiel far away on camp, more sensations starts to infuse in him. Being the stubborn person he is, Dean makes sure to pass near the clinic or Cas’s cabin as many times as he can. The nurse looks at him in these brief encounters, but nothing says nor does he give the leader any sign. He simply ducks his head and ignores him.

Dean wants to run towards Castiel and tell him a million apologetic excuses, but his ego doesn’t let him. Nevertheless, Dean knows that before anything he must remember Cas – all of him.

Chuck prepared a new list of supplies. Dean analyses the items near one truck. He waits for something to happen before he leaves to the raid, what he can’t quite discern, and when he sees the clinic far away an insight snaps on his head: he was waiting for Castiel to come there the way he always did before… Everything.

‘See you later, be careful’

The phrase settles like a prayer on his mind.

Dean scrubs his face, sighing. Now he wants to drink just for the pleasure of a good hangover. It’s getting late, so the trucks must leave now. Dean breathes in one last time telling Ash to drive fast. They’ll finish the supply run hastily, for Dean wants to come back to his room and drown in alcoholic dreams, so he can meet him again, the silly, innocent and happy man he let escape through his fingers; the man he had ruined with his rudeness.

One hour to noon the raid is back. Dean rushes to his bedroom not minding to visit Sam, or anyone. He manages to hide a nearly full bottle of whisky, and he’s going to savor it alone, to travel back to his memories; to dream with his lost Castiel again.

Four months ago

During a raid Dean faints after an asthma attack. His lungs close and hurt so much that he believes it’s the end. Somehow he stands still as they head back to the camp. Castiel is the first one to be there, by hearing the notice over the radio. He’s frantic, worried sick about the leader, cupping his face as Dean starts to cough again.

“Dean?! Dean!”

The husky tone calls him, but there is no way he can answer back, for his chest is scourging as if filled with flames; his eyes shut without strength to remain open, muscles aching and a loud cough comes out instead of his voice.

“Cas, what’s going on with him?!” Sam asks, carrying Dean to his cabin.

When he hits the bed more cough erupts from his dry throat, causing small scratches on it. His teeth are colored with red in the next assault.

“There’s blood Cas! Shit, shit, shit!” Sam pulls his hair with tight fingers, wanting to help but unable to do so.

Cas opens Dean’s mouth with one hand in a scissor motion, locating a small slice behind his
absent amygdalae:

“It’s just a cut on his throat.” Castiel explains.

“So this is serious?! Cas, please! Tell me what’s going on!”

First he needs to assist Dean. For the raw sound of it, Dean’s airways are obstructed. He orders Sam to bring his materials from the clinic while he helps Dean to sit straight on the bed; if he lays down now his lungs may close.

“Stay with me, Dean.”

Cas says it while rubbing gentle circles on Dean’s back trying to calm him. The cough persists, but less violent. Sam comes back in a rush with his black suitcase.

He changes positions with Sam, using all the apparels he needs to auscultate Dean’s chest. It’s filled with mucus, and as they don’t have many resources or medicines for an easy treatment, Castiel tells Sam to hold Dean tight as he plunges a big needle behind his ribcages to extract the excess of phlegm using a small tube. Dean scuffles, almost crying, But Sam’s huge body ties him down. Once Cas is done his chest is lighter and breathing is possible again.

“Sam…” He calls for his brother waving a weak hand, as he seats besides him on the bed.

“Dean, you scared the shit outta me!”

“I- Where’s Cas?”

This caught the nurse off guard, making his face itch a little:

“I’m here Dean, spare your energy.”

“…Hurts…”

“Yes, I know, but please try to rest.”

“…Stay…here”

Sam raises his head to gaze at Cas. The nurse is heated by the request, nodding in accord.

“I will.”

Once Dean stops the cough attacks, Sam and Castiel talk nearby outside the cabin. Dean can barely hear them, but a few words reach his ears:

“You sure about…?”

“…want to help.”

“I can… care of him.”

“…please.”

“Cas… You know… Dean…”

“I’m…won’t change anything.”

“Cas… For Dean you… and…”
“… its fine… can’t leave him.”

They discuss for another amount of minutes, until Sam finally beads goodbye, so he can tell Jess and the others about his brother’s condition. Apparently, Dean caught some kind of bacteria on his lungs that could easily be threatened – if they were ten years in the past. Some antibiotics might do the trick, however Castiel wants to keep a close eye on him just to be certain nothing serious ensue.

During the first night Dean has a small fever and coughing with mucus. Castiel is there to help him get the nasty infection out of his system.

“I feel like a baby…” Dean says after drinking some water.

“A giant, whining baby.” Mocks Castiel.

“Ha, ha, very-” Coughing, he reaches for the small bowl he’s using to spit. “Gross.”

“That’s a word to define it.”

“Cas, seriously man, you don’t have to be with me, I’m fine-” He coughs again. “I will be fine.”

Truth is Dean can’t stand seeming weak in front of others. Specially Cas. He doesn’t know why, after all he’s a nurse, used to patients and the disgusting stuff, however Dean doesn’t need a babysitter, or anyone’s pity. It’s enough the glare and complacent behavior of his brother, he sure as hell doesn’t need it from Cas too.

“Just… Leave me alone…” He sulks, with voice hoarse dry.

“Interesting, not four hours ago you asked me to stay.”

Dean gulps remembering how embarrassed it must have been; him choking his lungs out, pleading for the nurse to not leave him. Pathetic – yet it was exactly what he wanted; Cas’s presence is constantly a solid comfort, but of course, he never will admit it. Castiel takes a deep breath, for he’s facing Dean’s back while the leader doesn’t says a word.

“I’ll stay by your side Dean, with or without your stubbornness. So you’ll have to bear with me.”

Dean wants to complain about it, but he can’t; he really can’t.

Castiel keeps company every day after clinic hours, to check on him, make sure Dean takes the medicine, bringing food to eat dinner together. Sam comes a few times, but he’s given the impression of a home-like atmosphere surrounding Dean and Cas, so he excuses himself after some minutes of catching up with his brother over camp discussions. On the third day of hard coughs, Castiel closes the clinic, and says he will attend there only for emergency cases, leaving the new assistance, Balthazar, responsible for the daily patients. He wants to be with Dean in case there’s another attack that causes his trachea to close.

“Cas, man, common, don’t childmind me!” Dean says from his bed, trying to sound enraged, but it’s almost impossible in his weak condition.

“I’m concerned with the lack of improvement in your healing, Dean. Perhaps we should double the dosage of the medicine.”

“No! We can’t spend that on me! What if someone else needs it?”
“No one is in need, except you.”

“But-“

Castiel shoves a thermometer on his mouth to shut Dean. He grunts, crossing his arms like a stubborn kid in visible thwart. It makes Cas chuckle, which eases the irritability on Dean.

“101.03, it’s high, but better.” Cas considered.

“Told ya, I’m fine.”

“Be quiet.” Castiel orders harshly, and Dean gulped. “You are a patient supposed to obey medic instructions.”

Ready to argue Dean opens his mouth only to realize the mock tone in Castiel’s voice. He is in shock, starting to laugh, but a cough takes its place, forcing him to cover his mouth as his back arches in discomfort. Castiel sits down on his side, lifting his thin grey shirt and rubbing a salve with mint odor over the middle of his shoulder blades. As Dean stops with the sudden attack, he is aware of the situation: his torso naked with Cas gently rubbing kind fingers onto the skin. They are warm, careful, spreading the balm with heed. Dean blushes for no reason.

“Better?” Castiel asks, seeing Dean nods. “Alright, you should rest.”

“Cas, it’s-”He coughs. “It’s fucking eight.”

Huffing, Castiel grabs his arm to make him turn around. Cas’s face is deadly serious and Dean doesn’t even try to pun:

“Pay attention to me Dean: as long you’re sick I am the one who you shall listen if you want to recover. Now stop acting puerile, and lay down.”

Dean clogs.

“Yes, sir.”

Satisfied, Castiel lets Dean adjusts himself before removing his shoes and sitting close to him. Dean blinks a few times, cleaning his stinging throat before daring to ask:

“Uh… Cas? What are you doing?”

“I believe it’s unclean to sleep using shoes.”

“Okay, but… Why are you doing it here?”

“Obviously I’m going to spend the night to make sure your fever doesn’t goes up.” He raises his head frowning a little “Also, the floor is too filthy.”

Dean should’ve say something, to tell him ‘fucking no’, however his voice doesn’t comes out, especially after Cas’s outburst seconds ago. He just lets his mouth forms an ‘O’, while covering himself with the sheets up ‘till his head to not face him, although knowing the nurse is right there a few inches away does cause his body to chill – not in a ill fever, but a passionate awareness of theirs backs timidly bumping.

Unfortunately, Castiel’s assumptions were deadly right.

In the middle of the night Dean coughs so loudly that Cas is afraid all camp will wake up. The
nurse tries to apply more balm, however it doesn’t seem to work. His fever also rises one degree, causing Dean to soak the sheets in sweat, although he covers himself even more with the blankets, shivering.

“Dean, Dean, do not faint, you have to concentrate.”

Castiel calls for him after seeing his eyes orbiting to a delusional state, his teeth gnashing. Cas holds his shoulder in place using a wet cloth to clean his forehead, obliging Dean to talk.

“Cold…” He mumbles.

“I know, Dean, I know, stay focused, please.”

“Cas I-”

Another cough access worries Castiel even more. He’s shivering too much, the fever is going up. He makes Dean drink water, but nothing is helping. He stays awake all night, cleaning his forehead with a cold damp cloth to lower the hotness of his body. Dean is half awake during the process, but he still manages to say:

“You… Can catch it.”

More worried with others than himself as always.

“I know how to guard myself.”

“No Cas, just… Leave me alone.”

“I cannot do that.”

“You don’t need… You-” He coughs, still not facing Castiel. “You don’t owe me anything.”

This causes a boiling anger in Castiel. He spins on the mattress, facing Dean so he can’t escape his fierce glare; however his voice is gentle; steady:

“That’s the reason of your stubbornness? Because you assume I’m here purely over a life debt?”

If Dean wasn’t running with a fever, Castiel would’ve notice how embarrassed he was right now.

“I… I just wanna mourn over my sickness, Cas…”

“No Dean, you need assistance.”

“I don’t-”

“Yes you do.” He retorts, inflating his voice “Everybody does at some point. Stop being so persistent, and please…”

Castiel raises one cautions hand towards Dean’s hair, stroking it lightly in a caress that alerts the man and also makes him melt over the thin fingers scratching his scalp, causing his eyes to shut in contentment.

“Please, let me help you.”

He finishes saying as Dean opens lazy green orbs to meet his blues, looking at him with immense regard. Parting his lips, he swallows arid air, not sure of what to tell the nurse; this guy so eager
to help him, to stay by his side without wanting something in return; but merely because he wants to. The caress on his hair must be enchanting him, for Dean only nods, agreeing with Cas. Breathing in relief, Castiel keeps brushing the sandy-hair, sweat from the fever, but not less beautiful.

“Never again think I’m doing anything over gratitude, Dean. It’s of my free will to be here, not because you saved me, but because…”

His voice faints and Dean thinks he won’t say anything else, so he rests over the gentle touch, dozing off slowly. Cas stay by his side the whole time before gaining courage to finish his sentence:

“Because I immensely care about you.”

Dean is not yet asleep when Cas says it with an warmhearted voice. It’s with the sweet tenderness of Cas, the way he is there because he simply wants, or how he never once tried to judge Dean; and the nurse was one of a few who understands and knows him in the core.

Putting his memory to work, Dean can connect the feeling of loos he always felt over these years – even before the war – of a great abyss; and absence he solely ignored. However Castiel filled this gap, and now it was just so, so difficult to not see the nurse by his side.

He closed himself to the world, Dean knows it. Nevertheless with Castiel everything happened… Well, it just happened. There was no explanation for the easy way the nurse slipped into his life. Or better there was one, although Dean reluctantly didn’t want to accept it, to realize one solid truth:

That he is in love with Castiel.

Next morning Dean wakes up to find a heavy sleeping Cas snoring a little. The nurse’s body is bending to one side on a bizarre position, as he seemed to try to not touch Dean at the same time he wanted to. One wet cloth clutched on Cas’s hands rests near his head. Also, there are dark dots under his eyes, indicating he probably stayed awake the whole night, watching over Dean.

He feels his cheeks burning, but at least the fever seemed lower. He remains like this observing Castiel for several minutes, analyzing his bonny features, the eyelashes touching his cheekbones, or the swift snorts he gives when inhaling – it’s cute – how the stubble fits his jawbone sketching it with strong lines. Or how his lips are slightly open, looking like a velvet fabric.

Dean raises one hand following the shape of his mouth, but not touching it. His own breathe quakes with the proximity, and before he can think any better his head goes forward as he licks his lips placing them on Cas’s. It’s a delicate brush, innocent even, but it causes all electric signals on Dean’s body to vibrate in ecstasy. Goosebumps sneaks his spine as he wants to go further, to gather more of this intoxicating flavor Castiel has, already addicting Dean to it.

The nurse moves on the mattress wailing a feeble drowsy sound as Dean opens his eyes in fear of being caught; realizing how creep it is to steal a kiss from a sleeping person. Castiel is still unaware of the world, though.

Less incline to continue, Dean gets up taking care not to alarm Cas, and feeling not so feverish, he allows himself to have a moment of panicking, grabbing his coat and running to his brother’s cabin in minus five minutes. The sky is a dark-blue color when he knocks the door, hearing Sam cursing on the other side for stumbling on a chair.
“Dean?” He asks concerned, for Dean is sick on his porch at dawn, panting. “What happened?!?”

He hurries them inside to warm up. Once they sit down and there’s hot tea on their hands, Dean continues to stare at nothing, as Jess appears from the bedroom scratching one eye:

“Is everything alright?”

“Don’t know baby, but you can go back to sleep.”

“I can help Sam.”

“Jess, don’t worry...”

“Of course I’m worried!”

“Please Jess...”

“I kissed him.”

Dean abruptly says making both give every single attention to him. Sam realizes now how anxious is his brother, bumping his leg on the floor, rubbing hands fiercely as if the world is ending again:

“What happened, Dean?” A Sam query using his sympathy voice and his brother finally looks up to stare at him with panicked eyes.

“I... I kissed Cas.”

Jess and Sam exchanges a complacent stare, as little ‘O’ forms on their mouths. Cleaning his throat, Sam sits beside his brother bearing a serene gaze.

“I mean, he wasn’t even awake!” Dean gestures with one hand, laughing in anxiety desperation.

“Dean, calm down.”

“Sam, I just- Cas is-, I don’t know! Fuck, just... Forget it!”

He rubs his face angrily, getting up and ready to leave to hit his head and forget this conversation ever occurred. It’s Jess who grabs his elbow forcing him to turn around and confront her. If it was his brother the one holding him Dean would’ve push Sam in no time. But Jess is scary. He gulps as the woman glares through piercing eyes:

“It’s been a while, you know? Since you looked so calm.”

“W-what?” Dean asks, more confused than ever. Jess chuckles.

“It’s always something about camp, or helping someone, or going on raids, but never about you. Your mind is constantly worried over others, but with Castiel it all changed.”

Dean gulps, for Jessica is scrutinizing directly at his soul. He shudders, wanting to flee from her grip, but she remains firm in place:

“I can see it.” Dean merely stares her feeling his stomach twist. “The way you talk less stoically; or how after a shitty day it only takes a gaze from Cas and your entire self is in peace.”

Dean ducks his head too embarrassed to eye Jess. Her mouth speaks only true words.
“But he’s a ‘he’!”

Jess, then, grabs his shoulders with hands too strong for a woman, clasping there and digging her nails to make sure all Dean’s attention rests on her. The leader gulps, beholding at severe eyes that stares at him.

“Dean. Listen to me: the world doesn’t mind about those stupid things anymore. Besides, it doesn’t matter who is the person you choose as long as you’re happy.”

“Jess, God! I don’t…” Shaking his head, Dean scratches his face, unsure, doubtful as a million of questions of ‘what ifs’ and deep restraints constricts him in place “I don’t know what to do!”

Admitting it finally, opening his own insecurity in front of others, which is a big step for Dean, he scoffs feeling stupid. Because really, who is he trying to fool? The problem isn’t Cas, it never was… The problem is Dean and his historic experience with failure, when with someone, of life in general, for he knows that at some point everything will collapse over him, and when that happens he can’t allow Castiel being by his side, sinking together… He just can’t.

“You better think fast.”

Dean lifts his head frowning at Jess, too confused and lost in thinking to understand what she’s saying now.

“The guy made a fuss ‘round here Dean.” Sam finally speaks to clarify his brother’s muddled mien. “If you think too much, somebody else will get there first.”

Dean can’t stop remembering about that Balthazar guy. And suddenly, his chest is heavy and mouth dry, because one thing is imagining Castiel without him… But one entirely different is imagining the nurse with somebody else. The ache and hurt crawling inside his guts must be part of his illness… It can’t be this much suffering, not having Cas… Yet it’s exactly what Dean comprehends. How could he let someone become this essential on his life? How it happened? When?!

Maybe from the very first time he laid eyes on Cas and those intense eyes never letting go of his vision. Yeah, definitely he needs to take his head out of his ass. He’s a coward, that what he is. He doesn’t want to be with Cas, but he also can’t even picture Castiel with… Anyone! Shit, he has it bad.

“You lived too much time immersed in this war chaos, Dean.” Sam says, walking towards his brother, and the love caring respect on him destroy Dean completely “I think you deserve… No, I think you must grab what this world is giving, Dean. At least for once.”

Dean gulps, closing his fists and wandering his eyes on the room, with air stuck on his lungs; with every sensation and energy spreading to the muscles and veins, as if some kind of disease was there – and Castiel was the cure...

“Got the message Dean?” Sam asks, as his brother nods frantically. “Good. Now go get him.”

“Urg…” He rolls his eyes, rubbing his face and hair that point on all directions. “This is wrong in so many levels…”

“Stop winning and go!”

“Right, right!”
Dean walks back feeling light headed for the first time in years, not only because of what Sam and Jess told him, but because he’s considering it… Happiness. It seems something so strange for him, yet its right there, sleeping on his cabin at the form of a dark-haired man… Could he make it work? Could it be alright allowing himself this?

At least he thinks so… Even if it lasts only for a while. Halting at the door, not looking at Sam and Jess, he says before leaving:

“Uh, thank you guys.”

His brother and Jess are laughing. They’d better marry soon.

Dean comes back to a still sleeping Castiel, climbing under the sheets again and lying beside the nurse. He still looks very peaceful. So different from what Dean’s life always have been, since his childhood, since he can remember.

Castiel have suffered during the war countless times. He lost his entire family, was betrayed by them, persecuted, beaten, and hurt. Yet he raised his head and walked straight ahead. Even after those moments of desperation he agonized by the hands of those man he never blamed life, nor did he find excuses to not continue fighting back any adversity. He kept going, with his care and little smiles that could almost be not seen, but were always there.

Who is Dean to find he is better than Castiel? To believe life is a bitch so it’s better not mess around with her? If a man like Castiel can live and try to find joy in small tasks after seeing the opposite of it, after seeing no hope; how Dean can really give up of trying by using these lame excuses?! Not wanting to hurt Castiel is a goal, not a pretext to not give an effort.

Gulping, Dean curls on the bed gazing Cas’s sleeping features while dozing back to sleep, battling his insecurities and fears to allow a small flame of ‘what if I try’ to burn brighter.

After three more days Dean is almost fully recovered. He only needs to take the medicine and rest – raids are prohibited – but he can at least walk on camp. He’s coming back with Ellen’s dinner of the day when he enters his cabin to find Castiel grabbing a small bag from the floor. He narrows his eyes, putting the plates on the table.

“Hello, Dean.”

“Hey. What’d ya doing?” He asks, uncertain.

“Unfortunately, prolonging my packing. I brought to your cabin more things that I needed to spend these past days.”

“Oh, uh… So you’re going back to yours?”

“Indeed. Soon you’ll have your privacy back.” He jokes, but apparently Dean is not on a mood for it.

Because since the talk with Sam Dean has been engaging in a thousand of speeches, ways to come around Castiel, yet nothing seemed good enough – or it dealt with a tremendous number of feelings he didn’t want to face. Watching Cas preparing himself to leave, however, must have triggered some switches inside, for Dean jabbers without thinking:

“Cas, you… You don’t have to go back to your cabin, i-if you don’t want to.”

Castiel tilts his head, staring Dean:
“Is there a problem?”

“No, Cas, what I’m saying is I don’t… Mind if… You stay.”

“Are you feeling new symptoms?” He asks concerned.

“What? No, no, that’s not it. What I mean is… Shit.”

He scrapes his nape visible nervous, and Castiel only frowns, not understanding a thing:

“It’s just that… Your cabin is small.” He says, looking around because the excuse sounded stupider out loud. “And we’re always together, the clinic is closer, and I- I don’t mind… You staying.”

The bag is left behind open on the table as Castiel turns his body so they’re in front of each other. The nurse swallows hard as his eyes gazes Dean with an unbelievable struck.

“Dean, what are you…”

“Shit. Cas.”

Slowly shaking his head, Dean rubs his palm over his face feeling it sweaty. He starts to babble.

“It’s just that… You don’t have to go; you can stay here on my cabin. ‘Cause I don’t mind having you around, I don’t mind spending time with you…”

He’s not even breathing when Cas enters on his personal space placing one hand on Dean’s elbow. His voice ceases on the air. Dean haven’t notice how intense Castiel’s irises look at him, or when he stepped closer to him, eyeing Dean with bewilderment of what he’s hearing, but no less aware of the meaning these words possess. He gulps, with the bluish orbs hovering over emerald ones; a hint of anticipation and nervousness:

“I don’t mind, Cas…”

Dean continues, hearting thumbing in an inconsistent rhythm.

The nurse inhales deep, trembling. They close the gap by joining their chests. They hear and fell the resounding, constant noise in unison; air already mixed on breathes as hot puffs clashes cheekbones.

Dean tenses his body. Hands wanting to touch but with uncertain still circling him. Castiel stares; blue eyes in such compassion, looking at him, then his lips, with an impatient nervousness. Dean ducks his head at the moment Castiel lifts his, with lips ghosting the air each one breathes; their hearts becoming a battery of the same music; Castiel chants his name over again, breaking the silent spell scouting them.

“Dean.”

“I don’t…”

He just doesn’t know, he can’t be sure everything is right, yet these eyes stares at him and beyond, scratching his soul with its glow, all the care and wanting translated on a single gaze they shared so many times already. And it’s frustrating, desperate, how with a mere glance so many can be said, such a story can be told.

“I really don’t mind…’
The constant touches, the way they care for one another without words, the simple and vital feeling of-

“I don’t mind needing you, Cas.”

It’s Castiel who moves first, wrapping his arms on his neck as Dean strokes his face and puts one hand at the nurse’s waist dragging him closer. Lips are pressed, tongues thirsty for more, mouths smacking while making slurp sounds to feel their palate, to seek more of one another on the kiss.

Dean explores all corners of Cas’s, as he does the same among wet noises. The raven hair is more uneven than ever, as Dean took a huge amount of it to gently engulf among his fingers. Castiel chuckled in the kiss, saying in a muffled voice:

“I don’t mind needing you too, Dean.”

They kiss again.

And again. Until it’s almost evening and both are sitting on the same chair – Castiel straddling Dean’s lap – and after a few more heated caresses they give up to hungry, laughing at the sounds their stomachs made.

The wood ceiling appears in front of Dean’s eyes. It’s his cabin, his bedroom, and he’s reminded of a cold spot on his bed. Dean runs a hand over the empty side as if he can still feel it; Castiel’s warmth scattered on the mattress, holding him during the night, bodies pressed under the blankets, and even if Dean isn’t fond of cuddles, he cannot deny it to the nurse, for his face when embracing Dean is so peaceful, like he’s in a safe place, his particular heaven, that Dean only sighs, involving the smaller body with his arms – not admitting enjoying the heat they share in perfect accord.

The bed is now hollow, though, with only memories of Dean to recollect a musky perfume, cringes over the pillows as Cas dives his head on it, or his mouth open in a smile showing gums and all, raven hair pointing askew to every direction and not adjusting no matter how many times Dean pats it down, it’s a permanent bed hair, which he lover to run his fingers on.

Dean wants to turn the hourglass back in time, to go back to these silly moments of warmth and laziness in a bed where there’s no end of the world, there is no war nor his own demons to deal.

He wants Castiel back.

He gets up walking around the room, disarranging his hair, scratching nails over his face with frantic hands leaving red lines on the skin. A chair smashes on the floor in small pieces. A glass over the table is crushed at the wall, spilling water and shards. He punches the wardrobe cracking the door in a hole, wounding his hand and peeling the white thin skin out of the joints, but never stopping hitting the same spot, until his fist enters the door and pulls barbs of wood that slides on the back of his hand, cutting it in scarlet streaks.

He squat on the floor with his fist pressed between his thighs and belly. A sharp breath of pain passes through his teeth as Dean tenses his jaw, closing his eyelids.

While rocking his body half seated on the floor he asks himself over and over again: what have he done?

Near the bedside table there’s still whisky on the flask. He pours some of it in his hand almost yelling with the burning alcohol striking the flesh, but the pain becomes a concrete truth of the
reality around him. Dean is alone, he lost so much and now he’s back on that place of anger, solitude and his arrogant manners, when he pretend he doesn’t care anymore – because admitting he’s broken is too damn painful.

Like the aching in his hand.

But not worse than the pain of remembering the warm body that used to lie beside him on that bed, the same one that brought him back from seclusion

Once he’s done pouring the whisky on the wounds Dean sips the rest of the drink, hurling the bottle on the wall to add its broken shards to the destruction he made on his cabin.

He folds his hand under a pillow creeping on the mattress with a ragged pant, forcing his head to doze off, to go back to sleep; for his memories are the only place where the world makes sense again; it’s the reality he wants to escape to, because knowing that in this world Castiel is not his…

Dean has no more forces; he didn’t want to wake up anymore, but rather live in this dream endlessly. He was having a much better time asleep, seeing Castiel smiling for nothing, his hands touching his without restraints.

Waking up felt like a reversed nightmare.

Eyes are shutting with the pain of his burning hand. His throat is dehydrated, physique absolutely wasted, as Dean knows soon his guts will complain from the excess of alcohol, throwing it away on the bathroom.

However right now he can dream of blue eyes.
The trigger

Opening his eyes is torture. Dean wants to know how that dream... No, how that memory ended. What he did; what Castiel did? Not knowing the truth about himself was crumbling him inside out.

It was visible his bad humor. He didn’t want to talk to anyone, nor do any kind of job. He stole two bottles of vodka from the raid Jo and Benny just came back from. It wasn’t his favorite drink, but it was enough for now.

That fire behind the cabins certainly became his favorite spot of all camp. He could watch the fire all day alone as soon as the night falls, for no one wanted to be outside in this cold. Not feeling the tip of his fingers was something he oddly liked, because when he drank, and the hot sensation traveled down his hands and through his veins the sensation of being alive was incredible.

It reminded him of the times Castiel touched him.

This feeling was right there, but his injudicious brain was too locked to perceive it, ensnaring itself on a wheel of “why’s” and senseless pre-judged reasons of “no” and “don’t”.

The feel was so much more real in his actions, senses, craved deeply on his soul, that Dean can understand it know…

Men, woman... Just a bunch of meat covering what’s inside, transfiguring and modeling us into the beings so called rational, but that hide a natural fact to us: that we want a witness, someone to accompany us in this so short life and is just there at our side, no matter what.

In war you learn to appreciate these little moments, these rare people that adorn the existence of each one.

And if Dean had a tiny luck to find something in the middle of the chaotic disorder of the war, then what superhuman power he has to deny it?

Because if there are those who condemn the act of love, then he can flip his finger and rub it in the face of the rest of the world.

Because he does not care, he doesn’t give a fuck for those people.

Only Castiel matters.

The rest of the vodka, Dean doesn’t finish to drink there. No, he marches back home and lunches himself on his bed, throwing the burning liquid down. And the dreams will come back, he is sure of it. He needs them to.

