Snowbound

by KreweOfImp

Summary

After a particularly harrowing near-miss in the library, Sam, Cas, and Dean have finally managed to figure out how to fully ward the bunker against angels. Now the feathered dickheads cannot poof in or out. That shouldn’t be a big deal, since Cas can just appear right outside the door and then walk in, or leave the bunker and do what Sam resolutely insists on calling “disapparating,” because he’s a fucking nerd.

Nobody accounted for the eight feet of snow.

Notes
This piece falls several weeks after the events of *Cumulonimbus*. Snowbound can be read as a standalone easily, but there are a few minor references that won't make sense to you without reading Cumulonimbus first.

This is only the second piece of fanfic I've ever written, so feedback is not only welcome but craved. Don't be shy. Let me know how I've done, but I should apologize in advance if you hate it, because I’m having so damn much fun that I’m unlikely to stop any time soon. Edited 7/7/17: I still love and appreciate feedback, but please see below for a few guidelines and disclaimers.

Also, I’m taking some serious meteorological liberties here, and possibly a few bunker-layout liberties, so bear with me.

At the moment, I'm planning on a M-W-F posting schedule, but I'm impatient, so if I finish and get chapters beta read early, I'll probably post them early. If I'm late with a chapter, I'll give an update and ETA in comments of the previous chapter.

The smut doesn't really start til Chapter 4, but if you skip right to it, you're gonna miss out on a lot of fun.

Eternal gratitude to *AtYourCervix* and *phaelsafe* for beta reading, ideas, and relentless cheerleading.

ETA this disclaimer, 7/7/17: Sam acts in ways in this fic that are entirely out of character. I admit to shamelessly using our poor Moose for the purposes of cracky ridiculousness and humor. Of late I've had a spate of commenters who are loudly expressing their disapproval of the way in which I wrote this behemoth of absurdity. While everyone is absolutely free to feel how they'd like about any written work, if you find that you can't stomach Sam going a little (...a lot?) around the bend/that you can't view it in the spirit of groan-inducing hilarity in which it's intended, this may not be the work for you. But please check out some of my other stuff in which Sam behaves, y'know, like Sam.

If you choose to disregard the disclaimer and go ahead with the fic, I respectfully request that you keep in mind that you were warned. Consider this a nice way of saying that I'm done being flamed.
Cockroaches and Cheezburgers

They probably should’ve paid better attention to the weather reports, but for once in their damn lives there was what looked like it might be an actual lull between Armageddons. No, really, it had been four whole days since the last time Dean had had to kill anything, and that had been a cockroach. A normal, boring, totally unremarkable cockroach. The fact that cockroaches could get into a bunker that was warded against the most powerful forces hell could muster seemed to Dean further proof that one of these days, roaches were going to be the real team to beat. When he expressed this opinion to Sam, who regarded cockroaches with only somewhat less trepidation than he reserved for clowns, Sam twitched visibly. Castiel, unsurprisingly, had wanted to keep it:

“Cas, you cannot have a cockroach as a pet.”

“Why not? I find its hardiness reassuring. It seems unjust to kill it. Who knows what trials and tribulations it has survived to make it here, in the dead of winter?”

“Because Sam will move out. Look at him, he’s terrified!” Dean stabbed a finger toward where Sam was cramming himself into the smallest space he could muster (which still took up approximately the same square footage as a small country) in the corner of the kitchen.

“I am not terrified!” Sam insisted, his eyes never straying from the inch-long insect scuttling along the base of the fridge, “I just don’t want thecreepy little bastards anywhere near where I eat. Or sleep. Or—you know what? Fuck you.”

“You see? He’s gonna have a panic attack. You can’t keep it. We’ll get you a kitten or something.”

“Sam,” Cas assured him earnestly, “I promise I will keep Curtis away from your bedroom and the kitchen.”

“Oh, for the love of—you named him?” Dean inhaled a long, cleansing breath. “I’ve gotta nip this in the bud, before you build him a little habitat.”

As Cas opened his mouth, no doubt to start telling Dean about the floor plan he’d already drawn up for Curtis’s dream home, Dean strode across the kitchen and flattened Curtis with one heavy boot.

Sam was pathetically grateful, and Cas sulked for two days, skulking in dark corners of the bunker and muttering under his breath in Enochian, until Sam introduced him to icanhascheezburger.com. Sam was the one who generally kept abreast of the internet in general, including weather reports, and, as he informed Dean from the doorway of the kitchen (he refused to enter it since Curtis’s appearance and untimely death) while Dean fixed a sandwich, he hadn’t seen his laptop in the last 48 hours.

“Next time you traumatize him, we’re hooking him up with cuteoverload.com on your laptop,” Sam told him, only half joking. “It’d be a mercy. Your browser might weep with gratitude at a reprieve from porn.”

Dean narrowly dodged stepping on the tiny monument Cas had built to Curtis. It was dominated by a small star of David crafted out of popsicle sticks (Cas insisted, for no reason Dean could figure, that Curtis had been Jewish) surrounded by tiny blue flowers that Cas had rustled up from God only knew where. He’d probably stepped outside and made a special trip to the Vatican’s botanical gardens or something.
“It’s not my fault he becomes weirdly attached. Would you rather I let him keep Curtis? By now he’d probably have found the little guy a mate, and in a month we’d have 10,000 tiny roaches swarming the place.” Sam paled noticeably and beat a hasty retreat. Dean, skirting carefully around Curtis’s memorial (because Cas hadn’t even slept in his bed the last three nights, let alone put out, and Dean wasn’t aiming for another sexless week), finished making his BLT.

Cas, presumably, was too busy occupying himself with poor-grammar-prone cats to worry about anything like a weather report, and Dean was four and a half seasons into a Netflix binge of Cake Boss and still going strong, which left no time to troll the local news.

Nevertheless, for guys who prided themselves on keeping the world safe, it was a little sad how oblivious they were to something that pretty much everyone within a radius of about 100 miles in every direction was talking about.

By the time they figured out what was going on, it was way too late.

On his way to get a late afternoon snack between episodes (the Cake Boss was gonna make a real working elevator cake!), Dean noticed the shadow of snowflakes falling outside the bunker, which wasn’t a huge surprise. It was, after all, January in Kansas. By the time he returned to the kitchen four hours later (because Sam, still boycotting the room, had bribed Dean into making him a sandwich with the promise of a pie run to Dean’s favorite bakery later), it was too dark to see anything outside the massive windows.
Chapter Summary

Somebody probably should have checked the weather reports.

Dean finally fell into bed around 3 and was roused barely 4 hours later by a cry of surprise from the library. He was on his feet, gun in one hand and machete in the other, halfway down the hall before he was really awake. He came around the door to the library in a crouch, ready to strike out at the threat. Instead of any number of nightmare scenarios, he found Sam and Cas side by side, both facing the wall of windows. Sam’s jaw was hanging open about half an inch, and Castiel’s head was tilted inquisitively. Letting his weapons drop to his sides (but not relinquishing them) he spun to face the window. His own jaw joined Sam’s.

No light shown in through the entirety of the lower set of windows, and at least six inches of the higher. They were entirely swathed in…something. For a heart-stopping second, Dean was sure it was demon smoke, surrounding the bunker. He almost immediately discarded the thought—the quality of the barrier was entirely different. A second later, his brain caught up with his eyes, and he put it together.

“Holy shit, is that…?”

“Snow,” Sam confirmed.

“That…can’t be right. It’d be like…ten feet or something.” Dean recognized the same dim-witted shock in his own voice that he heard in Sam’s.

“Eight,” Castiel finally spoke up, and then amended, “and seven inches.” Even he sounded a little dumbfounded.

“Yeah, those seven inches really make all the difference,” Sam scoffed, but it was half-hearted at best, his eyes still trained on the windows in stunned stupefaction.

It was so easy; Dean couldn’t believe he didn’t go for it. Sam had thrown the door wide open, but Dean was so busy trying to wrap his brain around the 8 feet and 7 inches of snow outside their window that he let the opportunity slide by.

Cas manfully picked up the slack, “I believe,” he intoned thoughtfully, “that more than once, seven inches has made all the difference in the world to your brother and I.”

“Oh my God,” A spark of vigor came back into Sam’s eyes as he twisted his head to look at his brother, “look what you did!” He stabbed a finger toward the angel. “You ruined him.”

“No,” Dean corrected with unconcealed pride, “I schooled him in the ways of awesome. That was…that was goddamn beautiful, Cas. You have never been sexier.”

The angel waved this praise off with humble good nature, while Sam gagged ostentatiously.

The trio lapsed back into silence for a moment, still gazing upward.
“So.”

“Yeah.”

“How…I mean…wouldn’t we have heard about…?”

“When’s the last time either of you checked the weather?” Dean cut off his brother’s spluttering.

“Cas hasn’t let me near my laptop in two days.”

“Cas?”

“I do not generally concern myself with terrestrial weather patterns, except when they serve as demonic omens.”

_Or,_ Dean added silently with an internal shiver, _when you’re learning how snowball fights work._

Cas slanted a gaze toward him with the barest hint of a smirk lurking in the corners of his eyes, as if he knew what Dean was thinking. He probably did. Sam pulled him out of his reverie, his tone exasperated.

“And you’ve been ass-deep in the Cupcake Mafia or whatever, so—“

“It’s called Cake Boss, and it’s awesome, okay?”

“—so,” Sam forged ahead as if Dean hadn’t spoken, “you certainly haven’t been investigating the weather.”

“That’s _your_ job!”

“If _someone_ hadn’t traumatized Cas, maybe I would’ve had access to my laptop, and—“

“Perhaps,” Cas interrupted mildly, “we should remedy our oversight now? I believe I have determined definitively that they no can has cheezburger. You may have your laptop back, Sam.”

Dean stifled a snicker as Cas vanished back through the door Dean had recently come out of and returned moments later with Sam’s computer.

Sam set it down on the long table, hunching over it. A second later he grunted in what Dean recognized as half-amused dismay. Dean came around the table, nudging Sam slightly to one side to get a look at the screen. Sam hadn’t even gotten as far as his preferred weather site. Instead, the home page of the New York Times was up, huge letters splashed across it declaring, “RECORD-BREAKING BLIZZARD BLANKETS MIDWEST.”

Dean couldn’t hold back his snort. Apparently, they were the last ones to know. Clicking on the article, Sam scanned it, reading aloud as he went.

“Already forecast to break records with over five feet of snow in several Midwestern states, the third major storm of the winter, named Curtis—“

Dean managed with great effort to restrain himself from snorting again in amusement at the startled look on Cas’s face.

“—shattered expectations, bringing more than eight feet of particularly wet, dense snow in some areas of northern Kansas and southern Nebraska. The governors of six states declared preemptive states of emergency on Wednesday afternoon and cautioned residents to plan to stay indoors for
several days. With more than 24 hours of whiteout conditions expected and temperatures forecast to drop into the negatives, classes were cancelled at thousands of public and private schools, college campuses deserted as all non-residential staff were sent home. FEMA released a statement…” Sam trailed off, skimming the rest of the article in silence, then stood back up, swiveling his head back around to face the window.

Dean was sure the dismay on Sam’s face was reflected on his own. He loved snow, but despite his hedonist tendencies, he had to admit that it was possible to have too much of a good thing. Nothing daunted, Castiel (who, to be fair, had never lived through a vicious snowstorm in a crappy motel room with unreliable heat), gazed up at the window and inquired brightly,

“Snowball fights, then?”

Sam grunted. He still hadn’t forgiven Cas or Dean (which was patently unfair, since he’d had nothing to do with it) for his impromptu trip to Manhattan, KS several weeks ago. Dean, who felt a little squirmy at the memory, stepped in to disabuse Cas of his aspirations toward snow warfare.

“I don’t think we’re gonna be able to do that, Cas.”

“More rules I am not familiar with?”

“Not exactly. This is more of a logistical issue.”

“I do not understand.”

“Okay, come with me.” Engaging the safety on his gun, Dean set both weapons on the long library table and snagged the angel’s hand to tug him up the stairs. A moment later, Sam followed. When they reached the door to open the bunker, Dean disengaged the locks and pushed at the door with one hand. Ordinarily, this was more than enough to swing it open. This time, nothing happened.

Sam stepped forward next, placing both of his hands on the door and leaning in to press against it with all of his strength. The door twitched what couldn’t have been more than two millimeters and then settled back again. Eyes narrowed in dawning realization, Cas waved Sam aside and pressed one calloused palm against the very center of the door, drawing on his strength and pushing. The door shuddered and a crack of about half an inch appeared, snow immediately squeezing through the tiny gap like toothpaste from a tube.

“It will not open,” Cas observed. Dean resisted breaking out ‘No shit, Sherlock,’ because that particular phrase still mystified the angel, merely nodding in confirmation. The braniac yeti beside them spoke up.

“It’s the weight, Cas. That much snow is heavy, and this was expected to be particularly wet snow, extra dense, and there’s at least 8 feet of it. Probably more, because the door is in a depression. There’s gotta be more than 160 pounds per square inch of weight against that door, and the pressure only increases as you try to open it, because you’re packing the snow even more densely.”

Dean tuned Sam’s explanation out, grabbing a bit of the snow that had squeezed through the miniscule crack in the door and hefting it.

“Jesus, this stuff is solid. Remember that time in the Berkshires, when I practically knocked you out with a snowball because the snow was so wet? This is worse.”

Sam reached out to grab his own small handful and whistled lowly.

“Oh, yeah. None of us are going anywhere.”
“That’s okay,” Dean assured him, “if we need anything, Cas can—oh. Oh shit.”

“Caught up, have you?”

There had been a particularly near miss in the library a few months back, when an angel with a vendetta managed to wrangle the bunker’s location out of a pizza delivery guy (Dean was devastated at the realization that he had to stop ordering take out) and showed up in the library. Since then, and with no small effort, Sam and Cas had worked relentlessly to figure out a way that the bunker could both be shielded from angel eyes and be what Sam liked to call “apparition proof,” because he was a fucking nerd, ensuring that angels could neither appear nor disappear within the walls of the bunker.

They finally figured out the appropriate combination of sigils and spells a couple weeks ago. Cas tested it by trying to zap out of the library and found himself unable to do so. Sam had tried to teach him a secret handshake in celebration, which resulted in two broken lamps and a near-miss with the power grid of the entire eastern seaboard. After wringing a promise from Sam never to try to teach Cas anything ever again, and assuring Cas that really, it could’ve happened to anybody, Dean had largely forgotten about the new protections. Life had gone on basically as usual, except that when Cas wanted to come and go he had appeared directly outside the door to the bunker, or stepped outside to disappear. Sam happily referred to the upgrades as a “Fidelius charm.” At this point, Dean informed him in no uncertain terms that if he didn’t stop borrowing from Harry Potter, Dean was going to shove Sam’s collectible Dumbledore wand where the sun didn’t shine.

“Does this mean,” Cas said uncertainly, “that we are trapped?”

It occurred to Dean that, even though he was certainly not crazy about being penned in, it wasn’t the first time—and at least he was safe, warm, and with people he trusted. For Cas, though, this had to be a new and uncomfortable experience. He wasn’t used to being confined, particularly not on earth, when his grace was fully intact.

Sam, with an uncharacteristic lack of sensitivity, spoke up first.

“Well. Could be awhile, too. We’re looking at over a week of subzero temperatures, and it’s not like anybody’s gonna be bringing a snowplow to clear out the doorway.”

“Is there no contingency plan?”

“I guess we could check the Men of Letters’ records,” Sam said doubtfully, “but I don’t remember seeing anything about plans for a snow emergency. I think they figured that the place was more than well-stocked enough to sustain people down here for indeterminate lengths of time. Lucky for us, they’re not wrong. There’s no way we’re gonna lose power—”

Unless, Dean thought, you decide to try to teach Cas a cheerleading routine or something.

“—and even if we run out of perishables we’ve got plenty of emergency food supplies.”

“I am sure I could send more than enough heat through the door to melt the snow,” Cas suggested hopefully.

“I’m not sure that’s a good idea,” Sam responded a little more gently, starting to catch on to Cas’s discomfort. “You might damage the sigils and warding on the door, and even if you succeeded we would eventually end up with about three feet of solid ice blocking the door once the water froze back up.”

Cas mulled this in silence for thirty seconds or so before conceding, “I cannot guarantee that I could leave the protections on the door unharmed with the amount of heat it would require, and the
protections are more vulnerable on this side of the door than the outside. The Men of Letters did not intend the warding to keep people in, only out.”

“Yeah, I think we’re here for the duration,” Dean agreed, settling a hand on Cas’s back and rubbing it in soothing circles, “but we’ve got two laptops, the entire internet—including Netflix—a sauna, warm clothes, lots of food, and,” he added, nearly as an afterthought, “a whole hell of a lot of books. I think we even have a pretty good collection of board games around here somewhere. We’re actually in about the best possible place to be snowed in. We’ll just call it a vacation. We can make it a lock-in. It’ll be fun.”

Cas looked puzzled. “It is not the locks that are the problem, Dean. The issue is the volume of snow.”

“No, I know, Cas, a lock-in is—you know what? Never mind, it’s not important. The point is, we’re safe and warm, and we’re going to be fine.”

“Yeah,” Sam piped up, clearly starting to get into the idea, “think about it. We get a real break and don’t even have to feel guilty about it.”

“See?” Dean told Cas, wrapping an arm around his shoulder and pulling him in for a squeeze, “it’s going to be okay. No harm done, except that Sam now has a reprieve on getting my pie from Pat-a-cake.” Whatever, it’s not like he named the bakery, and their pie was really damn good, “As soon as we’re out of here, Sam, you’re back on the hook. In fact, you can damn well bake me one.”

“No way in hell,” Sam said grimly, “I am going anywhere near that kitchen.”

“Oh, for the love of—they’re like an inch long, Sam, what the hell do you think they’re gonna do to you? I haven’t even seen another one since Cu—since the last one,” Dean hastily corrected himself, since Cas still looked like someone had kicked his puppy when Curtis’s name was mentioned.

“It’s not about that,” Sam insisted, “I just don’t like being near—you know what? Fuck you.”