Three months ago

Castiel moved to Dean’s cabin on the end of the week. Sam and Jess helped, smiling like fools to them. Dean ignored it. He was happy, he can overpass the jokes for a while.

Ellen made a special dinner tonight, saying it’s time to celebrate; what exactly she never told, but all camp seemed to notice the fresh frame of mind cincturing their leader and the nurse. Dean thought he was going to be uncomfortable, or too humiliated that he would screw things with Cas.
But he only needed to see a shyly grin crossing Cas’s lips to melt. It’s okay, he can live knowing he’s a sappy guy – he just doesn’t have to say it out loud.

At night Dean entered his bedroom – their bedroom - pulling out his boots and tossing them somewhere near the bed. He wanted a proper rest tonight, and sleep with his shoes on, although a necessary precaution for any eventuality, appeared pointless today. Castiel did the same also removing his huge beige Trenchcoat, however he still was a little bit insecure, rubbing his hands, looking around as if he didn’t belong there.

Dean stared the nurse for a while, gradually walking towards him. Cas shudders as they are so close, but not touching - breathes an inch away from their cheekbones. Dean inhales, eyes hovering the blue in Castiel, raising one unconscious hand to stroke his jaw. The stubble is thick on his fingers, a weird sensation but not unpleasant. Cas parts his lips licking them, as Dean leans down unable to control himself anymore.

He cups the nurse’s face, while holding his waist. Castiel knot both hands around his neck as the kiss heated with tongues and drools of saliva. And it was the whole lot they required to surrender into the long postponed aching.

Their bodies demanding one another battled for control as they kiss and hands wander over clothes, drifting from wall to wall, sometimes being Castiel pressed against it; at other times it was Dean who felt agitated legs rubbing his oh, so ready volume under his pants. It was anxious, critical, both men rushing to feel, to grab more than the amount of fabric covering the skin.

By a wild yank, Dean brought Cas’s legs up, holding his thighs in a tight grip aligning it with his waist and rocking his cock over Cas’s. They moaned together, as the smaller one holds strong shoulders in front of him to prevent from falling.

In between moist kisses, clash of tongues, air being drank from one to another, Castiel groaned suppliant, and his voice is desperate.

“Bed! Dean, take me to bed!”

Dean grinned, rushing his tongue on the plushy mouth, kissing it wantonly before asserting.

“Yes, sir.”

Still holding Cas’s legs, Dean walked in their room never stopping to pinch and kiss his lips. Once he felt the mattress hitting his knees, Dean throws Castiel on the bed huling on top of him, lifting the nurse’s blue shirt so he can lick the navel. Cas groaned, feeling the hot flesh travelling on his abdomen, oscillating to the ribs, biting the pecs in tiny nibbles, and suddenly pulling one nipple between his teeth.

“Ah, Dean!”

Cass shouted, leaning his head back as his hands catch the sandy-brown hair. Castiel was panting, knowing that his dick already leaked a considerable amount of pre-come; hips moving up to rub against something, to ease the pain in the jeans. His nipples continued curling inside Dean’s mouth, excited, rigid, with the abrupt sucking.

Per a rapid beat Cas’s chest jolted, and Dean could count each bumping as he heard them up close. Shutting his eyes, Dean dragged both hands from Cas’s pelvis to his ribs, scathing carmine lines on the white skin. The smaller one rustled, moving his torso side to side in spasms, but without space to run away – not that he wanted to. Dean takes his time to suckle the pink and now
firm nipple; a melting sensation over his tongue as the flesh meets the middle of his limp tongue; slacks are becoming skintight.

Swallowing hard, Cas breathed in with his legs quivering, fingers sealed on strands of sandy-hair.

“Want you!” He manages to say in a gasp. “I want you so much!”

Dean goes up, kissing Cas’s collarbone and removing his shirt at once. When the cloth is out, he licks the nurse’s chin slowly, entering the mouth and exploring all corners of it. On a last smack he locks eyes on Castiel, rocking his hips in measured brushings so they can relief the anxious itch of hard cocks.

“Cas, I want to ruin you.” Dean whispers with lips glued to his ear, hot breath warming the sensitive skin there. “Want to split you open just for me.”

“God, yes!”

“You want that?”

“Yes… Want to feel you in me, Dean.”

The rough tone in a demand causes quivers to crawl its way to Dean’s spine. He groaned, kissing Castiel again.

“Fuck, you make me crazy!”

Lowering his body, Dean went on nipping all skin he could see: chest, ribs, navel, abdomen, hipbones – jumping as two accentuated bones on the sleek skin, creating a direct line to Cas’s inner thighs - and then, once no other place were exposed to kiss, he started to unbuckle the belt that deprived him from sensing the wetness in Cas’s boxers.

Whilst he works on the zipper, Cas starts to tug on the neckline of Dean’s shirt, since he was still dressed. Dean lifts his torso just a little to let Castiel remove the blouse. The nurse supported his weight on one elbow, kissing his now nude chest, biting his pecs. Dean moans, and Cas only allows him to leave his mouth since he wanted to go back to the labor of opening his jeans.

The minute he’s done, he sees gray boxes snug on Cas’s length with a darker spot on the tip of his dick, jutted on the fabric. Dean licked his lips breathing fitful, using teeth to bite the muscle over the textile, dragging loud screams from Cas. This yells so needy made Dean liquefy, knowing it was him provoking these sensations on Castiel. It obliged him to palm the aching cock trapped on his own slacks. This was crazy; he can’t hold anymore, he just wants this man like never before he wanted someone.

Suddenly, Dean leaves the hard muscle still in the boxers while Castiel complained in a huff the lack of touch, but soon is compensated with the delicious vision of Dean taking his belt out – unhurried, the leather sliding on each loop around his waist – then the single button on the pants unlocks in a pop, and the zipper of his dark slacks slide down leisurely, as Dean keep staring Castiel through thirst green eyes; and in one go he pushes boxers and pants to his thighs. Cas groans with the view: a solid red cock large on the base and following a delicious line of veins to its reddish glans, jerking as beds of pre-come leaks from the small slit on the tip. It makes him growl in hunger.

Blue iris becomes black in lust, begging for Dean to move, to keep going. He doesn’t care if he sounds despairing – because he is. And compelling to his pleas, Dean goes down smashing his body on Cas’s as he gets out of his pants. He lets Castiel touch his length with delicate fingers
cupping them both, moaning fuggy in his mouth. Castiel complained in puffs about the clothes still stuck between them. Dean smiles, helping Cas to get rid of his own outfit, and it’s purely skin against skin now. When Dean sees his dripping flushed cock pulsating, he is lost again.

A tingling on his throat makes him grunt, compelling Dean to descend in kisses, resting his cheek on Cas’s groin in a lazy movement as his tongue flings out licking stripes on one side of the beautiful dick in his palm. It’s big enough to fulfil his hand, but of the perfect size to enter his mouth without trouble. It’s easy to remember all the times he got lips around his own length, so he mimics the same motions of up and down, his cheeks becoming hollow as he sucks, swirling the tongue wherever he feels like it. However what turns him on even more into swallowing is the whines and shrieks Cas gives altogether pulling his sandy-brown hair.

“Ouh mm-Dean! Dean!”

Humming in approval, Dean is encourage to do more, while Castiel can only process the hotness of his mouth, the starving way the cock is gulped up and down, slurped in, hearing pleased ‘hums’ coming from Dean who juices and twists his damp tongue around Cas’s length. Dean holds his hips in place as they were bulking up to feel more, but he manages to let the tip of the muscle hit the back of his throat, swallowing the whole thing hard every time Castiel did it; so he can be driven mad, so his skull imprints this sensation, being Dean the single one capable of making him feel this fucking good.

Raising his head in pursue of air Dean hisses, licking one finger and covering it in spit, still pumping Cas slowly, verging him to the edge - the burning turmoil travelling low his tummy to the desperate release on his cock, but not letting go entirely - as Dean sees Castiel’s thighs flexing in harmony along the thrusts.

Once satisfied with the coating, the wet finger goes right to the ‘V’ of Castiel’s legs, fumbling through the skin until Dean finds it; the puckering hole vibrating in need. Cas gasps as Dean circles the tip of the digit on it, pressing, but no entering. Breathing uneven, Castiel holds strong biceps with nails digging there, making Dean bite the inner of his mouth. Kissing the smaller one again to tranquil him, Dean patiently waits the clasp on his arms to cease, and at that moment he pushes in one finger.

Cas cries in a grating voice throwing his head back, eyes closed, startled with the invasion. It’s new and intimate, strange and incredible at the same time; so utterly delightful that he puffins in irregular blows, the oxygen on the room seeming scarce, and he is hyperventilating. Through an open mouthed kiss, Dean tries to make Castiel focus again, blowing air inside his lungs, which wakes the nurse from the ecstasy:

“Breath for me, Cas.”

Dean mutters, kissing him again, hearing his nostrils lugging in air. Pacified, Castiel licks his lips, opening his eyes to stare at the man above him. Green are watching blue, as Cas holds the small of Dean’s back rocking his pelvis gentle together with the sweet thrusts on his entry. After prepping his hole a long more, Dean kisses his neck leaving red dots every time he nibs it, while Castiel stamps his shoulders and spine drawing scratch marks.

As soon as Cas starts whining, giving up to the first glimpses of pleasure, Dean sucks his nipple once more, mapping his tongue down, and down, biting the lower belly, drinking the new beds of pre-come with quick slurps on the tip – Castiel only but moans and shakes - when Dean says goodbye to any walls still blocking him and at last dives keen on desire, dropping his lips further and further, slipping gingerly on the perineum until burying his face on Castiel’s hole.
Cas stutters, smacking his hand on the bed several times, chanting Dean’s name.

“Ouh... Mmm-Dean! Oh my, God! Dean! Dean!”

At first he’s only lapping there, tempting, kissing and adjusting his body over the mattress. His ass is bucked up while in the middle of Cas’s legs, and to find extra space where to set in his tongue, Dean grabs the back of Castiel’s knee lifting it to his ribcage. Now he can clearly see the rosy entrance drinking his digit, shuddering as he smoothly licks it, pulsating while it relaxes and tightens again, and again, becoming loosen and narrow.

“Amazing...”

Dean whispers, with his tongue licking a long strip, and then the tip forces its way in, as his finger thrusts another side of the entrance to open it for his wet flesh sting in. It works. The digit opens the hole to receive Dean, the tongue goes in stopping halfway through to twist and curl together with the finger. Castiel is ruined beneath him, closing his hands on the mattress until the knuckles are white, voice coarse with screams, his beautiful cock throbbing red and swollen. Nevertheless Dean wants do destroy him.

He lets his finger go out to hold the other leg, lurching both on the air to Cas’s torso. The creasing entrance pulsates around his tongue, and then he eats Castiel, squirming the flesh sideways, sucking slight just to provoke friction, kissing the soaked muscle. At first Dean thought it would be weird the rimming thing, but truth be told it’s not that different from chicks. Or maybe it’s better. He can only taste Castiel, as if he had some kind of addicting flavor, and Dean was already drowned in it.

Closing his eyes, Dean parted his lips even more so he englobes all of that velvet place amid Castiel’s legs, knotting his hole. Then his tongue has enough freedom to dive everything Dean can put in. The smaller body quakes, beating the mattress again with his fists along a shameless squeal so full of pleasure and relish that Dean could cum only by hearing it. Dazed, he lurches forward, still with eyes closed, just cherishing these sounds, how the soft muscle opens just for him, receiving the soggy tongue spinning, stabbing in and out through rough motions.

“Ah-! Mm-good! So good, Dean!”

Cas gasps, lowering one hand to grasp Dean’s hair; the other fiercely shut on the sheets almost ripping the fabric, because the sensation is something immense, unhuman even, and Cas feels like he never before experimented such intenseness; nothing before was right.

Castiel moves his hips up in ghost thrusts, for he has no release on his inattentive cock, wanting to rub against something as Dean shoves his tongue pitilessly, the tip of if stiff, hitting deep in his inner, as the rest of the flesh soothes circling the puckering entrance at the same speed. Castiel never received such attention, nor had he experienced being eaten - which definitely he would want to do again.

The thing is, with Dean all seemed new, right. They felt each other, fulfilled the no spoken longings in hums, touches, and intense pleasure by this act capable of provide a silent name for their longing; not merely in physical gestures, but in a coupling of souls.

In a loud whimper, Cas arched his back tensing his legs, because Dean had just slide one hand back to his hole, entering two fingers at once together with his tongue.

“Ah-gh-ah!”
Castiel gulped whatever he had to tell. It didn't matter anyway, because Dean was eating and
scissoring him at the same time. Amid the digits, Dean kept his tongue pushing while inserting the
fingers to stretch the opening. At this point Cas was completely open, just receiving each joint of
Dean’s fingers ’til the knuckle, and when he fought nothing could surpass this incredible sensation,
in the next deep thrust of the fingers he dissolved into a carcass of lust.

“DEAN! O-My-Oouh GOD! Dean! Mm-there! Right there!”

He squealed and panted, chest erratic going up and down, body fighting to be steady – in vain - as
Dean keep hitting the same marvelous rough nub of tissue inside, and his tongue also kept licking;
sucking his hole.

“Amazing, Cas.”

Dean lapped and kissed while using his fingers to please the nurse, guarding the place he just
touched in memory.

“Dean I’m mm-ready, please, oh-please I-I need you!”

Cas babbled moving his pelvis in the same speed those amazing fingers hit his spot over and over.
If he continued, Castiel was going to cum really fucking hard.

In one last shove, Dean places a third finger in, using his other hand to hold the base of Cas’s dick,
preventing him from coming. Once he was satisfied with the easy way his digits could move in, he
removed them, licking and sucking the pink soft muscle before lifting his head to press sweet kisses
along Castiel’s torso. His nape was being pulled up and he went with the haul, laying over Cas so
they can kiss avidly. Dean is smiling, because Castiel wasn’t even breathing properly – destroyed
by just the rimming.

“Cas…” He calls in weak smooches. “Cas, how do you want it?”

Torpidly, the smaller one whimpered, using what is left of his brain to think a little over it. Tired,
he pushes Dean so he can sedately turn around, placing one pillow under his waist. Castiel was
embarrassed, but furthermore he sought to offer all of him, without restrains or boundaries, and
being exhibited open like this, trusting in Dean to take care of him, is what Cas utmost wished for.

He can hear Dean inhaling sharply with the view he’s receiving: Castiel’s ass jutted up on the bed,
legs spread, his red face beautifully pressed against the mattress and elbows levering faintly his
weight. Dean eyes the pink skin of the perineum near the line of Cas’s dick that is flushed against
the pillow, and he can see the hardness quaking in need very fucking well.

“Want it… Like this. Please, Dean.” He says hoarsely in between small puffs.

“…Fuck.”

Dean mumbles, palming his cock so it doesn’t explode right there, because it’s too much for their
first time, yet it’s all they needed.

Dean breathes closing his eyes, putting one hand on the small of Cas’s back caressing up and
down in a moderate pressure while Castiel softly moaned, happy with the kindness of the palm
caressing his skin.

Before entering him, though, Dean leans down once more to lick a new line on his hole, coating it
with saliva. He kisses there, going up on his knees behind Castiel, who is just eagerly waiting for
him.
With one kiss on each round of his ass, Dean holds his length rubbing more spit on it – shame they can’t afford to spend any lube – and when his palm slides through it, he torments Castiel a little; rubbing the tip of his hardness up and down in Cas’s cleft, but not entering. Growling impatient, Cas rocks his waist backwards, surprising Dean with the hit.

“Hurry.” He says in an almost broken voice, so Dean knows he can’t play anymore, laughing slightly to ease the tension.

“You ready, Cas?”

Nodding frantically, Castiel arches his back as Dean touches the tip on his entrance. Both close their eyes, hearts thumping non stop anticipating the feeling. Gulping, Dean darts forward, pressing his cock to force the narrow rim, and when the head is sucked by its scourging force Dean almost thaws. Cas wails with the new aching invasion, twisting his hands on the mattress as Dean goes in, in, in, pushing further, stretching the rim with the fat length, entering until the middle of his cock. Together they breathe harshly, rumbling on the same timbre sounds that can’t be translated as humans.

Dean is lost, so fucking lost, thinking purely on how warm, hot, and searing Castiel’s inner is, so concentrated in the feeling, that he’s not ready for a contraction of the muscle around him, slurping his cock, driving Dean to the verge of pleasure. His dick is swallowed in one go and before he can even process any of this, he droops his torso over the smaller body, resting his forehead on Cas’s shoulder, panting, whereas his hands grips the nurse’s waist to keep him in place, for the bodies are just wobbly puppets stimulated by thirst lust.

“Fucking tight; fuck! Cas, y-you’re incredible!” Dean shouts, but Cas only replies in yelps and muffled sounds.

“Ouh…Dean, mm-it’s t-too m-much!”

Castiel trembles as his chest went heavier without air. The sensation of being fulfilled is stupidly marvelous, also insane in pleasure. It burns and hurt, but there’s so much more beyond that Cas suppress the pain, he chokes on his shudders and takes Dean wholly.

Dean hisses, sliding an open mouth onto his neck, nipping the skin, a flicker smooching under the ear where he whispers:

“Move with me.”

Gasping, Castiel pulls the mattress in his hands doing as he asks, adjusting to the pace of Dean’s haunches. Dean just stay still, linked with him, rocking oh, so quietly slow that his dick barely goes out, just swinging inside. He stays in, stroking with a kind speed, adjusting himself a little, them more, further, harder. The scarlet length inflated ready to load, but Dean contains it, which frustrates him and also squeezes his rigid volume in the entrance.

He sobs, digging in, beginning to pull out, but just enough so he can enter again with more force. When Castiel lugs a delicious moan with his voice Dean knows he no longer hurts the nurse, shoving in real good. The first time he goes out until half of his length, thrusting back in less than a second, he sees stars behind his eyes, biting Cas’s neck. The crack of his ass is so beautiful parted for Dean, receiving his cock hungrily.

Still with his forehead pressed on the smaller one’s shoulder, Dean places sweet kisses there, sliding his palms on Castiel’s biceps, passing the elbows, holding firm his closed fists making they loose the sheets, and then intercalating their fingers, with arms tangled on one another.
Cas’s legs are spread, with Dean’s chest fitting perfectly on his spine, his hipbones pressed against the small of his back, modeling his muscles and bones to adjust to the lines of Castiel’s body as they quiver together – arms locked under his chin and their waists swaying in accord. Breathing unevenly, Dean tries to move faster, pounding with force, but still unhurried. However, when Cas’s back curves making his ass bash against his length, Dean moans, bucking up and piercing faster, faster, faster.

Sucking dry air, Castiel feels his throat coarse as Dean delves in; swinging his waist from left to right until he finds that amazing point of pleasure. It almost causes him to faint.

“Ah! Mmm-AH!” He screams narrowing his blue eyes, not caring about the noises they made.

“F-fuck!”

Dean shouts with an abrupt halt, letting go of his hand, straightening his body and sliding one palm behind Cas’s thighs to hold one of them. The nurse is confused by the sudden interruption, but as Dean rolls his knee to the right, twisting his torso on the bed he finally understands. They swing calmly, so Dean is inside him all the time during the spin, until the position is inverted. Cas, with his back on the bed, and they are facing each other’s faces flushed of embarrassment, lust, desire...

“Wanna see you, Cas.”

Dean says idly kissing him, as Castiel opens his thighs for Dean to sink back all the way in, evolving his waist. He feels a throb on Dean’s shaft, purring at the sensation. The wrinkling muscle compresses around the rigid flesh, causing Dean to lose all reason with the certain that Castiel was more than ready – eager. The new impact of out and in slumps his chest over the smaller one, sliding both hands to his ribcage, clenching and skimming down, getting to his hipbones where Dean grips the waist, slowly lifting Cas from the bed so the small of his back floats midair, meeting with each impact that bumps into his ass.

Castiel breathes hard as Dean pounds with relish. He gasps, craving his nails at Dean’s spine, scratching it while purring in grating moans. Castiel’s mouth is chapped when Dean smashes his lips for another demanding kiss. This time they soothe the speed, savoring their mixed flavors, panting and wheezing in lavishly sounds.

“Cas, you’re-a-ah-beautiful; so hot! Mmm!” Dean stammers, kissing erratic within rushed lunges.

“Dean, ah-mm-Dean! Want –Ouh! Mm-more, more; please!”

“More?” He teases, licking his jawline “How much ‘more’, Cas?”

“A-Mmm! Ah! All of it!” He answers amidst cries.

“Will you have me, Cas? All of me?”

The question no longer has a mocking tone. Castiel open his eyes so he can embed his glare into Dean’s greenish globes. The hidden doubt is visible and clear on his eyes. Cas cups his face with a sweet smile, kissing Dean indolently until their tongues are molten on one another.

“I want everything.”

Dean inhales feeling his chest burns with air and urge. All of him, his faults and misbehaviors, his blatant manners, his insensitivity and intense emotions – Castiel wants him.
“Now please, give me all of you.”

“Fuck! Cas!”

Gasping hard with fervor, impatient to give and have the nurse entirely, Dean places his arms behind Castiel’s knees supporting the back of the thighs on his biceps and leveraging his elbows on each side of Cas’s head, bending him even more, making his back arches up on the mattress. Cas squeals as Dean delves till the base of his length, shoving in and out as he kisses him with no restraints.

Castiel englobes him fully, his arms around Dean’s neck, legs spread to receive the swollen cock pumping in. Dean then writhes his waist, making Castiel yells in startle, for the firm muscle hit the incredible sensitive spot inside him. He can’t breathe nor think, only squirming in pleasure with Dean pushing again and again there, and Dean is beaming softly, because he is the one causing this much delight in Cas.

“Augh! AH! Mmm- F-Fuck! D-Don’t stop Dean! Don’t ever stop!”

He doesn’t. Dean hurls as in a rut, thrusting Castiel’s tapered entrance, being swallowed by it. His dick inflates, piercing without mercy as his back is grazed by Cas’s nails leaving scratch marks. Both forgot about the hours of night, ignoring that anyone might be up with their screams by now. Dean is guided through his need, through Castiel’s moaning, his pretty soaked cock rigid-red on his belly throbbing together with his.

“Mm-more! Dean! F-faster! A-AH!” Cas is begging, clutching the sandy-hair on Dean’s nape to bring him down to an irregular kiss.

“Uhmm;’s so fucking good! C-Cas!” He murmurs with lips clashed.

“Ough-Oh God! Oh God; Dean!”

He’s gonna come. The pressure inside him is too much, too deep and powerful; Dean thumping the marvelous delicate nub wantonly, panting on Cas’s ear as the nurse pulls his hair and bites the junction of his neck, humming and permitting his body to become a disarray – ruined by Dean – as he himself collapses in euphoria.

Dean thrusts in, in, in, Castiel responding with jolts, Dean’s cock almost exploding inside the narrow entrance, bucking up the pace with his hips motioning in a precise angle. His knees are rubbing on the mattress, but no pain is in there; Dean can only feel the scourging hole slurping him, the tight inner-walls massaging his length and irradiating to his nerves blows of delight.

Dean rests his forehead on Cas’s shoving harder in solid stabs, his thighs hitting his groin, kissing him obsessively while stifling the symbiosis of screams and whines, locking visions as they puff with hot breathes clashing in the gap of their mouths.

The heat on his lower belly increases and judging by the frenzy growing in Castiel under him the nurse is close too. Bawling, Dean rushes one hand to seize Cas’s dick, fisting it in the same speed as he goes out an in.

“DEAN!”

“Cas, shit! I c-can’t anymore!”

“Ah! Dean! M-me too!”
“'Mm-Gonna! C-Cas! Fuck! Gonna-mm-gonna!'”

“In me! Dean-ouh-mm! Nn-In me, in me, in me!”

The base of the crimson length burns with the friction, in and out, burying deep, shoving in abandon, bulging, growing, until Dean wails, coming, and coming, in strong spurts, screaming a single name with a broken voice.

“C-Castiel!”

Hot and wet gushes of come coat the inside of Cas completely. Dean yells his name several times without breathing; his waist delves hard in lazy motions as his cock twitches spilling load after load in boiling jolts. Castiel clinches his entrance around Dean, feeling so full, damp and involved, the sensation of belonging causing spasms on his body; and Dean continue to thrust quick and almost not getting out of the rim, digging the hungry cock in the sweet spot inside Cas, hearing his implores for coming, ‘till no longer after Dean’s orgasm, Castiel is covering their abdomens with white shots.

“OuaH! A-ah! AH! Dean!”

The cry brings more beads of come out as Dean reaches a jiff of heaven and unreality. Castiel can barely keep his eyes open, his entrance squeezing Dean on each spill while they moan together. His shoulders are tightened in an embrace with huge arms binding him in place; bodies impeccably aligned, as breathing becomes a long forgotten deed.

Inhaling what is left of oxygen, blue and green met among sweat puffs. Dean cups one side of Castiel’s face, drafting his thumb on his reddish pulpy lips seeing the soft flesh modeling on his finger. Their nose bumps in a tender manner, as they kiss leisurely, the tip of tongues encountering its way to one another.

No longer after, they smile, lying side by side with legs intertwined, chests joined as no one wanted to be more than an inch apart. Fingers brushes over Cas’s cheeks, as the nurse makes small circles on Dean’s shoulder, goosebumps affecting both while their spend energy slowly comes back to their bodies.

Dean couldn’t take his eyes out of him. Even covered in sweat Castiel seemed like a being from another realm. Surreal is the way his chest inflates with air, drawing the inches of his skin with this movement. Or how his face seems to be in peace, with eyes half open and lips bruised and pink from the hard kisses they shared. It's just unreal.

It should have a light, there had to be some kind of secret light coming through a crack on the roof that Dean did not fix last summer; it could not be true that Cas’s eyes had this piercing bright under the dusky night, staring at Dean with nothing but tenderness.

It’s like a millions stars dancing in harmony on a single wave making Dean forget about the rest – the tiny rest – of the world outside.

“Cas... Where have you been?”

The question is muttered in a clean disbelief. Cas chuckles, thinking it’s kinda adorable. He smiles, watching Dean and stroking his sand-hair as if nothing else mattered – and for him it truly didn’t. There was nothing better than spend the end of the world with Dean.

“I’m here now.” He states in an affirmation of his presence to the other, and his Adam’s apple goes up and down in an uneasy motion.
“Don’t ever go.” Dean asks, because he has lost so much, so many, nothing good lasts for him, and Castiel… Castiel is more than good. He is everything.

“I won’t.”

“I mean it.”

Castiel knows he does.

The world is ending.

They don’t have much of anything.

They’re lost creatures climbing on one another. To fight. To struggle. To keep swimming against the tide. But they can have this beyond the pure need of survival.

Dean can have Cas as much as he have Dean. They can. It’s all that matters, it’s all that will ever make them keep going, and going.

Being lazy in bed under the sheets as the world end around them. It doesn’t matter. They have hope; they have each other.

They kiss, and adore their bodies in touches until eyes no longer have the power to remain open. They sleep carefree, knowing that in the morning they’ll have more of this to themselves, and the real world can wait while they reside at this instant of their own.

Dean wakes up panting on his bedroom alone. He sits, remembering all tiny pieces of the dream – the hottest one he had in like… Forever! God! Castiel was-is amazing! The sensations imprinted on his head; Dean can trace his hand over his body where Cas touched him and feel it as if the nurse was there with him.

However it’s not only that. Shattered images come now with no effort. A kiss, a gentle whisper, Castiel smiling from the clinic as Dean leaves on a supply run, the way he hurries himself at the end of day to great Dean, almost running in excitement towards the trucks, but taking care to not seem desperate; the crinkle on the corner of his eyes as he smiles, the honesty, the caring.

The dream have trigged all the things locked in his head, everything of Castiel flows like a mild tide on his skull, then it all came as a leaking dam, suddenly flooding his whole body in an unstoppable flow.

What they had, so raw and unique and inexplicable even, but no less true.

The whole lot Dean needed. Not perfection, not the romance books would have described. It’s filled with flaws and cracks, but those are what they’re willing to heal on one another; it’s these fissures that Castiel cured on him as so as Dean cured the ones on Cas. They became the threads uniting them in place.

But Dean cut the strings.

“Dean, are you in there?”

It’s Jess voice on the outside. Dean jumps on the bed still sweating and panting, but if his future sister-in-law are knocking on his door, something must have happened; maybe with Sam. He
swallows the last memories into a hidden place on his head for later, answering the door. Jess doesn’t look frantic, which relieves Dean. She’s holding a piece of paper, smiling.

“Can I come in or what?”

“Yeah, sure… Sorry, I just woke up.”

“I can tell.” She chuckles.

“How’s Sam?” He asks closing the door as the woman enters his room.

“Better, asked for you, though. You don’t visit him in three days,”

“I know he’s in good hands.” He winks to her, making Jess snort.

“It’s not a good excuse, but nice way out.”

“I’ll go see him later. So, any particular reason for coming here?”

“Chuck finished his list.”

She gives Dean the paper as he analyses the new items, laughing a little over the amount of toilet paper he demands this time.

“I’m gonna marry Chuck with a box of these things.”

“Speaking of marriage, I have a request to make.”

Dean turns around facing Jess. She’s gorgeous over the dim bright from the window, her hair becoming gold with the sunlight, the small nose and pulpy lips. Sam sure is a lucky guy.

“I… Maybe during this raid could you try and find, I don’t know, white clothes perhaps?”

Blushing a little, Jess pulls her hair curling it on her fingers as she bites one side of her mouth. It’s like she knows the request is foolish, kind of unnecessary, for no one will care about what she dresses during a weeding these days, but deep inside Dean feels an urge to give this present to her, to make Jess and Sam have one piece of regular happiness. Hugging her, Dean places a soft kiss on her temple, rubbing her shoulder:

“Gonna find something beautiful for you, don’t worry.”

The woman sniffs a little mumbling a ‘thank you’.

“What about Sammy?” Dean asks.

“Oh, we have more male clothes in stock. I already found black slacks and a green button shirt. It’s perfect.”

“Nice. Wait… I’ll have to use something fancy too?”

“Of course!”

“Damn. And the rings?”

“Apparently Sam had planned to propose way before his surgery. He had saved a pair of fake gold rings he found on a jewelry store. Nothing fancy, but… It’s perfect.”
Dean smiled fondly, hugging Jess one last time before breakfast. A weeding on a survivor’s camp after the war. They didn’t have any priests, but there’s this woman, Hannah, who used to be a very religious one, that accepted to bless Sam and Jess also making the ceremony. It will be perfect.

The raid today was really peaceful, and Dean thanked whoever forces contributed for this. The calm afternoon freed him to make a few stopovers in the forgotten city to look for clothe shops. This part of the trip was exhaustive. Jo and Benny went with him on the fifth store and there was absolutely nothing usable there. Jesus… Did all kinds of outfits just disappear?! How difficult could it be to find a simple pair of white clothes?

Huffing, Dean passes by a broken window inside a Walmart. It’s all destroyed, with missing pieces here and there. The food department is… Empty. The pharmacy has a box of cotton which he takes. Even the construction aisle has nothing useful to take, save for a few nails. He's getting impatient, but he promised Jess to find something… Shit, he can’t let the woman down!

The store has a second floor, and maybe there he can find anything usable. He goes up the stairs noticing it’s a bedroom department. Bed sheets and pillows were all taken, towels as well.

He passes a few wardrobes resting his head on it and ready to give up, when he sees it. Tossed and crinkled inside the wardrobe there’s a white nightdress, with a delicate lace detail on the sweetheart neckline, knee-length, and the fabric was not cetin, but a cotton like one. Dean smirked for his mission was accomplished. Well, it was a nightdress, but who would’ve care about it? Besides, it really looked like a normal dress.

Satisfied, Dean walked back to the first floor showing his finding to Jo, who congratulated him giving a ‘thumbs up’. She took the nightdress and folded it, going back to the truck together with Benny.

Dean was following them more satisfied with today’s mission when a strange glow, blinded his eyes. It was the sun changing positions on the sky, making a new ray of light enter the store and hit a forgotten kiosk on one corner. Dean walked among shattered glasses looking for the origin of the strange spark and under cracked wood he sees it: an open black box thrown on the floor with a pair of silver rings attached to it. He keeps staring to the piece of forged metals for longer than he thought. Then Jo is yelling his name with impatient.

Dean doesn’t know what drives him to toss the box away and put the two rings in his pocket. It’s a luck thing to find good materials to trade; silver is one of those. However that’s not the reason of why Dean collects them. Seeing the rings discarded on the ground; the glow it emanated within the sunlight made him think of blue eyes.
It began with a dream. Memories returning gradually to his head, images of a cheerful Castiel, full of joy and happiness. Currently awake, Dean is capable of evoking traces, sensations, words whispered on the blurred light coming through the window of his bedroom – their bedroom. He wants Cas to move back, want them to be ‘them’ once more. But he cannot expect things to be easy. Castiel is wounded, and even if Dean got there and claimed he remembered, it would be another dick move.

Just thinking about it hurts. Imagine you telling someone you don’t want to go back with him; you do shitty things, you say the stupid excuses, and so, one day, you wanna come and say: “hey, now I remember you, so we can go back to the way it was”. Yeah, Dean is an idiot, but not that level of an idiot.

For the next days, his memory returns in abundant portions he can fit into the maze, finding his way out of the oblivion. Dean didn’t tell anyone, though. The first person he needed to have a proper conversation is Castiel. However, he is in a lack of words or excuses. There’s nothing mendable enough for him to say that will erase his past actions.

Through the clinic windows, he watches Cas on a safe distance, longing to go over there and take the nurse on his arms, but not convinced of by what means. The pair of rings tingles on his pocket since the raid, but he doesn’t have the slightest idea of what to do with them, why he had the urge to take those things in the first place.

As another day strikes Dean in silent, he and Cas are put on the same place on a morning reunion when Jo called everyone to Sam’s cabin to discuss a matter brought by their ally and long term friend, Bobby Singer. He’s the leader of a camp not seven miles away, and for him to have the trouble to send a message, it must be something big.

Dean presented swiftly to his brother's bedroom since Sam was still recovering. Jess was sitting on his fiancé bed, Jo and Benny laid their backs on a wall shoulder to shoulder as Chuck and Ash were in the middle of the room. He said hello to everyone in there until his eyes stopped over Castiel; his arms crossed on the other side of the cabin, looking to anywhere but the leader. Dean narrows his eyes unsure of what to do or say, or if he has something to tell him.

Dean wanted to, but once more his tongue seemed to weight three times its size. Coughing to cease the tension, Chuck began to talk.

“Thank you all for coming this fast. I’ve received a message from Bobby half hour ago.”

“What’s the problem?” Jo frowns.

“Bobby says they had a raid nearby that got ambushed.”

“By who?” Queries Benny.

Chuck sighs deeply, rubbing his nape.

“He thinks it’s from Lucifer’s camp.”

A chill runs over Castiel as he hears the name. Dean notices the discomfort the nurse is feeling. His
legs move one step ahead in his direction, however his fists clench and his jaw stiffens with uncertain. Not now; he wasn’t allowed yet.

“We need to go over there and check for survivors.” Jess comments from the bed.

“Is that a good idea? I mean, we had a lot of trouble with Luc before.” Ash has a point.

“Perhaps it’s our chance to make him crawl with his tail between his legs.”

“Why you always have to be so direct, Jo?” Chuck asks, shaking his head.

“I’m just being rational. Besides, Bobby’s our friend.”

None says a word against that. The old man did so much already. Dean and Sam considered him a father. Actually, they even asked Bobby to move to their camp, but he refused, for someone had to take care of things up north.

With this unhesitating, they formulated a quite simple strategy. Two trucks, Ash, and Benny were the drivers, as Jo, Garth, and Dean went on field. Everything was going fine. Until Sam brought an uncomfortable matter.

“Bobby thinks there’s people wounded, so I believe Cas should come.” Sam explains.

“What?! No way!” Dean immediately counter, seeing the nurse coming out of his distant spot.

“Excuse me, but I believe I’m the one who should decide that.” Castiel burst for the first time, fiercely looking at Dean after avoiding the leader for so long. His eyes felt like a blazed beam.

“You’re not going to a gunfire.”

“If I’m required, then I’ll go, Sam.” He states, staring at the youngest brother.

“Say something!” Dean shouts at Sam who only shrugs.

“Cas is right, Dean. Those people might die if they don’t receive medical attention soon.”

“It’s not something we haven’t done before.” Jo says.

“Cas is the best, mate. We need him there.” Benny concludes.

“Are you fucking with me?! What’s this?! Some kind of shitty plot against me?!”

“Not everything revolves around you, Dean.”

It’s the tone and the way Castiel says those things that wounds Dean’s chest. He feels small and cornered, with every glance and breath that comes from Castiel, causing perforations invisible over his body. It was like walking naked on broken glass, hoping not to be cut at every step. No one says a word, feeling the palpable tension in the air. Gulping, Dean raises one cautious hand towards him.

“Cas, please…”

“Enough with this discussion, Dean. Act like the leader you are.”

Rule number one: never piss off Castiel. The room is dead silent as the group stares embarrassed at the two men staring in angry at each other: Cas, for he is being treated like a child, and Dean for
not having a say on this matter. The tautness is a thin layer of ice now, and Sam needs to interfere with his best weapons.

“It’s for Bobby Dean, he need us.”

This broke Dean from the inside. The man had done so many things in the past for them. It’s not a good plan. Dean still hates the fact they have to put Cas one feet near problems with Lucifer again, but he cannot discuss over that. Huffing, he agrees, going out in a hurry to gather some air.

They’ll leave after lunch, since it’s already eleven in the morning. Dean prepares his bag tossing guns and ammo with a rage strength on the back of a truck while thinking. Of course he doesn’t want Castiel on the field. Especially on a mission involving Lucifer. But what he’s supposed to say? There’s no way to counter his brother's assumptions, much less deny assistance to Bobby. And Dean has no right to bossy Castiel around. Not anymore. The more he thinks about it, worse is his temper. If before Dean did not care even for a grain of sand to think about Castiel, or even entertain the idea that the nurse meant something to him ... Now Castiel had simply become all - Dean had remembered that Cas was everything to him. And they wanted to put him in danger.

When they’re shoving their bags on the trucks, Castiel is there preparing medical equipment as well as wearing a bullet proof coat. The view causes a shiver on Dean, and he can no longer back off. He marches towards the nurse and with a surprised grip, he pulls Castiel from the group receiving some apprehensive glares, but no one dares to interfere.

“What are you doing?!”

Castiel shouts pulling his arm from Dean. The clasp is gone, but a pain above his elbow indicates a bruise is gonna appear later. They’re on the parking lot, but far enough for a private talk.

“Cas, I don’t think you should go.”

Dean tells him in one breathe, causing Castiel to snort, shaking his head in disbelief. What this man is thinking is a mystery – with or without his memory.

“I never asked for your permission.” He answers in a stoical voice.

“That’s not- Jesus! What I’m saying is that...”

That Dean doesn’t want to see him hurt, to give a chance for Lucifer to capture Castiel again. Dean just wishes to use all of his brutality it for something good once in his life, to keep Castiel safe. However, it’s none of this that comes out of his mouth, but more ego detours of his true feelings.

“You’re not made for combat! You’re a nurse!”

Castiel scoffs a choked sound, closing his fists.

“I’m not a helpless person for you to feel sorry. I am going, you like it or not.”

“This is Lucifer we’re talking about!”

“Your point?”

“My point?! What about the fact he almost slaved you?!”

An odd glow shines in Cas’s eyes. He blinks twice stepping back, staring at Dean in confusion. He can not tell how much of what Dean is talking is part of the information given to him, or if it is part
of something denser in him, almost like a lost luster of his memories ... There was a strange familiarity in the way Dean's eyes moved.

“How did you…”

His voice fails him, as Dean ducks his head. Shit, this wasn’t supposed to come out this way; he had planned everything to happen in small doses, he had everything in a outline of how, when and what to do to make Castiel believe it was all a big mistake ... Dean's words, the terrible things he said to the nurse seemed so surreal and even more stupid now. How could Dean do that with Castiel? With them? He parted his lips, wanting to explain, but before he does, Castiel turned half his body, tired of all disappointments and raises a hand in the air.

“Doesn’t matter. I don’t want to hear more apologies.”

“Cas-wait!”

A hand grabs the smaller one, pushing Castiel against a truck. The nurse closes a fist ready for a punch, but Dean is faster, not thinking when he kisses Cas.

In the first second Castiel fights against it, putting both hands on his chest and pushing Dean away, but his own forces betrayals him, giving up. The brief touch of lips makes the whole existence of the world around them to cease. It was like diving back to the days of the past, and all the pain, lies, half unspoken words turned into the heat from the mouths meeting. Castiel could not resist, he could not. The desire of his body compels Castiel to savor the marvelous taste of Dean’s tongue over his, the smack of lips, mouths open and eager, reminding him of all the times they shared kisses and languid caresses. And Dean just wants to feel him, like in that dream. He wants to terminate the indifference build with walls he constructed around himself, and speak through his actions for Cas to comprehend, to transfer through the press of lips all he didn’t know how to say. However, sometimes, words are a better weapon than abrupt actions.

As soon as Castiel regains his conscience back, of the time and place where they were, he scuffles, shoving Dean away with a precise punch on his stomach. The leader almost falls, coughing and blocking the nausea, as Cas pants with both hands rigid on his body’s flanks. Huffing with clenched teeth, Castiel looks at him in a feeling that can be almost translated as hatred.

“Don’t use my feelings against me, Dean, just don’t.”

Castiel utters, and it’s so wrong. It’s not what Dean was doing. He just-! If Cas could simply understand his struggle, what he really wanted to say, all the words trapped in his own confusion, then he—

“Dean, we gotta move.”

A feminine voice call’s him – Jo. She’s smart enough to tap the truck on the other side while saying it, not entering their vision. Castiel snorts, fixing his clothes, and he is the first to leave. Dean curses a million curses, refraining in the last second from hitting the vehicle. His chest is heavy again, as if he couldn’t breathe; water filling his lungs and drowning him in a slow agony. Things cannot end this way. Dean desperately wants to fix all of his errors, to correct what he had with Castiel before it’s too late – if it’s not already. He tries once more to follow Cas, but as soon as he walks towards him a hand rests on his pecs.

“Go to the other truck.” Jo orders him.

“Get out of my way.” He harshly retorts.
“No! We have no time for your personal drama!”

“I need to talk to him!”

“You’ll have plenty of time when we get back.”

“Oh, fuck you!”

“No, fuck you! Don’t throw your problems at me!”

“Leave me the fuck alone!”

“Easy there, Dean.”

Benny appears beside Jo to give her support. Only then Dean realizes he’s huffing in frantic anger. The shouts alerted the rest of the group who stares at him in confusion. He only glares at them with cold eyes. Dean snorts, a fist hitting the truck this time, as he walks to it in solid steps. Even Castiel is looking abashed, however everything is about to end in a terrible disaster, for when Dean eyes Cas he also takes a glimpse of Balthazar on his side – one hand rested on the nurse’s shoulder.

“Do we have a show going on here?”

Balthazar mocks, grinning, sliding his palm to Cas’s elbow, caressing there. The nurse retracts it, giving his assistance a dangerous glare and a warning to stop, but he simply shrugs, watching Dean once again, using words meant to hurt the leader in the deepest way possible.

“At least he’s not running away this time.”

It’s too much.

The blood rushes far and wide, thick and ravenous by every corner of Dean’s being, filling him with fury. Jo screams something, Benny tries to hold him back, but no one can stop him; not even Castiel. The nurse tries to go between them, but is pushed away by Dean at the same time his fist blows a heavy punch on Balthazar’s jaw, wiping the grin from his face. Both end on the ground, kicking and delivering punches, opening cuts, creating dark dots along their bodies, and if Dean breaks one rib or two from Balthazar, it’s simply an unfortunate consequence.

It’s obvious that Dean retains the advantage of years emerged in this war; also, his past on the Arena presented him with an intensive training. Balthazar is beneath his legs, his arms stretched on the dirty motionless, with blood being dragged out of one eyebrow. He’s unconscious in less than a minute, however Dean keeps hitting, and hitting, fists aching with the pain of crushing his maxilla and face bones, but the leader can only see an enemy on the floor, someone he hates and have to kill; another body to add to the pile.

“Dean, stop it!”

Castiel’s shouts holding his arm to avoid another blow on Balthazar. Soon he embraces Dean from behind, involving his arms around Dean’s biceps to immobilize him. The man screams in a coarse voice scratching his throat, wanting to continue, to punch, to hit, to kill, kill, kill.

“Wake up!”

Sam’s voice appear from nowhere in shoutings, snapping two fingers in front of his face. Dean blinks a few times realizing Castiel is still holding him firm, trying to wake him from a trance of oblivion where he was back in the Arena, and Balthazar was his adversary. Huffing, Dean fights to
leave Cas arms, but the nurse still firms him in place, afraid he’s going to continue the insanity. He
fells Castiel pressing his forehead against his shoulder blades, and this turns Dean into a tiny ball
of shame, regulating his breathing to a calm condition until Cas allows him to go.

The nurse runs to Balthazar body not even looking at Dean. He crouches on the floor checking his
vitals, seeming relived for the blond just passed out, but nothing serious happened.

“Carry him to the clinic, I’ll mend his injuries.”

Benny, who was closer to Castiel, does as he says hearing his warnings of how to hold a body
without damaging it.

A tremor similar to a shock runs in Dean. His hands are shaking; his whole body is dormant in a
hypnotized state. He misses the weapon in his fingers, the pommel of the blade which he uses to
kill. And there was still ... He still needed to destroy the enemy.

“What the fuck was that?!?”

Sam shouts at him levering his weight on two crutches. Dean turns his head lazily at him with eyes
full of confusion. Sam breathes in asking for Jo to drag Dean with him to his cabin before more
people come to see what was happening. Dean let himself be pushed slowly by them, feeling
nauseated when he sits in Sam's porch.

“Drink this.”

Jessica offers a glass of a brown liquid – probably whisky – receiving a scowl from Sam.

“What? He needs to wake up. This’s from Ellen special reserve.”

In a single sip, Dean swallows the whisky, coughing a little. The thing is really strong, almost like
pure gasoline. But it wakes him.

“Feeling better?” Jessica asks.

Dean still feels dizzy, but definitely better, with the images of the Arena disappearing.

“...Yeah, thanks.”

“No problem. Now, you need to recompose yourself before the raid.”

“He can’t go to a raid like this!” Retorts Sam.

“Sam, honey, if you know your brother as well as we all do, nothing we say will stop him from
going. So, unless you wanna tie him up, it’s better we just accept the facts.”

Oh, boy, Sam is screwed. Jess is going to boss him around without any trouble.

“But Dean, hear me.” She says and Dean turns to her. “You have to be careful. You want Cas
back? Stop acting like a jerk!”

“Ouch!”

She smacks the back of his head with one hand forcing him to drink another glass to calm down.
He understands each of her words, swallowing hard and turning to look at the group from a
distance. Taking a deep breath he gathers momentum, returning to the serious state of before. By
the time Jo comes to take him back to the truck, Castiel is already with Benny on one of them,
appearing distressed, not looking at Dean. The leader merely sighs.

“Good luck for you, Dean.”

Jo pats him on the back, joining Benny. Dean simply huffs, rubbing his hand over his face two, three times, heading to the other truck. He has another thing to add on the list of stupid things he had done. Great, just fucking great. Finally entering the front seat together with Ash, the driver looks at him with narrowed eyes and a half smile.

“Rough day, uh?” Ash says with a stick on his mouth. Dean rubs his face again in anger, cracking his joints.

“Just drive.”

Ash shrugs, forgetting he ever dared to make a joke with a short-tempered Dean. He is just not in the mood.

(...)

The raid is settled in an old part of the city. It was hit five years ago by a bomb, not a nuclear one, that’s a luck thing; however it left nothing but annihilation. Buildings destroyed, houses burned to the ground with only diseases to spread and consume the ashes of a ghost town. The reason for a raid to wander these parts is only one: the food cans fabric. No group could really go in there and claim all the goods the fabric has because the zone is in constant attack, like a new Gaza line, or something, always with muggers or lonely wanderers armed ‘till their teeth, ready to run into the fabric and steal what they can without receiving a bullet on their heads.

Of course, Bobby knew better than to try and sneaky on the place, but his camp was short on supplies, and the town had rumors of being unoccupied for the past four days. Unfortunately, you can’t trust in rumors.

“Let’s split. Me and Ash take right, you guys go left. Check the place and be back on the meeting point in fifteen minutes to a full report.”

Dean orders, finally entering in his leader role. Everyone nods following their paths, looking for survivals and with wide eyes to anything that could move. Before that, thought, Dean claps Benny’s arm and bring him close to his face.

“Don’t get your eyes out of him.” He whispers hovering his eyes to Castiel.

“Don’t worry, mate. We got this.” Benny reassures his friend, patting his shoulder and walking away. Dean still looks at his back, turning around and starting to do his job.

For the first ten minutes no group can see the other anymore, passing by buildings and destroyed structures, Dean sees the can fabric, noticing how things are quiet.

Too quiet.

“Any ideas, amigo?” Ash asks.

Dean shrugs, wandering around and then they see the first body on the ground a few feet from the
entrance of the fabric. Dean recognizes the guy immediately: Rufus, one of Bobby’s friends. He goes quickly to him, crouching beside the guy and turning him up. There’s blood on one side of his arm and a few holes on his coat.

“Shit- Get Cas here!” He yells to Ash “Rufus, hey Rufus it’s Dean!”

The old man grunts, vaguely opening his eyes.

“…Dean?”

“Yeah, good to see you too, now let’s get the hell outta-”

“You fool…” Rufus say coughing. “He’s here…”

Dean frowns, grabbing at the man to leverage his body.

“Who?”

That’s it. All Dean needed to know is in the fear on Rufus’s eyes and the words… These words that causes a chill on his spine.

“Dean, we have company.”

Ash tells him aiming his gun and pointing it towards the fabric where he sees a group of men coming like soldiers to assault them.

“Run!”

Rufus scream in one last breath. Dean curses, getting up and shooting before he receives the first bullet. While looking for cover with Ash he can only think how stupid they were to fall for a trap like this.

Moreover, once he finds shelter behind a building he looks towards the direction Benny and Jo went together with Castiel, gritting his teeth as he thought how good he will feel once he rips Lucifer’s throat with his bare hands.

(...)

“I believe this is an ambush.”

Jo states after they see a third man moving through the store buildings in front of them.

“You think Bobby was wrong?” Benny asks. “Or he betrayed us?”

“He would never do that.” Castiel states aiming a gun.

“But somebody did.” States Benny.

“Doesn’t matter. We need to regroup.”

Jo is right; however how they are going to do so in gunfire is a mystery. Speculations if Lucifer is there or not are insignificant now, still Castiel can only think about it, not because of his own
safety, despite the fact his heartbeat enhances only with the idea of seeing his brother again.

However his worries lie on Dean and what he can possibly do once he meets the man who captured and tortured him for so long. It can’t be a good prospect.

Huffing, the nurse starts to look for a way out while leaving the shooting to the experienced hands of Jo and Benny. Scanning the town he finds a small opening between buildings, and maybe if they run they can hide and seek the other group. Tapping Benny’s shoulder he points with his head to the route’s direction. The man nods calling for Jo. The woman grins with the plan, for she knows it will be time to use one of her favorite things: a grenade.

Pulling the pin she holds the artifact for brief seconds before throwing it. The explosion is followed by screams and mote shoots, but it also gives them the perfect distraction time to run.

(...) 

The explosion can be heard on the four corners of the town, echoing in every direction. Dean curses for not knowing if it was one of theirs or if Lucifer’s soldiers got the advantage. He can only hope.

“We need to get to the cars!” Ash yells to him.

“There’s five guys out there! How can we do it?!”

The guy thinks for a while shrugging. 

“Guess we have to hit and run!”

Dean blinks to him, cursing as he sees Ash standing up. The guy screams and aims his machine gun discharging several bullets and not caring if he hit the target. 

But what shocks Dean is the fact no response comes from the other side of the gunfire. Intrigued, he lifts his head to look over the half wall he crouched, seeing Lucifer’s men dispersing and changing directions.

“What are they doing?” Queries Ash, frowning.

“I don’t-”

Terror.

Dean can sense terror creeping on his spine and scattering to his limbs, cutting his oxygen from the lungs. Lifting from the ground he jumps the half wall and jogs without thinking, without considering any logical plan of attack, for his mind pulses with Castiel’s name over and over again, because the reason for their enemy’s leaving can be only one: they captured someone.

If they had their best way with Benny’s group, it means Lucifer’s orders were to kill or bring hostages to the camp. Dean knows it because he understands how the mind of that sadistic son of a bitch works.

So he runs, and runs, he steps on mud and something wet that he thinks it’s blood, but doesn’t stop in any moment. Every second count, every minute spent away from Cas is a certain that he is in
danger, and Dean can’t allow it he just can’t-

A single deaf shoot echoes on the town.

Dean gasps the moment this sound reach him, tripping and trying to stand, but his legs turned into paper, as if the dirty is sucking his strengths away. His knees collisions on the ground, hands lifting half of his tired body as his gun ends somewhere around him.

There’s a tinkle on his ear, a whipping pain. He’s bleeding somewhere, but it’s not lethal since he can lazily move his limbs. Dean gasps for air, choking with a bead of blood, coughing until he expels it from his throat.

A strong kick on his chin makes Dean falls on the ground, rolling to one side. He grunts, curling into a ball to avoid another blow when he hears his attacker sighing. Daring to look up he faces the man who started all this mess.

“You really are one of the most troublesome human beings I have ever encountered, Dean. Still I must say I never thought you could get caught by a stupid trap like this. Guess I was wrong.”

“Lucifer…”

“Is Sam with you? I really want to have a talk with the kid.”

 “…Fuck y-”

The feet on his neck forces down even more as Dean coughs, trying to remove his leg, unsuccessful.

“No, he didn’t come. Or else he would’ve been here begging for me to release you.”

In huffs, Dean tries to breathe, but his throat is almost too closed for it.

“Why you must always interfere with my plans?” Lucifer says, gesturing one hand in the air “I mean, you have everything. Your little camp, obedient subalterns, your pretty brother, hmmm. Sam, Sam, Sammy. I need to pay him a visit.”

“Don’t you dare…”

His foot comes again, this time heavier.

“Ah, ah, I’m not finished, how impolite. As I was saying, you have everything; nevertheless you come and mess with my business, even taking my little brother away from me.”

“Cas-” He coughs. “You… Hurt him…”

“I was protecting him. Imagine if I left him alone? Someone so innocent would be dead! But he had to run away. Well, the family is together once again. But don’t worry. I told Alistair to not give Castiel permanent damage.”

Dean froze on the ground, his cheeks puffing with the difficult breathing as he tried to escape, however his shoulder is aching with pain, his eyes heavy; yet he struggles because Castiel needs him.

“Let him go!”

He shouts in a coarse voice, his throat burning for the effort is too big. Lucifer frowns as if he’s
analyzing Dean. For a moment the clutch on Dean’s neck slackens.

“I must say you never cease to amaze me, Dean. I mean, first you’re at my camp, captured half drunk on the wild. It only took me seconds to truly see what your real calling is. It felt good, didn’t it? The thrill in each fight? Killing every week people you barely knew with the lame excuse of ‘it’s him or me’.”

“No…”

“You liked it so much that you didn’t even bother to stop, to try come back to Castiel.”

He tried. He wanted to leave. So much pain, so many deaths… It was his head, what they did to him that made this savage part of Dean emerge to the pores of his skin, cutting, torturing, and killing. But he wasn’t this person anymore; not the soldier, not the man filled with a coldness that shoot before asking. It all changed one year ago, Castiel changed him. The nurse had shown that life, no matter how unfair or crushed it is, can still be good; you can always claim your happiness back.

There can be hope.

“…I did. I did try!”

The yells are nothing more than mere excuses for Lucifer, who continuous to make fun of Dean’s words.