Dean let it slide, mostly because Cas was starting to get misty-eyed.
Dean eventually headed back to bed, dragging Cas with him to prevent the angel from ruminating too much and panicking. By the time they got out of bed for real, it was past 11 and Sam was grumpily eating a squished granola bar he had managed to dig up from someplace. Feeling generous, Dean ventured into what Sam now referred to as “the hive” and cooked up a mountain of scrambled eggs and hash browns. Sam cheered up pretty quickly after devouring two platefuls, and Dean even managed to convince Cas to eat some scrambled eggs, although he observed mournfully that they tasted too molecular to be really satisfying.

Dean talked Cas into joining him for a few episodes of Cake Boss that afternoon, and by the time evening rolled around, Cas could be found back in the library, excitedly describing to Sam a cake that the bakery had made in the style of St. Basil’s Cathedral in Moscow. Sam was rolling his eyes so ostentatiously Dean thought there was an even chance they would roll right out of his head and across the library, but Cas was undaunted.

Faced with the possibility of being stuck in the bunker with two companions obsessed with what he continued to stubbornly refer to as “Cupcake Mafia,” Sam took to research. Dean was passing through the library on his way to make popcorn around 8:30 when he heard the gleeful cry that always heralded Sam’s lightbulb moments. Pausing on his way to the kitchen, he turned to Sam and quirked an eyebrow in question.

“I can’t believe we didn’t think of this before! We can just break the angel warding temporarily. Now that we know how to do it, it won’t take nearly as long to set it back up. It’s basically just reversing what we did to set it up. We should still have all the ingredients we need,” Dean grimaced, trying to ignore the slight sinking feeling in his stomach, and Sam plowed on, oblivious, “and it’s a fairly simple ritual. We do that and wipe out one or two sigils and Cas can pop in and out to his heart’s content. Even take us with him.”

“Oh, I’m not sure that’s a good idea, Sammy. For the sake of safety, we should really leave the warding in place. We put it there for a reason, and breaking it just for convenience seems risky.”

Sam scoffed.

“Look, we’ve only had one incident, and we can probably even find a way to break the wards in only one room and just make sure to have extra protections around the room.”

“I really think it’s a reckless plan. I can’t go along with this.” Dean was working hard to make his voice neutral of anything but concern, but Sam knew him way too well.

“Since when are you the cautious one? I’m not going to do something that will risk all our—wait a minute. You’re hiding something.”

“What? Don’t be stupid, I just think it’s a bad idea. I don’t want to put us in danger.”
“No, you’re definitely hiding something. Fess up.” Dean hovered on the edge of maintaining a plausible deniability gambit, but Sam had the look of a dog who’s latched onto a bone and has no plans on releasing it, ever. Cas picked this inopportune moment to poke his head around the library entranceway to find out what was taking Dean so long, doubling Dean’s audience.

“Okay, fine. You, uh, remember that one dried herb you used for the final sealing ritual? The one that kind of looked like—”

“Dean, you didn’t!” Sam looked like he was torn between horror and unwilling amusement.

“IT even smelled like weed, what the hell do you expect? And—you were done with the ritual, and I heard you say you’d never heard of any spell before that used it.” Dean tried for reasonable, but was pretty sure he just sounded a little whiny.

“I cannot believe you smoked our spell ingredients!”

“There was no way to know we might need it again. I was bored!” Dean insisted defensively.

“Does someone,” Cas interrupted, “wish to explain to me what is happening?”

“Dean,” Sam stabbed an accusatory finger at him, “smoked any chance of us getting out of here before the snow melts.”

“Oh my God, how the hell was I supposed to know we’d be trapped in here and randomly in need of—whatever it was? You said it was easy to come by!”

“Turnera Diffusa. It’s called Damiana, and if you’d looked it up you would’ve known the only psychotropic properties it’s supposed to have are—oh. You did look it up,” Sam accused.

“Come on, how do you expect me to restrain myself when it smells like weed and it’s supposed to be an aphrodisiac?”

Cas’s eyes were rapidly bouncing back and forth between them, as if he was watching a particularly interesting tennis match.

“That’s it, you’re officially banned from the room the ingredients are in.”

“That’s not fair!” Dean protested, “what were the odds that this was gonna happen?”

“What were the odds that 90% of the shit that happens to us was ever gonna happen?”

Dean could hardly fault Sam’s logic.

“It seems to me,” Cas said mildly, “that we have neither gained nor lost anything. We are exactly where we were this morning, yes?”

“Yes,” Dean said forcefully, “Sam’s just being a bitch.”

“You can forget your pie,” Sam told him severely.

“That’s not fair!”

“Dean,” said Cas patiently, “I will obtain a pie for you. Sam,” he turned to the irate sasquatch, “we will get more Damiana as soon as the snow has melted. As you said yourself, we are perfectly safe here in the meantime.”
“Fine,” Sam groused, “but absolutely no more Cupcake Mafia.”

“Fine,” Dean grumped, “but Sam still owes me a pie when he gets over his bitchfit.”

Just to be a dick, Dean spent the rest of the evening loudly watching Cupcake Wars.
Wake Up Call

Chapter Summary

Cas is the best alarm clock ever.

NOTE: Chapter-specific tags and warnings posted in note at the end of the chapter (for this and all chapters that contain smut)

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Generally, unless there was immediate danger lurking, Dean liked to wake up slow. He enjoyed the feeling of drifting toward wakefulness a little bit at a time, and was never pleased when a sudden threat—or pretty much anything else—jerked him wide awake in a heartbeat.

There were, however, certain exceptions.

Sudden awareness came upon him the next morning. He was lying on his left side, right leg bent and resting on the bed. The first thing he registered was the hot, hard length pressed between his bare cheeks. Somehow, Cas must have managed to get his boxers off while he slept. His awareness expanded to the warm, solid weight of Cas plastered to his back, pressing kisses to the nape of his neck. Cas must have heard Dean’s intake of breath, because a second later his lips moved against Dean’s skin, murmuring with quiet authority.

“On your stomach. Don’t speak.”

Dean wasn’t honestly sure he could have put words together, but he didn’t feel inclined to try. He rolled forward to settle on his belly, and Cas shifted atop him smoothly, his nose sliding down Dean’s neck to his spine, then over to his right shoulder blade. Dean drew in a breath through his nose when Cas nipped him sharply. The low command came a moment later, followed immediately by another nip to the other shoulder blade.

“Hands above your head. If you move them, I will not be pleased.”

Dean obeyed immediately. What had started out as reflexive morning wood was rather more than that, now, and he shifted just slightly to feel the friction of the sheets against his cock. Cas huffed out a silent laugh that said he knew exactly what Dean was doing, but he let it slide.

“I’m going to fuck you now. You can come any time you like, but you will do it without me touching your cock. If you cannot come untouched, you will not come at all.”

Jesus Christ. Dean exhaled sharply, his groin twisting with heat. This was a hell of a way to wake up.

Cas’s weight lifted from him briefly. Dean made a low whine of protest, and Cas chuckled.

“So impatient. Don't tempt me, or I might take you dry.”

That settled Dean rapidly. He didn’t, on occasion, mind a rough ride, but it was way too early for
The sound of Cas slicking himself up made Dean’s cock twitch in anticipation, and his fingers twisted in the sheets, catching a good grip to help him resist reaching back to guide Cas back down to him.

What with one thing (Curtis) and another (icanhascheezburger.com), it had been almost a week since he and Cas had fucked, but the soft mewl Dean made when he felt the head of Cas’s cock nudge at the ring of muscle between his cheeks was not one of protest at the lack of prep.

Cas didn’t drive in all at once, but he didn’t take his time, either. With a smooth, steady press of his hips, he breached Dean and slid in until he bottomed out.

It was a tight fit, and Dean was panting by the time the angel’s hips were flush against his ass. Although there was ample slickness to ease Cas’s passage, the burn of the intrusion was intense, a deep pleasure-pain that drew a pulse of precome out of Dean.

Cas gave him only a few seconds to adjust before he began to move, slow and smooth, rolling his hips steadily as he licked a path across Dean’s shoulder blades, occasionally pausing for another nip. Dean’s cock rubbed against the sheets with each thrust, the friction delicious but not quite enough. He wondered fuzzily whether Cas was doing this on purpose, giving him just enough to stimulate but not enough to satisfy. It wouldn’t be the first time Cas deliberately left him shy of orgasm, taking his own pleasure without permitting Dean to come. As torturous as it was, it was always followed by such mind-blowing sex later that Dean had to concede it was generally worth it. That didn’t, of course, mean it didn’t drive him crazy in the moment.

Opening his mouth to demand or maybe beg for more, Dean remembered the warning not to speak at the last second, and instead released a wordless whimper, drawing another low laugh out of Cas.

“Something you’d like, Dean?” Dean was pretty sure the question was rhetorical, especially since he’d been instructed not to talk.

“I was thinking,” Cas mused, continuing to slide in and out of Dean at the same steady, too-slow pace, “you smoked the Damiana and didn’t even tell me about it. Seems a terrible waste, not to take advantage of an aphrodisiac.” Something about Dean’s silence must have given him away, because Cas let out a slightly surprised laugh. “Is that so? You did take advantage of it, you just did not tell me.” There were a few moments of silence as Cas puzzled it out, and then he huffed another laugh. “Ah. That night you dragged me out to the Impala. I thought you seemed particularly desperate.” Cas drove in a little more roughly, and Dean thought he was finally going to step it up, give Dean enough to really get off on, but he immediately slowed back to his previous, steady pace.

“That was very naughty of you, Dean. Keeping such a secret from me.” Dean knew what was coming next and couldn’t quite suppress the moan that was 10% protest and 90% anticipation. “I think you will need to be punished.” Dean twisted his head from side to side, not in negation, but in desperate need for more. Punishment could mean a hundred different things, not the least of which was Cas revoking his permission to come. “But that can wait until later.” Dean huffed out a relieved breath and then grunted as Cas shifted the angle but not the force of his thrusts, so that the head of his cock rubbed in a too-light tease against Dean’s prostate with every pass.

Dean was gasping, little breathless whimpers escaping him at each thrust, and Cas drew it out interminably, for what felt like hours but was probably no more than ten minutes. The angel had mind-boggling stamina, a fact which he often exploited to impressive effect.

Finally, at the moment when Dean felt like he might actually burst into tears from the frustration of
so-good-but-not-enough, Castiel’s pace kicked up almost imperceptibly. Dean found himself rocking his hips back in uncontrollable demand. Cas’s teeth came down at the nape of Dean’s neck in wordless warning. Dean made a sound of protest but forced his hips back down to the bed. Cas rewarded him by picking up the pace another notch, by driving in just a little bit harder. Dean could feel the wet patch beneath his dick expand as another spurt of precome was wrung from him. He could hear the angel’s breath speeding, and feared that Cas might come without ever giving Dean enough stimulation.

He needn’t have worried. Although it was sometimes fun for Cas to deny Dean, that did not seem to be on this morning’s menu. The pace and force of Cas’s thrusts continued to increase, and Dean buried his face in his pillow, biting down on it to muffle his cries.

“I love this, Dean. You, spread out under me, speared on my cock, desperate to speak, to move, to beg, to come, but knowing you’ll get only what I give you.”

Cas was well aware of what his dirty talk did to Dean. Really, it was a gift. His filthy mouth, growling in Dean’s ear, had more than once made the difference, pushing Dean over the edge. Today would be no different.

“Do you know what it does to me, waking you up like this? Easing your boxers off, sliding up behind you. That gasp when you come awake and realize what is happening, what is about to happen.” Dean was pretty sure he wasn’t breathing, mostly because he had forgotten how to use his lungs. Everything, his entire awareness, was focused on the cock impaling him, working him open, punching against his prostate with each sharp thrust.

“Later, I am going to bend you over my lap and spank you until your ass is so red it glows. And then I’m going to fuck you, start your spanking all over, except it’ll be my hips spanking your ass while I take you.”

Forget it. That did it. Dean’s hole spasmed around Cas as the climax pulsed through him, come spilling out of him and soaking into his bedsheets. Cas held himself back, driving Dean through the climax and into oversensitivity, refusing to give in to his own pleasure until he could hear Dean’s whimpers go breathy. Then he, too, followed Dean over the edge.

Sam had really remarkable timing, because while Cas was literally in mid-climax, a perfunctory knock came at the door, followed by Sam’s voice and the creak of the hinges as the door cracked open.

“Hey, Dean, are you planning to come out anytime soon? I’m starving, and I was thinking maybe panca—Oh Jesus Fucking Christ.” Dean couldn’t see, but he imagined that Sam’s head had retreated back out the door within seconds of poking in. He certainly heard the door slam hard enough that it rattled, and the sound of Sam retreating at full speed down the hallway.

Cas came to a stop a few seconds later and rolled off of Dean, who finally detached his aching hands from the sheets and snorted.

“Serves him right, coming in here without waiting for permission. He ought to know better.”

Cas made a sound of agreement and leaned over, brushing his lips across Dean’s shoulder lightly.

“Good morning, Dean.”

“Mornin’, Cas.”
Chapter Warnings:

Consensual sort-of somnophilia, Dom!Cas/sub!Dean, coming untouched, mention of spanking, coitus interruptus (sorry, Sam)
Dean and Cas finally made their way out into the library about an hour later. Cas had insisted they shower beforehand, because “going out there smelling of sex would really be adding insult to injury,” and Dean had to acknowledge that he had a point. When they stepped into the library, Sam had his head buried in a book, and resolutely failed to look up for long enough that Cas gave Dean a slight nudge and a pointed look that meant “fix it.” This was just unfair, since as far as Dean was concerned, Sam had traumatized himself with his rampant disregard for proper bedroom-door-knocking etiquette. It took a second nudge from Cas, even more pointed, before Dean cleared his throat and clapped his hands.

“So! You were, uh, saying something about pancakes?”

Sam grimaced slightly.

“I think I’ve lost my appetite—“ Dean didn’t even bother to let him finish.

“Nothing has ever made you lose your appetite, except almost closing the gates of hell. Since I’m pretty sure you haven’t managed to do that again in the last hour, I’m gonna go make pancakes. If you stop sulking, I’ll even put chocolate chips in ‘em.”

There was something to be said for knowing someone as well as he knew Sam. By the time his little brother had demolished three mammoth stacks of chocolate chip pancakes, Sam looked a great deal less grouchy and seemed prepared to let this morning be water under the bridge. Cas helped by insisting that all three of them go together to examine the bunker’s board game collection and demanding a short description of each. Much to Dean’s amusement, he immediately decided that he wanted to play Candyland, and displayed such unabashed enthusiasm for the game that neither Sam nor Dean could bring themselves to tell him that he was actually playing by the rules of Sorry (apparently, sometime over the years, the rule booklets had gotten mixed up between games).

Eventually, Dean sort of got into it, and by the time early afternoon rolled around, the three of them had given up entirely on the official rule book (of either game) and developed an elaborate set of house rules. Cas’s idea to turn it into a drinking game was vetoed because it would’ve taken more alcohol than existed in a 60-mile radius, let alone what they had in the bunker, to get him tipsy. The angel sulked for a little while—he had clearly been hoping to use Sam and Dean’s inevitable inebriation to help him win—but Dean cheered him up with a reminder that a wasted Dean was not a down-for-sexytimes Dean (Sam slapped both hands ostentatiously over his ears at this discussion and flatly refused to remove them until Dean threatened via a complex series of gestures to actually start the sexytimes immediately). Eventually they settled on 26 rules which included having to pour a circle of salt and stay in it for one round upon landing in the fudge area, and the option of dousing
oneself in holy water rather than travelling backward more than four spaces. A couple hours in, Sam and Cas got a little overcompetitive, and after a particularly bitter round of bickering that included threats of holy oil use (Sam) and promises of smiting (Cas), Dean ‘accidentally’ overturned the board to prevent permanent injuries.

The game was abandoned by mutual agreement in favor of lunch, and Dean headed to the kitchen (“You mean the hive,” Sam insisted, shuddering) to whip up his signature bacon mac and cheese (“Still just tastes like molecules,” Cas told them sadly). After eating enough to sustain a small, clueless militia, Sam trooped off to his bedroom to change his shoes—he had inexplicably managed to lose one at some point during the game—and Dean and Cas were left to their own devices. Dean was wrestling with Netflix on his laptop, trying to figure out how to get it off the “Cerebral Foreign Dramas from the 1950s” list of recommendations (Sam had somehow managed to get it stuck there sometime this morning, presumably getting his revenge for the Cupcake Wars incident), when Cas strolled up behind him, hands in his trenchcoat pockets, and rested his chin on Dean’s shoulder.

Dean turned his head just enough to brush his lips across the side of Cas’s forehead, eyes still on the laptop, smiling at the angel’s low, contented hum. Cas watched Dean fumble with the recommendation screen for several minutes until he finally closed out his browser with a grunt of frustration, resolving to threaten Sam into fixing it later.

“I think Netflix is out for the moment, unless we hack Sam’s account, and he probably has the same recommendations up, since he actually watches that shit,” Dean grumbled, planting his hands on his hips. A second later, Cas slid his hands out of his own pockets and through Dean’s arms, wrapping them around his waist and turning his head to nuzzle his nose into the crook of Dean’s neck. Dean leaned back against him, lips quirking affectionately. A moment later, Cas drew his head back just far enough to press his lips against Dean’s cheek with something Dean recognized as purpose.

“You know,” the angel murmured, voice deepening, “I was going to give you a pass for today since we’ve had a busy morning, but we do still have the matter of your bad behavior to discuss.”

Dean heard his own sharp inhalation more than felt it, freezing as if the angel who was plastered to his back might suddenly lose track of him.

“My visual acuity is not dependent upon movement, Dean,” Cas observed with quiet amusement. “I am not a velociraptor.”

_I knew showing him Jurassic Park was a mistake_, Dean grumbled internally.

“I believe you were promised a punishment,” Cas mused, “now, what did I say you had earned yourself?”

Dean was sure Cas could feel his heartbeat thundering as he responded with what he would resolutely insist was not a stammer, “I, uh, I don’t remember.”

“Liar,” the still-amused response came immediately upon the heels of Dean’s words, “and isn’t lying what you are being called on the carpet for in the first place?”

“No, it was really omission—not telling you about using the Damiana before we—“ Dean cut off suddenly, realizing the trap he’d been caught in just a little too late. He could practically hear Cas’s smirk of triumph.