“To whom are you lying, Dean? Me? Castiel? Yourself?” Lucifer presses his feet harder over Dean’s skull “What, haven’t you enjoyed it? And can you imagine how disgusted my brother will be once he knows it; what you have done to so many? With that blood on your hands? Or how Sam is going to look at you knowing the killer you are? There’s no need to lie here.”

Dean is dead silent. The Arena was his only reality for almost a month. He killed more in there than in raids, swinging the damn blade from body to body as if they were nothing. He can’t admit it, but once his memory was lost, once he entered that Arena mindless, nothing else mattered. It was just him and a fight, an easy thing to do. No more responsibilities, no more pain by seeing others dying under his watch; no more nothing. Not even Castiel.

Trying to stay awake, Dean blinks and breathes as hard as he can. None of those words are untrue. If only they knew… What would Castiel say, how would he look at Dean seeing his hands covered in blood, the thirst for killing running in a devious smile over his face?

“You are quite troublesome, Dean. Truly, your use for me was only because of Sam. I put him in the Arena the day you escaped. Do you wanna know why?”

Dean grunted, his eyes fighting to remain open.

“Oh course you want. Well, my men brought Sam with the rest of the cargo. We talked a lot that afternoon, and I assured him that you would be released. Well, not in one piece, but it was better than nothing. As long as he did exactly as I said. Hm. For a moment I believed he was truly giving himself to me. Guess I wasn’t prepared for his innocent eyes.”

At that, Dean wanted to laugh, but truth be told, he didn’t believe Sam was willing to sacrifice himself, to be besmirched. It hurt something deep inside in Dean to know he was incapable of protecting Sam from Lucifer.

“It’s kinda sad, don’t you agree?” The man continued, arching his torso forward and resting one
hand over his bended knee. “Castiel stained his hands to save you, Sam was inclinable to do anything I said to have you back. It doesn’t matter what you do Dean; good deeds or evil one’s, you have this… Excellence for corrupting anyone around you. A remarkable skill, I must say.”

No words for a reply. Lucifer spoke truths; Dean is a disease who corrodes with his touch. That was no mystery.

“It was quite easy to bring you here. I just had to find one of those friends of yours that exiled me, and ta-da! I had the perfect mouse trap. But instead of cheese I used, you know, corpses.”

The pressure on his neck was strong, almost making Dean pass out, however Lucifer continued his speech as Dean still heard him.

“I had to do this, you know? Because you persist on giving me trouble. I mean, what I do is a public service, which I applied into a business plan.”

“It’s not… Business… Slaving people.”

“Have you lost your mind? I am order in chaos, I bring consistency to these lost souls through the fights, appeasing them, selecting the stronger ones to live and discharging the nuisances; it’s the natural order! A big plan is happening here, and if you can’t see that… Then you’re really blind. This is hell Dean, and I’m simply ruling it.”

“N-no… You are… The one… Creating a living hell.”

“Well, that’s your way of seeing it.”

The sole of his foot presses Dean’s neck. Dean stiffens the muscles to avoid breaking the bone, but the pressure is strong. However, Lucifer has others plans. He slides a hand over the hem of his slacks pulling a black 44 magnum. The metal is rigid on his hand and even if the recoil of the gun is pretty strong, Dean is sure the man will be able to handle it with no trouble.

A blurry vision fogs his eyes at every second that passes and the air seem so little, his lungs urging to keep him alive.

“Dean.”

With a flicker of his eyelid, Dean turns his green orbs to the side, and a sudden panic rushes a wave of adrenaline to his limbs.

It’s like that times before, when his memories where lost within the maze of his head. A ghost image looking like Castiel, staring at him with one of those true smiles only the nurse knew how to give. He must be standing on the precipice of death if he’s already hallucinating. Nonetheless it is a nice goodbye view, at least, Cas’s smile.

In one instant, Castiel was right there, extending his hand for Dean to hold, however in an abrupt turn the spectre dissolved in thin air, leaving nothing behind for Dean to see, feel or even imagine. Cas is gone. He will be gone if Dean stays there.

A tremor runs in his body again. Cas needs him, he’s in danger. Dean can give up on himself, accept he’s doomed. But Castiel is different.

Lucifer slips one finger to the trigger, as his thumb disengages the hammer. Dean goes in a last attempting of freeing himself, in vein. He’s going to die. The click of the metal rubbing on Lucifer’s finger sounded ten times louder in Dean’s ear. He just lies there, struggling, though, but
in wait for his inevitable end.

“I changed my mind.”

The magnum is locked and put behind Lucifer’s pants. Dean releases an amount of air trapped on his chest, feeling his throat release from the other man squeeze. He coughs; rotating his body on the ground as his hands massage his neck. Without weapons and weak Dean doesn’t have many options but to lay there regaining his strength. However, Lucifer didn’t free him for no motive.

A hard kicksmashes his head leaving a buzz on his ears and a throbbing pain in his skull. The left side of his cranium; the same place where the scar of his injury is, and it starts to open again as Lucifer’s hits the same region over and over again, not allowing Dean to move an inch.

He grunts and wobbly spins on the ground, but the blood is leaking over his face, blinding him and giving his tongue a taste of metal. Green eyes become a blur of red; his vision is a paint of scarlet as he vaguely sees a pair of figures dragging another one towards them.

Lucifer stops the special treatment to give attention to the body being hold by his man. Dean can’t distinguish a word they say. Someone is calling for him while others speak. The unfamiliar frame is forced to stand up as he coughs rose stains on the ground.

The scar is burning, as his mind gradually confuses Dean. Time, present, gravity, space, past, it all muffles in a constant black hole of uncertain. Pulsating in jolts of pain, his brain is going to soon explode. He has to do something before he lost himself, before the dark returns guiding him back to nowhere; because there’s nothing more excruciating than knowing you’re a mere piece of emptiness.

“Dean!”

The voice calls again. He knows that voice. It’s grave and familiar. Who is this? Who are Lucifer’s men holding near him. He can’t see. Must be all the blood over his eyes.

“Now, since I got my plans frustrated, and Sam is not here, I’m going to give you a good show, Dean. That’s before I kill you, of course.”

Lucifer is walking near the smaller body, who struggles, trying to escape, screaming for Dean, and he… He can’t see who this is.

“Hello, little brother.”

The man stops in front of the guy putting one hand on his chin to lift it.

“Let him go.”

Castiel says gravely while staring with his deep blue eyes at his brother; one of his kin, his family.

“You mean Dean? Wow. Even now you choose him after your own kin.”

“I told you before: I rather die than follow your insane ideas.”

“Well… That can be arranged, huh? Common Dean! You don’t want to miss this show!”

His bloody head swings to the sides as Dean tries to focus on the people in front of him. He sees Lucifer standing up plus two other guys holding someone kneeling on the ground, and-

“Cas…”
“A-ha! He’s still with us! Good, good.” Chants Lucifer, spinning on his heels to be in front of Castiel. “Let’s start then.”

The first punch moves Castiel’s jaw to the right. He follows the motion of the hit to not receive a deeper damage, but the pain is excruciating. It makes Dean scream.

“Stop!” he shouts coughing some blood, but Lucifer merely smiles, punching Castiel again. He holds his chin in one hand lifting towards Dean’s direction.

“Don’t you pass out now, little brother.” Says him, rubbing a drop of blood from the corner of Cas’s mouth “We have a lot of time, fora lot more of fun.”

“… You’re insane, Lucifer…”

Castiel utters between his teeth, however his rage only generates additional entertaining for Lucifer, who drops his head and smacks another fist on his jaw. Castiel spits more blood, seeing the world turn around on his eyes. In front of him, Dean grunts and tries to leave the grip on his arms, but Lucifer’s man tighten it, making him hiss, compiling him to watch the bizarre show.

“Common, Castiel!” He shouts in a new attack “You wanted to leave, you wanted to be in this world on your own!”

Lucifer’s hands and feet now swipes on strikes at his face, ribs, and legs, and Castiel can’t even breathe between the blows, feeling s his lungs starting to give up. Grabbing an amount of dark hair, Lucifer raises his wobbly head to whisper on Cas’s ear.

“What are you thinking so far, uh? Is the world a better place with or without me?”

“… Without you…” Castiel manages to say in coughs. Lucifer snaps his tongue in a ‘click’ sound, letting him go.

“Perhaps a little music shall make you see things differently. Right Dean?! A show deserves some music!”

Spreading his arms while speaking, Lucifer waits for Dean to focus his attention on him, at the large smile on his face. Then a fist meets his jaw again, making him bite inside his mouth and spit blood. Even then, Lucifer doesn’t stop.

Dean can hear a mix of skin being cut, sore muscles, the blood on his skull being moved around, and Castiel’s shouting for Lucifer to stop, even begging him to leave Dean alone.

It does nothing more than to encourage him to keep going, punch after punch, and with Dean almost fainting Lucifer starts to ‘hum’ a familiar old song.

“AAnnd I’m singing in the rain! Just siiiiing in the rain! What a glorious feeling! I’m happy again! Common Dean, you know this song, sing with me!”

There’s a grunt leaving swollen lips on Dean’s face, but it’s no coherent sound that can be translated in a familiar word.

Lucifer grabs Dean by his hair and pulls him back, seeing the damage on the pretty face – and Castiel can’t avoid gasping in horror.

Both eyes are reddened, his mouth cut and full of the red liquid that came from probably two organs or more. It’s horrible and it hurts Castiel to merely see it; to image what kind of physical
agony Dean was put into while lost the past month in the Arena, forgotten of every memory he once had, of every person and loved ones, having only the fights and the pain as a certain of him being alive. It must have been like living in hell.

“Hey, Dean, Hello! Are you with me?”

Dean coughs and tries to clutch at Lucifer’s shirt, but his energy is long gone. The man purses his lips in a half smile, shaking Dean’s head a little.

“Okay, now I’m done! Where’s my knife?”

One guard hands a blade to Lucifer as he walks towards Dean’s weeping body. He crouches beside him and grasps his hair in one hand tugging it backward and holding Dean’s chin to make him watch Castiel; the blood on his face, the limp limbs and the one eye that Cas can still remain open stares at Dean in horror.

“N-no…”

“See Dean? Even now my little brother wants to protect you. Isn’t that ironic? Someone so filthy like you… Yet there’s Castiel here, always saving your ass…”

“…I’ll kill you, you son of a bitch…”

“Oh, no Dean. You’re so giddy that you don’t understand. See?” he waves the knife in front of him “I have the knife, and you have the neck that will be cut by it. I’m the one who’s going to kill you, and Castiel will do nothing but watch… And guess what? Once I get rid of you I can finally take Sam for myself.”

“No!”

“Oh, yes! That’s the catch! It always had been you the reason why Sam never wanted to be by my side. Now, I’ll have both things you stole from me.”

Gently placing the knife in his skin, Castiel can see the first line of blood running down the blade. He yells and furiously trembles his body, trying to reach Dean, trying to save him.

They hear the thuds of trucks and distant sounds of bullets and guns, small explosions even, reaching their ears in muffled blasts. Lucifer sighs in frustration, looking at one of his men but not letting go of his grip on Dean’s hair.

“What is it now?!” He asks him.

“More people from his camp, sir.” One guard answers “They have grenades, and a greater number of trucks coming this way.”

“Oh, my… Can’t you do things the easy way, uh?!” Lucifer directs his queries to Dean now, shaking his head from side to side “I’ll end this game now.”

The knife comes up on the air between his fingers, on the right distance to come in one precise stab at Dean’s chest.

Creaking his teeth, Castiel has no time to think. He uses the distraction caused by the new assault to get away from the man holding him on the ground, running to Dean in less than two steps, knocking his body against Lucifer’s and bringing him down.
Dean falls to the side battling the dizziness, but his chest, lungs, legs and head, the whole thing that is himself hurt just so much, that Dean is capable of letting only his ears work, closing his eyes involuntarily. He listens to new sounds of tires rolling on the dirty ground, exasperated voices, screams and steps running and running. Lucifer is saying something, he is hitting someone – he is hitting Castiel.

“Sir, we have to go!” One guard yells.

Dean listens to someone sighing.

“I guess one out of two isn’t that bad. Take Castiel to the others and let’s move.”

What Dean hears are his last words, for at the same moment there’s shooting off guns, trucks and cars parking, screaming; a real warfare happening around him, however he is just too tired and beaten to move.

Sam’s voice is calling him but Dean can’t stand being wake. He wants to think it’s all but a dream. No; a nightmare. He wants it all to fade like his memories did, so he can see Castiel safe again, so he can hold him in his arms and never let go. Stretching his flabby limb, Dean drags his nails on dirty, reaching the small pool of blood where Castiel’s body was lying unconscious. He needs to touch it, to feel that it’s not real, to be sure everything will be alright once he wakes up, once he…

Red stain his fingers, the palm of his hand, everything. It’s cold already, from the icy breeze hitting there, however, Dean can still feel the moist liquid mingling on his digits. It’s not a nightmare. It’s not an illusion of any kind.

“Hey, common Dean, we have to go.” Sam says, helping him to get up, but soon is pushed away by the leader.

“Cas…” It’s all he says, reeling and spitting some blood.

“Wait, Dean you can’t-”

“CAS!”

His ribs burn in laceration pain when he screams Castiel’s name once and loud before falling on his knees, fainting.
Do you remember our last Impala ride?

A piercing sound in thundering on Dean’s head when he wakes up slowly, hissing with the light that hits his eyes, moving away the sheets that covers his body.

Once used to the luminosity he adjusts his sore body over the mattress – his bed, it’s his bed. He’s back at his bedroom.

Abruptly Dean sits, heaving, looking around. There’s clean sheets over his body, which hurts everywhere with cuts and purple marks.

Carefully he puts his feet on the floor, hissing again as he moves his torso, irradiating a scourging pain through every muscle. Putting one hand over his chest he notices bandages on it, and small red dots spread on the white cloth. He feels hot, but nothing that stops him from getting up.

There are a few memories coming back on his mind.

In a stunning flash he remembers someone with dark hair… A pair of eyes… Blue, they were blue.

“Cas…”

Wandering on his bedroom, Dean stumbles on the furniture to get outside and walk towards Castiel’s cabin, or his clinic, anywhere he might be. He just needs to see the presence of the nurse; it’s all he can think about.

“Dean, what the hell are you doing?!”

His brother enters through the door watching as Dean leverage his weight on one wall to stand up. The bandages on his chest are wet with the blood coming out of it, from the effort he just made.

“Sam…”

“Jesus, Dean. You can’t walk like that, common, sit down.”

Leaving the tray of food on the table, he helps a very disgustful Dean to come back to bed. However he fights his brother’s arms, wanting to continue his way out.

“I need to see Cas.”

He says, and the sentence makes Sam stop the infantile battle of trying to put his brother under the sheets. The amount of air on his breath is thick and hurtful when he talks.

“Dean… I’m sorry.”

Frowning, Dean looks at his brother unsure of the meaning of his apologies.

“Sorry?” He repeats as Sam lick his lips, wearing his most understandable and comprehensive mien.

“We tried to follow them Dean, believe me, but… They had too many people heading back to their camp and we just… We couldn’t rescue him.”
“What you’re saying?”

“It’s Lucifer he… They took Cas.”

Each syllable passes through Dean’s ears and is registered by him.

Each sound seems to echo distant on his head as a death sentence being declared in front of him, because that can’t be true… It was a lie, it must been another hallucination of his, a dream! Because Cas was still there on his cabin… He was practicing on the clinic, he was helping others like always; it’s impossible that he’s not there. He is always there, he-

“No…”

Dean tremble his eyes still unsure, with Sam feeling the growing affliction on his brother’s face.

“Dean, we are going to find him.”

“…No.”

“Dean? Hey-Dean!”

Dean leaves like a bullet passing through his brother, out of his cabin and trembling on his walk, but never stopping to run towards the path that leads outside camp.

It takes Sam two seconds to reach him, running towards his brother as his legs had recovered their strength. Sam’s strong arms are around Dean in no time, holding him in place.

“Let me go!”

He utters, and half of the camp is seeing him struggling against Sam, who holds him by the arm and forces Dean to come back to his cabin. Once inside, Dean punches Sam, however it’s merely a scratch n his weak condition.

Huffing, Sam drags Dean to lay on the floor and pins his there. Quickly he crawls over his brother’s torso, and puts his thighs around it to restrain Dean there. He coughs and smacks weak punches on Sam, but eventually the lack of air and strength takes the better out of Dean; however he continue to huff and battles for control.

“Dean you have to calm down!”

“They took Cas! I have to go after them!”

“You will only make it worse like this!”

It doesn’t make any difference. Sam can use any valid argument, and still Dean would find all the excuses and reasons to pursue the inconsequent act of going after Castiel.

“Dean, control yourself!” Sam cries trying to grasp his brother who struggles, kicks and yells for Castiel innumerable times, growling as his throat is scratched so powerful is the potency of his screams.

“Cas! CAS!”

His chest burns with the weight of Sam over it, and it only makes Dean remembers how the nurse looked at him while receive Lucifer’s treatment; the affliction on his face and voice, everything just pushed Dean into Castiel’s direction; of the person, the only one he allowed to come this deep
of his flawed existence. Castiel, who even during the grey colors of the war brought the taste of live back to Dean, carrying it on his blue eyes.

“Cas…”

He says once more, almost in a plea for his brother, for anyone who could assist him. Then all the senses fade away, giving up to his tiredness.

(...)

Its night, a period of the day different from when he slept. The disturbed vision created by a peculiar smoke makes Dean remind of that fogged memory of him and a man… Of Castiel holding his coat. Nonetheless now he can visibly see the figures in that space. The surroundings are similar to the graveyard of cars they have on camp, and he can see Castiel sitting on the hood of an old black car that was a beautiful piece of machine back on the days. The time is vanished from Dean’s head, but he can tell it was somewhere later where they moved to the same cabin, probably before the fatidic raid that lead those young kids to their deaths, thus creating a yarn of complications in Dean’s life.

“Why are you here, man?” The ‘him’ in that memory queries.

Castiel, then, turns his head quickly, smiling at Dean as he sees him.

“I like this place.” He simply answers.

“Really? Why?”

“The quietude is good to think.”

“Hmm, and you like to think on the top of cars?” Teases Dean, coming closer and stopping besides the nurse, with his hip touching the cold metal of the vehicle.

Not answering, Castiel smiles, shaking his head a little over his playful tone. His eyes are really pensive, gazing at a distant place that seems beyond the one in the sky.

“Do you ever think time has stopped and we are living the same day, one after another?”

For a moment Dean doesn’t quite understand Castiel’s words. It seemed like a foolish talk, and he opens his mouth to reply on a smart comment, but then… Then he perceives all the cars deteriorating in there, as a cool drive from the days of the past, pieces that no longer made sense existing, but that were making their presence a constant reminder of what no one else wanted to remember: the days before the war.

But cars and metals bit by bit erode, the paint becoming brown and forgotten, as if the inanimate lives on them were fading progressively. And in the time being all the cars continue rusting, ignored and left behind.

Day’s passes one after another in the same way, like rust, and they got slow, repetitive - again and again, the same routine of survival - until they were left to end as an old carcass of something that
once was beautiful.

But not that car, the one Castiel was accommodated. That old black car carries much more than dust on the hinges, the nasty leather seats and wheels without tires. This car had kept within the ventilation pieces of toys left there by Dean. And that door on the other side, Dean still could see a little green soldier Sammmy put there for no reason.

Car’s rust, the days go by, but they are still living there, each of these moments, and even if there is the war and the whole fearful monotony of it, there’s still those who fights and continue moving forward.

“Have I ever told you how Sam and I got here?” Dean asks, rubbing a nostalgic hand on the car’s door.

The intake of air Cas gives is from some tiredness. Maybe because Dena didn’t answer him, or maybe because he was too puzzled by what the other man was talking about. Whatever the reason may be, it must be a better talk than his depressive thoughts.

“Not that I can remember.” the nurse replies.

“This was my dad’s car.” he says still looking at the machine with affection “I rebuilt it from nothing, and sometimes me and Sammy used to drive around the country, just to hang out.”

The captivate voice Dean has speaking that story awakes Castiel from the deep lethargy he have.

“And what happened to it?” asks the nurse in a hint of real interest.

“When the war began we drive it with our father. He was still alive, and kept us like that for a while. Then one day, we got ambushed in a town together with some friends; Bobby, Jo and Ellen… We got out, but dad stayed behind.”

Parting his lips, Castiel gives a small nod with his head, complacent with the grief feeling.

“I’m sorry.”

“It’s okay. I think he died like he wanted to. Besides, ever since my mother’s death when we were little, I don’t know… Dad was never really there, so…”

“Still he was your father.”

Dean shrugs, rubbing the racked door of the car, full of eroded parts and other nauseating things.

“We continued, Sam and me, traveling to some place far away from the bombs with the impala.”

“That’s the car name?”

“Yes.” Dean smiles “My beautiful Baby. Once we got here, though, the camp needed better things than an old car… So we had to leave it behind, use its pieces on other stuff. I don’t know why I still keep this thing here.”

“Maybe one day when the war is over you can restore it.”

Dean has to smile at the pure innocence in Cas’s words. It has been more than eight years. Despite the fact they are at a ceasefire, Dean can’t construct in his head this thought of peace ever again.

“Maybe.” Answers him, shrugging and rubbing the tip of his nose.
Castiel inclines his head to the side, reading the expression on Dean’s face too quickly.

“You don’t think the war is going to end?” He asks tilting his head while watching the distant look in Dean, who sighs long and with a pause.

“I think it already had and we just lost it, having this project of world to live in.”

“It could be worse.”

Dean laughs.

“Could it?”

“It always can.”

Always with an optimist answer. Dean turns his head to Castiel’s direction, and stops as he sees the pair of blue eyes. For a nanosecond he thinks about the world before Castiel. Not before the war, or the bombs, nor anything. But a time way back in the past, when he didn’t knew the nurse. His lips suddenly felt dry, and his chest bumps desperately in what can be called torment. Not meeting Castiel, unable to just be here with him right now… Yes, things could be worse, Dean thinks.

Walking around the car, Dean sits half of his body on the hood, coming closer to Castiel, cleaning his throat and definitely not looking at him.

“Cas… I know I’m not good with words…”

“I am familiar with that.” Teases Cas.

“Right.” Dean coughs “So, I just want you to know that, uh… Thanks, okay? And also that I-”

He stops the instant Castiel places a hand on his shoulder, gripping it tight.

“You don’t have to say anything.”

“… But I-”

The nurse places a firm and gentle palm on Dean’s face, familiar with all his words, manners, the motions of his muscles and pitches of his voice, including this incontrollable fear of losing what he possess, of not being able to hold himself together without his father, without his brother… Without Castiel. And he knew all of this about Dean and more without the need of words.

Castiel then smiled, stroking his jaw.

“I know it all already, Dean. I know you.”

Castiel is the one coming closer, ending the gap and kissing him. Dean doesn’t fight, closing his eyes, embracing the nurse and in no time he is laying down both of them, just savoring each other’s presence, flavors, textures of lips and skin, feeling the heat emanating under the layers of clothes.

“Cas…”

Dean breathes in and out, kissing him again; on his forehead, his cheeks, his nose, mouth and chin, coming back up all the way, causing the smaller one to laugh amusingly.
“Dean!” He beams, slightly hitting his shoulder.

Pressing his lips over Castiel’s again, Dean gulps once their eyes lock visions, unconvinced that this person is with him, that Cas is his. Because it seems so stupid, this idea that they had each other at the end of the world, that after so much misfortune and despair, Dean have found the only thing he ever wanted for his whole life: someone who accepted and understood him entirely. Absurd, insane even, and yet the body of Castiel between his fingers is real, his warmth fills him in a way that is impossible to be put into words. It’s like the end of the world is theirs.

With a tremor in his voice, Dean dares to let something long forgotten by him take care of his actions, letting the sensations and the rapid pounding of his chest to take possession of his actions.

“I…Cas- I want to…”

“Yes?” He arches one eyebrow in confusion.

“I want to…” Dean kisses his mouth with lips ungluing temptingly dawdling “To make love to you…”

As his heart skips a beat or two, Castiel opens his eyes and stares at Dean with nothing but awe, allowing those words to enter his system, irradiating through all directions. He smiles.

“Dean…”

“Right here, on this car, right now and ever…”

Affectionate hands crawl for Dean’s spine, leaving scratch marks there while Castiel moans delicious sounds of desire.

“Under this night…” Castiel says in a weak breath.

“…Yes.”

Holding the leader’s face, Castiel gazes at green eyes that can shine even in the small lights of the evening. Castiel was drawn to them from the very first instant. He never told Dean, never was sure of how to say that he trusted the man the moment he saw those pair of determinate and confident green orbs. Cas rubs gentle hands on Dean’s jaw and suddenly his eyes are dragged to the sky, this same veil of an obscure matter that lived through ages watching the humanity. In this night Castiel sees the black ink covering the painting of the firmament above them with shining dots dispersed on it. It seemed impossible that stars were shining, but there they were, they become present in that night.

Lost in the middle of the view in the sky's picture, Cas's eyelids blinks, and then right in front of him he sees sprinkled marks like the sand of a desert painting a face of a man. They didn’t shine, but he could still see each of these grains of sand as clear and distinct as the bright points tingling in the sky. And these dots were like a powder spread on someone’s cheeks; on the tip of his nose, on the piece of skin uncovered at one side of his shoulder. And pressing against his fingers warmth this face seemed more intense than any galaxy, more alive and certain than any of the shining stars that night.

There was only Dean and nothing more. Castiel had a full set of stars that he could touch with his bare hands. And if Cas were actually going to measure the weight of Dean’s face on his palms, it was as if he really have the whole cosmos rested over his hands, an universe just for him.

“There are stars on the sky tonight, Dean.”
Castiel says not because he wants to be romantic, but because they were simply there: the stars, shining as promise of a better tomorrow, wearing the face of a man.

“I can see them.”

Dean states, but it’s not to the sky that he’s looking. It’s on blue irises that glint the spark of this unusual night above them as a mirror.

“I can see, Cas.”

Castiel watches Dean for a while, tracing invisible lines on the stars Dean have painted in his skin, beginning to smile kindly and not even perceiving it.

“Make love to me…” Castiel mutters, kissing Dean’s lips with the velvet touch of his own.

It’s slow and affectionate, the way Dean lays Castiel down and enters him with nothing but want, dressed with a layer of need as his hips rocked back and forth, having Cas holding his shoulders as he takes the nurse in a tight embrace. These familiar sensations are also so different now, so pure and simple; this act of making love as he comes in and out hearing soft words on his ear, with Castiel moaning whispers, touching himself in small strokes with utter bliss. And the way Dean looks at him, how the starts shine behind them – and everything else – it’s all what it takes for Castiel to come in a cry, coating their bellies in white, as Dean himself also comes in a strong gush, grasping his hands over Cas’s hips and pulling him closer, so he can feel his muscle buried deep inside the nurse.

With sluggish kisses they melt into one another, under the sky; under the stars, and Dean knows that’s one of his favorite memories, when he allowed his existence to have the tip of happiness Castiel is.

It’s when he knows he loves him.

On a gasp Dean opens his eyes, He can’t find enough strength to sit on the bed, but the glow of the night can be seen through the open window. It’s dark and cold from the winter, but beyond that, Dean can’t see anything but blackness, a deep shadow covering the tiny dots that used to shine beside the moon. Then, before falling sleep again, he can only think that the shine was stolen; from the sky, from the world, from him.

(...) 

The afternoon is filled with a sudden rain and everything it brings. A repetitive sound of droplets of water falling on the ground, moistening the earth and giving the sweet smell of mud on the air.

It’s with these noises that Dean wakes up.

He sits on the bed, leaving the sheets to slide his body and exposing his injured torso.

There is nothing, not even the tiniest tip of emotion stamped on Dean’s face. The dim room shows his silhouette, however if there was a spectator there, that one would see the absence of feeling on his face. However maybe it wasn’t exactly the lack of it, but the union of it all, as in a color prism,
mingling and becoming just one thing, one simple and precise thought that told Dean what he needed to do, without doubt or questions, just a mission to be done, a clear and pure objective that he must follow.

His green eyes are half fallen not from tiredness, but with indifference, watching an empty space in front of him, for Dean can only see the path to be walked. The room is gone, the cabin and the camp, nothing mattered if Castiel’s presence wasn’t there.

The mandible tensions and his tough and quick fingers remove him from under the sheets. There’s a force covering his muscles that ignores all the pain from the wounds, making him wander in the room, gathering what he requires for the travel.

He removes all the comfy sleep clothes and dresses as always; as when he did leaving for a raid. A jeans pants, one thin grey t-shirt, a dark green over it, one coat…

The coat he didn’t found anywhere, grinding his teeth for losing time with something so trivial. He pushes away the hangers, throwing everything that doesn’t matter on the floor. In the tumult of the clothes, Dean sees a small box in the closet. Without calm he takes the box and tosses it on the ground, and on the wood plates is spread an old green coat, the same he gave Castiel a long time ago, the one which he enveloped the nurse marked body, injured by someone else, protecting him as if it was an safe cocoon, freeing him from the shame, and thinking he protected him from everything that happened.

Swallowing hard, Dean clutches the fabric and squeezes it on his hands. He get out of the cabin with everything disorganized. Everything but the green coat, which he leaves plain on one chair, waiting patiently for its owner, who soon would be back.

For himself he picked a blue common jacket. Adjusting the backpack he opens the door and is faced by a rainy weather. His foot touches the stair at the porch and on the same instant a repressive voice calls him.

“I knew you would do something stupid.”

Dean turns his head. Sam is there, sitting beside the cabin with his arms crossed.

“Don’t try to stop me.” bluntly he says, with no patient for conversations.

“I wasn’t planning to.”

When he stands up, Dean sees Sam putting one bag of the same type he has over his shoulder. It makes the leader scoffs.

“Your leg is still fucked up.”

“You can say anything Dean, but I am going with you.”

“Why the change of heart?” frowning, Dean tries to figure what is his plan of keeping him there, laying and waiting. But that’s not what Sam tells him.

“It wasn’t a change of heart.” He answers “You just needed some more time to rest, so we could go after Castiel.”

Dean parts his lips while seeing the veracity of this statement in his brother’s eyes. They don’t need to say anything else to each other. Sam will always support Dean’s choices – it was every time like this – even with the fights and struggles, in the end they are just a couple of idiot brothers,
who would do anything for one another.

“How long I was gone?” it’s all Dean asks.

“Two days. We better hurry now. The rest of the group will get ready in just a few minutes.”

“Rest of the group?” Dean queries, following his brother under the rain to the parking lot.

“Of course. You didn’t expect me to lay low while you had your beauty sleep, uh?”

Dean snorts, taking shelter under the roof of the garage, finding Chuck sitting there with both legs over a table, holding a chart in hand. He jumps as he sees Sam and Dean marching there.

“Are we all settle to go?” He asks, looking at Dean, then Sam.

“Yes Chuck. Go gather the others.” Sam answers, giving Dean a huge interrogation quote over his head.

“Right. The trucks two to seven are the ones packed to go.”

Running to not stay in the rain, Chuck disappears, leaving the brothers alone once again. Sam merely starts to load the first truck with his things, seeing Dean frowning deeper at him.

“Sam, care to explain?”

Pursing his lips down, Sam closes the door of the truck.

“I told you Dean. I wasn’t just laying low these two days.”

“And what have you done?”

“Well, as I am the smart brother that doesn’t try to run away like a nut cracker,” he teases “I came up with a plan.”

“A plan?”

“Yes, a plan.”

“And you are going to share it with me, or…?”

Sam turns around to his brother, shrugging a little.

“We are not going to hit and run, Dean. Lucifer is a smart… Demon. To catch him off guard we will have to approach-”

“With caution?” Dean cuts him, already imagining the answer.

“Exactly the opposite.” Sam crooks a smile “Lucifer is a meticulous man. He is always prepared for the small intruders, or the stealthy type. He probably expects you to do there by yourself. But if we come on the light, showing our faces, we can distract him using our numbers, and he won’t know for sure how many of us are there.”

“So we will spread and conquer.”

“Yes.”

“You are the smarter brother.” Dean smiles at Sam “But I got the better looks.”
Rolling his eyes, Sam finishes loading the truck, with Chuck coming followed by some others people. Dean turns around seeing many of his friends there. Ash, Jo, Benny, Garth, even the former sheriff Jody Mills came – and she is someone you would want on a fight beside you. There’s others Dean knows from the camp, but he was impressed of seeing these faces there; people he wasn’t that close with, but that were there ready to help.

The aching spreading on his chest is not from the pain of his injuries, no. those faces looking at him so full of certain, despite the probability of low success…

Suddenly, having hope doesn’t seem like a stupid thing anymore.

(...)

The long ride reminds Dean of those small trips he had with his brother around the country. They used to do it sometimes, when Sam was in law school. Every summer they took their dad old car, the Impala, and drove on the roads with no destiny in mind, just an idea, and the presence of each other.

It’s one of those memories from before the war Dean treasures the most.

“Hey, Sam.” he calls his brother, feeling the cold wind against his face.

“Yeah?”

“I… Lucifer told me you were going to hand yourself to him.”

Seeing the world around him passing by through the window seemed like one of his dreams, Dean thinks, one of his memories. The time passing by the clock tells him they are closer to their destiny, and maybe, just maybe, facing Lucifer is the greatest mistake of their lives – hell, it might cost their lives – but they had to try. And things can’t be left behind when you are marching to your own death.

Sam only sighs; finishing cleaning his gun and adjusting it back on his waist.

“I had to say something to make him let me get closer to you.”

“And then he put you in the Arena?” Dean is incredulous, narrowing his eyes as he stares at Sam.

“He said it was a test, to see how far I would go.”

“So, killing me was a trial?”

Sam shrugs, adjusting his hands on the steering wheel.

“I guess he wanted to see me… Injuring you.”

“So you sold yourself.”

Sam rubs his nape, sighing.
“He had some family issues, so I worked it out, telling him I was tired of being bossed around by my brother.”

“Are you?”

“Dean, look, what I said-”

“Are you?”

Sam scratches his temple, aware that there is no point lying now.

“Sometimes. It’s like… Living with dad again.”

“What?”

“You know, how he made us follow his rules without questioning while growing up, wanting us to be like him and nothing else.”

“… You think I’m like him?”

Sam purses his lips swallowing hard. He didn’t want to talk about it, not now. His brother has improved himself so much over the years, especially after Castiel, and poking the scar it’s just… Not healthy. Yet he knew Dean was never going to drop it.

“At some point, yes.” He answers at least “But hey, that’s not a bad thing.”

“How come Sam?! We had a crap childhood!”

Dean shouts, feeling nervous, headaches, and everything else that remembered him what growing up with a former marine was like. The discipline John built in him of a good soldier, the lack of emotions, the duty, the work, the job, those were the words John used to describe his life, and at some point Dean embraced all of it.

He never wanted to admit it, not on that time, but fuck it! They were two messed up adults – him even more.

As Dean allows this rage to flow, Sam remained calm and quiet, just driving through a long road, like in the times thjey spent summer on field trips between states. He misses those simple days.

“You would never admit it before Castiel.” says him when the time seemed proper.

Dean is dead silent, staring at the road and parting his lips with a frown. Then Sam continued.

“Ever since you and Cas got closer you became less demanding, as if you were allowing yourself to be… You.”

“And not a shadow from dad.” he snorts, as Sam shakes his head.

“Being like dad… Sometimes is not a bad thing. You kept us alive; this whole camp survives because you do things like dad.”

“I don’t wanna to be a dictator, Sam!”

“And you’re not one! Anymore…”

“…Shit.” he mutters, clenching his jaw.
“Dad lost it when mom died.”

The house burning, the smell of cooked meat. Dean wishes this memory would never come to the surface of his mind ever again, yet there it is, floating like the remains of a sinking boat. It’s true though. John became a wreck with a huge piece of him missing, unable to move forward Mary’s death. It caused so much pain to the brothers, for the same time they understood his reasons, they couldn’t forget how they suffered by the man’s hands; sometimes his real hands coming and slapping them on the face; mostly Dean.

“And Dean, you… You were lost too.” Sam tells him lowering his voice “I mean, sure, you’re less harsh than dad, but you spent more time with mom, you remember her. And the fire on our house… You had to endure this all by yourself, even taking care of me because dad was too busy inventing excuses to run away, trying to know why mom died instead of taking care of his children.”

“Sam…”

“I understand his reasons, I do. If something like this happened to Jess…” he pauses, and Dean doesn’t dare to interrupt. “But eventually everyone needs to get over the pain. He never did, and at some point you took that pain to yourself, but you’ve manage to get free from it.”

“.This’s stupid.”

He turns around knowing there’s no escape on that car to run, and Sam will keep talking.

“Please, listen to me. Dad had his issues after mom. You had yours before Castiel. Basically, you lived Dad’s life on reverse.”

Dean scoffs, rubbing his face furiously.

“It’s true. Cas made you see through the pain of this world, he made something especial grow in you. I would never be against a brother who loves me more than his life; who loves his family and would do anything to protect them. Dean, I love you, and I know we’re going to be fine. But you need Castiel because…”

Dean only shakes his head, holding the steering wheel.

“Because Castiel keeps you human.”

Without any answer to give Sam, Dean simply pushes the pedal harder, going faster.
The travel is not an extensive one as soon as Dean can pull from his memories the right path towards Lucifer’s camp. The ride takes three hours, but once they come closer enough to be noticed, all the vehicles stop a few meters away, surrounding and studying the environs. The place is dead silent, with guards nearby. This camp Lucifer built is a complex of buildings that used to be a large industry. Now its huge spaces were the home of desperate souls, lured by a tongue of a mischievous sprite disguised as man.

It’s a big ground, but Dean remembers most of it without trouble. They go in groups using the same strategy Sam machinate to rescue Dean: by putting the guards into a distraction with the trucks honking and people shooting so they can invade and take Castiel back before someone notices. If Dean is accurate, he will be near the camping grounds, where Alistair keeps his prisoners.

Dean, Sam, Jody and Garth go to one side of the camp waiting for the signal. Dean feels his chest pounding hard with worry. He just wants to save Cas, take him back and make things right for a change of scenario. And if he can kill Lucifer, well, it will be a great bonus. And to think that he only wanted for the nurse to be safe at camp. Dean's fist closes, cracking it’s junctions when thinking he could’ve protected him if he had insisted more, telling Castiel something on the day of their departure instead of locking what he felt with seven keys as he always did on his life. Then Dean laughs of himself. Not because he thinks the idea of protecting Castiel is futile, but because he knows the nurse has all the conditions to take care of himself. If Lucifer managed to capture him was because he didn’t play fare.

The sound of sand sinking calls their attention. No, it wasn’t sand, but snow making the watery sound when it was fiercely stepped. The four of them comes together in a semicircle, looking at their surroundings with caution.

“There’s someone here.” Jody says with a gun in hand.

“At least five.” completes Sam.

“We can handle it.” Garth states “Right Dean?”

“Right…”

Dean has the junction on his hands aching, muscles trembling in excitement just with the idea of releasing some of his anger on someone. Dean takes a warning position just as Sam, waiting, being ready just as they always do, until the first shoot is made.

“Go, go!”

It’s Jody who yells, aiming with a surgical precision to an group of guards that appeared near the buildings on their right, they do run, hiding behind a group of cars as the distraction on the outside continues to direct most of Lucifer's man there. Ash sure is doing an excellent work.

Soon there are echoes of bullets, cars and trucks moving faster, grenades, explosions; it’s like the war regained its power, making them fight one another for reasons none can quite understand anymore. The first explosions that covers the whole region with smoke and fire, the smell of burning concrete and bodies carries an image memorable if one of those figures present in books
that talks about the apocalypse; gull of iconography of screaming woman, suffering men and weeping children crying for their mothers – all of them lost in a world abandoned for chaos, for the horses of the knights to gallop over the ones left behind.

The sky can’t be seen anymore, as only a fogged red and orange color adorns the shadows of the men running.

And at some point all the group is spread and lost inside the camp, looking for shelter from the bullets, or simply doing their distraction job, guarantying a clear passage for Dean, since he’s the one who knows how to navigate in the camp. However not having someone to watch your back never is a good thing, so after the first thing Dean does is trying to find the safety point they concerted earlier, hoping to see someone of his group there.

He senses bullets coming on his direction, throwing himself on the ground and hissing with the impact, not strong enough to react and crawl to someplace safe, already seeing his own death when an helping hand grabs his shirt and pulls him to the side of a car.

“What the hell are you doing?!”

Sam asks him, and Dean doesn't feels offended, but instead is relived.

“Dodging bullets.” replies in a half smile, coughing from the smoke afterwards. Sam rolls his eyes and looks from a fissure on the truck to the other side where most of the fight is happening.

“We need to regroup.” He states, and Dean agrees with him, getting up at the same time one close blast causes him and Sam to fly a couple of meters.

Dust and sand comes in a mist of confusion, and Dean only shoots at shadows, wishing for his lucky dices to play on his favor and not hit any friend, but truly he can’t see anything, only smoke and more fire.

Before he can even see if everyone is okay, he has a small flash coming to his mind. It’s of a building close by where he sees himself walking, as if on one lucid dream, and so he repeats these same steps, grabbing Sam to come with him.

It’s Sam and Dean running together like old times, trying to find the best alternative and not get in the crossfire. Dean leads them to the middle of a square of buildings, and at this point his brain really hurts, making him stop and press one hand at his temple.

“Were to?!”

Sam queries, aiming his gun, worried of being this exposed.

“Have you seen Ash?” Dean asks, trying to dismiss the pain, and also to be sure his friends escape the explosions “He’s supposed to be back there, waiting for-”

Sam nods slowly lowering his head.

“They hit the gas tank at this last blast… Ash couldn’t make it out.”

“Shit… Shit, the son of a bitch.” Dean rubs his face and hair breathing deep in, battling against his feet that wants to go back and see if the rest of the group is okay, however Sam takes him out of these questions, being more rational than ever.

“We need to run Dean, were to?”
“I… Let me think…” he forces his head back to the headache, starting to feel it. There’s no time for mopping over the dead, they need to run.

“This will be your triumph walkway, Dean.” Alistair tells him while they walk through the corridor “It’s your passage through glory.”

The memory fades, but this place… This godforsaken place remains the same.

These walls are familiar, the ones on the arena where he spent almost a month. There’s a bunch of empty rooms that belong to fighters, others on the left are larger for the newly slaves to stay waiting to know their destiny: if to fight or to work on camp, or worst: become baits for traps in town. The corridors are almost the same. This building is full of storage rooms, but if he remembers correctly, Castiel must be held hostage on a room near the Arena.

“Common, this way!”

Dean goes ahead hearing Sam’s footsteps behind, watching every corner of worn out paint and receiving images of the time he was held there back, going from an unsteady walk to a march of confident; a march that resembles the one’s he made the first time out of the fire, at the war. After so many years, it appears that this goddamn war will never end.

He knew how, where, when to shoot. Everything was like a fluid sensation in his hands, going easily as he pleases, a bullet out of the gun right on the target.

When he and Sam first set into camp after the ceasefire commitment over the world he was lost. Dean never really got his mind away from the battlefield, which made him constantly run in raids after raids, wanting to get back some of what he thought was normal: the killing.

It took some time to get used to the slow rhythm of ordinary people trying to live. He eventually made it, but nothing felt right, nothing made him have that feeling from before the war of a home, of having something to come back to.

Dean will never have his happy ever after; an apple pie life, as he liked to. Sam, well, maybe his little brother can live on a more distant camp with his future wife, but Dean, ah, he knows what awaits him on the end of the tunnel; and for the record, it’s nothing beautiful.

He deserves it, he thinks. Deaths, tortures, destruction, what was that that Dean hasn’t done in order to obey his father? To protect Sam and keep them alive? With the pieces of his head connected Dean can’t think of a reason for him to be happy, to want to keep going…

Then a flash of blue eyes emerges on his now restored memory, causing him to pant and almost fall. Oxygen is falling his lungs, and everything around seems to turn in spins.

“Dean?!”

Sam puts one hand on his shoulder to prevent his brother from falling. Dean doesn’t answer, but rises one hand to ask for time; time for him to quickly think.

The war will never end. The world will remain as this piece of crap it is, but… But Dean has this… This tiny light of hope, this man he’d found amidst a pandemonium; that have saved him from perdition and a senseless life. And it matters, all of what Castiel is and gives to Dean, it matters more than anything.

It’s not much, but it’s in there, somewhere on that miserable camp, stolen by Lucifer, and Dean will find him, will save Cas like the man had saved him.
“Let’s go.”

Disentangling up from Sam he recovers from the abrupt stop, more determinate than ever, focusing on blue eyes, on the color of the sky that night, on the stars in it and everything between on that gap, promising to restore the fissure. Running through a door they enter the build Dean points to, closing it behind them after being sure of not being followed. They reach a big and open field, with the ground covered in red sand. Around them there’s chairs, arranged as in a box, wooden stakes that surround the room like a cage.

Dean is back to Arena.

He can hear everything, the voices screaming, asking for him to kill the other person standing there with him, shouting a chorus of hatred and greed, wanting to see the winner of the battle step in, rip the head off the enemy. Kill, kill, kill, was the only thing they repeated again and again, always in Dean's head every night he lay in the dark prison. His throat burns with the memories now, but he holds the back of his head, trying not to care about the impregnated smell of blood there.

They just need to cross this foul place, that's all. Across the Arena would be the cells, and Castiel in one of them, just waiting to be saved. It was so close, they have only to cross the place, but before they can someone perceives their presence.

“Oh, what do we have here?”

The slow voice is more than familiar, as Dean doesn’t even need to turn around and see who it is

“Alistair.”

The name comes in a hiss, and Dean doesn’t waste time, pointing his gun to the man’s chest.

“Ah, my sweet pupil returns home.”

Dean faces the man that tortured and enforced him to do horrendous things for three months. Alistair looks at them with both arms spread in an invitation; there’s a gun on each side of his waist, but it doesn’t appears like he intends to use them – and for someone in disadvantage that’s not a good sign.

“Your presence is always something that makes my heart beats faster, Dean. You were the best apprentice.” The man plays with his words, seeing the way Dean is affected by it; amused by his odd tastes.

“Shut up already.”

“Don’t be this rude, we have a story.”

“I just haven’t shoot you already because I wanna know where Cas is.”

Sam nods agreeing with his brother, looking at the place for any kind of surprise as they talk.

“Ah, I see.” Alistair lowers his head, smiling with a thin line on his lips “You always were the hero type.”

“Where is he?”
Controlling his personal need to shoot Alistair dead, Dean keeps his finger steady on the trigger, constantly reminding the reason of why they are there, holding his breath while his glare meets Alistair’s in a silent challenge. Still the man doesn’t flicker, nor he seems unsettled. Strangely, it’s Sam who loses his patient first.

“Stop goofing around like you have a plan!” he utters, coming closer to his brother and aiming the revolver to his head.

The devil’s smirk appears in Alistair, turning his mouth into the pure definition of sadism.

“Who said I don’t have a plan?”

Alistair then shows the back of his hand, where he is holding a small device with a red button on it. Dean and Sam mentally cursed, exchanging knowing glares of danger.

“As you can see, I’m always prepared.”

“I’ll shoot you, you son of a bitch…” Dean mutters between his teeth.

“Do it, and we all die. Castiel too.”

Twisting his features, Dean snorts his frustrations, squeezing the gun's metal even more.

“What do you want?!”

“I want you two to do exactly as I say.”

“… And?!” Dean bursts, irritated by this foolish game.

“Oh, not you Dean, you can go, Castiel is on that side.”

Alistair points with his free hand to a corridor locked by a door, having the brothers becoming even more confused with the sudden cooperation. It’s never this easy.

“What?!” Dean frowns “What the fuck are you planning?!”

“Nothing at all, my dearest Dean. You are just not interesting to us anymore, so take the chance I’m offering, and go after Castiel.”

“I won’t do shit, you mother-”

“Dean, go.” Sam interrupts him, coming closer while staring at Alistair.

“What the hell Sam?! I’m not going without you!”

“Yes you will, or we are all going to stay here, doing nothing while everybody else outside fights for their lives; fights to help you! So stop this stupid talk, and go!”

Dean blinks at his words, gridding his teeth.

“Sam, we have no reason to believe in him…”

“Oh, I’m being honest here, Dean. As I said, you are not of our interest anymore. Same as Castiel.”

Deep inside, Dean knows this is a discreet way of Alistair to say Castiel’s abduction was a scheme to leading him here, thus bringing Sam: the one Lucifer truly wants.
“Sam, I can’t leave you…”

“Dean, please, just trust me on this. I’ll meet you later; with Cas.”

“If I were you, Dean, I’d listen to you brother, especially after the treatment I gave Castiel earlier. He might not hang in there for too long.”

All Dean’s focus falls apart with that phrase, as if he sunk into it, destroying all his calm reserves and accuracy, transmuted into pure fear; not for him, but at what may have happened to Castiel. He has his memories back, he knows very well that this man is able to invoke the terrors of hell itself, breaking one person into indefinite pieces. His heart fails to pump properly, and Dean can only process that he must find Castiel.

Reluctantly, Dean looks at Sam and swallows hard, cursing a small “dammit”, pointing his gun to Alistair as he finds the way through the door, closing it behind him and trusting his brother with everything he has; following the right path – he thinks – before he can even change his mind, thinking about the nurse while avoiding worries over Sam.

(...) 

“Why you allowed Dean to go?”

Sam queries after Dean leaves the room for them alone. He wants to give his brother time to find Castiel, for if he cannot stop Alistair at least he wants to save his brother – for a change of scenario.

“Oh, I really love your brother, seriously. He is a dedicated student, but… He is not who the guy above me wants.”

Sam huffs a quick laugh, shaking his head in disbelief.

“And you let him go to save Cas? Just like that?”

“Killing him would be meaningless, since it would make you angry, probably causing my death, thus leading the bombs on this place to activate, so… No, it wasn’t a good plan. Besides, Castiel will distract him from our business.”

“What business?”

“First, you have to put your gun down.”

It was taking too long, Sam thinks. Tensioning his jaw, he does as he is told, slowly placing his gun on the floor. At the moment he kicked it away, Alistair opened his jacket, revealing a small box with two wires, connected to the device on his hand. He pulled one wire and the whole thing stopped working, and he let go of the red button. Sam breathed in, locking visions with the man again.

“Good, Sam. You are a good listener. Better than your brother.”

“What do you want?”

“Oh, now? Now it’s the fun part.”
Without warning, Sam sees a fast movement of legs in front of him, and soon after a punch hits his jaw. He tries to stand still, but blow after blow he feels weaker, feels destroyed as a human, with the nerve connections of his body getting knocked out in precise punches and kicks; not strong ones, but accurate.

“I overrated you, Sam Winchester.”

Alistair says with another attack, hearing Sam coughing as he tries to walk away.

“Maybe Lucifer expects too much from you.”

Lucifer. It all made sense. This sudden fight, the small act the tortures did was part of something bigger, a way Lucifer found to try ant test Sam, to make him bend.

As always, Sam was being used. His father did it while he grow up, then his brother, and now another person was trying to determinate what he was supposed to do, as if Sam is somehow incapable of thinking for himself. It infuriated him. On the next blow, Sam dodges with such strength of will, unforeseen by Alistair. He is surprised by an uncommon power, hidden on the boy that smacks him down. From there on, the plays were inverted.

There isn’t a fight. Sam has just so much guarded and boiling inside of an unexplainable rage inside of him that he merely unleashes it on that man, hitting Alistair, making him bleed, grabbing his head and smacking it again and again. He just wants to put it all out, to clean himself from that pain, from all the years he storage the anger in there. And Alistair was just unlucky enough to be the one there on that moment.

(...) 

In the direction Dean blinded followed, a couple of guards slowed him as they gambled their lives with bullets flying on the air, smelling like powder when they hit the ground, the floor, of merely got lost beyond its targets. Then in a blink of an eye Dean counted two more deaths to add on his list, asking himself if his skills were a blessing or a curse. However, even if he was dammed these abilities he gained over the years of war, of the time spent in the Arena, he will use to get to his objective – he doesn’t care if it’s from God or the Devil it came from.

He cannot give up to moral standards.

Sam will take care of Alistair, Dean is sure of it. He needs to find the place where Benny’s group entered, that’s the right direction, and the only way to stop any more deaths. They already lost Ash, Dean can’t afford do-

“ Took you long enough…”

A weak voice startles him. On the corridor he is now there are no guards near and he sure haven’t seen any shadow moving, nor is he going crazy - yet. Then his eyes scan a wall, going down, until he sees a small frame resting its back on it, as if without energy to even move one finger. There’s blood on that sweet little face.

“…Jo?”

Dean cannot breathe, kneeling quickly besides her, not blinking as he sees the cut on her stomach.
She smirks frailly coughing a little, spiting blood.

“No, no…”

“It’s ‘k Dean… I was got in the frontline. My own fault…”

“Don’t talk! Just… Stand still!” He stammers, trying to hold back the red liquid, but some of it is dry, and there’s more coming out… Together with pieces of flesh.

“There’s no time. I… I can’t feel my legs.”

“Jo…” Dean cringed his teeth, unsure of what to do.

“They’re coming. I’ll hold them off…” She grabs her gun arming it with slippery hands “You better run.”

“No, we’re fighting together, we-”

“I’m gonna smack your head… What’s the whole point of me dying here if you’re gonna whine instead of saving Cas?!”

“Jo, no…”

“Don’t make it worse… Just go… Remember telling my mom, though.”

Frowning, Dean shakes his head.

“Telling her?!”

“Love you and sorry, maybe?”

Dean opens and closes his mouth, to startled to do something, to utter any word, because whatever he did it would be senseless. Cas is the medic, the one that could save her. If he was there, if Dean had paid more attention, if this whole thing with his head didn’t happened!

He presses his eyelids on his cheeks, squeezing his hands and breaking through the skin on his palms. Then he feels a hand grabbing his shirt, watching the tiny hand of Jo seeking for him. There’s no turning back, there’s no secret closure for him to hide. Dean looks at Jo. How pale she is, and yet a smile adorns her face.

“Also… Tell Benny… We should’ve just go for it instead of waiting…”

This doesn’t surprise Dean, but sure as hell makes his chest ache even more. Trembling he nods, kissing her forehead, getting up and running towards the end of the corridor. He doesn’t look back, because if he does he will collapse in tears, and the time for grief will be guarded on the depths of his mind for the future. Right now, Dean can only run.

Jo sees him leaving still with a gun in hands. There’s a bunch of voices nearby. She tries to hold the gun firmly, but it is slipping from her hands. She curses then, because the only solution involves getting killed faster.

She goes to the pocket in front of her pants and grabs a round object. Pulling the pin, she presses the grandee on both hands, smiling as she remembered telling Ash no one would find any use for a bomb these days. Well, she will have to pat him in the back once they find each other in the afterlife.
Dean sees a metal door on the next corner he takes, feeling triumphant for having found the place after so many times. He puts one hand over it when he hears a loud blast coming from behind. He turns his head around, feeling a swell on his chest as a smoke rises in a mist.

He curses once again, pushing the door open.

(...) 

Alistair chokes a few times on the floor before his existence is once and for all ceased. Sam can’t feel the slightest remorse over it – he just can’t see the man that caused harm to his brother and feel anything else than pleasure for his death, and all this hate that’s inside him that just needed to flow outside seems to finally calm down after seeing Alistair’s body fell lifeless on the ground.

Once recovered from the initial shock of these thoughts, Sam looks for his gun, however, when he turns around, triumphant of his victory he finds himself in front of the man who entices all this soothing hate back on the surface.

“Hello Sam.”

“Lucifer.”

He greets Sam with a smirk.

“Finally, I finally get to see you again. Did you miss me?”

“Cut the talk. I’m here to kill you.”

“Oh my, kill me? Didn’t we get past these futile treats?”

“Shut up!”

“Oh… He said shut up to me!”

Chuckling, the blond man walks around the room wielding only a knife while Sam pats his waist, finding his own blade in there, taking it between his fingers.