“Yes, that’s right. I knew your memory wasn’t quite so poor as you’d like me to believe. Why don’t you tell me what you were promised, before I decide that my sentence must have been too lenient?”
Breath coming quickly as that familiar squirming heat settled into his groin, Dean reluctantly gave in. He could feel the flush creeping up his neck to his cheeks and wasn’t sure whether it was born of arousal or humiliation—he certainly had ample amounts of both at present. “You…said you were going to bend me over your lap and spank me until my ass glowed, then fuck me,” he choked out.

“Ah, yes, I did, didn’t I?”

There was a moment of silence that could have been Cas waiting for a response, but wasn’t. Dean knew a rhetorical question when he heard one. A moment later, Cas slid his arms from around Dean. Dean’s back felt cold with the sudden absence of the angel’s warm body, but he didn’t have long to mourn the loss. When Cas spoke next, his voice was lower, quiet but resonating with the command.

“Boiler room. Now. March.” Dean was generally good at holding his tongue in these moments, but occasionally he forgot himself.

“Boiler room, Cas?”

“Are you trying to make this worse for yourself, Dean?” Cas’s voice was deceptively tranquil. Dean got the hint and marched.

Cas was at his back, a little too close for comfort, giving Dean the sense that he was being herded. Halfway down the second set of stairs that led to the boiler room, Dean realized the wisdom in Cas’s choice of locations, which would presumably spare Sam the noise of what was to come. His groin clenched in nervous anticipation at the realization that Cas fully intended the sounds of flesh striking flesh to be loud enough and last long enough that it would require two full floors and a maze of hallways.

Dean found his steps slowing imperceptibly as he got closer to the boiler room—the thought of punishment never failed to twist him into conflicted knots of wanting and dread—but Cas’s voice sounded, echoing slightly in the dim hallway and causing Dean to start, “Dragging your feet won’t make this any easier on you. It’s only going to make me think you’re even more in need of a reminder than I thought you were.” Apparently the slow-down hadn’t been quite as imperceptible as he thought. He forced his steps to return to their previous pace, shuddering just slightly at the quiet words spoken right at his back, words that always left him so conflicted.

“Good boy.”

What felt like seconds later, the door to the boiler room loomed in front of Dean, and a hand that he realized was trembling ever-so-slightly reached forward to turn the knob. He stepped inside, eyes widening a bit as he realized that at some point, Cas must have been down here to prepare. One of Dean’s own ties hung over the back of a straight-backed chair that was settled directly in the center of the largest clear space in the room. The empty chair loomed large with promises of what was to come, and Dean’s steps drew to a halt, unable to go further without instructions. Cas was more than happy to oblige.

“Strip. Completely. And don’t forget to fold everything neatly.” Now that was just mean. Making Dean fold his clothes neatly was just another way of ramping up the tension, increasing his anticipation. Occasionally, Cas would even decide he hadn’t done a good enough job and make him refold his clothes. Dean couldn’t restrain himself from the mutter that escaped him.

“Sadist.” Cas chuckled in low promise.

“Mmm, yes, a bit. As I plan on demonstrating shortly.” The full-body shudder that escaped Dean
must have been visible, because Cas released another low laugh as Dean started to unbutton his flannel shirt with slightly unsteady hands. He became aware of the brush of fabric from behind him, as well, and found Cas shrugging off his trenchcoat, folding it over twice before setting it aside. Dean shrugged off the flannel and folded it as neatly as he was able, placing it on the floor before pulling the t-shirt under it over his head.

The air in the boiler room was slightly warmer than that upstairs, the hot water heater raising the temperature by several degrees. Dean took a moment to be grateful that Cas had picked this room rather than any of the other rooms down here, which tended to hold onto a chill. As he set his folded t-shirt on top of his flannel and toed his boots off, Dean noticed that Cas had also shrugged off his suit jacket and was now rolling up his sleeves with a precision that belied the general disarray of his usual wardrobe. Cas always did this prior to ‘punishing’ Dean, and it never failed to produce the desired response. His heartbeat kicked up another notch as he worked his jeans down over his hips and set them beside his shirts and neatly lined up boots. His socks followed, folded into a ball and stuffed into one of his boots. The floor was cold against his bare feet, sending gooseflesh pebbling up his legs. Cas finished with his sleeves and stood, hands clasped behind his back, gazing at Dean like a stern professor as Dean hesitated with only his boxers left to remove.

“It’s not,” Cas mused, “as though you will be showing me anything I haven’t seen and made extensive use of, Dean.” Dean could scarcely fault his accuracy. “Off, now, before I think you’re asking for me to use your belt.” Dean was pretty sure it was an empty threat. The belt came out with extreme rarity, and only with Dean’s explicit consent ahead of time. It was a little more hardcore than their usual games, and Cas was very clear before their scenes that he never wanted to do anything that Dean didn’t love (despite his frequently conflicted feelings about how much he loved the things they did get up to). Nevertheless, empty or not, the threat had its intended effect.

He stripped his boxers off, letting them fall to the floor and stepping out of them. Cas’s eyes glittered greedily as Dean bent to pick them up, folded them, then turned and again bent to place them atop his folded jeans. Every now and then the angel moved like a goddamn ninja, because suddenly, before Dean could rise, Cas was right there, his hips—still swathed in his suit pants—flush against Dean’s bare ass. Dean could feel how rigid Cas’s cock was through the layers of clothing, and it was oddly reassuring to know what this was doing to the angel, how much he, too, got off on this. Cas didn’t thrust his hips, merely gripped one hand firmly around Dean’s hip and held him there a moment, bent over, a reminder of what he had to look forward to if he could only get through the next little while. A calloused palm settled between Dean’s shoulder blades and slid smoothly down his spine. Somehow it managed to be both threat and reassurance, and Dean was never able to figure out how Cas managed to transmit two such disparate things with one simple touch. Then, as quickly as he had come up behind Dean, he was gone again, and Dean heard the creak of the chair as Cas settled himself into it. Dragging in a slow, calming breath (that only half worked), Dean stood again and pivoted to face Cas. Any efforts to claim he didn’t enjoy this, didn’t want what was coming, were belied by the rock hard, leaking length of his cock jutting upward.

Dean stood for a moment, caught in indecision, needing the push of Cas’s command to move forward. Cas was only too happy to oblige.

“You know exactly where I want you. Don’t make me tell you again, Dean.”

Chapter End Notes

Tags: D/s, discussion of (consensual) punishment & prelude to spanking
Boiling Point

Chapter Summary

In which Dean and Cas get down to business, and Dean is made sorry for his lie of omission. Sort of.

AKA: The chapter in which your author discovers that she is entirely incapable of writing short smut scenes, and thus gifts you with two chapters today, instead of one.

(Chapter-specific warnings, as ever, located at the end)

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Dean’s cock twitched a little as he paced the several steps forward on bare feet to stand at Cas’s right side. He’d once tried going to the angel’s left side, figuring that if he bent over that way, Cas would be using his non-dominant hand and wouldn’t hit quite as hard. Cas had figured out instantly what he was up to, with that uncanny not-quite-mindreading ability he had to understand Dean’s motivations (often better than Dean did himself), and had paid him back for it with an ass so sore that Dean had to come up with at least 20 excuses, each weirder than the last, to explain his unwillingness to embark on a particularly long trip in the Impala.

Cas nodded the go-ahead to Dean, and without any further reasons to delay, Dean slowly stretched himself out over the angel’s lap. Once he got halfway there, Cas rested a hand on the back of his neck, guiding him into place. A few seconds went by as they settled themselves more comfortably (insofar as it was possible for Dean to get comfortable sprawled across Cas’s lap). Once they were both in place, Cas’s voice drifted down to Dean, clinically inquisitive.

“So. Do I need to tie your wrists, or are you going to be a good boy? I’m more than happy to make this easier for you. Choose wisely, because you know perfectly well that if you try to cover up, I will be extremely displeased.”

Dean wrestled with himself in silence for a few seconds. The angel was not wrong, that sometimes binding his hands was a kindness, preventing him from having to focus on keeping his hands away from his-ass-turned-Cas’s-canvas. The problem was, if he wanted it, Dean generally had to ask for it. Explicitly.

“I…” Dean struggled to drag the words out of himself, and finally, in desperation, drew his hands behind himself and crossed them at the small of his back, in the clearest invitation he could muster without words. Cas took pity on him and let it slide, this time.

“Very well.” Seconds later, his own tie was being wrapped thrice around his wrists and tied off, binding them snugly together. Cas shifted Dean’s position just slightly, adjusting his balance since with his wrists bound, Dean was now unable to manage it himself. When the angel’s voice next emerged, there was a softness underlying it, a nearly worshipful undertone that reminded Dean of what a gift it was, to be so adored, to be so safe with someone, that he not only allowed but yearned for this.
“Beautiful. Absolutely beautiful.” His hand ghosted over the flesh of Dean’s ass so lightly it could almost have been imagined, mapping out his canvas with the feather-light touch.

Dean settled more deeply into Cas’s lap at the words, the gentle touch. He could do this. He wanted this. And Castiel knew it. The voice that came out of the angel next was an entirely different one, nearly a growl.

“You’re going to be begging me to fuck you by the time we’re through, Dean.” He didn’t doubt the truth of it.

The next thirty seconds seemed to go on forever, as Dean held his breath, waiting for the inevitable smack of Cas’s hand against his ass. It didn’t come, and eventually Dean had to release the breath as his head started swimming. That exhaled breath was Cas’s signal, and the hand Dean had been expecting fell with a crisp smack onto his right cheek. He jerked slightly, pressing forward against the angel’s thigh, no doubt smearing precome on those suit pants. Cas waited only a few seconds before beginning in earnest, the smacks falling quickly but no less sharply for all that. Dean didn’t generally try to keep count, but he was pretty sure at least twenty hard spanks had fallen on his ass before Cas paused. Dean was not foolish enough to think they were anywhere near done, but the angel allowed him a brief respite to catch his breath, lightly ghosting his fingernails across the pinkening flesh laid out before him.

Dean could feel his cock pulsing in time with the light throb of his ass, and realized he was grinding against the angel’s thigh, seeking friction against his hot, hard length. He could feel Cas’s own erection poking at his belly, and, no less solidly, the weight of the angel’s eyes resting on his ass, the curve of his back, all of the flesh laid out for him. Dean could sense that his warm-up was done, and knew what happened next.

The next phase of his punishment involved a thorough ‘discussion,’ (such as it was) about the misbehavior that had led to this. Of course, sometimes they ended up in these positions without the excuse of correction, and then Cas had fun making up truly absurd infractions. Dean’s favorite had been the time Cas had delivered a firm lecture on Dean’s failure to say “Amen” after his exorcisms. He wasn’t entirely sure how the angel maintained a straight face some of the time, but Cas somehow managed it with aplomb.

“You know,” Cas said conversationally, “it occurs to me that there’s a reason you didn’t inform me of your plans to smoke,” the smack of his hand across the meatiest part of Dean’s ass came as a surprise this time, and he jumped a bit, wrists pulling lightly at his bonds, “Sam’s and my spell ingredients.” He followed this up with another smack, then paused thoughtfully.

“I think you knew perfectly well that I would have questioned the safety of your actions. Imbibing a substance that was virtually unknown, that might have had,” Cas punctuated the next two words with a sharp smack each, to emphasize his point, “unforeseen consequences,” Dean drew in a breath and spoke up to defend himself,

“No, Cas, I looked it up first, it—“ Cas’s hand fell hard, five times, at the sensitive place where Dean’s thighs met his ass, cutting him off and leaving him gasping.

“Did I ask for your explanation, Dean? The fact that you would continue to try to excuse your actions tells me that you are clearly not learning your lesson. Hold your tongue.” Whoops. With a sinking feeling, Dean recognized his own misstep. Of course, the angel knew already that Dean had looked it up—that’s how he’d known it was an aphrodisiac. Cas was making a point, and he didn’t appreciate being derailed. Dean paid for his momentary lapse as Cas settled to his task, hand rising and falling with metronomic regularity, not a single millimeter of Dean’s ass escaping his diligent attentions. What had to be another twenty smacks later, he paused again, rubbing the flat of his palm
across Dean’s cheeks as Dean panted and tried to stop squirming.

“Now, where was I?” Cas continued to rub Dean’s cheeks, soothing the sharp sting but setting in the very beginnings of a deeper ache that would remain long after the spanking had ceased. “Ah, yes. You know perfectly well how I feel about your tendency to ignore your own well-being in favor of executing any number of reckless plans.” His hand reached down to spread Dean’s thighs, earning a low groan as Dean recognized what was coming. “Had you told me about your idea ahead of time, I might have stopped you, and you believed, as you have so many times told me, that it is easier to seek forgiveness,” his hand fell twice, once on the tender flesh of each of Dean’s inner thighs, earning his first true sound, somewhere between a grunt and a whimper, “than permission.”

He left his hand between Dean’s thighs for a moment, sliding his fingers across the underside of Dean’s balls before he moved them further upward, ghosting across his perineum and then further up, to probe perfunctorily between his cheeks, lightly pressing just a moment against the furled knot of muscle that they both knew would accommodate him soon enough. Dean released a bone-deep shudder, unable to hold back the roll of his hips against Cas’s lap, seeking greater friction on his almost painfully hard cock. Cas stopped him with the pressure of one bruising hand around his far hip, and then continued, voice thoughtful.

“It seems to me that I will just have to ensure that achieving forgiveness is a great deal more painful—“ A particularly harsh flurry of slaps fell again at that sensitive area where Dean’s thighs met his ass, “—than merely seeking permission might have been,” Cas concluded. It took Dean a second to catch up as he caught his breath from the latest round of smacks, and when he did, his ass cheeks tightened involuntarily for a moment. “Ah ah ah,” the angel admonished with a smile in his voice, “none of that, now.”

Dean didn’t even pretend not to know what Cas meant. He simply forced his muscles to relax again, leaving him draped loosely over the angel’s lap to await the next stage of his comeuppance. He was rewarded with Cas’s left hand, gently carding through the hair above the nape of his neck. It grounded him, helped him to remember why they were doing this, how fully he trusted the angel at whose mercy he had placed himself. Dean felt himself sink a little further out of his own mind and into that place in which he simply felt, in which he just existed, free of overthinking and second guessing. Cas, as always, must have sensed this. He let his hand slide down slightly, resting against Dean’s spine, between the arms that were pulled back to the spot at which his wrists were bound. Leaving his hand to rest there, anchoring Dean, Cas drew back his right hand and went to work. His palm fell over and over, crisping the skin of Dean’s ass, working him over from top to bottom and then back again.

Cas preferred length over force, so he never hit Dean nearly as hard as he could. This was not to say that there was no heft behind the smacks, they were just not so hard that a prolonged spanking would leave him deeply bruised. On a good day (or, depending upon one’s definition, a bad one), Cas could deliver several hundred smacks before he was satisfied, and somehow he knew exactly what force to use in order to leave Dean’s ass bright red and stinging but unbruised, with a deeper ache that would settle in as a timely reminder of the spanking for several days thereafter. It was kind of a problem, actually, because Dean found himself getting hard pretty much every time he sat down or accidentally brushed his rear against something too firmly. It made him feel like a teenager, skulking around, carrying unnecessary books or bags around with him to hide the evidence of his unwanted arousal. Cas always took great satisfaction in watching Dean squirm, going out of his way to ‘accidentally’ brush against Dean’s ass on his way past with great regularity. Mostly, Sam was oblivious, but occasionally he would start throwing the two of them suspicious looks, as if he was trying to puzzle out what was off.

Putting this out of his mind (if only because Sam was the last thing Dean wanted to think about in
mid-erotic-spanking), Dean closed his eyes and sank into sensation completely. The mild strain of his shoulder muscles at the angle they were held by his bound wrists. The brush of Castiel’s suit’s fabric against his belly and cock. The cool tile of the floor against Dean’s tiptoes (the only part of his feet touching the ground). The feel of the cool air his harsh panting dragged into his lungs. And, of course, the progressively more intense stinging, underlain by a deeper throbbing, as Cas continued to work his magic.

It seemed to go on forever, and Dean floated in it. He didn’t know when it had happened, but realized at some point that his hips were rising to meet each smack as he sprawled wantonly over Cas’s lap, and that a deep, sensual moan was flowing steadily from his own mouth. The smacks did not stop, but slowed perceptibly, as if Cas knew Dean was approaching his limit. Dean fell back into sensation briefly, startled out of it only when he heard his own voice in a wanton, desperate whimper.

“Please, oh God, Cas, please, please, Cas, please.” He realized that at some point, the spanks had ceased to fall, and Cas’s hand was simply resting across what Dean could feel was the swollen, brilliant red flesh of his ass. He began to rub, then, his hand easing the sting and deepening the throb. Dean loved them both, but it was that bone-deep throbbing that really sang to him. His hips writhed restlessly against Cas’s lap, which was wet from the combined leaking of their cocks. That thought—their precome mingling as it soaked into Cas’s pants, one from outside and one inside, practically broke Dean. His pleas finally broke off on a wordless groan, and Cas’s voice floated down to him, impossibly gentle but unbending.

“What, Dean?” Dean didn’t consider or plan the words. He made no conscious decision to speak, he simply heard it as it fell from his lips.

“Please fuck me.” Cas never made him wait, once he finally gave in and begged. Today was no different. Dean felt himself lifted to his feet and discovered, somewhat to his surprise, that they held him easily, if a bit unsteadily. Cas stepped away for a few seconds and then returned, dropping his own folded trenchcoat on the floor in front of the chair. Cas nudged him the few steps to stand in front of the chair and then placed a hand—his right hand, which Dean realized was just as red and swollen as his own ass—on the nape of Dean’s neck, pressing him gently to his knees, then bending him forward until his torso rested across the seat of the chair, still warm from Cas’s recently vacated ass. The tie that held his hands at the small of his back was released suddenly, and Cas lifted Dean’s arms in his own, placing them upon the chair’s seat alongside his torso, wrapping his hands around the vertical slats in the backrest. Dean’s fingers gripped the wood eagerly, grateful for something to hang onto. A moment later, the tie that had just been freed from around his wrists came around his head, hovering a few inches in front of his mouth. Cas’s voice, soft, murmured in his ear.

“Yes or no, baby?”

Dean liked being gagged, sometimes, but Cas was never willing to do it without express consent right beforehand. Dean caught in a breath and nodded once, hard. Yes. He needed this. The tie immediately came down, pressing into his mouth until he bit down on it. He felt Cas tie it around the back of his head, then whisper in his ear.

“If you need me to stop, let go of the chair rungs.” Dean registered what this meant. Not only did he have a nonverbal safeword, he also had a mandate to keep his fingers clutching the chair, if he didn’t want Cas to stop. And he already knew he didn’t want Cas to stop.

Cas waited until Dean nodded acknowledgement before he drew back. Dean heard the sound of rustling cloth that had to be Cas removing his pants. Without conscious planning, he found himself spreading his knees, drawing his back into a deep arch that pressed his ass upward and outward
toward his lover.

Since it had been barely six hours since the last time they fucked, Dean didn’t really require prep, and Cas took advantage of it. The slick sound of lube was the only precursor to the feeling of a cock poised at his hole. Dean made a soft, needy sound through the gag, and Cas pressed in with steady, insistent pressure, just an inch or so, then back out. Dean’s muffled whine of protest at the withdrawal made Cas chuckle once, and he pressed in again, this time an inch further, then back out. Twice more, he tortured Dean with penetration that wasn’t deep enough or hard enough. Only on his fifth entry did he give Dean what he wanted, surging forward until he bottomed out. His hips pressed flush against Dean’s ass (which, Dean imagined, must indeed be glowing), earning a grunt from deep in Dean’s chest. His own sounds and the way they were muffled by the gag only turned Dean on further, and he knew without a shadow of doubt that neither he nor Cas would last long.

At times like this, the sex didn’t feel like it was what they had been working up to. It was nearly an afterthought to the piece of music they had been composing together, a coda. Necessary to the shape of the piece, but not the point, not the main event.

Cas let Dean adjust for a good 15 seconds before he moved, and when he did draw back it wasn’t far. He rode Dean fast and close, making sure with each thrust his hips jarred against Dean’s ass, reigniting the sting in it. He leaned forward, so his chest—now bare, Dean noted, his shirt unbuttoned so the sides brushed against Dean as he moved—was plastered to Dean’s back, his lips right at Dean’s ear, voice barely a whisper.

“Can you feel that, baby? Am I waking your ass back up? This is what I promised you. Your second spanking, courtesy of my hips, with my cock buried in you. This is what you begged for. Here it is. All for you.”

That was all it took. The mental picture he painted, what Dean knew he must look like, his sore, red ass impaled on Cas’s cock, rocking forward and backward with each thrust—honestly, Dean was almost grateful Cas hadn’t touched his cock. It would’ve simply been too much.

Dean was too lost in the seconds leading up to his climax to really register the sound that came from the hallway behind them. Cas must have been more with it, because Dean did register that the angel had suddenly frozen solid.

Later, Dean would muse that there were at least a hundred ways it could have been avoided. If Dean hadn’t been gagged, surely his sounds would’ve served as a warning. If Cas hadn’t somehow managed to accidentally shut off the hot water heater when he came down to set up his scene. If Sam had waited just ten minutes before deciding to shower. If. If. If. It didn’t really matter, because the blizzard that had struck outside was not, apparently, the only perfect storm happening hereabouts.

In any event, Sam’s voice, grumbling irritably, along with the creak of the door, broke over them just as Dean’s ass finally convulsed around Castiel’s suddenly motionless cock and he shot his load all over the underside of the chair.

“Fucking…ancient hot water heater. If we end up with cold showers for the rest of—OH DEAR HOLY LORD NONONONONO NOT AGAIN!”

For the second time that day, the slam of a door was followed by the sound of Sam rapidly fleeing what he had unwillingly witnessed. This time, Dean was pretty sure Sam was still shouting denials as he ran. Dean could practically feel Cas’s shrug as he decided that the damage was already done, and there was no point in ruining a perfectly good climax. With three more quick thrusts, Cas’s cock pulsed, emptying inside Dean’s still clenching ass. Cas had the presence of mind only to untie the
gag from around Dean’s head before he wrapped his arms around Dean’s middle, resting his head against Dean’s bowed back as they both fought to catch their breath.

From somewhere above them, Dean was pretty sure he heard Sam swearing.

Oops.

Chapter End Notes

Warnings/tags: Consensual spanking, light bondage, tie kink, gagging, seriously unintentional voyeurism (sorry again, Sam)
That moment when aftercare includes trying to coax your traumatized brother out of his room.

Does it seem to anyone else like things have been peaceful for a suspiciously long time?

By the time Dean and Cas muddled their way upstairs, Sam had vanished into his room and was blasting something that sounded like Enya. Dean was pretty sure this constituted cruel and unusual punishment, but Cas flatly refused to allow him to go demand that Sam either turn that racket down or switch it to real music.

“I believe,” the angel said thoughtfully, staring at Sam’s door, “Your brother may need some space.”

From out of the room a voice bellowed over the music, “I WILL STAB ANYONE THAT COMES NEAR THAT DOOR! I HAVE SEEN MORE THAN ENOUGH OF YOU ASSHOLES TO LAST A LIFETIME.”

“You’re probably right,” Dean allowed to Cas, and let himself be led down the hall and back to the kitchen as Sam started singing along with Enya.

Cas poured him a glass of juice and insisted that he drink the whole thing, hovering over him like a hawk-eyed mother hen. While he was generally quite good at aftercare, he tended to adopt a persona that Dean could only describe as ferociously nurturing. A decade ago he’d have said those two things were incompatible, but Cas had a particular skill for effortlessly merging apparently disparate things with mystifying ease.

Dean allowed Cas to make him a peanut butter sandwich (as if he could stop him) and ate it under the angel’s watchful eye, then let Cas drag him back to his bedroom, where he settled on the bed and gathered Dean into his arms. The angel was careful to keep Dean on his side in deference to his ass, which was somehow managing to both smart and throb at the same time. Dean made a token show of grumbling about the coddling, as ever (he had to reclaim his macho cred somehow, after being spanked and fucked into next week), but Cas let it roll off his back without bothering to respond, one arm wrapped firmly around Dean, his other hand carding through the hair at the back of his head.

The fingers in his hair had approximately the same effect on Dean as a heavy mallet to the head, and he melted comfortably into Cas and was out inside of two minutes.

He woke up hours later, still cradled warmly against Cas, coming back to awareness with slow languor. Cas’s cheek rested comfortably against the top of Dean’s head. It lifted when he heard Dean’s breath change, and the angel’s lips brushed against his forehead tenderly. Dean always felt so warmly loved it nearly made him squirmy at the knowledge that Cas had held him and watched over him for the hours that he slept. Still sleepy enough to get away with it with his man cred intact, Dean nuzzled his face into the crook of Cas’s neck affectionately, squeezing his arms more closely.
around him, remaining there for several minutes as his mind sharpened back to full wakefulness. Cas returned the squeeze before letting Dean roll away from him to stretch. Not for the first time, Dean didn’t register the continued throb of his ass until it was sharply reignited by firm contact against the mattress. He hastily continued to roll until he could push himself upward off the bed, trying to pretend he’d been planning to do that all along. The knowing grin on Cas’s face and the way the angel’s eyes raked over him in self-satisfied possessiveness told him the charade had been entirely in vain, so Dean abandoned it, reaching a hand down to rub the abused area lightly. Cas’s grin widened slightly, and what came out of his mouth next was not surprising.

“Let me see it.”

“Come on, Cas, I—“

“Now, Dean.” The angel’s voice deepened easily into command, and (as he so often did) Dean found himself powerless to resist. In an attempt to keep hold of the somewhat tattered remnants of his pride, Dean responded with as much dignity as he could muster.

“Fine, but only because I want to put on sweatpants.” That much, at least, was true. Once he and Cas had gotten through the initial post-scene haze of endorphins, they had set themselves languidly back to rights, which included Dean somehow easing his boxers and jeans back up over his swollen ass. What with one thing (Sam) and another (the bone-deep, exhausted satisfaction that followed a really good scene), Dean hadn’t bothered to change before melting into a puddle on Cas’s chest. Now, he remedied the oversight, gritting his teeth as he unfastened his jeans and carefully slid them and his boxers down over the curve of his ass, turning his back to Cas to allow him to inspect it. A hand settled onto his upper back, gently pressing forward to bend him slightly at the waist, allowing the angel a better vantage point from which to examine his handiwork.

Dean was not entirely surprised by the feather-light graze of fingernails across the swell of his cheeks, but it still drew in a sharp inhalation. He knew Cas wasn’t actually trying to start something, merely appreciating the intense sensitivity of his erstwhile canvas, and Dean didn’t try to fight him on it, just sinking back into the echo of the scene that the touch reignited. Cas’s pleased voice settled over him like a blanket.

“It’s a shame you can’t see it. Still so red. We will have to check before bed tonight; I’ll wager it will still be pink. Some of my best work, if I do say so myself.” Dean hid a grin at the evident pride Cas was exuding.

A moment later a hand came to rest lightly upon Dean’s shoulder, giving him permission to stand back upright, before Cas brushed past him to open a drawer and pull out a pair of Dean’s sweatpants, along with a pair of boxer briefs so soft they were one of the few things that wouldn’t exacerbate the deep ache that had settled into his rear.

Dean took the offered clothing with a nod of thanks and put them on, wondering aloud as he did, “Do you suppose Sam’s unbarricaded himself yet? He’s gotta get hungry sometime, and since he won’t go into the kitchen, he sort of has to interact with us if he’s planning not to starve.”

“I suspect,” said Cas, “that at this point it would not be unreasonable to leave a tray outside his door. I rather imagine we do not top the list of people Sam is anxious to see at present.”

It went against the grain for Dean to coddle Sam like that when he wasn’t actually sick or injured, but he had to acknowledge that Cas had a point. If he’d come upon Sam with some guy balls-deep in his ass twice in one day (Oh, Jesus. He shuddered at the mere idea, immediately finding his empathy for his brother sharply increased) he would want days to try to scrub the image from his mind.
“Yeah, that’s probably a good call. I’ll heat up some of the bacon mac and cheese for him. Maybe even make him some garlic bread as a peace offering.”

“Cookies probably would not do any harm, either. He seems quite partial to your oatmeal chocolate chip.”

Dean sighed deeply and nodded, comforting himself that at least he, too, would have cookies when he was done.

They headed back to the library and then the kitchen, Dean noting that Sam was indeed still holed up in his room. Enya had been replaced by something else that Sam likely thought was soothing, but Dean found frayed his nerves more than an actual cheese-grater might. He set to work whipping up the cookies, starting on the garlic bread as soon as they were in the oven. He waited until the first batch of cookies were cooling to put the garlic bread in the oven, since garlic-flavored cookies seemed a poor way to butter Sam up. Once he was done, he heated up a small mountain of bacon mac and cheese, then added three thick slices of garlic bread and a pile of five warm cookies to the tray. Just to prove what a good brother he was, he followed that up with a glass of soda and three fingers of whiskey (which he doubled upon further reflection, suspecting that if Sam hadn’t already broken out the good stuff, he almost certainly would not say no to a little bit of blissful intoxication). He sent the angel to deliver the tray while he cleaned up. Cas returned to report that while Sam refused to actually interact with him, by the time Cas got down to the end of the hall to return to the kitchen, his door had slid open just far enough to slide the tray in before slamming shut again.

Peace offering managed, Dean took a third batch of cookies out of the oven and popped the fourth and last batch in, snagging himself a cookie that was still a little too hot to eat comfortably. He hummed contentedly to himself, savoring his own baking skills and wondering whether he could successfully fix his Netflix recommendation screen so that he and Cas could watch a movie.

As it turned out, he couldn’t change his recommendations. Cas actually seemed excited to watch a Cerebral Foreign Drama from the 1950s, so Dean went with it and let him pick one out. They settled together back onto Dean’s bed, snuggling up. By the time they were about halfway through, Dean had to admit the movie wasn’t actually terrible despite the need to read subtitles (which always annoyed Dean, since he got too absorbed in reading them to really watch the nuances of actor’s facial expressions). They ended up watching another one afterward, although Dean swore Cas to secrecy about the fact that he had not only watched but actually enjoyed the movies.

By the time the second movie was done, Dean was starving again, so Cas accompanied him to the kitchen for a late night snack of an omelet and a handful of cookies. Dean noted that the pile of cookies, which he had left on the library table in case Sam came out so he wouldn’t have to enter ‘the hive,’ appeared to be diminished by at least 1/3. Cas seemed heartened by this evidence of Sam’s emergence, however briefly, from his room.

After demolishing his snack, Dean brushed his teeth and he and Cas returned to his room and settled in for the night. Cas insisted upon examining his ass again, with no less self-satisfaction than the last time, and Dean was again unable to keep his eyes open long enough to do more than pillow his cheek on Cas’s chest before he was gone.

~*~

Dean slept for a solid nine hours, still marveling at the luxury of being able to do so, and woke alone in his bed to the smell of coffee permeating the bunker. Sitting up gingerly and discovering that the lion’s share of the deep throb in his ass had abated overnight, Dean shuffled down the hallway toward the kitchen, wondering whether Sam had not only deigned to come out of his room but had actually screwed up his courage enough to re-enter the kitchen for the first time since Curtis’s
appearance. He found Sam settled in a chair in the library, sipping a mug of coffee and reading the news on his laptop. In deference to his suspicions that Sam did not want to discuss yesterday’s incident(s), Dean padded past, pouring himself a generous cup of coffee in the kitchen before he returned to the library and settled down across the table from his brother.

“Anything going on worth knowing about?”

“No particular supernatural crises as far as I can see, but everyone’s having a hell of a time digging out after the blizzard. Lots of roofs have been collapsing under the weight of the snow, and people are having heart attacks right and left while shoveling. They’re saying it’ll be two weeks before things really start moving again in the hardest hit areas, and even then things won’t really be back to normal until it melts off.”

“Any word on when that might happen?”

“No for the next ten days, at least. We’re still looking at another four or five days of temps below zero, and after that it’s only gonna warm up to the single digits.”

Dean gave a low whistle, shaking his head.

“Should we be worried that there’s some kind of supernatural cause behind the blizzard?”

“No unless you think excessive fossil fuel use is demon-driven.” Not anxious to get Sam started on the topic of climate change (which he felt very passionately about), Dean hastily changed the subject.

“Hey, where’s Cas?”

“I’m not sure, actually. He wandered off sometime after I talked him through making coffee.” Dean narrowly resisted rolling his eyes. That explained how there was coffee despite Sam’s refusal to venture back into the kitchen.

“Dude, you know that at some point you’re gonna have to go back in there or risk starving.”

“Those…things and I have an understanding,” Sam told him with dignity, “I acceded the kitchen to them, and they stay the hell out of everywhere else. And the least you can do is feed me, given what you’ve put me through in the last 24 hours.”

Dean let the latter slide, but absolutely could not resist poking fun at Sam for the former.

“What, did you call a conclave? Send diplomatic envoys? Negotiate a treaty?” Dean was aware he should probably stop, given that Sam was actually speaking to him again, but come on.

“Laugh it up, jerk,” Sam grumped at him.

“You know none of us have actually seen a single one since Curtis. It’s possible he was just a—“

“A scout,” Sam told him grimly, “And one of these days, when he doesn’t return, they’re going to send in the cavalry.”

“Has anyone ever told you that you have an overactive imagination?”

“Has anyone ever told you that you’re an asshole?”

“Many people,” Dean told him cheerfully, “but I figure they just have lousy taste. Do you think we should be worried about what Cas is getting into?”
“Frankly, as long as whatever he’s getting into isn’t you, he can carry on as far as I’m concerned.”

Dean snickered and pushed back from the table, stretching and snagging his coffee.

“I’m gonna go make breakfast. Gotta keep my strength up for another day of traumatizing you.”

Sam grunted, and Dean marveled at how much he managed to convey wordlessly. This particular one was his you’re-not-nearly-as-funny-as-you-think-you-are grunt, for instance, and he had a wide range of others which included if-you-don’t-shut-up-I’m-gonna-throw-shit-at-you and can’t-you-see-I’m-trying-to-research-here.

Dean made for the kitchen, huffing out a laugh as he noted that Curtis’s monument appeared to be growing. The newest addition was a miniscule teddy bear that Cas had dug up from God only knew where. Somehow he managed to whip up eggs, bacon, and a stack of toast without trampling the memorial, and carried two heaping plates back out to the library, setting one in front of Sam and flopping down into a chair with his own.

He and Sam were just finishing up second helpings when Cas reappeared, carrying several smallish, battered-looking boxes and looking excited.

“I thought perhaps we could start the day with another board game or perhaps a jigsaw puzzle,” he told them happily. Dean hid a grin in his cup of coffee and Sam looked up from his laptop screen, lips quirking.

“I can think of worse ways to spend the day,” Sam allowed, slightly grimly.

“Oh, come on,” said Dean, “how the hell could anyone have predicted that you would go to the friggin’ boiler room of all places?”

“Well, if you hadn’t turned off the hot water heater—“

“So! I have brought three games,” Cas interrupted, setting the boxes down on the end of the table and sorting through them, “and two jigsaw puzzles.”

“No puzzles,” Dean vetoed immediately, “they make me cross-eyed and the pieces always get lost.”

Sam looked a little crestfallen—of course the geek loved puzzles—but recovered admirably.

“So what are our board game options, Cas?”

“I thought ‘Sorry’ seemed redundant, given that Dean was already made very sorry last—“

"Okay," Sam interrupted hastily, “so what did you take out?”

“This one is called Parcheesi, there’s one called Scrabble—“

“Absolutely not,” Dean piped up, “it’s like a massacre. I already know Sam wins, we can skip the actual playing.”

Sam sighed sadly, and Cas went on as if Dean hadn’t spoken.

“—and the last one,” he paused, squinting at the cover, “It must be very old, the cover is hard to read, but there’s something here about risk?”

“Risk!” Sam said excitedly, “I’ve heard about it but never played. It’s like this strategy game where you try to—“
“I think,” Dean interrupted, turning back to Cas, “We’re playing Risk. Sam might cry if we don’t.”