“Come on Sam! We had this talk before. It’s simple: you want your brother alive and I want you. Can’t we make an arrangement?”

“There’s no deal with you, I’m not buying it.”

“Hm… That’s a shame. There’s so much potential wasted in you. It’s like looking into a mirror…”

“Stop-saying that!” Sam barks “I’m nothing like you!”

“Was that what Dean told you? Hm? And you believed in him; again!” sighing, Lucifer rubs his face and neck. “It’s like talking to a door, really.”

“Enough!” Sam yells. Lucifer doesn’t smile anymore, but there’s a lift on the corner of his mouth.

“Are you going to kill me, Sammy boy? Without any compassion like you did with Alistair?”
Widening his hazel green eyes, Sam stares the body on the floor, and then back at the other man, not believing in it

“… You watched it?”

“Of course. I wanted to see how far you could go.”

“You’re a monster! You saw your comrade being killed and did nothing!”

“Well, you’re the one who gripped his throat and sliced it in one fine, slow cut, full of pain, Sam. Not me. So who’s the real monster?”

Sam gulps, holding his knife tighter, lifting his arm.

“…Enough.”

“Oh, common. Don’t think I’m sad! Alistair was so repetitive and boring! You made me a favor. Besides, I’m really proud of how you manage to deal with him. The hate, the passion while slicing his skin?! Amazing, Sammy!”

“I said enough.”

They dance around each other for some time, with Lucifer not quite catching why he’s still alive, why Sam haven’t moved yet. Does the little boy have a plan?

“So… are we going to walk around some more, or…”

“Tell your man to retreat.”

Pressing his lips on a thin smile, Lucifer clasp his hands.

“Ah, the big plan is reveled.”

“Do it.” Sam repeats, gritting his teeth.

“I see. Well, I expected more from you Sam, that much I can say.” Lucifer walks slowly while speaking, not looking at Sam but merely heading to the door. “I was hoping for an arrangement between us.”

“Not going to happen.”

“That’s a shame, uh?”

Lucifer smiles. It’s never good when he smiles. His feet are closer to Sam now, and he didn’t notice when the room between them became so little. There’s no time to react or escape from the cut that comes direct to his forearm, opening a huge gush there. Sam hisses, still holding the gun with one hand, but it’s soon removed by a strong grip and punch on his ribs.

“Like I said, it’s a shame.” Lucifer ponders, sighing softly “You put me in a difficult situation. See, I want you, but I also have to kill you. It’s a real Sophie’s choice here.”

“Screw you… You psychopath!”

“I… Think I hit your head too hard, Sammy boy. The insults are entering into a low level.”

“Fuck you!”
“And, now you’re swearing.” He sighs, using the tip of the knife to scratch his beard.

In a last attempt to regain some advantage, Sam tries to run for his gun again. It was laying on the floor, he could grab it if he was fast enough. But he wasn’t.

The metal blade of the knife caught his hand as Lucifer came closer, kneeling on the ground and stabbing the back of Sam’s hand. He screamed, looking at the blade stiffed in the middle of his hand, feeling a disquieting sting run from his forearm, to his spine. His mouth leaked spit, as he felt Lucifer grabs the thin hair of his nape, tugging at it. Sam sensed a pair of lips sliding on his cheek, coming nearer to his ear while he breathed in thick puffs.

“Fight as long as you want, Sam. I will have you.”

“F-fuck!” Sam countered, trying to focus beyond the hurt “Why do you do this?! Why the hell you insist on doing this to me?! I don’t want anything with you!”

“I don’t know, Sam…” Lucifer said, kissing under his ear, then gluing his face on Sam’s while contemplating the ceiling “Maybe I’m crazy.”

With his mouth quivering, Sam looked from the corner of his eye to this man. Perhaps that was the most certain thing he ever said, because Sam couldn’t find a better explanation to describe his narcissism, his need of constant control, or better: his desire for chaos and destruction. Deep down, Sam felt pity. For seeing a man that had lost his mind to the war, someone who could only see chaos as the only true path.

The thoughts are ripped from his mind as Lucifer pulls the knife from his hand, making Sam yell once again, but his screams doesn’t startle the madman.

(...) 

Dean runs.

It’s the only logical think he can do, run towards Castiel, run to find him, run for all the pain on his body to go away as his mind is focused on the most important quest he have; forcing his muscles to work harder, for his legs to stomp on the ground like the fierce of trees falling on a forest; running to the place he spent innumerous hours of the day with Alistair – being tortured and torturing – the place that resembles him a piece of hell on Earth, and where Cas is held captive now. Dean curses a thousand curses for allowing this to happen with him for-

The rotten smell of burning meat hits his nose and makes him cough.

But it’s not the only thing making him dizzy. A pair of hand comes to his neck quickly, pushing him against the wall.

“Look who’s here!”

A sharp voice says in a mocking tone. Dean have to turn his head and look from the corner of his eye to see him. The man is strange in every way. He is bald on the top of his head, but has some grey hair on its sides. A corpulent body, but not structured equally. However the smile he shows is similar to the one Lucifer wears on his lips; the smile of someone that is so full of himself.
“Aren’t you a funny little human…”

With a crooked smile, Dean looks at the strange man, asking half sarcastically, half without air.

“What’s so funny?”

“I think a person like you interesting, Winchester. After all, it’s not always that we receive a visit from a camp leader.”

“I’m vibrating with joy.” Dean mocks “But enough with the talk.”

“Straight to the point, uh, Winchester?”

He laughs, letting go of Dean. He quickly is on his feet again, watching as the half bald man walk in circles.

“I have to admit I didn’t expect you to have this much trouble over the nurse. Oh, my name is Zacharias, in case you wanted to know.”

Dean frowns, staring the man as he scratches the tip of his nose shaking his head. This... Zacharias looks at him waiting for something. He them sighs, gesticulating his hands in the air.

“I see you want to do it the hard way.”

On the next instant, Zacharias goes for Dean in a single motion, delivering a punch. Quickly regaining his equilibrium, Dean stars to dodge from the hits; blasts a lot more faster than he previously imagined, huffing when Zacharias hits his stomach.

When he tried to push Zacharias away from him, Dean has one of his wrists restrained, being tossed on the floor with a tremendous force. Before he could get up, Dean receives a kick in the middle of his ribcage, choking a ball of air. After that there’s another hit, and his hands come up to his head, trying to protect himself by curling in a fetal position.

“Common Dean! Haven’t you come here to save Castiel?!”

Zacharias torments him, infuriating Dean little by little, however he remains immobile, accepting each blow, recovering his breath before going for a new attack. The man smiles, seeing the leader red in anger, feeling triumphant for discomposing Dean, and by now he have him too distracted in anger to pay attention on his movements.

Dean gasps when is put back down by a strong punch, and new kicks marks his body with dark dots and scars. There’s a fillet of blood on the corner of his mouth, a small swell on his eye, and this is just the outside, because he is sure to have a concussion, plus damaged organs.

“We are going to make you watch, Dean.” he says and kicks Dean’s torso “We are going to take Castiel and hurt him in every possible way!” Another kick, another gasp from Dean “And Lucifer will finally kill the rebel brother!”

Breathing heavy, Dean feels every word piercing his body as he struggles to get rid of the grip of this damn man, but the weight of his scams on him makes Dean dizzy and breathless.

“And Castiel, well, he will see in you show the inability of your actions.” A new kick on Dean’s stomach has his curving into a ball “Then soon he will pray to get killed. All because of you, Dean Winchester.”
The words salivating venom arouses every sense in Dean on every second.

Zachariah's leg moves toward Dean's head wanting to crack his skull. His sole gets close enough to slip in his light hair, but stops midair, between Dean's fingers that holds the leg by the ankle. Zacharias snorts looking annoyed, but his expression becomes from anger to surprise - and then despair.

Dean spins his ankle hearing the sound of bones breaking. Zacharias hisses through the pain when his back hatch on the floor, and with no time to dodge or trying to defend the clenched fist that hits his jaw, bursting ligaments and tarnishing the muscle, which turns red in an instant.

Dean uses the floor as a blank canvas and paint it with Zacharias’s blood that gushes over it in each powerful punch, shattering the skull gradually. Dean is not even aware when he speaks.

“Say it again!” he yells “Say what you will do with Cas! I dare you! Say it, you son of a bitch! Say it!”

He punches as his hand bones snaps,. He strikes Zacharias until his face is deformed and there is no way to recognize that one day he was a human being. Dean punches without feeling not even hate, but just letting the sensation of the hardened muscles from his forearm to take his brain in a lethargic state, where there is only the sound of a head being crushed over his fingers; of bones cracking.

Running his eyes over the scene Dean sees Zacharias, well, what's left of him partially buried in the floor and the stain of blood around his head almost forms a vision of an carmine areola.

But Dean felt only peace.

His nostrils inhale all the air it can, gradually calming the adrenaline race throughout his body that leaves it lethargic. Snapping his fingers, Dean slowly gets up, scratching his nose and looking at the red fingers. He did not care, cleaning the back of his palm on the jeans, and wobbly he goes on, getting face to face with a large, heavy metal door.

The rotten smell of rotting quickly reaches his senses, and Dean feels his chest heavy as iron sinking into the ocean. Swallowing hard, he recomposes himself enough to push the door open.

The world stopped spinning and the time became something static before him.

Castiel, sprawled on the floor with chains holding him in place. It seemed like a Christian painting, the detailed cuts on his body. Each wound appeared to be designed in such perfect and sublimes slices on the scarification skin.

All of Dean’s coldness dies.

He crouches on the ground next to the bloody figure laying there. His wrists are constricted, his clothes are destroyed; bruises with every purple and blue colors scattered on the body that doesn’t move, doesn’t make any motion – nor even breath. Dean is hyperventilating, cutting all the ropes he can see, removing the fucking rags from his mouth and eyes, holding Castiel tight against his chest. He trembles, embracing the smaller one into a protective cocoon, caressing his face.

“Cas, shit, please, wake up! Please, please!”

Dean’s voice seems to awake something in him, for the nurse blinks, parting his sliced lips, feeling a dry air coming in. Lazy eyes opens, adjusting to the light as a familiar figure starts to form in front of him.
“…You came…” he mutters, unbelievable of Dean’s presence there. It must be one of his delusions.

“Of course I came Cas, I…”

“…Dean…”

Trembling hands rise up to touch Dean's face, feeling, confirming his presence there. Castiel does not remember how many times he thought he saw him coming through the torture room's door while being cut, beaten and everything else that Alistair could do. But the heat of Dean’s skin on the icy tip of his fingers ... Yes, this is Dean, not an illusion.

And though it hurt a lot, Castiel wanted to open his lips in a smile, not regretting the burning he felt on his face.

“Cas…” he grabs the nurse’s hand and squeezes it, holding it close to his chest.

Inhaling deeply, Dean lowers his eyes and takes a better look over his condition, noticing now how his pants are destroyed, ragged, pushed down, with trails of blood falling between his legs.

“Cas…” He trembles. “Cas my God-please, oh, please tell me I’m not-” He takes a deep breath.

“Please tell me they didn’t…”

A sob escapes Dean’s throat. The soft lips of his lover are chapped in many cuts, filled with dry lines of blood. Around it he can see the white skin fracturing, so as in many cuts on his cheeks, his temple...

There’s also a cut above his eyes, almost hitting the globe, but the open slice of flesh doesn’t allow Castiel to blink. Over his arms are spread deep and thin cuts, filled with what seems salt grains, causing the wound to burn in pain, something of Alistair tortures. The tip of his fingers are a little purple pale due to the ropes that were constricting them. His torso is covered with the same paths of scratches. Cas’s legs... God! It’s filled with hand marks, stripes of scarlet liquid, and if Dean lifts one small side of the ragged jeans he can see Cas is naked under there – all new wounds appearing. He breathes a cry through his teeth.

“Forgive me Cas… I’m sorry... So, so sorry. Please forgive me!...”

Dean can’t block the tears away, not when one of Cas weak hands are trembling to hold his elbow, clutching at his coat, afraid that he might vanish. He barely moves, only nodding in small gestures, swallowing hard, though his eyes are full of relief.

“If I- if came sooner… Those bastards!... Cas, you-”

He sobs again, choking, hugging Castiel even tighter.

“N...No.”

Castiel manages to say after a few tries, although Dean doesn’t quite understand what he’s trying to tell him. Dean cups his face stroking lightly, dragging air through his teeth as he tries to breath, but he can’t.

“Shh… I’m here now, I won’t ever leave you again, Cas.”

“A-listair…” He sounded worried, as if the man would pop from anywhere.
“Don’t worry ‘bout it.”

Castiel breathes in, blinking, opening his eyes for a tiny bit. Dean feels his hearth squeezing over his chest. They’re blue, but so most of its shine is gone. It’s like seeing the death of a soul.

It did not take long to make Castiel close his eyes, too tired to even talk. Dean rips some parts of his blouse and uses it to cover the large wounds and more evident ones, wanting in some way to ease the pain of the nurse. He bit his lower lip to keep from falling into despair, for he had to take Cas out of there as soon as possible; and he could not fall into panic.

Awkwardly he puts Castiel on his lap and out of that fetid room, walking fast to the same patch he came from. He grinds his teeth at the memory of the corridor where Jo is ... Was.

Cursing, he turns to the other way, following a alternative direction that leads to the Arena, taking care to not be surprised by anyone. He needs to find Sam.

Pressing the limp body of Castiel, Dean moves in a swift march, remembering the numerous exits that lead to the heart of the camp; the cells which held the fighters. His stomach wraps, but he manages to get through the nausea knowing that the Arena is just ahead, that Sam is there, probably with Alistair dead.

Grunting amid the shifting balances of the race, Castiel murmurs weakly.

“Dean...”

“It's okay, we are almost there, just hang a while longer.”

So Dean wanted, so he longs; just run away and take Castiel out of this hell. And in hell’s mouth he is received by the devil, as Dean arrives at the Arena.

“Hello, hello, Winchester boy.”

Stopping in the middle of the field, Dean immediately see the body of Alistair lifeless, but his joy fades when he notices that Lucifer is also there, holding Sam kneeling on the floor by threatening him with a knife propped behind his neck.

“I see you found Castiel.” Lucifer says, turning his neck to the side “Now you can go.”

Dean snorts, holding Cas tighter.

“Let him go.”

“Who? Sam? Oh, common! It's only fair! Like I said: you take my brother, and I keep yours.”

Drifting his attention away of the main event, Dean sees the already visible destruction of the place. Far away he watches as clounds of smoke comes up to the sky. Since he arrived there the camp transmuted into a battlefield emerging from the Earth's dull silence. Cars spending the scarce gasoline, guns firing, bombs exploding in small spaces, all happening at once, firing and burning in fires; piercing bodies with bullets.

All that Lucifer had built based on a blind belief that his means were the right ones - the only possible bias - it was crushed in his face. And maybe that's why his expression now was of pure insanity, trying to force a trade when in fact he had nothing more to bargain.

Dean needed to think fast, so he could pull his gun and aim to the man’s chest.
“Stop talking crap, you psycho.”

“Maybe you did not hear me.”

Lucifer then picks behind his waistband a gun, angling it and pointing to Dean, who swears mentally because he does not have any condition to confront him with Castiel in his arms.

Closing his eyes, Sam grasps his breath, holding his injured hand, considering any plan, anything that could solve that situation, faster, in one motion, he needed to do something before his brother was shoot dead.

“But on second thoughts, Dean…” Lucifer ponders, pursing his lips “I think killing you will be the best solution for my problems. Without you, Sam will be free from any leash.”

“So you can put another one in him?” Dean replies sarcastically.

“I am freeing Sam.” He answers, too convinced on his own words “After you, there will only be the pretty blond woman to take care of.”

“No!”

Sam yells, twisting his head to face Lucifer, however he receives a strong clasp with the back of the gun hitting his face, falling on fours.

“It’s not your turn to talk yet, Sammy.”

“I’ll fucking kill you.” Dean says from between his teeth, but those threats seem to cause no worries on the other.

“This has got too tiresome.”

With a wry smile, Lucifer scratches his beard again using the knife in one hand, still pointing the gun at Dean, sighing in a bored tone.

“You should have taken the offer I gave to you.”

The finger on the trigger comes back firing the gun, and Dean has time to just throw his body to the side, protecting Castiel with half of his torso.

However, so many things happened at the same time that it would be difficult to discern which came first. The shot from Lucifer, Dean involving Castiel in a protective embrace, or Sam throwing his body back and hitting between Lucifer’s legs, unbalancing him in a fall that led both to the ground.

In a gasp Dean looked at himself and Castiel, noting they have no new wounds, and relieved by the amount of luck he had. Then he hears another shot, seeing Sam standing with a lame leg, holding his gun between his fingers.

Lucifer were still breathing on the ground, with blood coming out of a hole in the left side of his chest. He tries to inhale, but every time he did it is with tremendous force, running out gradually of oxygen in gagging chokes, reaching out into the air in a failed attempt to cling for his life, unable to accept that this is the end. It’s as if he threw an illusory cage around himself, and his body were going to remain in torpor; or so it’s what he chooses to believe in a last snap of his lungs. And then there is only darkness.
Both brothers are standing watching the lifeless body of the man who plagued their lives in disbelief that this was his true end, because Lucifer haunted them for so long, that they just waited for more.

But it was over, that was really the end.

“Let's get out of here.”

Dean says, spinning on his heels and leaving this dammed place once and for all.

And Lucifer was lying in the same disturbed place he had created; in the middle of that Arena, without any public to watch it.
There’s no feast or emotions of joy when the small group returns to the camp. Their march is packed with the weight of the loss, of the one’s who sacrificed their lives to save others. Dean comes back with Castiel unconscious in his arms. Sam, Benny, Jody, and a few other from Bobby’s camp comes alongside them – including refugees from Lucifer’s camp – but that’s it. No one else that left with them is on sight.

Ellen comes in static steps, passing by the small crowd gathering around Dean and the rest of the group. She stops with a mute question on her shattered mien, quivering her lips as Dean lowers his head and shakes it.

It’s Benny who comes closer to her and holds the woman as her legs falls on the ground. She doesn’t screams, but the silence works the same way, heavy and painful like a coarse throat yelling for hours, and everyone can hear her gasps and tears. Unable to move or stop, Ellen just cries everything she can over the loss of her daughter.

That’s all they can do, cry and move on.

(...) 

On the afternoon of the next day Dean finds the strength to talk with Benny. He didn’t left the grave, or at least he tried to stay there, near the stone placed beside the dining hall as the memory of Jo.

Benny is crouched there, looking at the earth, caressing the coldness of the stone as if to feel part of Jo. He places a small bouquet of white flowers over it.

“They are beautiful” It’s the first thing Dean says, standing up behind him as Benny gives a weak smile.

“Yeah, they are.”

The quietude is equal of these past hours that no one wanted to talk about what happened. It reminding Dean of the misery from graveyards, why he didn’t like them; why after his mother’s death he never once stopped to give her flowers, why the ghost of loved ones will haunt him forever. But seeing Benny looking with fondness to Jo’s grave causes a deep regret in him, for not seeing his mother before the war. Now, her gravestone must be buried under the remains of a city, or probably destroyed by the bombs.

For Benny this small memorial will be a constant remind of the woman he… Loved. And the same for Ellen, for Sam, for him…

Dean stood there as long as he felt it was right, until Benny lifted from the moist soil and turned around after gently tapping the stone one more time. Facing his friend was terrible. Dean could see how he didn’t slept by the dark color under his eyes. It didn’t soothe the words he came to say.
“Benny, about Jo…” Dean talks in a lower voice, unsure of what exactly he will tell Benny.

“It’s okay buddy.” His friend cuts him “You don’t have to say anything.”

“…You liked her.”

“… Yeah.” He admits, rubbing his nape “She knew it; we just decided it wasn’t a good time for, ya know, romance ’n stuff.”

Nevertheless Jo died in order to save someone Dean loves… It doesn’t matter how much it hurts, he has to say it.

“She told me… She told me you guys should’ve just…” He chokes “I’m sorry.”

Benny smiles weakly as Dean pats his shoulder, gripping it lightly.

“You know I… For whatever you need Benny.”

“Thanks mate… But I don’t think I’ll ever be okay. You know how it is right?”

Dean turns quickly his head, looking at his cabin where Cas is sleeping, and his chest feels heavier and massive.

“Yeah.” Dean answers “Without them life is like…”

“Purgatory.”

Dean snorts with Benny’s parallel; though he can’t disagree how right it seems once he reasons about it. Surely those moths deprived of memories, with a huge piece of his life missing felt like this; drifting on a place where there’s no day or night, struggling to find a way out and never getting anywhere… And he only understood what was missing when he lost Castiel again. Dean was misplaced in a limbo this whole time, trying to find Cas.

“Nice way to describe it.” he says.

Benny shrugs, putting his hands inside the jacket.

“Anyway, go. Castiel needs you.”

“What about you?”

“I’m gonna be with Ellen. Give a helping hand, ya know.”

Dean nods, and then for what he believes it’s a time for an appropriate comfort, he puts one arm around his friend giving him a quick hug.

“If you need something Benny…”

“Don’t sweat it, Dean... But thanks.”

(...)
who comes and helps him changing gauzes, applying medicine. She’s also the one who brings food, for Dean doesn’t leave Castiel's side, no matter what. He leaves the nurse with the entire bed to himself, stroking gentle caresses on his hair, covering his body with blankets as he moves too much over the sleep hours, cleaning the sweat from his forehead. Once Castiel in calmer, Dean sits on a chair beside the bed, rubbing the tip of his fingers on the back of Cas's hands until finally falling asleep with half of his torso over the mattress.

During the afternoon of the fourth day there’s groans coming from the bed, making Dean wake up from his little nap to face a pair of blue eyes staring confused at him.

“Dean…” A dry voice calls him.

“Hey.” He smiles with a full set of teeth, displaying relief “How you’re feeling sleepyhead?”

Cas rubs his eyes pressing two fingers at his temple, noticing he is on Dean’s bedroom, but too exhausted to question why.

“Tired… Headache; sore. How long have I been sleeping?”

“Four days.”

“This much? Clinic must be a chaos.”

“Don’t worry about it.”

Dean smiles for a second time, lifting one hand to fix a pair of strands falling on Cas’s brow. The nurse’s body is rigid on the same instant, leaning his head back unsure of Dean’s movements. It alerts something in Dean that maybe it’s too soon for a touch after the “treatment” Lucifer made sure he received. So Dean just swallows hard and nods with a delicate beam, squeezing the nurse's hand he is still seizing – and apparently only now Castiel realizes Dean was holding it.

“You have to drink some water and take the medicine Jess brought.”

“… Okay.”

While Dean goes from side to side of the cabin, Castiel observes the motions of his body, the way he walks carefree picking up things on the table, or as his features were mild when he looked at him. Everything seemed so similar to before Dean's disappearance, before he lost his memories. Even his most subtle gestures reminded Castiel of the Dean he had known, the one somewhat happy...

Heaving a sigh, Castiel brushes away anything he might be pondering. It must be his numb head playing tricks, because his Dean is gone. He wasn’t caressing his head nor was he going to touch his hair minutes ago. But he was holding his hand… Maybe an honest mistake since Dean was… Sleeping near him.

Pressing two fingers on his forehead, Castiel’s eyes get thinner, and he rubs the tip of his digits as if he could scratch his brain and get rid of any false impressions, of things he can’t have anymore.

For so long Castiel built this same fantasy, that one day he would wake up from a long and terrible nightmare, with Dean by his side, waiting for him to open his eyes. It didn't happened. the memory loss, the discussions or the bitterness. In this fantasy of Castiel, he continued going to the clinic every day, returning to their cabin at night where Dean and he talked, ate and then lay in bed, spending hours under the sheets, exploring each other's bodies and making love.
But the Dean from that illusion is gone. He was lost, torn away from Castiel. But it looks like his brain insists on deceiving him, interpreting each action Dean made as an improvement of his healing.

He will not be broken again, Castiel cannot have hope plucked again from him, he can not...

“I asked them to make your favorite.” Deans tells him carrying a small tray “Melt cheese ‘n all. Of course I had to pay for the favor, but, here.”

Dean wakes him from the brief trance. Castiel looks at the plate with two burgers and fries narrowing his eyes. Then he goes up back to Dean not comprehending a thing. What he is saying, the way he touched Cas on the right places, his words; using jokes that make the nurse giggles - even if just a little - or how his green globes stares as if they’re unable to change directions. It’s all so familiar and at the same time foreign to Castiel that for a moment he thinks that… That Dean… No, it’s impossible.

Pulling the sheets to cover him from the cold, Castiel feels something slipping from his shoulders and landing on the bed. He grabs the sleeve of a green jacket, frowning.

“Ah, I found it in the wardrobe.” Dean says at his soundless question “The sheets are so thin that I thought it might warm you better.”

Still holding the jacket, Castiel looks at it like the most interesting thing of the world, with all the sensations that this mere piece of clothing brings to him.

“It’s your coat…” says him almost too quietly.

“No, it’s yours.” Replies Dean “But you never used it again so I assumed you had tossed it away.”

Castiel frowns, tilting his head and facing Dean.

“I would never discard it.”

“Yeah, you got really attached to this thing.” Dean snorts. “You do know that I found this jacket on another’s guy body, right?”

Castiel actually chuckles.

“Yes, I know.”

“The guy was covered in mud, Cas. Took me weeks to remove the entire thing from it, Ellen kept lecturing me of the water I spent, but…”

“But you just liked the jacket so much.”

“It’s a good jacket.”

“And you gave it to me.”

“Well, you needed it more than me. I don’t regret it; it always matched you better.”

With a huff, Castiel shakes his head feeling entertained while rubbing the fabric of the jacket.

“How many times will you tell me this same lie?”

“Until you believe in it.”
“You’re uncorrectable.”

“I’m adorable.”

“You-”

The conversation drifted in such a comfortable routine that Castiel became conscious only later, of what they were talking about, of this joke they played with each other so many times before. It all felt like they were just repeating a previous talk they had about senseless things every day, wrapped on the bed sheets, too lazy to get out of the cozy mattress and from each other. Dean speaks of old jokes and stories Cas is never tired of hearing, because it amused Dean to talk about stupid things, especially if it made the nurse smile.

The world must have ended again.

There’s a bomb outside that destroyed everything once and for all, leading Castiel to his personal heave, because he can’t sense any air in the room. It is vanquished from his lungs; even the ability to breath is gone.

Castiel locks vision with Dean parting his lips with small puffs, his heart almost pulling out of his chest as a deep quietude drafts on the gap between them. Dean angles one corner of his mouth to form a weak smile; his emerald gaze shining in a warmth familiarity. He let the tray on the nightstand, sitting on the bed and slides one hand through Cas’s wrist until entwining their fingers. Taking Castiel's delicate hand to the height of his mouth, Dean kisses his thin fingers, closing his eyes tightly as he finally can feel Castiel's skin against his own.

“Sorry it took me this long, Cas.”

The dark-haired man intakes air when sensing it was possible again. The fantasy unfolded from the dark spaces of his mind in a moment of reality. His hands tightness around Dean’s as if he was scared he’ll run away or vanish. Castiel just ducks his head, then, shaking it in awe; his whole body trembling.

A thumb comes under his neck caressing softly and holds his chin, lifting his face. Blue eyes are watery; the pair of pulpy lips quivering as all of his questions are answered by the placid, wide beam that Dean shows - and in the sheen of his greenish eyes beholding Castiel's spark, as if Dean had found the most sacred thing in the world: him.

“You remember me…”

He mumbles the words so weekly that for a moment Castiel believes he only thought about them. However, Dean simply nods.

Clumsy, Castiel tries to move over the bed so he can hold Dean. He almost falls from on the floor in the attempt, but Dean wraps his arms around his torso keeping the nurse in place, getting closer, putting their chests together, and feeling like the skins unite into one.

Their arms are ensnared in no time; Castiel’s body fully on the mattress as Dean puts one leg over the bed, leaning into the embrace. Cas tugs him more and more, as if it wasn’t enough to have him in this short meet, as if he never wanted to release him... And he really didn't.