Cas set the other boxes aside and opened that one, unfolding the board and starting to set up the pieces. Carefully opening the rule booklet, which was so old that the corners were crumbling, he narrated as he went.

“It appears that we each get game pieces which we move around the board based on the rolls of—“ he paused to dig through the box, then triumphantly pulled out a wooden die, “—this.” He paused, “It calls it a die?"

“Yeah, it’s the singular of dice in older English,” Sam told him, “Nothing sinister.”

Looking reassured, Cas went on.

“And based on where we land, we sometimes draw…” He dove back into the box, poking around before he came up with a stack of yellowed cards which he placed at the center of the board, “…a card. The first one to reach the end of the board wins.”

“Sounds pretty straightforward,” Dean nodded, “That’s sort of the formula a lot of board games are based on.” Sam’s brow was slightly knitted, and Dean raised a brow at him, “What’s eating you, Sammy? I thought you wanted to play?”

“That doesn’t actually sound much like Risk, I don’t think.”

“You said you’ve never played, right?” Dean said reasonably.

“Well, no, but—“

“And this looks like a really old version, right?”

“Well, yeah, but—“

“So maybe it’s changed since it was invented, and this is just the older version.”

“I guess, but—“

“Look, we can give it a try and if it’s not fun, we move on to something else, no harm done. Not,” he added hastily, “Scrabble.” Sam still looked a little doubtful, so Dean pointed at Cas, who was practically bouncing with excitement, “Do you want to tell him you changed your mind?”

Sam glanced at Cas and grinned a bit reluctantly. Dean could’ve been a little biased, but he found it hard to resist the angel when he was looking at them with such pleased expectancy.

“Okay, fine, we’ll give it a shot. But if it sucks, I’m gonna say I-told-you-so.”

Later, Dean would reflect grimly that the phrase ‘famous last words’ didn’t even begin to cover it.

Chapter End Notes

Next chapter will likely be up later today, for those who are pissed off at the foreshadowing cliffhanger. It might be a little while before we have more smut, but there’ll be more than enough excitement to make up for it.
Chapter Summary

Always read the rules carefully before agreeing to play a game, folks. Especially if you’re the Winchesters.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Sam and Dean moved down the table to settle on opposite sides of the board, and Cas sat at the end of the table.

“Who will go first?” he inquired brightly.

Sam, without needing to consult Dean, pushed the die toward Cas.

“Why don’t you start, since you picked out the game.”

Cas beamed and, picking up the die, tossed it back onto the board.

A concussion shook the table slightly and rattled the lights in their fixtures. Dean felt his ears pop. He and Cas had both risen from the table and were gazing around them, looking for the cause of the disturbance, but Sam, for once, looked unconcerned.

“Calm down, you guys, I’ve been expecting that to happen.”

Dean, still scanning the room, paused long enough to raise his eyebrows at Sam, who went on.

“There’s 8 feet of snow on the roof. You didn’t think eventually some chunks of it were going to fall off?”

“Must have been a hell of a chunk,” Dean muttered, starting to relax as there were no further signs of trouble.

“Might’ve been an entire eave’s worth—wouldn’t be a bad thing, unless it fell in front of the door, and it’s not like we can be any more trapped than we already are,” he observed philosophically.

Slowly, Dean and Cas settled back into their chairs, and Cas glanced at the die.

“I move my piece,” he lifted a tiny game piece. Dean squinted at it in surprise. It was a little man, but he appeared to be in horrible pain, holding his intestines in with one hand, “Three spaces.”

“Jesus,” Dean muttered, picking up his own piece to inspect it. This one was a woman who appeared to be bleeding from her eyes, “that’s intense. What’s yours look like, Sammy?”

Sam picked up the third game piece and lifted it up close to his nose to examine it.

“Looks like a kid, but its arms have been ripped off. Well, that’s charming.”

Cas, who appeared unperturbed, moved his piece three spaces forward, onto a blank space.
Dean went next, rolling a five and nudging his piece two spaces past Cas’s. Cas glanced down at the space and nodded to the pile of cards.

“That symbol means you draw a card.”

Dean did so, turning it over and squinting to read the ornate script:

“Hunters are my chosen prey / I’ll lead you with me, far away. / If you think I am not real / Just wait, you may be my next meal.”

Blinking, he stared at the card, then looked up at Sam and Cas in confusion.

“What, is that a riddle? Do I need to, like, solve it or something?”

Sam was frowning across the table at the card.

“That,” he said firmly, “is definitely not Risk. What does it even mean?”

“Um,” said Cas, drawing both of them up short, “I do not mean to alarm you, but we appear to have company.”

Both of them swiveled in their seats to look in the direction Cas was gazing. Dean blinked hard, then scrubbed a hand over his eyes and looked again.

“Is that…a chicken?” Sam was staring at it, both brows hovering just under his hairline. Slowly, the creature turned its head to face them. Both of its eyes glowed bright red.

“Holy shit,” Dean breathed, “I think it’s an evil chicken.”

“Where,” Cas inquired, “do you suppose it came from?” Keeping one eye trained on the chicken, which was clucking softly, the three of them glanced back at the board.

“You know, I said this was a bad idea,” Sam complained.

“What do you suppose we do with it?” Castiel asked, looking bewildered.

“It’s not…doing anything. Should we just, like, leave it there?” Dean wondered.

“Perhaps we ought to read the rules more thoroughly,” Cas suggested, scooping up the ancient booklet and frowning at it as Dean grabbed the top of the box, swiping what had to be fifty years of dust off of it.

“Uh. You guys.”

Cas was still squinting at the rules while Sam watched the chicken (which seemed to be trying to get their attention with increasingly loud clucks) apprehensively.

“You guys,” Dean insisted, “This does not say Risk. It says “DANGER: Play At Your Own Risk.”

Sam closed his eyes briefly, lifting two fingers of one hand to lightly rub at one temple before he spoke in a too-controlled voice.

“Okay, that’s fine, we’ll just…stop playing. Put it away—or, you know, lock it away and make sure we don’t go anywhere near it again. And, uh, figure out how to deal with the chicken.” Dean started to nod, liking this plan, but he wasn’t entirely surprised when Cas spoke up to dash their hopes of averting disaster early.
“I do not believe we will be able to do that,” he told them grimly. “The rules inform me that the game must be played to completion, that is, until one of us wins.”

“…or?” Dean asked, turning in his chair to continue watching the chicken, which he could swear was giving him a ‘come hither’ look.

“Or we die,” Cas told him flatly. “Apparently, starting the game effectively places a curse on all participants which can only be lifted by completion of the game. Otherwise all players will die 24 hours after the game stalls.”

Dean opened his mouth to speak, but came up with nothing. Sam was no more loquacious. After glancing between them, Cas sighed deeply and went on. “It seems to me,” he observed, “that we really do not have a choice. We must complete the game.”

“Awesome,” said Dean grimly. “Sam, you might as well go ahead and do it now.”

“I told you so.”

“Now that we’ve got that out of the way,” Dean said, turning back to Cas, “Why don’t you tell us anything else worth knowing from the rule book.”

“It seems that the cards are what determines what, uh, challenges appear next. Some are creatures,” he nodded to the chicken, which was looking increasingly frustrated, insofar as a chicken could look frustrated, “and others are…challenges.”

“Challenges? Like…what kind of challenges?” Sam asked uneasily

“That is not entirely clear, but I rather imagine we will find out soon enough,” Cas sighed.

“So…weapons?” Dean suggested

“Weapons,” Sam affirmed.

They left Cas to monitor the chicken while they headed into the armory, loading up with a wide range of weaponry which they toted back toward the library.

“At least,” Dean told Sam, “it doesn’t seem to be anything too awful so far. I mean, it’s a chicken, right? How much damage can it—“

A cry of pain sounded from the library, interrupting Dean, and he and Sam both sprinted down the hall and back in, where Cas was clutching an arm which was bleeding profusely and staring warily at the chicken, who was hovering between two bookshelves.

“It bit me,” he told them unnecessarily. “It went between bookshelves, I followed it, and it jumped out and bit me.”

“Wait a minute,” Sam said, narrowing his eyes and setting his weaponry down on the table, “and watch that thing carefully. Don’t get too close.” He headed for a bookcase across the room from the chicken and glanced through a few titles before pulling one out and rapidly flipping through it. He scanned a page, then nodded, “Yeah, I thought so. It’s a pollo maligno.”

“A what?”

“Pollo maligno. The literal translation is actually ‘evil chicken’—“

“See?” Dean said, “I was totally right.”
“—and it’s a Colombian forest spirit. They lead hunters deep into the forest and eat them.”

Cas darted back to the table and picked up the card that Dean had set down, rereading it: “Hunters are my chosen prey / I’ll lead you with me, far away / If you think I am not real / Just wait, you may be my next meal.”

“Oh, yes,” Cas started, moving his good hand over his injured arm, which immediately healed up.

“Does that book say anything about how to kill this thing,” Dean gritted out as he dodged the chicken, which had flung itself at him with murder in its red eyes, “or are we on our own?”

“We’re on our own.”

“Okay,” said Dean, “Then let’s try something simple,” he suggested, “like—“ The chicken exploded in a shower of blood and feathers. Sam and Dean turned to face Cas, who was holding a handgun extended in front of him. He shrugged.

“What? It was simple.”

“I can already tell,” Dean sighed, “that the clean-up from this is gonna be brutal. You know, if we survive and all.”

Sam again rubbed his temples, before starting to distribute the weapons between the three of them. “Okay, are we good to go? Dean? Cas? Okay. Stay alert.”

Sam picked up the die and rolled it, pulling a three and landing on the same spot Cas was in. When he moved his piece to the spot, Cas’s chair suddenly went flying four feet backward, knocking him out of it and on his ass.

“Oh, shit!” Sam groaned, getting out of his chair to help Cas to his feet, “I’m so sorry, I had no idea —“

“Let’s just continue,” Cas said, wincing a little, “and not take anything for granted.”

Cas picked up the die and rolled it, getting a six and sliding his piece six spaces ahead before frowning down at the tiny symbol which instructed him to draw a card.

“Keep rolling like that and you’ll be at the end of the board before we know it, and this thing will be over,” Dean encouraged as he stood up, picked up his machete and turned to face the room, crouching a little in readiness as Cas drew his card and read aloud.

“I can be your friend, not foe / But first my evil eye must go / If that should fail, remember you / Can ask me back for morning brew.”

“Sam?” Dean questioned, “Any ideas?”

“Maybe,” Sam told him thoughtfully, “But first I’ll need to see—oh.” Dean turned to face the same direction Sam was looking, brows shooting up.

“Is that a—no way. No fucking way.”

“It looks,” Cas mused, “like a cat in a hat.” Dean stared, speechless, at what was indeed a grey tabby cat wearing a hat. It strolled under the table, and all three of them backed away hastily, but it
emerged from the other side momentarily. At least, Dean thought it was the same creature. It was wearing the same hat, anyway, but now it looked like a pig.

“This might be,” Dean muttered, “the weirdest thing that’s ever happened to us. And that’s saying something.” While he and Cas continued to monitor the animal closely, weapons pointed at it, Sam strode back across the room to a different bookshelf and yanked out a book, paging through it, then grunting in frustration and returning it, grabbing another one a few shelves down.

“Any day now, Sam,” Dean told him as he continued to hold his gun on the hat-wearing creature, which had suddenly shifted into a dog that looked a little like a Labrador. The hat hadn’t gone anywhere.

“Okay, got it,” Sam told them, “it’s an Alp.”

“It does not appear to be a European mountain, Sam,” Cas told him gravely, “I think you must be mistaken.”

“No, Cas—look, it’s a Germanic nightmare creature. It shapeshifts, but always wears the same hat.”

“That’s gotta be it. How many hat-wearing, shape-shifting creatures can there be out there? Cas, read the card again?”

“I can be your friend, not foe / But first my evil eye must go / If that should fail, remember you / Can ask me back for morning brew.”

“Yeah!” Sam said, sounding a little excited, “okay, the way it works is, you can remove its malicious intent by destroying its evil eye, or if it comes at night, you can make it go away by inviting it to come back in the morning for coffee.”

“You cannot be serious,” Dean told him, startling and nearly discharging his gun as the dog suddenly turned into a small, white, hat-wearing butterfly.

“Completely,” Sam assured him.

“It does not seem particularly threatening,” Cas mused, “what does it do?”

“It prefers to prey on women, but sometimes is known to drink blood from the nipples of men and small children—“

“The fuck?”

“I know. They mostly attack at night, it looks like. It sits on the chest of a sleeping person and controls their dreams. They like tangling up long hair into elf-knots too.” For the first time since it appeared, Sam looked concerned, raising one hand to smooth back his own shaggy locks.

“What’s an elf-knot?” Dean wondered aloud.

“No idea, but I don’t think I want to find out,” Sam told him, “so how about we just find the thing’s evil eye?”

“Would it not be simpler to kill it?” Cas asked, a little regretfully, as he watched the butterfly flutter around the room.

“It probably would, except this says they’re pretty much impossible to kill. I think destroying malicious intent is probably our best bet, and then we can…just kind of let it hang around until we
“How the hell do you propose to find a tiny evil eye on a butterfl—oh. That’s better, I guess,” Dean observed, as the creature landed on the floor before turning into a snake, still sporting the same hat.

“See that red thing in the center of its forehead? I think that might be it.”

“What’s with evil and red eyes?” Dean wondered idly, “And how do you propose we destroy the eye without, you know, pissing it off?”

Sam glanced down the page and nodded once.

“Okay, this says they like cow’s milk. Cas, can you go grab a bowl of milk from the hive? We can lure it over with that and then just…stab out the eye.”

Cas hastened out of the room toward the kitchen, and Dean watched the snake slither around silently while Sam continued to scan the page he was looking at.

By the time Cas made it back, the creature had shifted back into a cat in a goddamn hat, because apparently their lives were now a Dr. Seuss book, and Dean would swear it was starting to eye his chest hungrily.

“You come anywhere near my nipples,” he told it threateningly, “and we are going to have a serious problem. I don’t even do bloodplay with him,” he stabbed a finger in Cas’s direction as Sam grimaced.

“Come on, does everything have to come back to your sex life?” Cas opened his mouth to respond, and Sam added hastily, “Don’t answer that!”

Cas moved toward the creature, bowl of milk in hand, and Dean cautioned,

“Easy, Cas, don’t startle it or who knows what it’ll turn into.” Cas nodded and set the bowl of milk down on the floor, remaining knelt in front of it in as nonthreatening a manner as he could manage. The Alp lifted its nose, sniffing the air, then edged over toward the bowl of milk. It hissed at Cas in warning, but finally edged close enough to start lapping at the milk. Cas narrowed his eyes at it and then, in a move so swift Dean could’ve missed it by blinking, one of his hands shot forward, impaling the small red eye in the center of its forehead, then scrambling backward to get out of the way of what they all assumed would be its fury.

All three of them blinked as the third eye shrank into nothingness while the creature continued to lap at the milk, apparently unperturbed.

“What now?” Cas asked uncertainly from about six feet in front of the Alp.

“I don’t really know. Apparently it’s no longer got malicious intent, anyway,” Dean said hopefully. “Maybe it’ll just hang aro—Cas, look out!”

The creature had tired of the milk, apparently, and darted forward toward Cas with great purpose. Dean cocked his gun and Cas lifted his small knife, then froze prior to letting it fall. Sam shook his head wonderingly as Dean snorted. The cat was butting its head intently into Cas’s side, and a low purr had started up. Cas stared at it for a moment before his free hand reached out to scratch the creature’s chin. The Alp’s eyes slid shut and it stretched its chin out in apparent bliss.

“Well, okay then,” Sam observed. “Cas, come on back to the table, we gotta move on, I guess.”
“But it’s—“

“Cas,” Dean said, “You can bring the damn cat if you must.”

Looking significantly happier, Cas scooped up the Alp and returned to the table, settling it in his lap, where it curled up contentedly and continued to purr.

“You know we’re never getting rid of it now,” Sam observed to Dean, who sighed.

“You did,” Cas told him innocently, “tell me we could get a kitten.”

“That,” said Dean, stabbing a finger in the direction of the hat-wearing feline, “Is not a kitten! It’s a German nightmare creature!”

“But it likes me!”

“You’re likeable! Look, let’s worry about what we’re gonna do with it—“

“Al. His name is Al.”

“Goddammit, Cas, you cannot keep naming— oh, forget it. Let’s worry about what we’re gonna do with Al later. We gotta get through this game. And,” he added warningly, “if you let him anywhere near my nipples, I cannot be held responsible for what I do to him.”

Dean rolled the die, still eyeing Al suspiciously, and all three of them sighed in relief as he landed on a blank space. Sam went next, landing on another card. He pulled it out of the deck and his eyes widened as understanding struck, followed immediately by horror. He read the card aloud rapidly.

“An ancient beast / With many heads / But cut one off / Get two instead / Fire is your only friend / If you would bring it to an end.’ It’s a fucking hydra.”

Even Dean had heard of those, and he hissed out a breath through his teeth and quickly dug through the pile of weapons, coming up with a machete and a blowtorch.

“We only got one of these. Cas, how fast can you get to the armory and get back with two more blowtorch—shit. Too late.”

A chasm had opened ten feet in front of the table, and from out of it rose a creature that brushed the ceiling. It was green and scaly and looked for all the world like a dragon, except for the three heads it was sporting. It hissed loudly and all three of them flinched.

“We need a strategy,” Sam yelled over the sound of its breathing, “Cas, you and I need to try to chop off the heads. Dean, you cauterize the wounds.”

Cas and Sam both swiped long blades off the table and began to circle. The problem, they quickly discovered, with a creature that has more than one head, is that it’s damn near impossible to keep track of all of them at the same time, especially because if Dean was a little too slow on the blowtorch, another two heads popped up to join the fray.

Twenty minutes later, four severed heads were lying on the ground in pools of blood, but there were still two heads weaving and striking out at them. Sam was nursing a bleeding shoulder, Dean was limping on an ankle he was pretty sure was sprained, and Cas’s hair was smoldering slightly (they had discovered a little too late that the middle head actually breathed fire). Three bookshelves had been knocked over and books were scattered across the library floor (which, as Sam had noted bitterly, was not going to help them figure out the next fifteen creatures that appeared). They had
discovered, much to Sam and Dean’s surprise, that Al was actually quite helpful. It seemed that destroying the evil eye had not just removed his malicious intent, it had caused him to imprint on Cas like a duckling, and now it was clearly trying to protect him. While a cat wearing a hat wasn’t exactly the single most powerful ally they’d ever had, it turned out he was pretty good at distracting the hydra, and two of its heads had been dispatched that way.

“I think,” Sam called as he dodged a strike from the left head while Dean circled the right head—the fire-breathing one, “maybe if we kill the fire-breathing head the whole thing dies?”

“And it didn’t occur to you that this information might be useful 20 minutes ago?” Dean demanded as he barely dodged a stream of fire that left a small scorch mark on the tile floor.

“I just remembered! What do you want, I’ve been a little busy!”

Okay, everyone make for the—“ Dean cut off as Al transformed into a butterfly which fluttered past the right head’s nose, causing it to turn its attention away from Dean so it could breathe a jet of fire at the hat-wearing insect. The jet of fire caught the butterfly head on, and Dean saw its wings burst into flame a second before his attention shifted to Sam, who had taken a massive swipe at the creature’s neck.

Its head toppled slowly to the floor as Cas wailed, “NO! AL!”

Dean ran forward with the blowtorch, grimacing at the smell of cooking meat that rose from the severed neck as its flesh sizzled. A second later, the remaining head slumped to the floor with a thud that rattled the room, its huge eyes rolling upward. Sam hacked off the remaining head just for good measure, and Dean cauterized the wound, then all three of them stood panting before the remains of the creature. Cas sniffled a time or two.

Okay,” Dean finally spoke, “is everyone okay? Sam? How’s the shoulder?”

“It’s okay, but if Cas doesn’t mind—“

“Of course, Sam,” Cas crossed the room to place a hand on Sam’s shoulder, which stopped bleeding. He then moved to Dean, brushing a hand across his ankle, which was suddenly willing to hold his weight again. Then, grimacing, Cas raised a hand to his own hair, half an inch of which crumbled into ash. He sighed slightly, then shrugged, turning back to his seat at the head of the table and then gasping in horror.

Dean and Sam both whirled to face the board, only to discover that it had been overturned in the struggle. Sam stared blankly at it. “How the hell do we finish the game if it’s—wait, you don’t think we have to start over, do you?”

“You know,” said Dean thoughtfully, “I wonder.” He walked back to the table and set the board upright again, then gathered the scattered pieces, cards, and die, setting them all in the center of the board. He watched the board expectantly, while Sam and Cas stared at him. After about ten seconds in which nothing happened, Dean let out a disappointed breath. “I thought maybe—heh! Hey, look!”

Sam and Cas turned back to the board just in time to watch as all of the pieces righted themselves and slid slowly back to their previous positions. Then they turned to stare at Dean. “What? It’s only fair. If it demands that we finish the game, and it’s going to try to kill us at every turn, the least it can do is keep track of where in the game we are, right?”

Sam shrugged, willing to accept it, and Cas sank into his chair, sighing.
“I just wish that Al hadn’t—he didn’t have to sacrifice himself for us,” the angel said mournfully.

“Uh, Cas?”

“No, Dean! You insist upon mocking me for caring about other living creatures, but—"

“No, Cas, I mean, look behind you!”

Cas swiveled in his chair and then cried out happily, “Al!” The singed remnants of the butterfly had performed the weirdest shift Dean had ever seen, growing fur and suddenly expanding back into the cat. His hat looked a little crispy around the edges, but he seemed otherwise unharmed.

“I told you,” Sam reminded them, unimpressed, “they’re damn near impossible to kill.”

Cas climbed out of his chair to scoop the creature up, sitting back down and settling him into his lap, then beginning to scratch behind his ears while cooing at him.

“I think we might have to actually get him a kitten,” Dean muttered to Sam, watching this display, “Or he’s just going to keep getting attached to things he absolutely cannot keep.”

“I think he’s probably going to keep getting attached to things he can’t keep either way,” Sam told him gently, “but if he can have a kitten, I’m getting a dog.”

“We are not turning this place into a goddamn menagerie.”

“Perhaps we should continue the game,” Cas interrupted them, a little grimly. “Does anyone remember whose turn it is?”

“It’s actually yours, Cas, cause Sam drew the hydra card.”

With a sigh, Cas reached for the die and rolled it.

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The squonk that appeared next wasn’t too bad—it blubbered pathetically and actually dissolved entirely into a pool of tears when they got too close—but they were all a little confused at the card after that, drawn by Dean (“’Around and around and around it goes / Double should keep you on your toes!’”). Everything became clear when Sam had to draw a card immediately thereafter and, instead of a single kumiho, two of them appeared. Fifteen minutes later, as the three of them collapsed panting into their chairs, wiping blood off their faces after dispatching the duo of Korean nine-tailed foxes, Dean opined grimly, “Eighteen tails is too many.”

“The next time,” Sam scolded him as Cas glowered, “A creature that can shapeshift into a beautiful woman appears, try not to hit on it, okay?”

“I was trying to distract it!” Dean argued hastily, twitching a little at the promise of trouble in Cas’s eyes.

The next creature the game threw them made Sam almost paroxysmic with joy (“Oh my God, it’s a hippogriff! BUCKBEAK, IS THAT YOU?!”), and while it was fairly large, it didn’t seem especially aggressive, content to hang out on the floor, blinking at them blandly. That is, until Cas drew his next card and read it out:

“Let’s see how well you hit your mark / When you are fighting in the dark / You must dispatch your latest foe / Only then will darkness go.”
“I think that means it’s—oh, son of a bitch, you guys still there?” Dean squinted into the inky blackness that had suddenly taken over the library, reassured when he heard Sam’s voice.

“Yeah, I’m here. Cas?”

“Still here,” A brief pause, then the addendum, “And so is Al,”

“Okay, so we have to dispatch our latest foe to make the darkness go away, but it’s not—oh shit!”

Apparently the hippogriff had been waiting for its opportunity, because Dean was pretty sure the claws that dug deep grooves into his chest didn’t belong to the hat-wearing cat that had been gazing so adoringly at Cas a few seconds ago.

But for Sam’s quick thinking, they might have all ended up killing each other, but he had the presence of mind to insist that Dean and Cas both hit the floor and crawl under the table so that he could dispatch the hippogriff without accidentally nailing either of them. Three frantic minutes later, the light abruptly returned to the room, leaving all of them squinting as Sam stood triumphant over the corpse of the bird, swiping feathers out of his hair.

“I think,” Cas grunted as he pulled Dean out from under the table and healed his bleeding chest, “that I prefer the creatures to the challenges.”

“I think,” Sam observed, trying to catch his breath and waving Cas away when he would have healed the wound on Sam’s cheek, “No, Cas, it’s just a scratch, save your strength—I think if this goddamn game isn’t over soon we’re all probably gonna die.”

“That seems likely,” Cas agreed mildly, reaching under the table to pull out Al.

“Do you suppose we can pause long enough to eat something?” Dean inquired longingly, “Breakfast was three hours ago, and we need to keep up our strength.”

“Yeah, we’ve got 24 hours before the curse takes effect,” Sam told him, “but how far along the board are we, anyway?” The three of them turned toward it.

Dean sighed, “Looks like about 2/3rds of the way. So…sandwiches then?”

“And another bowl of milk for Al,” Cas added helpfully.

“Yeah, he can have all the milk he wants as long as he—“

“Let it go, Dean, he appears much less interested in your nipples than I—“

“For the love of God, you two, I swear—“

“OKAY,” Dean bellowed, before they were all talking at the same time. “Lunch it is.”

An hour and a dozen sandwiches later, the three of them (and Al, of course) returned to the board with grim determination.

Another two hours after that, a fine layer of fur was mixed with the feathers all over the floor, and an additional seven strange bodies in various states of bloodiness littered the room. Dean was sprawled on the floor trying to catch his breath from their latest bout, while Sam slumped in a chair and Cas leaned tiredly against the table. Turning his head to stare across the floor at the carnage, Dean had a horrible thought.

“What the hell are we gonna do with all the bodies when we get through this,” he demanded, sitting
“Maybe,“ Sam observed doubtfully, “we shouldn’t have killed the eurynomos. They’re carrion-eaters. It might’ve taken care of the problem for us.”

“One problem at a time, perhaps?” Cas suggested. “If we do not finish, we are not going to need to worry about the clean-up. I do not think I will be able to heal any of us again for some time without resting, so I suggest caution. Sam, I believe it is your turn.”

Sam reached for the die and shook it half-heartedly, letting it drop from his hand onto the board. When he went to pick up his game piece he froze suddenly before his face broke into a grin.

“Oh my God. Dean. Cas. Look!”

Dean rolled himself up from the floor to lean over the table along with Cas.

“No way. No way. For real? Finally?”

The die, resting on four, sat on the board several inches from Sam’s game piece, which was exactly four spaces from the end of the board.

“Do you think there’s a catch?” Dean asked doubtfully.

“You shut your whore mouth,” Sam told him hotly, then paused, “but just in case, don’t put down your weapons quite yet.”

Picking up his game piece, Sam moved it forward four spaces to the end of the board.

Another concussion, just like the first, rattled the library, and a second later a blinding light suffused the room. Dean threw an arm over his eyes, and when the light faded, he blinked away the spots for a few moments before he was able to focus back on the room around him. All the corpses were gone, as was the layer of blood, fur, and feathers that had blanketed the room. The scorch marks on the floor and table were likewise gone. In fact, the library looked exactly as it had this morning. The one thing that hadn’t been returned to its previous state was the three of them, who were still a little battered around the edges, clothing streaked with soot, blood, and other, fouler substances. The game was back inside its box, board folded neatly, game pieces, die, and cards in their holder. Sam hastily put the lid back on the game before collapsing back into his chair.

“Dibs on the shower,” he told them weakly, “mostly because I don’t trust the two of you not to use up all the hot water getting busy.”

“Are you out of your mind?” Dean asked him, sinking back to the floor and closing his eyes, “If I make it through a shower without falling asleep it’ll be a goddamn miracle.”

A small voice came from the end of the table, then, causing both of them to swivel toward Cas.

“Al is gone.”

“Oh Jesus,” Dean muttered, waving Sam off toward the showers, “I’m so sorry, Cas.” He was, too. The little guy had sort of grown on him. It wasn’t often you found a real, live hat-wearing cat.

“It is alright,” Cas told him with a deep sigh, “I couldn’t have protected your nipples forever.”
Chapter End Notes

All of the creatures mentioned herein actually appear in the lore of various cultures. Even the Alp!

(Also, the next update will probably include some more smut, for those of you patiently awaiting it.)
The Space Between

Chapter Summary

In which Cas is the one who needs, and Dean gives freely. Also, there's grilled cheese.

NOTE: I really intended for this to be some straightforward after-game recovery, followed by some good old-fashioned hard and fast smut, but then the boys insisted on bringing FEELINGS into the mix. As Sam says, "Goddammit, you guys."

You can find chapter specific tags and warnings in the notes at the end of the chapter, as always.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

As it turned out, Dean had not been lying to Sam. He’d only been up for eight hours, but since six of them had been spent in pretty much nonstop battle, he felt comfortable giving himself a pass for being bone-tired. He actually considered falling into bed without bothering to shower, especially since Sam took marathon-length showers (Dean could only assume he lovingly shampooed and deep-conditioned each strand of his hair separately. Twice.). He might’ve given it up as a bad job and gotten into bed, except that the ichor-like substance that one of the creatures had extruded all over him smelled like nothing so much as a fetid swamp.

The idea of climbing into his nice, warm, freshly washed sheets—his sheets actually got washed quite often, what with one thing (Cas) and another (still Cas)—while he smelled like that turned his stomach, so he allowed Cas to half-lead, half drag him to the communal showers, prop him under the spray of hot water, and set about cleaning him up in an unusually businesslike fashion. Even Cas, who was fairly insatiable, recognized that Dean was about as likely to be up for sexytimes now as he was to don Al’s little hat and do the Charleston.

The hot water lulled him further into semi-somnolence, and by the time Cas turned off the water and wrapped him in a robe, Dean thought he could probably bed down comfortably on the shower floor.
for a couple hours. Cas would have none of it, and bullied him back down the hall and into his bedroom, where he collapsed diagonally across his bed and didn’t move for the next four hours. He startled awake around 10:30, breathing hard from a dream in which a hydra-sized Al chased him around the bunker to chew his nipples (which seemed to have multiplied, and were now scattered liberally across his entire body) off.

After a brief check to ensure that he had the usual number of nipples (only two, thank you very much), Dean rolled out of bed and grumbled as his movement woke up aches and twinges in muscles he hadn’t even known he had. Despite Cas healing their major wounds throughout the game, the three of them had still taken a hell of a beating—or, more accurately, about 12 of them—and he was not, Dean acknowledged grumpily to himself, quite as young as he used to be.

A pair of sweatpants and an old and much-loved AC/DC t-shirt later, Dean plodded down the hall to the library, where he found Sam and Cas both slumped tiredly in armchairs. Sam was wearing flannel pants and his hair was going in so many directions it nearly made Dean dizzy, telling him that for once his brother hadn’t made it long enough to dry his hair before passing out.

Yawning deeply, he paused long enough to drop a kiss on the top of Cas’s head (the angel’s hair still looked a little singed, but Dean thought it was cute) before trudging past them toward the kitchen, calling in his wake, “Nice hair, Sammy.”

Still sleep-drunk, Dean stared into the fridge for at least two minutes before determining that there was no way anything complicated was going to happen and settling on grilled cheese. Fifteen minutes later, he padded back out into the library, carrying two stacked plates and a pair of beers. Handing off one of the beers and the plate with four sandwiches piled on it to Sam, he took his own three sandwiches to the long table and dug in, pausing long enough to offer half a sandwich to Cas, who waved it off.

The noise of chewing and the clink of beer bottles against wood were the only sounds that marred the room for long moments. Dean pushed his plate back with a sigh a few minutes later, musing sadly that a piece of pie from Pat-a-cake would’ve really hit the spot around now. Once the snow finally melted off enough for them to escape the bunker, he was going to hound Sam until he followed through on the promised pie. Pushing his chair away from the table far enough that he could kick his bare feet up on its surface, Dean let his head fall back as another jaw-cracking yawn tore out of him. He was pretty sure he could fall right back into bed and sleep for another eight hours without blinking an eye, but he figured there was one order of business to be dealt with first.

Glancing behind him to see that Sam had finished up his sandwiches and was gazing mournfully at the plate as if more sandwiches might suddenly appear on it if he wished hard enough, Dean sighed.

“I’ll make you a couple more sandwiches if you’ll go put this in one of the empty lockboxes and bury it so deep it’ll take a spelunking expedition to pull it back out,” he told Sam, pointing at the game which still sat, deceptively small and non-threatening, on the end of the table. Sam gave the box a dark look, but stood up, placing a hand at the small of his back and stretching it with a grimace. Apparently, Dean wasn’t the only one hurting from their earlier exertions.

“You’ve got yourself a deal.” Grimacing with distaste, Sam picked up the box, holding it away from him as though closer contact might contaminate him. Dean caught Cas watching wistfully as Sam bore it away, and paused to settle a hand on his shoulder.

“I know how you feel, Cas, and if there were any way to get Al back without also cursing us and drawing out about twenty other monsters, I’d be all for it, but I don’t think it’s gonna happen.”

“I know,” Cas sighed, “I only wish it were different. He was a good...” He paused for a moment,
groping for what to call Al, and then shrugged, “German nightmare creature.” His eyes strayed to the side of the library briefly, and Dean followed his gaze and blinked a few times at the new monument that had sprung up sometime while he was sleeping. This one was dominated by a small cross (apparently Al, unlike Curtis, was not one of the chosen people) which, Dean realized with a blink, was wearing a little hat that Cas seemed to have made from tin foil. Dean managed with great effort to keep his lips from twitching more than once or twice as he drew Cas in so the angel’s head rested against his abdomen, setting one hand on his back and ruffling the other gently through his hair. Cas’s arms came around his middle and they stood in silence for a few moments, breathing together, before Dean pulled back a little reluctantly so he could go make Sam his sandwiches.

“I really am sorry,” Dean told Cas, meaning it. He didn’t get the attachment to Curtis, but he could understand Cas’s affection for Al. He really had been a good German nightmare creature—great at diversions, and he’d been crazy about Cas. Dean couldn’t help but be partial to any creature that appeared to adore Cas as much as he did. Cas smiled tiredly up at him and motioned him toward the kitchen. Quirking a grin, Dean commented as he turned back in that direction, “Since you’re not actually going to eat it, I’ll let it slide that you just nonverbally told me to go make a sandwich.” Cas, unsurprisingly, looked blank, and Dean was too tired to explain, so he waved a hand dismissively.

By the time Dean made it back into the library with a plate of three more grilled cheese sandwiches (one of which he snagged for himself), Sam had returned covered in a fine layer of dust. He took the sandwiches eagerly and immediately took a bite of one that demolished about a third of the sandwich. Shaking his head slightly, Dean dug into his own sandwich with only slightly less enthusiasm before inquiring.

“Safely locked away?”

“Oh yeah. I can put some additional warding on it later if we decide it’s a good idea, but I don’t think anyone’s even likely to find it for the next hundred years, let alone get into it. I also wrote a… strongly worded letter to whoever does manage to get into the lockbox, advising them to read the rules carefully before they even think about playing.”

“Hear, hear,” Dean muttered, then glanced at Sam, recognizing the look on his face, and sighed. “Oh, fine, go ahead. I guess this one deserves a twofer.”

"I told you so!"

“Yes, yes you did.” Dean wasn’t even tempted to try to defend himself this time. If ever there was a should-have-listened-to-Sammy time, this was it. However… “so, what are the chances you’re ever going to let us live this down?”

“Pretty much nil.”

“Demon blood, Sammy. Demon. Blood.” Dean tried not to break it out any more than absolutely necessary, but sometimes it was unavoidable.

“Possessed by an angel, Dean. Possessed. By an angel.”

Oh, shots fired. Dean wasn’t sure he really had a comeback to that one, either. Especially since it was still a lot more recent than the demon blood. He settled for grumbling under his breath, and Sam grinned and laced his hands behind his head. “Good talk.”