The beat inside their ribcages resounding can be heard through the hushed bedroom.

“Dean… Dean!”
His voice comes out on weeps, his hands crawling on Dean’s spine as he breathes in relief his smell; for Cas is finally on his arms again, he is back home. Their cheeks slide on one another so they can lock their gazes. Dean strokes his jaw, feeling the ill-shaven beard being dragged through his thumbs, worshipping that feeling hitting in the electric current of the nerves and traveling all over his body, lighting as an ancient lighthouse that now could illuminate an entire ocean. Dean rests his forehead on Cas’s, filling himself with this closeness, slowly coming forward in an unsure motion.

The kiss is a brush of lips encountering its way back to where they belong on one another.

Castiel's lips trembled. But once he had the Dean's mouth touching its all made sense again. Castiel's velvet skin had not lost it's flavor in the dryness that his lips had taken after so much time unconscious. Dean could feel the taste of him every time Cas brushed his mouth on his, risking to toch Dean with his tongue and, finally, feeling the wet fleshes spacing on every corner of their mouths, with Dean feeling Castiel in every way amid a kiss that was long delayed.

Castiel cups Dean’s neck caressing his jawline with quivering fingers. Once Dean feels the uneasy touch, he holds both of Cas’s wrist turning them to his mouth, and kissing the palm extensively to assure Cas that this is happening.

“I was such an idiot…” Dean says as his lips travels over the hands of his lover, kissing the knuckles “Said stupid things; made you suffer; I… Forgive me Cas.”

The nurse shakes his head more times than he can remember, pulling Dean and kissing him again.

“There’s nothing to forgive. You saved me from Lucifer. Again.”

With closed eyelids Dean shakes his head not prepared to remember how he found Castiel on that room; covered in blood, cut and maculated in so many places...

“But I couldn’t- I was late. They did… You-”

Dean clogs a sob. Castiel vaguely remember his conditions when Dean founded him, but as he thinks about Lucifer’s promises of hurting him, the way Alistair held him for torture, slicing, pressing, digging bizarre metallic apparatus on his skin… His body quivers among Dean’s arms, and Cas is pressed tight against his chest.

“Alistair…” The name caused shivers on him. Dean quickly holds the nurse, patting his back up and down. “Yes, he tortured me. But Lucifer was very specific about my “treatment.””

Dean frowns, grabbing him ever tighter with worry.

“What he said? …”

“Orders to not harm me permanently. I was not-Only cuts over my body… But… That’s it.”

Dean releases him a little from the cuddle, cupping Cas’s face; eyes miraculously full of faith.

“So he never… With you…”

“No one. Never.”

A single tear leaves Dean’s eye. He can’t restrain it, from anger and relief that his lover; that Castiel didn’t have to suffer further on the torture’s hands.
“Thank God!” He gasps out, embracing Castiel again. “Thank God! I-I thought I was late…”

Cas actually chuckles, resting his head on the junction of Dean’s shoulder:

“You always come right on time.”

(…)

Jessica and Sam got marriage a week later Jo’s death, on Ellen’s insistence. She mourned what she had to mourn, but after the burial she said it was time to make what her daughter would want to see: a nice and beautiful weeding, like they had planned; to let the past rest and renew everyone’s energy.

The feast is simple, as everyone expected. Sam is wearing his usual jeans pants, but Chuck was able to found on the clothe stock a grey dress shirt and black shoes. Sam combed his hair to the back, and that was it, the whole outfit, but it couldn’t be better.

“Are you nervous?” Dean asks from the entrance of his cabin as he watches his brother rolling the sleeves of his shirt.

“After what we did last week, this will be a piece of cake.”

“Hmm, cake… Gosh, how I miss it.”

“Maybe Ellen cooked some.”

“Maybe… But I wouldn’t mind if she didn't.”

“No one would.”

Within the silence brought by the sadness, Sam felt his heart aching, and as he struggled with the deep wound of his left hand he decided to change subjects; or better he tried to inquiry Dean.

“How is Cas?” asks him directly.

“Better.” Comes the brief answer “Walking slowly, but I make him lay down most of the time.”

“Good. And how are, you know… The two of you?”

Dean only shrugs, putting his hands on his pockets.

“I think the idea of a weeding is for the bridge to be late, not the broom, Sam.”

He mocks to avoid the question, but his brother knows better. Turning to face Dean, Sam forgets for a while this is his day and calmly asks.

“Dean, is everything okay?”

He doesn’t have an answer. Will ever something be okay? Because as far as Dean can remember, his hands are so filthy with mistakes; he feels unclean, and there’s nothing he can do about it. He scratches the back of his hand fiercely, marking the skin in red colors, but even then he doesn’t stop.
“Cas is… He was pretty hurt, Sam.” he almost mutters, blocking the vision of Cas spread on the floor covered in red; and he scratches his hands harder.

Sam comes closer, stopping by his side and touching his shoulder. Dean jolts and looks up to find his brother’s gaze.

“I know. But he’s here now.”

“If I wasn’t stubborn he wouldn’t-”

Shaking his head Dean thinks and re-thinks of all he could have done to stop this mess. If he didn’t let Castiel alone in a ghost town, if he forced him to stay, if he didn’t pushed him away, if he didn’t got wasted and lost in the middle of a world where the stronger eats the weaker ; if he didn’t lost his memory… If he didn’t existed.

Those fears multiplied inside his head like a wound opening, infecting every area of his mind, filling it with guilty, monster, dirty, dirty, dirty. He scratched his hand some more.

Then Sam grabs his shoulder shaking his brother to wake him, because he knows Dean and is sure that he is overthinking it all – which for him is never a good place to travel.

“Don’t do this to yourself, Dean.”

“If not me, then who is going to?” He asks almost shouting “You? Cas? Ellen? No one blames me for anything!”

“Because it’s nobody fault!”

“Whatever, I’m not going to discuss this now, not on your weeding.”

“Good, but we are going to talk later.”

Dean rolls his eyes, and goes out of the cabin. His hands ache.

This sting behind his head is not of pain, but guilty.

Dean always saw a line of blood on his hands, in everything he touches in each person on his life. He touched the golden hair of his mother the night of the fire before she died, he touched the small body of Sam when he took him out of the house and since then his little brother only suffered. He held John's hand before his father depart for the battlefield, leaving him behind with the sole job of taking care of Sam - and yet he failed so many times.

It was his hand who guided those young kids to a raid that directed them to their early death; it was his words of despair that led Ash and Jo to a suicide assault on a place perched with enemies.

And from the first moment that his hands rested on Castiel, he tainted him with that damn destruction he owned. The nurse he wanted to protect; the person that Dean found in such an unlikely place, in a cruel and mean time, and yet he refused to give Castiel a chance to live with someone better by marking him with his poison.

How could he not blame himself? Did none of them saw this dusky burn around his soul? He was rotten and would continuously be up to the end of his life, because people like Dean corrupts the world around him with, telling lies to himself that he tries to do well; but in truth is just looking for an excuse to remain surviving. Dean still tried to find his reason to fight against the inevitable: his own death.
Jess began to enter the small hall of people and chairs, and Dean's thoughts closed for the moment; his hands itching.

She is beautiful, smiling as Dean had never seen her smile before. She wore the white nightwear he managed to find, but the dress fell perfectly on her body, leaving it similar to one of those misty figures of oil paintings walking in the middle of a theater of war.

From ear to ear, Sam smiled at her, hoping that the girl was brought to him by Bobby faster.

While standing alongside his brother, Dean looked at Jessica, but his eyes stopped on Castiel. He was sitting a few rows ahead, and if not for the heavy beige trenchcoat he wore anyone would be able to see the tracks of the wounds on his arms, torso and legs.

He took painkillers at night when he thought Dean did not see.

In the middle of Jessica path, Castiel smiled, watching her. He smiled and hissed when some burning pain hit his body. Jessica came alongside Sam, Bobby kissed her forehead and shake hands with his brother. Castiel straightened up in his chair, rubbing his hurting elbows. Dean felt weak just by looking at it.

The ceremony took a fast end since it was cold for everyone to stay outside, and after a brief kiss of the newly wedded, sounds of whistles and hands clapping, Dean walked towards Castiel, helping him out of the crows to put him comfy on the diner hall.

“I’ll grab you some food.”

Dean quickly said, not letting the nurse have a say on it. His hands just slipped through Castiel’s arm, almost not touching it, and soon he was gone, incapable to look more than ten seconds to him.

He needed just to get out of there; from Cas and the constant remind of his failure with the nurse. He needed air.

Grabbing the first glass of drink he could find – a nasty white liquid that someone on camp must have made - Dean swallowed it down, resting his back on a wall while his heart never stopped bumping. The glass on his hands was being pressed more and more by the palm, threatening to break. Then his moment of loneliness was disturbed.

“So, you did come back, uh?”

Dean twists his eye to the side, seeing Balthazar beside him with a small band aid on his nose. He snorts at the man’s observation.

“I was never pretending not to.”

Dean answers, however Balthazar captured the small quiver of uncertain in his voice.

“I’m glad you… Brought Castiel back.”

Nodding in agreement, Dean sees the still black eye above Balthazar’s cheek together with a twisted nose that might get back in place over time – or not.

“Sorry about your nose.” He says merely of courtesy, but in reality Dean doesn’t feel the slight regret. And oh, Balthazar knows it.

“I’m sorry you are alive, but life isn’t perfect.”
Dean huffs, drinking some more, with the strange drink mitigating his stomach and coherent thoughts.

“Just don’t screw things up this time, uh?”

Laughing, Dean finishes his drink taking another one from some guys hand and telling him to turn around before swallowing it down.

“Don’t lecture me.” Dean, says more harshly than he wants to, with the strong breath of booze coming out of his mouth.

“Be a grow man and listen to me, you potato head.” Dean widens his eyes, but nothing says “I really like Castiel. So take care of him.”

Dean can see from the corner of his eye Castiel seated on a chair as Jessica talks to him. The nurse has his injuries still evident on his body, and remembering the frail condition Dean faced him one week ago… It convulsions his stomach, twisting the drink, and hurt more than a needle stabbing the back of his head. He swallows hard, gripping at the glass and making an inner promise.

“… I will.”

He utters not juddering his voice and Balthazar huffs a “you better”, before leaving the leader alone. Dean scrubs his hand again, this time to remove the pieces of glass shattered there.

(...) 

After the wedding, Castiel was back to his room, or better Dean’s cabin, to rest for a while longer since there he had more comfort.

He receives visitors almost all day, everyone wishing for his full recover, bringing flowers and stuff. Dean sneezes with the amount or scent impregnating his bedroom – it will be a bitch to get rid of it – but he doesn’t complain.

His wardrobe is soon filled again with Cas’s clothes; his desk has a pile of books and medical apparatus. The nurse didn’t even blink when Dean asked him to move back. He wanted for so long to be with him once more. Castiel had gave up hope, so of course after his brother last attempt of killing him and the fact that Dean saved him added some points to balance his previous actions.

Nevertheless, Dean behaved as if he walked on thin glass, touching the nurse with a ghost of fingers over his shoulders, his wrists, a stroke on his head to play with the raven hair, chaste kisses, but nothing further.

Part of it was, Dean didn’t know how deep Castiel had forgiven him. And because of this he did whatever is in his power to redeem himself; taking care of Cas, staying by his side, not going on raids that could worry him. Also, his injuries would take some time to heal, and Dean knows Cas needed a private time to surpass the torture Alistair practiced on him.

The torture. Alistair had a bizarre gift for breaking people, tear them apart not only with the physical treatment, but words as well. Castiel gained several cuts along his inner thighs, behind his knees the hamstring tendon was damaged making it impossible for Cas to walk, needing to lay down for at least one week more in order to recover.
Dean watches him smiling, despite what he went through incapable of thinking what kept Cas sane through the process, how he could put the past behind. And maybe he was only faking it for Dean’s sake, pretending he wasn’t to blame for what happened when in fact Dean suffers internally for taking too long, for causing wounds on the nurse before Alistair, because he can’t even imagine what horror Castiel went while seeing Dean from afar those past month when he himself thawed in a continuous sentiment of hopelessness the first night of the dreams he had.

He was pretending to be strong this whole time, but in truth Dean is so, so weak, for not wanting to be alone, to not want to lose his brother and Castiel even more.

So how can he smile to someone less of a man? How can Castiel forgive him?

In words Dean never speaks what he’s thinking, however touches, or the lack of them, tells everything to Castiel.

His fingers doesn’t reach his skin or barely scratches the surface, and it aches from deep inside Castiel to have Dean back, but still not seeing the man he wants entirely there, feeling he is dripping from his hands, and soon he won’t be able to collect all of him.

At dinner, the anger mixed in confusion took Castiel, and he could not pretend everything was fine anymore.

“Dean is there a problem?” queries him, but the other shrugged, not looking at him.

“Huh? No, why?”

“You… Don’t want to touch me.”

Dean rises his head with lips parted, releasing the spoon on the plate.

“Yes, I do.”

“That’s not what I meant.”

Rubbing his nape, Dean moved on the bed huffing, not wanting to discuss.

“Cas, you…” He sighs. “It happened so much and...”

The sheets hurt on the skin as something corrosive. Castiel gets rid of them searching for the touch of Dean, not this gentle caress on his face, or a chaste kiss on his hair. That’s not what he needs to stop this burning pain on the skin. The way Dean motions or avoids him, it’s like saying goodbye, it’s like giving up, and he doesn’t want to, not when Dean remembered him.

Clutching both hands on Dean’s face, Castiel pulls him to a hard kiss, locking their mouths in a vacuum gasp without any space between their lips to separate them.

Dean places his hands on the smaller body waist, squeezing the light blouse Castiel wears. His thumbs strokes in gentle circles the hem searching for skin, feeling the heat spreading through his palms immediately. Dean moans as his tongue battles for control in Cas’s mouth, absorbing his taste and ignoring any refrains he had put inside his head, because this is the taste he longed for many days, the weight he wanted to have on his hands and the feel of this man around him...

With a groan, Castiel tilts his head to allow Dean more space as their bodies descend on bed laying there with Dean rocking his waist between Castiel’s thighs. The nurse hisses once the motion hits a specific cruised area, and his features contorts from pleasure to pain, noticed in a jiff by Dean.
He opens green eyes and jumps away from Cas, panting and cursing once he sees the gauzes and dark dots on his stomach.

“Shit… I’m sorry Cas…, I’m so sorry…” He starts to apologize again not only for that, but for all the mistakes he had done so far.

And it infuriates Castiel even more.

“Would you stop with these excuses already?!”

Dean lifts his resigned head to meet a pair of fierce blue eyes. He gulps, clutching the sheets with one hand.

“Cas, you know why I-”

“Yes, I do, and I already forgave everything that happened!”

“… That’s absurd, Cas.”

“For the love of- Dean, stop thinking too much with this thick brain of yours!”

“I fucking hurt you Cas! A lot, in more than one way! If you stay with me there’ll only be more pain! I will only cause more pain to you!”

“Why?”

“What do you mean why?! ‘Cause that’s what I do! I destroy everything I touch!”

Castiel is silent for a moment.

“Don’t you dare to turn away from this Dean, not now; you have no right, not after what I’ve been through, what I’ve done… You can’t give up on this.”

He can, because Dean can only imagine a better future if he simple didn’t existed.

“Everyone will be better without me…” He mutters, rubbing his tired face.

“I won’t.”

Snorting, Dean swifts on the bed with no patience.

“You will. Jesus, I’m not normal. I have issues for two lifetimes!”

“I don’t care.”

“But I fucking do!”

He shouts, hitting his closed fist on the nightstand and breaking a glass on the floor. Castiel opens his mouth and then closes it, not believing on the lame excuses.

“It’s not a matter of them, it's us!”

“Cas-“

“No, you shut your mouth! You're not a quitter, I know that much.”

“...Maybe I finally wake up.”
“Or maybe you splintered your head again.”

Dean pulls away in penance, in a twisted affection towards Castiel, and that's enough, it is too much from him to withstand; to have Dean, to lost him, get him back and see him leaving just like that by a mere whim of him.

Not allowing him to get out of the bed, Cas holds tight Dean’s wrist, gaining his attention – a glare full of fear too.

“Dean, you can touch me. I won’t break.”

But he shakes his head in disagreement.

“I don’t…”

“Touch me.”

Trembling his lips, Dean lifts his hand in an insecure motion and slides a couple of fingers on Cas's forearm, but every silk touch in front of Dean seemed to open gushes of scars, wounds and things Dean can’t fix, that he causes over and over again.

He jumps and get away, not breathing, seeing Castiel watching him with uncertain and somewhat disappointment.

Then his face is cut up on a lime of red, divided in two, and the blood is on Dean’s hands, and he wants to clean it, oh God, he just want to clean all of the blood in him.
Castiel is left behind lying on that bed like a poor creature, watching the man for which he risked his life storm out, fleeing the cabin, running away from Castiel and the mortifying vision it is to see him covered in scars.

And deep inside he knows why Dean cannot touch him.

He knows, though he can’t accept it. This is not something he can decide for himself, it is not something that Dean might just give up.

Castiel does not want Dean to ever give up.

(...)

Dean comes out of the cabin in a jolt, going away from Castiel, the image of his ripped face; galling on his knees in the middle of the mud formed by the heavy rain that falls since the afternoon. He is dirty, covered in dirt, but it feels so much better than being covered by Cas’s blood.

His blood.

He looks at his hands and can see, fell the thick liquid there. Digging his hands on the ground, rubbing his fingers on it, Dean wants it to get clean, to let the mud erase the image of the injuries he caused, of the pain those hands brought to Cas. He sees the skin around his nails peeling out, together with blood; but it wasn’t enough.

The mud masked Dean from the filth inside him, and he needed to reach the core of the dirty… Removing the blood from his hands, replace it by pure scars of cleanness, and scratch it out; he rubs the ground, destroying the skin and reaching under it, killing Dean little by little, freeing the world of a monster like him. Rub, pinch, clean, rain falling now on his back, the wet hair sticking to the top of his head, hands full of mud and dirt, the water spreading over them, and Dean heaved, holding red and brown fingers, stretching the skin further; needing to take it all out.

The cold hands that touched his face were not even felt by him. Only when that gentle touch lifted his chin was that Dean had noticed he no longer was alone in the mud. Castiel is there.

But he is not white and safe like on the bed, he is not pure. There’s mud on his knees, there’s mud on his fingers, and even the rain falling on his face can’t clean it. It’s the same mud that covers Dean, and it’s his fault that Castiel is dirty…

“It’s filthy…” Dean mutters, quivering.

“It’s okay, Dean, we will clean it.”

He tries to reach Dean’s arm, but he quickly retreats it, leaving Castiel confused and so, so hurt.

“I can’t!” He shouts trying to be louder than the rain “There’s mud, it’s all filthy!”
“Dean?!”

“Can’t get it clean; it’s too much!”

Rising, Dean walks away from the nurse, seeing him crouched on the floor, knees covered with dirt, his body wet and the mud around him. It is as if Castiel was slowly sinking in a pit of rot.

“Can’t!”

He repeats, again and again, twisting his body, not facing Cas, not having the courage to see him maculated, because it’s his fault, it’s always and everything his fault!

Castiel sees him going, looking confused like that day he ran away with the fire pits of the young ones burning until nightfall; Dean ran away - and Castiel lost him.

His heels hurt even more when Castiel walks again, tripping, almost falling, and the dense rain is his most powerful enemy; holding his steps back. However even bigger is the fear of not having Dean, of not knowing how to even breath without that man.

Castiel sees as Dean shakes his head in an insanity attack and avoids Cas's glare, ashamed; lost inside his own mind. Nevertheless, after everything they went through Castiel is not filled with pity, but rage instead.

“Don’t you dare to go!” He yells, stepping harder on the mud, throwing his body against Dean and leading both to the ground. The sound of water splashing is muted by Dean’s screams as he waves his arms, shakes his legs and tries to run once again; to get away from Cas.

“No, no, you will get dirty; I can’t!”

Dean tries to keep distance, to let the nurse go, but as his hands touches Cas's chest he sees himself hurting him over and over again, slices of flesh and blood, chockfull with mud under his nails as it scratches through Cas’s skin.

Then his breath stops.

“Dean, Dean, look at me.”

Castiel tries to reach him, however Dean is almost hyperventilating, seeing what he could do to the nurse; of what he had done, unable to even understand that Castiel is the one in front of him.

“It’s everywhere, the mud, the dirty…” the mumbles continues, with Dean breathing hard, but never stopping saying those things.

Shaking his eyes, Cas grabs Dean’s arms and he almost screams, but the nurse locks his eyes on green ones, clutching at his damped clothes. He rubs with a gentle pressure Dean’s chest, forcing him to stand still. He then takes one of Dean’s hands guiding it to his own face, and as if playing with a child he uses Dean's finger to clean the mud in there, allowing the rain to let the dirty unglose and drip from the skin. For a moment Dean cannot move, mesmerized by the way the brown water slides from Castiel’s cheeks and chin, falling together with the droplets of water.

“It’s okay.” Castiel assures him, using the hem of his coat to dry the mud “It will get out, it will get clean again.”

Dean takes a deep breath, pressing his lips together.
“It can’t… it’s on me…”

Castiel then cleans his face too, lifting his wrist to show the mud being washed by the rain.

“I’ll clean you too.”

“… then you will get dirty…”

“I don’t mind.”

“Cas…”

“I don’t care that you are dirty, or filthy, you can always come back to me and I will clean you.”

“No…” He shakes his head, biting at his lips and shaking furiously, scaring Castiel, because he is afraid of losing Dean again.

“Please, stay with me.”

“Cas…”

“I need you, Dean. I don’t care about the mud; I don’t care at all, I just…”

Dean lowers his head as if in a lost stance distant from Castiel. The rain still falls strong upon them, but neither Dean nor Castiel say a word anymore. Lethargically, Cas takes Dean by his hand and slowly he makes him get up. His clothes are all covered in dirty, just like Castiel is. The heavy rain falls over their bodies, leaving them soaked, washing the mud through the fabric of the clothes, their skin, going to the ground.

But the nurse truly meant it. He doesn’t care how filthy they are.

(...)
bodies persisting with patches of a lifetime. And everything was fine. That was enough; was all that Castiel wanted: him and Dean. It was what made life bearable.

Should it be wrong, to need someone that much? To know for sure one would die without the other? Castiel did not think so, because he knew no more how to exist without Dean. And so he doesn't care; he will clean this man as often as he needed.

While Dean felt hands on his body he did not outline any reaction, fearful that even his voice could hurt the nurse. His green globes looked at a distant space and time, where he does not exist, where Castiel can finally be free and safe. If his existence ceased Castiel would be safe...

He only listens to his name being called on the third time.

"Dean, it's done."

Lifting his face, Dean sees the figure in the mirror, a man without pieces of dry mud, one lined beard and a short hair spiked to all directions. While he observes this reflection, Dean does not see himself there, but a deception; a trick that is his cleaned face, hiding his true self underneath the soap layers. He was still dirty, his eyes still see filthiness, it is marked in his hands and in the blood running inside him with the poison he carries.

Castiel touches his shoulder, and he steps away from it, leaving the bathroom and fading under the sheets of the bed. The nurse sighs, sitting beside him.

"Dean, this is foolishness."

No answer, just a heavy breathing.

"Please, talk to me."

"You will get dirty ..." Dean murmurs the same phrase in incoherent thoughts.

"I already told you there's no problem."

"Don’t you fucking get it ?!"

He screams rising abruptly from the bed and grabbing Castiel's shoulders with a force greater than he noticed.

The anger contained within Dean explodes. He wanted Castiel away from him, to show him how dirty he is; that nothing between them could result in something good. Not because of Cas, but because Dean does this: he destroys and kills. It is his fate. And if with words, with thoughtless and crazy gestures Castiel cannot see it, so Dean will convince him to fear this cold side of him.

"Clean me all you want, in the end it will only lead to your death!"

Looking to the fury exploding in Dean does not scares Castiel. On the contrary. What it does is raise his hands to Dean's face, clutching each of its sides. The blue iris shine so many things at the same time that it's hard for Dean to understand what's wrong with Cas; why he is still with him, why he is so insistent on wanting to save Dean. There is nothing there to be saved, not even the design of a man ...

Never leaving Dean's vision, Castiel part her lips. His warm breath hit against the skin of Dean and he says in a deep, low voice, but he lets on what are the real fears him.
"Then kill me now."

In deep silent, Dean stares with widened eyes at the way Castiel shouted, or how his lips are quivering with the cold, or maybe it’s a true panic, Dean can’t tell.

"Kill me now" He repeats, no flickering an eyelid “Because it will be better than slowly killing me."

"What ..." Dean blinks decreasing his grip on Castiel, getting confused.

Swallowing hard, Castiel squeezes Dean's face between his hands, wanting to dig through his skin and enter at once into the thick and stubbor head.

"You, me, us ... We are mingled on this world together, Dean."

"No..." He shakes his head, pressing one hand on the middle of his temple “No. You can still escape."

"There is no escape from you; from my reason of existing."

"Cas ..."

“You can break as many times you want, I’ll be here to take the pieces.”

Grabbing gently one of Dean’s wrists Castiel stops, looking at him and filling his voice with certainty.

"Let me be the thing keeping you here."

Shaking his head in denial, Dean tries to pulls his arms away from the nurse, unable to look at him.

“I’m no good to you, Cas...”

“I don’t fucking care!” He yells in anger, tired of that same speech, of hearing Dean saying such stupidities about himself “You can be dammed, you can be the devil itself, and I won’t care! All I want is you the way you are, Dean!”

It is not possible. No one should want him, no one… Especially Cas.

“....Why?” Asks him, shaking already,

“It's not a matter of being perfect, it's about the mistakes you're willing to admit and amend.”

To fix? Fix what? What's still in one piece in Dean that can be redone? What if there’s nothing to amend?

What if there are only scraps of a man?

“I'm not... Cas, I'm broken.”

“So am I. But the hollowness I have, the ones you carry, we can tie them together. Are you such a fool to not recognize that? To truly forget it...”

To forget; memories, the blackness; emptiness; like a void… Dean heard all the words as a recording on his brain, once so fragile and destroyed that he dared to disremember things so sacred to him. That he forget about Castiel.
He didn’t want to lost control over his mind ever again. It scared him, being unable to face Castiel and acknowledge who he is.

“I don’t, Cas.” He admits “I don’t want ever again to forget.”

“Then stay.”

Dean gazes at the man in front of him not knowing the next word he could say, without excuses to use. It’s on Cas's eyes; the way his hands grabs at his shirt in fear of ever letting go, of being alone… Of being without him. This fear that Dean shares, and that perhaps it's even greater than his.

Pain and blood, paintings of bodies sliced to nothing flashes on Dean's mind like a curse that won’t leave him. He sees the mud and the carmine colors dancing over his knuckles, and he is so afraid to put one single finger in Castiel, passing to him this disgustful disease…

“Cas, listen…” Gulping, Dean closes both eyes with a tremendous force, unable to look directly at the nurse “When I… When I was in that Arena I did things I’ll probably regret for the rest of my life. I killed, even before I lost my memory, and nothing, none excuse exists for this. I’m cursed, I… I don’t know how you can- why you want to be with me… You’re so full of this… Light. I’m afraid I’ll taint you; that I already have. I’m a pit of darkness just waiting to explode, and I’m just-”

Velvet lips pressed on his, stealing whatsoever he could've say. Dean breathes sharply, but falls into it, sinks deep down in that pair of moist flesh fitting over his perfectly.

Castiel knows everything he is; the shadows building and crawling inside him. He knows that there’s only one way for his life to end, and that would be by a bullet on his head or a knife piercing his heart; who cares? Eventually his existence will cease in a gore battlefield, for his hands have this cursed bless for killing, and so he must die on the same fate.

It can be today, next week, year, he doesn’t guess on a date. But he wants to savor the time left before the inevitable sentence to claim his soul.

Thus he grasps into this kiss, this man whiling to accept all his squalor, to pull him back every time he drowns. Because even if he’s damned Dean cannot allow Castiel to go.