Fairly certain he’d just ensured that he was going to have to hear a lot of noise about all of this pretty much for the rest of his life, Dean snagged Sam’s empty plate, then detoured by the table to get his own. Grumbling his way back into the kitchen to deal with the dishes, he ground his teeth slightly
When Sam called from the other room, “Hey, bring me another beer when you come back, will you?”

With some effort he managed to refrain from pelting the beer at Sam’s head on his way back out of the kitchen, padding back over to the armchairs that he and Cas were settled in. Sam reached for the beer and Dean pulled it back several inches short of his fingers, grinning.

“You can have your beer as soon as you fix whatever shit you did to Netflix on my laptop, and not a minute sooner.”

Sam grimaced at him, opened his mouth (presumably to tell Dean he could get his own damn beer), and then closed it (presumably when he realized that since he was still boycotting ‘the hive,’ he could not, in fact, get his own damn beer), sighing.

“Fine, bring me your laptop.”

As Dean headed for the hallway to grab his laptop from his room, he heard Cas remark to Sam,

“You know, we actually watched several of your Cerebral Foreign Dramas from the 1950s. I enjoyed them a great deal, as did Dean.”

“Traitor!” Dean called back down the hallway. The friendship between Cas and Sam was either one of his favorite things or the bane of his existence, depending upon the day. When he got back out to the library with his laptop, Sam and Cas were deep in a discussion of the metaphysical themes intertwined with the plot of one of the movies. Dean handed off his laptop and beat a hasty retreat back to the table, shrugging down at the beer in his hands and opening it to take a swig. He’d grab Sam another one once he confirmed that his Netflix was back as it should be.

About thirty seconds later, Sam nodded and extended the laptop back toward Dean, who detoured around the table to grab it. He reloaded his Netflix page and hummed in approval as he saw that his usual recommendation screen had returned, and that the Cerebral Foreign Dramas from the 1950s had gone back into whatever hell they hailed from. With a tip of an imaginary hat toward Sam (which he almost immediately regretted, as Cas’s eyebrows drooped sadly at the reminder of Al), Dean trekked back into the kitchen to grab another beer, delivering it to Sam before dropping into Cas’s lap.

The angel’s arms wound around him with ready ease, and Dean did something that he would not admit (aloud, at least) was definitely snuggling back into him. Sam’s lips quirked slightly as he swigged his beer, and Dean stabbed a warning finger at him.

“Stop that!”

“Stop what?” Sam inquired with practiced innocence

“Stop thinking how cute we are!”

“…stop being cute?”

“I mean, I could just remind you about what you saw—“

“I swear to God, Dean, if you—“

“Stop bickering, or I will seriously consider gagging both of you,” Cas’s voice was reasonably quiet but rang with authority, and that tone—along with the reminder of yesterday’s activities—brought Dean up short. He realized he was squirming slightly when he felt the soft huff of Cas’s laughter
against his shoulder, and he made a concerted effort to still himself, with somewhat limited success. Sam, who was not always entirely oblivious, was grimacing at them.

“Look, you two can get up to whatever freaky shit, but feel confident that I have no plans of ever being in any way involved.”

Welp. That did it. Dean was fairly sure he would never be turned on again, and turned to Sam with what he was sure was a face that couldn’t quite decide whether to be more disgusted or appalled.

“Hey, he,” Sam pointed at Cas, “is the one who wanted to talk about gagging me. I did not start this.”

Dean could practically hear Cas rolling his eyes, something which seemed to come naturally to the angel. Maybe Jimmy Novak had been an eye roller?

“Sam, please rest comfortably in the knowledge that I have no intention of ever inviting you into our after dark activities,” Cas assured him with the slightest hint of what Dean could swear was actual sarcasm.

“That’s comforting,” Sam told him drolly, “but I’d like it even better if you actually reserved them for after dark.”

“You raise a valid point, linguistically if nothing else,” Cas conceded, before squeezing Dean somewhere that made him bite back what would definitely not have been a squeak.

“Pretty much only linguistically,” Dean told him, just a little breathlessly, “because the odds of us restricting ourselves to darkness, which is only—“

“About fifteen hours a day, at the moment,” Sam noted dryly, “so it wouldn’t exactly cramp your style.”

“Unless you want me to tell you, in great detail, more about our style, you should probably abandon your quest,” Dean advised helpfully.

Grimacing, Sam rose from his chair and knocked back what was left of his beer.

“I do believe that’s my cue, before you further traumatize my virgin ears.”

Dean’s snort of amusement quickly morphed into a cough as Castiel’s hands did something that caused him to attempt to breathe some of his own saliva. Sending a sharp elbow back into Cas’s midsection (which earned a quiet “oof” noise), Dean cleared his throat a little too casually before saluting his brother.

“Night, Sammy. Good fighting today.”

“Yeah, you too, Dean. Cas.”

Sam headed off down the hall toward his room. Dean started to turn his head around to scold Cas for his lack of discretion, before a hand firmly grasped each of his arms just above the elbow and squeezed. Dean paused, head tilted just slightly toward Cas, and drew in a deliberately slow, steady breath. A second later he felt the tip of Cas’s nose lightly graze the flesh just above the collar of Dean’s worn t-shirt. An almost imperceptible shudder skidded down Dean’s back, and again he heard the quiet huff of Cas’s satisfied chuckle.

“I believe,” he murmured smoothly, “that we have something to discuss, Dean,”
This time, Dean’s indrawn breath was neither slow nor steady. Cas was very particular about when he used that verbiage. The low, nearly latent squirming in his gut roared instantly to life, tangling up anticipation and want with apprehension. He was in trouble? What was he in trouble for?

“What could we possibly have to discuss?” He protested weakly, “We’ve been busy killing things all day, and—oh.”

“Oh,” Cas mimicked quietly, “oh, indeed. Did you forget the kumiho? While I recognize that their human forms were indeed women of extraordinary beauty, it seems to me that your endeavor to hit on them was not only in poor taste, but decidedly reckless.”

For once in his life, Dean actually had been telling the truth when he protested that he had a valid, work-related reason behind his attempts at seduction. He had been trying to distract them, and if maybe they had distracted him just a little too, well, he’d still managed to dispatch one handily, while Sam and Cas handled the other, hadn’t he?

“It was a gambit, Cas, and it worked. We got them,” he protested, opening his mouth to continue and then closing it on a low moan as Cas’s teeth sank lightly but warningly into his shoulder through his shirt. A moment later the bite released, and the growl that managed to be both smooth and gravelly (how the hell did he do that) flowed back over Dean.

“So it did, and that’s why you’re not presently ass up over the table, pants around your ankles, counting off strokes of your belt for me.” Dean’s mouth dried up faster than the Sahara after a rainstorm and he heard his throat click as he swallowed, forced to picture Cas’s scene only too vividly. He shifted just slightly, trying to adjust the way his straining cock was pressed uncomfortably against the seam of his sweatpants, but Cas’s hands tightened on his upper arms in warning, and Dean subsided.

“Now that I have your attention,” Cas went on, “you have a decision to make.”

Oh, Jesus. Cas’s decisions were pretty much the original Catch-22s. Letting Dean stew in his own juices for a moment, Cas shifted a little, adjusting Dean on his lap without relinquishing his grip on Dean’s upper arms. Quite suddenly, Dean could feel the press of Cas’s hard cock, riding just between his cheeks through the layers of clothing, and was forced to wonder (not for the first time) how Cas always managed to place himself so perfectly with no apparent effort. He suspected the use of angel mojo, but knew better than to ask. Instead, he focused on his breathing, on making it as steady as he could, on counting the beats of his inhale and exhale, on controlling his heart rate. He was doing a pretty good job of it, too, until Cas kicked over his sandcastle without a moment’s hesitation, the brush of his lips across the back of Dean’s neck forcing the breath from him as surely as a punch to the solar plexus might have done. Dean didn’t need to see the satisfied smirk on Cas’s face to know it was there any more than he needed to see the Eiffel tower to know it was there.

Finally, after what felt like a few centuries or possibly a millennium, Cas spoke again, his voice as casually conversational as though they had been discussing...something they would be casually discussing. Dean didn’t have enough brain power left to come up with a good analogy, considering the amount of blood currently being diverted southward.

“The first thing you will need to know is that very shortly, I’m going to fuck you. That is not a choice. That is a fact.”

Oh. Oh. But for the warning in the tightly restraining grip on his upper arms (not to mention in Cas’s voice) Dean would have been grinding back against his cock. Instead, he remained totally motionless. He didn’t realize he was not actually breathing until Cas laughed quietly, interrupting his monologue briefly with a simple instruction.
“Breathe, Dean. It is not nearly as much fun to torment you like this if you’ve passed out from oxygen deprivation.” Dean dragged in a rough breath at the command, biting back the urge to say something sarcastic. There was a time and a place. This wasn’t it. He felt rather than saw Cas’s nod of satisfaction as his chest rose and fell again steadily, if a little arrhythmically.

“As I was saying. I’m going to fuck you. What you get to decide is whether or not I prep you, and whether or not you come tonight.” Cas paused as if waiting for an answer, but Dean knew better. There was more to that choice. After a brief wait, Cas went on, a smile in his voice. “We can forego the prep, you can come tonight, and tomorrow you and my belt—or possibly yours,” he interrupted himself idly, as though this was a matter of mild academic interest, “will get a little better acquainted, to the tune of, oh, shall we say, fifteen strokes, after which I may or may not let you come.” Okay. Okay. That was one of his choices. No prep for what was bound to be a rough ride, but permission to come tonight while Cas was fucking him, in exchange for fifteen stripes and possible orgasm denial tomorrow. Dean couldn’t know yet whether he was getting a good offer. Not until Cas gave him his other option.

Cas continued to let the silence spiral out between them, until Dean couldn’t control himself any longer and had to breathlessly inquire.

“Or?”

Dean knew he had lost some indefinable battle of wills by the sound of the smile he heard in Castiel’s voice when the angel went on.

“Oh, and Dean?” Cas’s voice broke into Dean’s thoughts, which had barely managed to get off the ground, “You don’t get the benefit of a cock ring tonight. If you opt for door number two, you’ll hold yourself back. It should go without saying that I will be extremely displeased if you select that option and fail to restrain yourself appropriately.”

“This is not fair,” Dean heard himself protest hotly, then snapped his mouth shut before he could go on. He knew better than to let his mouth get away from him like that in one of these intensely charged moments. Now he was going to pay for the lapse in judgment.

Sure enough, Cas gave it a moment to see whether Dean was going to dig himself any deeper, then, when it became clear he was done, he spoke again, his voice both a little darker and a little more amused.

“Mmm, I agree with your analysis. I was being too lenient. In that case, why don’t we add five strokes for tomorrow, regardless of which option you choose.” Yep. There it was. Dean had to swallow hard past the lump in his throat. He knew better than to try to turn back the clock with pleading. Those three thoughtless words had just earned him another five strokes. Dean understood instinctively that if he opted for door number two, as Cas called it, the angel would not be going easy on him tonight. In fact, Cas would likely do all that he could to make Dean fail in his efforts not to come. He could take Dean apart with surgical precision, and Dean was—had always been—entirely helpless against it.

But. The promise of a blow job. Of Cas on his knees, sucking Dean off, two fingers no doubt buried in his throbbing, striped ass. How could he say no to that?

“Tick tock, Dean. We do not have all night. I can tell you’re still exhausted. I need to get you back to bed so you’re well-rested for tomorrow.”
No. It was a trap. Dean knew it was a trap. Cas had every intention of making him come tonight, the only decision was in exactly how much he would end up regretting it tomorrow. Dean sighed, regretfully watching the possibility of that blow job fade away into the distance, then offered his answer.

“I’ll come tonight.”

Cas was silent for a moment, then validated Dean’s it’s-a-trap suspicions with his simple response.

“Wisely chosen, Dean.”

Sometimes Dean was pretty sure Cas gave him these choices purely to see how well Dean could read his mind, how well he could guess exactly what game Cas was playing.

Dean had a strange tendency to wax philosophical in the unending moments when he waited for the ever-patient Cas to strike out, snake-like, and take him down. He couldn’t count the number of lightbulb revelations he’d had in the brief seconds of perfect clarity between the promise and the fulfillment, as he felt himself sinking toward the space in his head in which he was made of feeling rather than thought. The lightbulb came upon him as suddenly as it ever did, this time.

The last several days, Cas had been…particularly intense, even for himself. A little darker, a little more intently focused. The swirling storm in his eyes had been a little more dangerous, the promises—not to mention the fulfillment—a little harsher. He had been no less loving in the spaces between, but his edges were a little sharper. It was, Dean realized in a flash of insight that hit him with the electrifying force of lightning, a product of being incarcerated by the forces of nature. Dean’s instincts had been right, when they first realized what had happened, and that they would not be leaving the bunker anytime soon. There was a bone deep unease that had settled into Cas. With his grace fully restored, he was not used to the sensation of powerlessness any longer. He felt out of control, and was coping at least in part by throwing himself into the things he did have control over. Specifically, these moments between them, in which his control was absolute—over both himself and Dean.

When this had first begun between them, Dean knew, it had been because he himself needed it, and Cas felt no greater calling than in giving Dean what he needed. From the moment he had raised Dean from perdition, pieced him back together, body and soul, he had taken it upon himself to be not only the handler that heaven demanded of him, but also a guardian. With thatunnerving tendency to see immediately to the heart of Dean, to recognize clearly and without explanation the innermost spaces that he barely even gave himself access to, Cas had begun to grasp what Dean craved and would not allow himself to have, and he had learned all he needed to in order to fulfill the unmet need.

Dean suspected it had come as a bit of a surprise to Cas, discovering that he was a natural. Not so for Dean. Dean had known what was hiding within Cas since their second meeting. Since the moment when Cas had backed him up against the counter in Bobby’s kitchen, pinned him like a butterfly with his gaze alone, and growled, “You should show me some respect. I dragged you out of hell. I can throw you back in.” Dean had been horrified at the time to find that underlying the piercing sharpness of his own fear—which had been intense—there was an equally sharp undercurrent of lust. Of recognizing in Cas a foil to himself, one of the incredibly rare others who had the strength and force of will to give Dean what he needed, regardless of how much he fought against it. They fit together, their splintered edges syncing up perfectly. It was an unceasing wonder to Dean that even as the weight of experience—both shared and separate—splintered each of them further, changing the angles and planes that defined them, they continued to fit not merely easily but effortlessly.
Yes, Dean had known long before Cas that the angel possessed a natural affinity for the role that he had believed at the start he took on almost entirely for Dean. Cas had learned quickly, however, not merely how to fill that role, but that he wore it as comfortably as a second skin. Where his research failed him or he reached its limits, his instincts led him easily. As the sandpaper roughness of Cas’s control smoothed away some of the jagged edges inside Dean, it had likewise fed a beast inside Cas that he had not been entirely aware of until he found it purring in satisfaction when Dean writhed, helpless, beneath his hands and his cock.

Perhaps because of the way it had started, Dean knew that Cas often lost himself in the moments when he both took from and gave to Dean with total single-mindedness. It was this that made Dean suspect that Cas had not yet pieced together what Dean himself was just realizing—that this time, it was Cas who needed. It was he who yearned and who sought to take possession of Dean, not because he could sense Dean’s rising desperation to give up control, if only for moments, but because he needed to take it. It was nothing less than an honor to be able to surrender, to sacrifice himself willingly on the altar of Cas’s need. As surely as he knew that Cas would always sense the empty spaces inside him and know how to fill them, Dean likewise knew with sudden clarity and unshakeable certainty that the reverse was also true.

He found himself melting into the biting grasp on his upper arms, into the corded thighs beneath his ass. Once he recognized what was happening, Dean found that he knew instantly and without any searching exactly what Cas needed from him in this moment, and that he would know likewise in the next, and the one after that. In this moment, Cas needed him to bend effortlessly to his will, to settle into his control with ease and perfect trust. In ten minutes, or tomorrow, he might need Dean to fight him, might need to seize by force what Dean gifted to him readily now. Whatever the need, Dean would know, and he would meet it.

All of this, realization and understanding and acceptance, bled into Dean in the space between seconds, the timeless pause between the breaths that he realized had synced up perfectly with Castiel’s. Cas must have sensed something, because the pause which had clearly been intended to span only seconds spun out further, a hesitation before Cas threw them both over the precipice and fully into the flurry of heat and movement that was coming. They sat for a moment, both motionless, acutely aware of the tangled web that bound them together. Cas leaned forward, and for just a second, the lips that settled against Dean’s neck rested there in worship rather than in threat. Dean canted his neck into the touch, and found himself breathing out, without any real plan to do so, “Yes. It’s yours for the taking. Always,” and then, the words that he still guarded greedily, that he doled out with miserly rarity, flowing with such ease that he would marvel at the memory of it later, “I love you.”

Cas’s indrawn breath in his ear was music, serenading Dean with the knowledge that Cas would cherish the words, offered up without prompting. He would hold them close and safe inside, taking them out to examine in the moments when the world, when life, became too much for him. Dean’s love, already acknowledged and understood, but rarely spoken, would sustain him when his own strength was not quite enough, just as the reverse was true.

Dean turned his head just slightly, tilting it toward Cas. For the space of a heartbeat, Cas’s forehead brushed his cheek in silent communion. And then it was over, and they were in motion.

The hands gripping his arms slid down to settle around his waist, and he was lifted to his feet, the angel following half a second behind. With breathtaking swiftness, he found himself stripped of t-shirt and sweatpants—there was no need to remove the boxers or socks he had never donned—and then Cas’s hands on his shoulders urged him to his knees. As Cas shrugged off the trenchcoat and attacked his own shirt and tie, Dean’s fingers, oddly steady in a moment when they would usually be
trembling ever-so-slightly, unfastened the angel’s belt and drew his pants and boxers down in one fluid motion, helping him to step out of them. It couldn’t have been thirty seconds from the moment they both stood fully clothed to the moment that Dean knelt before Cas, both of them entirely exposed to one another, in body and more. Cas was already hard, and it was so effortless, so perfectly natural for Dean to lean forward the scant inches it took to draw the leaking length into his mouth. Cas’s hand slid down to grip his hair firmly, guiding but not forcing, because Dean was already giving what Cas might have otherwise taken. Dean relaxed his throat and took him deep, nose nestling briefly into the curl of hair at the base of his cock, inhaling his scent, soap and clean sweat and those hints of sunshine and honey that were entirely and perfectly Cas.