Once they depart, Cas keep them sufficient close for them to share the oxygen there. He closes his eyes, ghosting Dean’s mouth with his lips, caressing gently his waist under the shirt, and when he finally opens his globes to look at Dean a frank smile cross his face, appearing to illuminate everywhere around Dean. Cas parts his lips, whispering just for Dean to listen:

“Your hands destroy at the same time they build, Dean…”

Castiel whispers to him as if it were a secret, taking his lips once again. And with the kiss, the saliva going from side to side; it's like Dean felt the safety Castiel gave him crossing that distance between their tongues. The hands of the nurse holds his face again, and he doesn't detach the kiss, pulling Dean closer.

"You cracked my former insecure self and with your hands you constructed someone confident.”

“Cas…”

“Let me do it too… Let me rebuilt you.”

Castiel timidly raises his right wrist stretching his fingers in Dean’s elbow. The silk tip of the
phalanges touched the skin making goosebumps to grow in Dean, traveling to his spine. Cas’s attention remained on the touch until he lifted his chin seeing dilated pupils in Dean; black in want, altogether with dry lips due to the unsteady breath. Green orbited from one side to another watching Castiel and his actions.

Dean felt completely stripped by the piercing gaze, this unique glare capable of breaking all his defenses and reveal every hidden detail of his being.

“Touch me.”

The request is made again, but when Dean hesitates. Castiel rises his hands another time, and his warm digits covers Dean's eyes, leading him to a blind condition, as if to protect him from the rot images that appeared in his vision. Castiel whispered on the tip of his ear.

“Touch me, make love to me...”

Dean grinds his teeth and lowers his shoulders in a motion of loss and doubt, wildly shaking his head.

“How can you love me?

“I do. I love everything that is you. Please, oh, please Dean, touch me.”

He asks again, and swallowing a dry spit, Dean rests one hand on Cas's forearm.

“Cas...”

“You can have me, I want to.”

“I.”

“When you touch me...” Castiel says, removing one hand from his eye and placing it over Dean's, sliding it up on his arm, skimming the palm over his chest “I feel everything... It makes me feel alive.”

Lifting his eyelids, Dean sees Castiel observing him in expectation.

“And when you don’t... It’s like dying slowly.”

His blue eyes sees everything, from the depths of his soul, the brightest traces and the worst ones, all of Dean is deciphered in a single look, on a flick of an eye. Castiel squeezes his hand, pressing it tight on the middle of his chest; however he doesn’t need to guide Dean anymore, for he finally surrenders.

His body ached with the distance, and it was like a million needles piercing the muscles and stopping along the way, with bones burning like coals, not that agreeable way as in a morning sun, but it was like to be burned directly in the fire, to be scorched by it.

For Dean to know that Castiel, after what happened in the Arena, was extensively flouted by his own stubbornness, was something that consumed Dean internally. He cannot believe how stupid he had behaved. If he had heard his brother, paid attention to this intense throbbing on his chest every time he was close to Castiel, maybe none of this would have happened.

But the "what if" is a very thin and dangerous mined field. Castiel is before him, affable, ensuring Dean that he wants this, that he will take all the impurities; saving Dean from his own destruction.
Castiel is the name of an angel... And perhaps only he can save Dean.

And it's all true. If Cas dies without him, thus Dean had been dead for some time now, and is Castiel's touches that reminds him how to live.

When Cas presses his mouth lightly over his shoulder Dean remembers how it is the heat of a body. A kiss on his neck reactivates his pulse, and fingers tracing smooth lines on his back are like electrical wires powering the nerves and ligaments.

Castiel is life, and Dean wanted to drink this vivacity for him.

Still in reluctant touches, Dean palms his lower back, looking for Cas’s mouth to bring it closer.

“Dean…”

What Dean received in this new exchange of glances was ... Everything. Who was he to Castiel, and who the nurse was for him. With his lips on Castiel’s, one hand grabbed the small of his back while the other stroked his neck. The nurse slapped on Dean's waist, leaning his face to the side to create an angle for the kiss. Dean started to explore the perfection that is the thick and soft lips of Cas, occupying the inside of his mouth with his tongue.

This was not a dream, it was really happening, and suddenly Dean is not able to refrain himself anymore. Because his chest ache, his hands shiver without feeling the intoxicating touch of Castiel’s body. Embracing Dean's middle, Cas drowned in the kiss, being pushed back to the bed, laying down with Dean among his thighs. He let out an involuntary hiss when Dean pressed harder over a wound, but only he perceived that. Stooping, Dean raises his head a little.

“Dean… Is this too much? Are you alright?”

The nurse asks, and Dean looks at Cas and his worries, amused by them, but also with adoration and fondness, centered on that beautiful and bright pair of blue.

The emptiness, the war, the Arena, the loss of his memories… all was vanquished from his mind, remaining only Castiel forged in there. And even if weekly, Dean allowed himself to smile.

“I am now.”

The scars Dean carries were the only things he thought were the certainties of his life, physical marks of what he had done, what he should do until the end of his life; what he did for his father, what he should do for his brother, fighting for the survival of these people, advancing in the war and winning, always, never stopping on behalf of that cause, moving forward, even if his reasons at some point had become just a joke of an excuse for him to continue living. And he never allowed himself to fight for his own.

This until he first lined his eyes with Castiel's, seeing, in the deepest part of his blue depths an ocean of possibilities; feeling in his guts a hidden and visceral desire of want, of fighting for someone not only over a duty instilled in his mind, but because he just wanted to have this creature for him.

No one ever said to Dean how he would feel when his actions weren’t driven by anger; but passion, desire, love.

It was better, a superb turmoil that spread inside him, in every centimeter of his body, searching for more, driving the will; the hunger for the exchange of a single touch. Because without this his black soul would extinguished for good. Without that touch the fissures in him would expand and
break on the inside out.

Because Castiel was Dean’s certain. And so he kisses the nurse.

God! How he longed for Castiel! His body, his kisses, the warm touch, hands tracing the movements of his waist and under the layers of clothes.

Dean got rid of everything, letting it be only him and Castiel, naked as sacred paintings on a bed, coloring it with their own warmth, with the sounds of moans and gasps that filled the room better than screams of rage and denial.

That was it, the good feeling cruising in Dean’s body as he became a submissive creature of pleasure, stealing from him all reason and motives of why he should stay away from Cas. It did not matter; he could no longer find excuses, because his whole body craved for Castiel, as if the man was opium.

The sweet flavor of the nurse filling his arms again with life was what moved Dean, the way in which he responded to his touches in a hoarse and velvety voice asking for more. Castiel wanted, ah! How he wanted, and Dean could only surrender to all that remained of this world, the little font of life that still was left, finding that moment in the arms of Castiel, his one more reason to move on.

In having something good, to receive at least a small amount of happiness in the turbulent life after the war. No, in his entire life, if he could say so. Dean, for this brief moment of joy, wanted to relish in it as if there was nothing else around them, no battle, no fight, not the end of the world. In the kiss he gave himself into, Dean squinted, sucking Castiel’s tongue and allowing it to soften his thirsty. Smacking new kisses on his lips, Dean pants.

“I need…” he breathed out, kissing the nurse “Cas, I need…” another kiss “I want… You.”

“You want?” Cas asked almost in disbelief, placing both hands on Dean’s jaw.

“…I need you.”

Castiel swallowed hard, gazing Dean’s eyes with his cerulean spheres, catching the sight of the missing words in that sentence. His lips crooked a smile as he looked at him, holding Dean’s jawline, at the small frame of despair and hatred in the hunter’s iris. For all their losses, the hurt, for that past instant days ago when he believed he’d lost the nurse. Cas pressed his lips against Dean’s hard, stroking his face.

“You have me, Dean. As long as you want me.”

Dean had some air trapped in his throat as his tongue slipped over Castiel’s. Between kisses he muttered something like ‘Always, Cas …’; ‘Always you’, one more kiss and another, grunting, with Castiel’s hands disordering his sandy-hair, deepening the kiss.

With an extreme calm, Dean removes his weight from the top of Castiel, sitting on his heels as his gaze travels down the spoiled body of Castiel, bit by bit, from scars to dark marks. It makes his face earn a sad tone, but it is soon freed from it when Cas softly wraps his slim fingers around his wrist and squeezes it. Dean merely leaves out a deep breath, lowering his torso and with a gentleness that did not fit within a brute like him, kissed each one of those cuts, in a inaudible dialogue in which he sought to Castiel; to the world and maybe even the heavens, that they forgive him for each of those wounds in the body of an angel like this man, who so openly was receiving Dean.
And Dean accepted the broad smile of Cas as the certainty that, yes, from there on, everything would be fine; at their own way they would fix each other.

On the mouth of Castiel, where quick gasps escaped from the lips, Dean put the tip of his thumb, caressing the velvety flesh. Closing his eyes, Castiel parted his lips and let his tongue go out, passing over Dean’s digit, soaking it with saliva, and once the groans of both, combined with the slow movements of their waists became unbearable in its so flustered wait, Dean took a deep breath, lowering the wet hand in a ghost gesture on his abdomen, gently slipping on the rigid shaft in the middle of Cas's crotch - that stirred with the gentle touch - until the hand touched a warm, scorching place.

Castiel pulled the air back to his throat, throwing his head back when he felt Dean massaging the wet finger over his opening. He wanted to scream, wanted to cry and cling to this moment, because he wanted it for so, so long; to be loved by this man, get this intimate touch of confidence and reassurance, that everything else around them seemed to have vanished; life itself was an inconsistency in time and space, and Castiel only captured the essence of Dean's fingers touching, caressing the soft wrinkled skin and its entrance that asked for more, wanted so much, so much more than this simple meeting. Oh, no, what Castiel longed for went beyond that.

It was the meeting of the bodies, the feeling of being completed by Dean that would free him of all the hurt, all the suffering that he had held in recent months. Because Dean was a part of him that had been torn, mutilated; robbed from Castiel's arms, and he wanted it back.

Dean was what was missing in Castiel, in every way, and he needed to go home, he needs to be in Castiel, reconnect the warmth of two people melting into each other, forming a new nameless and faceless being, but that was all that the two were in one thing.

Ah! Castiel just needed Dean and nothing more. The world rests ruined; everyone there could die and yet it's nothing that Castiel cared about if he had Dean. It was scary to think so, while he could not avoid it.

Because Dean was everything.

And these words that Castiel spent thousands of thoughts during those days away from Dean, turned at this instant into the sensations coursing through his body, with Dean's fingers gradually entering him, pacifying a portion of the ache he caused.

The nurse sighed, his chest rising and falling slowly at every phalanx that crossed the warm rim in the middle of his thighs, curving lightly on the most sensitive point in him, finding the places that Dean now remembered so well that made Castiel moan and ask for more.

In the shock of the bodies they did not even notice when Dean started to arranging himself between Cas's legs, still caressing, and adoring his soft pink skin. Dean seemed to wake from the trance with Cas’s faltering voice:

“Dean I’m ready… I want you.”

Dean grunted in approval, kissing him, beginning to slide both hands down his inner thighs until they palmed the back of his knees bringing them up with care, always comforting the injuries and blemishes. Cas’s waist floated on the mattress and Dean remained firm between his legs - now completely spaced around Dean’s abdomen and slightly bended over his chest.

In a rushed breath, Castiel felt Dean’s glans slip up his entry causing his lungs to close while his hands tensed on the sheets beside him in search for some steadiness.
Noting the tension in the body beneath him, Dean lowered his torso, placing his lips on Cas's forehead. The fingers of the nurse steadily started to let go of the fabric, going to the base of Dean’s spine and pressing there.

“I’ve got you.” Dean murmured, nuzzling at his raven hair.

And Dean really did.

Castiel smiled softly, scratching Dean’s back as in a encouragement.

“I know.” says him, putting his hands on Dean's face holding blue on green. “I want you.” Castiel mutters with a dangerous shivering in his voice. “I missed you so much...”

Dean feels his eyes tremble at the same time, closing them and thanking silently to any of the gods of this world for having a second chance, for having arrived in time to bring Castiel back safely.

There is a choking on the breath of Cas and a combined sob coming from Dean when he slipped inside.

“Ah, ah-ah! Deaan!”

Castiel groans with the first invasion on his body, but does not stop it, completely given in to Dean and his touches, the lustful kisses, his tongue lapping on his neck and sucking red marks; he wants and craves for all of this and more - for Dean and only he, the one who Castiel waited to come back for so long!

“Cas ...” swallowing hard Dean settles his cock slowly inside the nurse, being careful not to hurt him.

“Dean… Oh, Dean!” he repeated his name, over and over, running unsteady hands on his arms, but beaming fully at him.

With this smile embellishing this man’s face, Dean breathed in, burying himself in Castiel. Dean’s chest puffed out wildly in a loud sigh, and Cas’s spine arched, removing his waist from the mattress while his hands gripped Dean’s shoulders, forcing him to remain in that arrangement - totally sunk inside as if he always belonged there. Leisurely he comes out halfway, seeing Castiel's mouth open and close hastily, the breath coming out of his throat in little puffs, and the hands of the nurse stopped on Dean's arms, digging his nails there to find sustenance. Cas brings his knees closer to his chest and the angle that Castiel is able to provide for Dean makes him moan and tremble his waist.

The bodies quivered in unison. There wasn’t a single cell that did not reacted to this stimulus; Dean coming out slowly ‘till half of his cock, coming back inside Castiel not too fast, not slow, but with the weight of an unique certain crashing against the thighs of the nurse each time he pounded.

And it was beautiful, the view of Dean's chest muscles twitching together with the buds of his abdomen, dancing to the whim of the movements of the pelvis. Strong arms held Castiel’s legs midair, allowing his waist to bury in the middle of the nurse, feeling Cas’s opening swallowing him greedily, the walls of the tight channel pressing his erection hungrily, not wanting to let Dean be any further distant.

And Dean didn’t want it either.

Dean hears and watches as an avid spectator to Castiel’s body shaking in harmony with his, sucking hard, closing the narrow channel while Dean begins to gradually hit the point of pleasure
in Castiel, leaving him even more lost and compliant to the thrusts. And to think that he neglected these feelings for so long.

He could not breathe with the pressure of all that had happened. Dean gasps when those emotions commence to boil on his chest, spreading the discomfort it caused to the rest of his nerves. He tries to tell himself that he is taking time to help Castiel get used to his volume when he slows down, but it’s not that. Pulling Dean down with a power that could not be resisted, Cas wraps his arms tight in Dean’s unstable chest, wanting and pleading for him to continue, to go **harder**.

Dean embraces Castiel stronger than he intended, and his chest suffocates with all the things he wanted to say and still couldn’t, everything clogged in his throat and that he kept to himself in fear of seeming weak, of hurting those who he wanted near him, with a selfish desire for more. Dean couldn’t breathe, because the mere idea of losing Castiel terrifies him.

“Dean.” Cas murmurs ignoring his own desires, immediately holding Dean as close as possible, wanting to comfort him “I know. I know. You don’t need to be afraid anymore.”

And Castiel’s words combined with the rough voice sounds like a spell to Dean’s ear, causing him to fail all his attempts of keeping himself steady.

“I thought I'd lost you…” Dean talks muffled with his mouth stuck in Castiel’s shoulder, thinking in all other words that he wanted to say to the nurse “I need you…”.

“I am here. I’m not going anywhere ... I’m yours, Dean.”

Castiel helps him go through this instant of uncertainty, as his uncertainties falls like a whole universe over Dean’s shoulders, on what could and what was not, over the months they were away from each other.

Stroking Dean’s back, Castiel smacked a stolen kisses in him, relaxing Dean.

In blue eyes, then, Dean sees an entire galaxy staring at him and giving all the certainties of the world that he required to know: this is real; Castiel is on his side and chose him; this heat between their bodies and the sweat - the smell saturating the entire cabin - is true. What resounds restless and constant in Dean’s chest is real; he has no more doubts...

"I love you... I love you so much!"

He speaks with his mouth glued to Castiel, clinging with all his strength on his hipbone and thrusting firm and right the first time.

"Dean!” “I—I love you too!”

Castiel screams while he dries the single tear falling on the man's eye and savors the salted kiss they now share – with Castiel unable to stop the crystalline lines falling from his own blue eyes.

Dean was giving small strokes now, digging the base of his rigid muscle and taking only one centimeter out, too lost in Cas’s body and aroma to want to leave a millimeter of space between them.

They moans cries of longing and desperation, calling out for each other as if they were miles apart – as if Dean wasn’t there still - for every time Dean removes himself from the warmth that resides in Castiel he remembers all days they were apart, and even this tiny distance is too much space between them. So Dean thrusts back fast, coming back to Castiel and, oh, when he does, when he is completed and fully wrapped by Castiel’s scourging interior; legs wrapping around his thighs while
they sloppily kiss and embrace, sticking their torsos, it’s like home - it’s the two of them returning to each other all over again in every shove.

Castiel's body clings to Dean as he reaches his peak of pleasure, moaning in a low and high voice. The white knuckles of Cas's hand tighten around Dean's arms, throwing the black hair get scattered on the bed, and ah, that was the limit, it was all Dean needed - while Cas squirted between their bodies, warm and wet gushes, Dean’s cock enters and leaves one last time before pouring in Castiel, moaning in every second of it as their own minute in heaven.

Each one felt the other in an internal, visceral level, as if the presence of each one were direct carved in their souls, rebuilding them from the scraps in a deep and dense level, heavy and light at the same time.

“Dean ... Oh, Dean...”

Castiel whimpers the name feeling his sweaty hair being dragged out of his forehead with Dean kissing him there. Grunting, Dean embraces the nurse and doesn’t move an inch, savoring his presence, his smell, his everything.

And while still inside Castiel, Dean can only wonder, though reluctant against such thoughts, what will happen now. If this union is certain, if he will be able to stand firm, because there are so many things that afflicts him, there are so many wrongs, to simply think that Castiel can be plucked from him again, or that he might hurt the nurse. Dean’s worries for what tomorrow can bring, and—

"Dean."

Castiel calls in a exhausted voice, gazing at him in the midst of his delight, but still answering all the unspoken questions Dean has stamped on his face. And absorbed by the blue cosmos of Castiel’s eyes, Dean erases the one thing he is sure he does not want in his memory: he expunges any inquiry, because they were trivial and unimportant.

It was enough to know that Castiel was his, as Dean also belonged to Castiel.

"Cas ..."

He mumbles the name in an arid tone, still I half disbelief of how fucking luck he is. Dean wanted to cry again, but instead he begins to kiss Castiel, tasting his addicting flavor, sucking, as he said he would, the life that he needed to feel alive from Cas.

Let the world burn.

Let him go to hell for all of what he did.

But please, oh please, do not take him away from the arms of this man.

(...)

The sheets moved around their bodies as Dean entangled himself even more in Cas, resting his head on the nurse’s chest. His scalp tickled with the tip of Cas’s fingers running on it. Sleep is coming fast in each stroke Cas gives on the top of his head, until they stop over the scar on the left side of his skull. The nurse follows its line ‘till behind his ear, going back on the same path as if
tracing the way it was carved into the flesh.

“Does it hurt?” he asks softly.

“Itches a little, but it’s nothing unbearable.”

“Do you want me to stop?”

“No.”

Castiel chuckles, going back to the task of scour his head. Dean didn’t like people messing with his hair, but Castiel can dig his hands on it and he would never find the will to reprehend him.

Almost falling back to a trance, Dean looks at the clothes at the floor seeing one of his jeans there. In a jolt Dean opens his eyes and remembers something, cursing himself for not thinking about it earlier. Twisting his head in a search for the right pair of pants he leaves the bed, feeling a cold chill on his spine and shivering a little, but as soon as he has what he wants in hands he runs back to the mattress with Castiel chuckling as he warms Dean by rubbing his hands over Dean’s body.

“What’s the matter?”

The nurse asks, but Dean remains quiet, somehow seeming flushed.

“I found something on a raid.” he says not looking at Cas.

“What is it?”

Dean doesn’t raise his head when he lifts a closed fist in front of Castiel, bit by bit opening the fingers, showing the reason for such mystery. He gulps, for Cas doesn’t utter a word, and Dean thinks he screwed up, that this was too stupid.

Long minutes passes by with no one risking to move or make a sound, so he daren to stare at Castiel, finding his blue eyes in a shock mien towards his hand – lips parted in an expression Dean is sure he never saw on the man before. Only now Dean breathes, cupping with his other hand Cas’s jawline. This wakes the nurse from his state of astonishment, bringing his gaze to meet Dean’s.

“Is this…” Castiel whispers, pointing to his palm.

Dean only shrugs, shifting on the bed.

“It Reminded me of you.”

“It… Made you think of me?” Castiel blinks.

“Yes. I know it’s stupid—”

“No.” Cas cuts him, putting his hand over Dean’s “It’s not; but mostly, are you sure about it?”

Green eyes come up to deeply stare into the small uncertain in Castiel. Snorting, Dean grabs one of the rings and puts on his finger without hesitation, and then he kisses Castiel hard on the lips, sucking his tongue with a deep breath. Cas is almost dizzy from it once Dean stops to clasp his mouth on his temple, snuffling the dark hair.

It’s all the reasons and more Castiel needs. He takes the other ring, fitting it on his finger. It’s a little tight, but who cares? He can’t seem to remove his gaze from the jewelry, but his distraction
isn’t enough to make him not hear what Dean mumbles next.

“…Don’t know if I deserve any of this, but still…”

Castiel shuts him up with a Kiss.

“Think this way if you must, but know that no matter what, you have me Dean. And to keep it like that I will expect your better efforts to have me here, with you.”

This wasn’t some kind of discouragement. No, not at all. Dean understood exactly what Castiel said in the subtext of those lines, and the crude veracity of it made him shiver. He expects Dean to try, to ever keep fighting. To never give up whether it’s over Castiel or himself. Cas will stay right here making sure Dean doesn’t act like a pussy again, as some kind of coward who prefers to create a thousand excuses, seeking the easy way out instead of just accepting the only true thing that the war taught them so far: if you want something, you have to fight for it until your last breath and more.

Castiel will be there, just on the side of his bed, on every corner of his life making sure he pushes Dean over the edge, and in response Dean will never fall, he will always come and grab for something new and dangerous, something that challenges him to do his best.

He can’t resist the urge to kiss the nurse again, stealing his tongue to his mouth, and making this day one of his most sacred memories. Of the day he decided to at last fight back.

“You saved me from myself, Cas.”

Dean says in a pure conclusion, resting his forehead on Cas’s. The nurse let his breath out, unhurried and low.

“Dean…”

“…You really did.”

Castiel runs his hands up Dean’s pecs, entangling them around his neck.

“I guess we’re each other’s saviors, then.”
Epilogue

Dean comes outside of their cabin and already knows where Castiel is hidden. The nurse can say anything about his stubbornness, but Cas can be such a child for not wanting to be in bed. Smiling a little, Dean walks in the middle of the night with a blanket under his arm and marches towards the car graveyard they had near the parking lot. Some machines are left here in case they need a replacement, or maybe to try to make one of these old beauties in four wheels to work again.

Is on the hood of the best car Dean has ever seen there, an Impala 67, that he finds Castiel.

The nurse said once it was the best place to watch the sky. Dean wishes he was able to find enough pieces to reconstruct the car and maybe show Castiel what was like to drive in it, but unfortunately they can’t spend what they find on his pure selfish wish.

Without making his presence audible he takes the blanket and puts it around Castiel, who doesn’t even flinch, merely staring at the night sky, murmuring a ‘thank you’ to Dean and wrapping one hand around the blanket.

“You’re supposed to be resting.” Dean says, somewhat amused.

“But you’ll sit with me anyway.”

Castiel pronounces as Dean watches him with his arms crossed looking at Cas’s back, or better: the light of the moon that darkens him. The shadows engulf Cas, and all seems like a painting, so far away and distant. Dean sits beside him on the hood, getting under the blanket as well, with his shoulder pressing on one another.

“There are starts on the sky tonight.” Cas says leaning his weight on Dean.

He looks up following Castiel’s gaze, and indeed he can see it: thousands of bright points there, just making what stars do, shining between the dusk night.

“It’s been a while since I saw stars.”

Comments Dean, remembering the dream from that day they spent over the impala hood, kissing, loving one another under a sky with thousands of the minuscule bright things. And now he is the one unable to focus on something else that’s not this surprising view. Indeed, it has been so long since the sky looked so… Peaceful.

“They have always been there behind the bomb clouds, though, just waiting to appear again.” Castiel blinks, cuddling his head on Dean’s shoulder. His eyes seem concentrated on counting how many starts are there, when he takes in a deep breath.

The bombs, Castiel says. Sure thing they haven’t heard or knew about explosives being dropped in any place near. But still, there was no reason to believe they were really free from all the fighting. It’s never this easy.

“We’re here alongside chaos.” Dean comments after some thinking.

“We’re here despite chaos.” Castiel corrects him.
The nurse keeps gazing at the stars and the wilderness those tiny lively dots on a dark sky convey. It makes him feel suddenly small, but also makes him remember that even under those darkest days there are always starts on the sky, waiting to be found and to shiny upon those poor souls on a shattered world.

“The stars… It’s like a remembering.” He mutters, cuddling his head on Dean’s shoulder.

“Of what?” Dean asks.

“Of what we’ve lost in the past…” Cas breathes in loudly “They exist through millennia’s in the space, just watching us. They’ve observed the rise of humans, and also our fall in war after war, from ancient times to present days. But they also saw that we persisted, that we’ve found on one another the strength to keep going. It tells us the need to weld on each other for sustenance, something to keep moving forward.”

“We’ve always had to fight for something, even before the war.”

There’s no answer, just the glow of distant freckles on a galaxy of possibilities reflecting on blue eyes.

“In any other time or place, do you think we could’ heve met?”

Dean holds air in, pondering over Castiel’s words. Today he seems so nostalgic and thoughtful – more than usual.

If the war wasn’t there to bring them together, what would have become of Dean? He can see himself living on a house, having a family and maybe a decent job. He can also picture Castiel as a badass doctor on a hospital, doing some important shit. Their lives would be quite different, for them to even cogitate meeting.

“Maybe.” Answers him, and that’s the best he can do without engaging in a hurtful talk.

“Just maybe?”

Dean shrugs, not knowing what to say anymore. It seems wrong to think that they wouldn’t wake on the same bed, had the same smell to remember one another on a scent, but still having a distinguish perfume. Dean likes to smell the top of Cas’s head. It’s always so clean and has the fragrance of soap. He’d miss that smell every day.

“I would’ve find you.”

Castiel looks at him, but Dean is staring at the stars.

“I’d met you, on any other time.”

“No you won’t.” smiling weekly, the nurse doesn’t move, wanting to capture this moment.

“I would.”

“You’d look at me passing by and wouldn’t know me.”

Dean turns to him then, leaving the stars. Cas locks vision with him too.

“We’d be strangers in a monotony world, without the war to bring us together.” Castiel simply declares.
“I’d met you.”

“You wouldn’t.”

“Yes. I’m pretty messed up. I’d end up on a fight at a club, or whatever; needing to go to a hospital, and there would be you, the awesome, hot nurse to mend me.”

Castiel finally chuckles, and Dean comes closer to him, squeezing his shoulder just a little.

“I would find you, fight for you, love you, because this entire universe os stars would conspire for me to do so.”

Love, he says, and Castiel smiles.

“You’re being sappy.”

“I can be sappy just for now.”

Castiel’s lips purses in a thin line, curving up to form a shy smile.

“You’re a good liar, Dean.”

“I’m adorable, and you know it.”

“I sure do.”

“In any other time Cas, it doesn’t matter. War, peace, I’d met you, and we’d be together to fight for one another.”

“In any other time… Or place.”

“Yes”

“You’d be with me?”

“As long as I could have you.”

“Forever, then.”

Dean smiles at him, kissing his forehead, then his nose, taking time to kiss each cheek, and finally his mouth, savoring the amazing flavor and texture of Castiel’s tongue over his.

“You’re promising this much, uh?” Dean says in a sassy voice, smacking another kiss “Don’t regret it later.”

Castiel lets his hand cups the other man’s jaw. The small shiny of the silver ring glowing on his finger while he strokes Dean’s face tenderly.

“Never.”

~End~
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