Then the grip in his hair drew him back and pressed him forward again, starting a steady rhythm. The hand eased as Dean took up the rhythm readily, saliva coating Cas’s cock as he took it deep. He didn’t know whether ‘no prep’ included lube or not, but just to be safe, he did not hold back for fear of being sloppy. Drooling a little was a small price to pay for easing the inevitable burn. Well—some of it, anyway. Dean would not lie to himself, would not pretend that he didn’t feed on that burn.

Hands wrapped around the back of the tight muscles of Cas’s thighs, steadying himself, Dean drew back enough to run his tongue along the underside of Cas’s cock, causing it to twitch slightly. He knew a bare second before it happened that the hand in his hair was about to tighten, to draw him away. The whisper came from above him, gravelly and urgent.


Dean didn’t quite fling himself backward, but he didn’t waste any time, either. Shifting so that he rested on his ass rather than his knees, he stretched backward until the length of his body was lain along the tile floor. It was cool against his heated skin, and without needing to be told, he bent his knees, spreading his thighs wide and resting his feet flat on the floor.

There was a split second of indecision in Cas’s eyes—almost unheard of in mid-scene (although Dean could not quite be sure if they were scening or not, and anyway, the line that delineated scene from everything else was often less than perfectly defined between them), which was quickly washed away in his usual surety. He turned away for half a second, drawing a low, uncontrollable whine of protest from Dean. He was back a moment later, a tiny bottle in his hand, and Dean realized that Cas had changed his mind, opting for lube where he had planned on none. It was, Dean recognized, a tip of his head toward the electric moments of intense connection, which he was now going to honor by not merely fucking Dean, but also making love to him. Cas was the only person Dean had ever been with who could do both simultaneously.

Still looming above Dean, the nearest lamp was just behind Cas, silhouetting him in a soft glow. Dean caught in his breath, transported by the beauty of his angel, the perfect lines of his body, its curves and concavities. Gazing down at him, Cas took a spare moment to slick himself up, quickly but thoroughly, and then he sank to his knees. He bent forward until he hovered just above Dean, whose hips canted upward, raising his ass an inch off the floor in offering, in plea. Cas took what was offered and answered the plea.

The penetration came suddenly. One moment Dean was panting in anticipation of it, and the next Cas was fully seated inside of him, soft pubic hair tickling the underside of Dean’s balls. Dean gasped in a strangled breath, arching his back, reaching his hands upward toward Cas in wordless need. Cas’s hands came down, wrapping around Dean’s wrists and bearing them backward to the floor, pinning them at either side of his head with firm, steady pressure. Dean was only dimly aware of this through the burn of his body attempting to adjust to the intruder. For once, Cas let him fully adjust, face both hard and impossibly tender as he gazed down at Dean. Dean discovered his legs
They fell into the rhythm, then, Cas driving into him, body hovering just inches above Dean’s own. Dean was panting, unable to produce any real sounds until the moment when he found himself speaking, a demand and plea wrapped up together.

"Kiss me," and then, in awareness of what they were to one another, "Please, Cas."

The angel did not deny him. He crashed their lips together, tongues tangling, teeth clicking against one another. They devoured one another with equal fervor, Dean giving no less than he took. All the while, Cas’s hips rose and fell, the delicious friction drawing a moan from Dean’s throat which Cas swallowed greedily. The thrusts turned sharper, the force of Cas’s cock driving Dean’s ass into the floor. Dean gave himself over to it, letting Cas’s assault crash over him with no less force than the waves of a hurricane pounded the beach.

Dean did not register it at the time, but later, when they were lying in his bed, every inch of Cas pressed snugly against his back, he would dimly remember the sounds that the press of Cas’s cock and lips had not allowed to penetrate his consciousness,

“Hey, can one of you grab me a glass of—“

Honestly, even if he had registered it, had heard the almost silent footfalls or the words that barely preceded Sam’s entry in the room, and then the inhalation of surprised horror, Dean did not have enough space left in which to care that poor Sam had yet again stumbled upon something he had no desire to witness. This time Sam didn’t even scream, although later Dean would piece together the sounds that had no meaning to him at the time, a strangled voice grating out,

“God dammit, you guys,” before the footsteps retreated a good deal faster than they had approached.

In the moment, Dean had no awareness to spare for anything but Cas. His entire being was absorbed in their points of connection at lips and groin and wrists. Cas didn’t even hesitate this time, continued fucking Dean through the momentary interruption, and when his hands slid from Dean’s wrists to entwine their fingers, the thrusts came no less sharply for it.

The climax came upon Dean without warning. One moment he was rocking with Cas’s thrusts, sure that he could live in this moment of joining forever, and the next his body was shaking apart with the force of it. His cock pulsed, painting both of their stomachs, and Cas fucked him through it, giving him no quarter. Dean wouldn’t have asked for it, anyway. He barely registered that he was wailing into Cas’s mouth, or that Cas was swallowing it all greedily. As he started to float downward slowly from the peak, he became aware of the length of Cas still buried inside, twitching a moment before it released its load deep within him.

They came back to themselves slowly. Cas’s body was flush with Dean’s now, his softening cock still anchored within. Their fingers were tangled, foreheads pressed tightly together as they panted, mouths scant centimeters apart. Long seconds rolled out quietly, and when Cas’s voice spoke, he sounded no less wrecked than Dean felt.

"I love you, too."

Chapter End Notes
Chapter-specific tags and warnings: mentions of spanking with belts and orgasm denial. Also, Sam, interrupting. Again. Does anyone else sense a pattern emerging?
Just Enough

Chapter Summary

In which Sam is astonishingly chill, until he is not, Cas is remarkably patient, until he is not, and Dean is a lot mushier than he will ever admit. Also, there are waffles.

Author's Note: This chapter is...more (you'll understand that reference later) than I thought it would be. More of everything. More fluff, more kink, and God knows, more words (for comparison's sake, if every other chapter were as long as this one, there would only be four chapters). That's one of the reasons it comes so late in the day today. The other one is that my poor beta readers have to sleep sometime, or so they tell me (I'm not entirely convinced). As a result, this chapter is mostly unbetaed, and any errors in it should be blamed on me and not on my practically superhuman beta readers. (Feel better, phaelsafe! I lurve you!)

Side note: I'm not completely satisfied with the title of this chapter. It may change over the next couple days if I figure out what's wrong with it, and how to fix it.

As always, chapter-specific warnings can be found at the end.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The next morning, Dean wouldn't entirely remember how they got from the library floor back into his bedroom. At some point, with Cas spooned closely behind him under the covers, Dean recalled asking whether Sam had actually interrupted them yet again. Cas confirmed it and Dean, in a moment of generosity, mused sleepily that one of them should probably go bring Sam a glass of water, since it seemed likely that's what he wanted in the first place. Cas, clearly recognizing that Dean was in no shape to do so, slid out of bed with promises to return shortly.

Dean drifted in and out, sleep wrapping him in its tendrils bit by bit, but he was still barely clinging to consciousness when Cas lifted the sheets to snuggle against him. Cas reported, slightly bemused, “He did not say anything about it. Didn’t even sound upset. Just thanked me for the glass of water and said he had been thirsty, and it was thoughtful of me to bring him one since he had no plans to go anywhere near the hive.”

In his state of semi-somnolence, Dean registered more from the tone of Cas’s voice than the information itself that something about it was odd. Cas, recognizing this, tipped his head forward and pressed a gentle kiss to the back of Dean’s shoulder, his soft voice ushering Dean into darkness.

“Sleep now, baby.”

Dean did.

~*~

Much later, when the snow had all melted and the weight of real life had settled back upon his shoulders, Dean would muse that he had never slept so soundly as during the time in which the
outside world had no claim on him. If he’d been asked ahead of time, Dean might have predicted that the eight feet of snow in front of their door would leave him feeling straight-jacketed and uneasy. He would’ve been wrong. The entrapment that pressed down on Castiel like a weight settled on Dean like a soft blanket, cloaking him just for a little while from the pressure of broader expectations, the responsibility to ensure the safety of the world outside. When he had no choice but to abandon for a brief time the never-ending quest to protect, to hunt, to save, the underlying guilt that had never let him fully appreciate rare moments of freedom in the past left him alone. He had never realized just what a relief it would be.

Awareness found him slowly that morning, coaxing him from the arms of sleep over long moments. When his thoughts finally coalesced into something resembling order, he registered the feather-light brush of Cas’s lips, dusting across the back of his neck. There was no urgency in the kisses, no heat. Cas was not endeavoring to start anything, just giving his deep affection an outlet in the contact. Dean made a soft, sleepy sound of merged contentment and greeting, tipping his head back so Cas’s forehead pressed against his hair. He felt rather than heard the smile.

“Good morning, Dean.”

Dean hummed a response, not demanding that his sleep-muddled brain produce words quite yet. Cas was unperturbed, accepting the low sound as adequate response and going on.

“I would’ve brought you breakfast in bed, but…”

But, indeed. After one too many disasters in the kitchen, including a particularly memorable incident that resulted in the fire extinguisher needing to be replaced, he and Cas had come to an understanding about well-meaning attempts to feed him. Dean would, he had told Cas, much rather have a bowl of cereal or a sandwich—or even fix his own sustenance—than have to put the demolished kitchen back together in the wake of another attempt at meal preparation from the angel. Cas had accepted this with good grace, recognizing that although he possessed many enviable abilities, skill in the kitchen was not one of them. Dean was the accepted chef in their ragtag little family, a role which he did not mind. He enjoyed cooking. They spent so much time in destructive actions, it was nice to be able to create sometimes. Plus, he got to decide what they ate. If he let Sam loose on their meals, he was as likely as not to end up with salad for dinner (salad, Dean resolutely insisted, was a *side item. It was not* a meal.), which was simply untenable. He was a man. He needed meals of substance. Red meat. Starches. And even Sam had to admit that Dean had a gift for it.

Cas gave Dean another few minutes to swim his way slowly toward full alertness, returning to pressing light kisses, this time across the width of Dean’s shoulder blades. Finally, Dean opened his eyes and turned his head toward Cas in wordless demand for a good morning kiss. After all they had been through, a little dragon breath was hardly likely to tear them asunder. Cas obliged him, and Dean rolled forward, stretching his muscles to test what stiffness remained. He was certainly better than yesterday, although there were still a few twinges to protest the unusually sustained battle, not to mention the diversion that had followed it. Glancing at the clock across the room, Dean found that he had again put in a good nine hours. Sam, no doubt, would be wide awake, probably had gone for a run through the halls of the bunker (*what kind of lunatic ran for recreation, rather than because something was chasing him??*) and was almost certainly hovering somewhere nearby, anxiously awaiting Dean’s appearance and the sustenance that was likely to follow. Plus, he was probably saving up accusatory quips about what he had witnessed last night.

Sitting up and settling his feet onto the floor, Dean dug his softest, oldest jeans out of a drawer and topped them with a ribbed henley. He settled for warm wool socks and didn’t bother with shoes, in deference to the fact that he knew he wouldn’t be going outside today. Glancing over his shoulder at
the sound of one of his drawers opening, he saw that even Cas was dispensing with his uniform in favor of a pair of Dean’s sweatpants and a long-sleeved tee. Grinning a little (he loved when Cas wore his clothes), Dean leaned a hip against the dresser and crossed his arms to watch Cas dress, observing, “Wow, Cas, really letting your hair down, aren’t you?”

The angel looked briefly confused, raising a hand toward his somewhat uneven hair uncertainly before he seemed to put together what Dean was implying and shrugged. “There seems little point in not being comfortable, given the unlikelihood of needing to be dressed for the outdoors today. In addition, I would prefer to have full range of motion for our later activities,” he added in a deceptively casual voice, his eyes shifting to pin Dean in place with their glittering intensity for a long moment.

Dean found himself shifting restlessly. He chose to blaze past the implications Cas was making and cleared his throat a little, somewhat impressed with how steady his voice sounded when he responded. “Well, it’s a good look on you.”

Cas smiled almost shyly, the predatory intensity gone as quickly as it had appeared in favor of his natural sweetness. Dean reached out a hand, twining his fingers with the angel’s as Cas provided them in response to the overture. “How about we go get me some breakfast and see how bitchy Sam’s feeling after last night?”

A slightly odd expression crossed Cas’s face as he nodded agreement. “I do not know. He seemed strangely unbothered when I brought him his water.”

Dean vaguely remembered the exchange when Cas had returned to bed, and shrugged a little. “Maybe it hadn’t really processed yet? C’mon, I’m starving.”

He led Cas down the hall and into the library, where Sam, who was seated in front of his laptop, looked up with a welcoming smile.

“Morning! What do you think about waffles for breakfast? I’ve got a craving,” he informed them cheerfully, adding a little apologetically, “I’d offer to do the dishes, but we all know I’m not going in there.”

Dean paused and looked closer at Sam, a little befuddled by the apparent lack of resentment or even acknowledgment of what he’d unwittingly witnessed. “You’re in an awfully good mood this morning,” he observed, and Sam shrugged easily. “I slept really well. No wonder, after the day we had. I’ve actually only been up for about 45 minutes myself.”

“And you’re not…upset with us?” Dean probed cautiously. He was loath to reignite Sam’s ire, but the total lack of any reaction was just weird. Sam glanced up at him in what appeared to be astonishment.

“Why, should I be?” He lifted an uneasy hand to his hair. “You didn’t put Nair in my shampoo again, did you?”

“Uh. No.”

“Oh, good,” he sounded relieved but otherwise appeared mystified as to why Dean was expecting his anger, “so how about those waffles?”

“…sure, waffles sound good. Coming right up. Cas, you wanna help me with the prep?”
In reality, Dean could more than handle the prep himself. Waffles were easy. He mostly wanted to confer over Sam’s lack of bitchiness with the angel, who seemed to recognize what Dean was up to and nodded readily. Hands still intertwined—which Sam noticed and smiled at before turning back to his laptop—Dean led Cas into the kitchen, where he turned on him.

“What the hell?”

“I do not know. This is exactly how he seemed last night. As if it never happened. Do you suppose he is possessed?”

Dean actually paused to consider this for a second. “Nah, can’t be. The anti-possession tattoos work, not to mention nothing can get into the bunker. Maybe he’s just in denial? I don’t know. Let’s not look a gift horse in the mouth.”

Cas looked bewildered and opened his mouth, clearly ready to make an observation about the presumptive mouths of gift horses. Dean forestalled this. “It means let’s not second guess something good that was given to us.”

Cas nodded in understanding. “that makes a great deal more sense. So, what do you need me to do to assist you in waffle-making,” he asked expectantly.

Dean grinned at him. “Stay out of my way. We don’t need any fires in here.”

Cas appeared to consider being offended but decided against it, since they both knew perfectly well that Dean wasn’t wrong about his disastrous kitchen tendencies. Dean puttered around, gathering ingredients and adding them to a mixing bowl as he heated up the waffle maker. Cas leaned against one of the counters and watched him work with a slight smile on his face. He enjoyed watching Dean cook, which Dean found endearing. About twenty minutes later, Dean had three perfect Belgian waffles to show for his efforts. Plating two of them, he tossed some whipped cream and fruit on Sam’s, figuring he might as well keep him in good spirits. For his own he opted for butter and syrup. He gave Cas the task of carrying two glasses of orange juice back out to the library while he turned off the waffle maker and set the dishes in the sink to be washed after breakfast, then brought the two plates out to where Sam waited. Sam looked up as he approached, face breaking into a welcoming smile.

“Thanks, Dean, this looks great,” he said warmly, accepting the plate of waffles.

Dean shrugged internally and went with it, grinning back. “Hey, no problem. There’s another one in the kitchen that I figure we can split.”

Sam, who had already dug into his waffle with a groan of enjoyment, hummed agreement. He paused about halfway through the waffle just long enough to praise Dean, “This is amazing. I hate how fast you had to grow up, but man, I will never regret the things you can do in a kitchen.”

On an ordinary morning, Dean would’ve found this the perfect opportunity to traumatize Sam with a few well-placed comments about the things he and Cas had done in the kitchen more than once, but if ever there was a time for restraint, this was it. Busy enjoying the fruits of his culinary labor, Dean merely nodded acknowledgment at the praise.

Cas was kind enough to go get the remaining waffle once Sam and Dean had finished their plates. Dean plopped half of it on Sam’s plate, and Cas even consented to eat a bite off of Dean’s fork. He smiled a little sadly at the taste, shaking his head to indicate that he still couldn’t appreciate it the way he might have if he were still human.
Dean shrugged apologetically in response, glancing up as Sam stood and inquired of them, “I thought I’d do some laundry today. You guys have anything you’d like me to wash while I’m at it?”

Dean goggled at him but, following his own advice, didn’t look that particular gift horse in the mouth. “Sure, I’ve got a few things. Let me finish up and I’ll go grab them. Thanks.”

“No problem. Least I can do since I’m not helping out with any of the chores in the hive.”

Shaking his head minutely, Dean finished the last few bites of waffle and then headed for the bedroom to grab his laundry while Cas took their plates to the kitchen and set to work on the dishes (the one task Dean would permit him to tackle, although he did have a tendency to break more plates than anyone Dean had ever known). Returning with the small pile of clothes that needed to be washed, he handed them off to Sam, who headed toward his own room, actually whistling. Dean stared after him, then shook his head again and headed back to the kitchen, where Cas was finishing up the dishes, none of which he had actually broken. Dean kissed him in gratitude and congratulations, then settled to the remaining clean-up tasks. Once the counters were wiped and the waffle iron washed and put away, Dean turned to lean back against the counter, crossing his arms loosely to watch Cas, who was humming quietly to himself as he dried the dishes.

The sight of the angel, contentedly absorbed in such a mundane domestic task, filled Dean with a sense of warm fulfillment that seemed on the surface disproportionate to what he was witnessing. Dean had done a fair amount of soul searching before he recognized what was happening and why these moments struck such a nerve within him.

When you lived on the road, charting your life by the minute differences between a series of crappy motel rooms, there were a lot of things you missed out on. Washing dishes, folding sheets, making beds, and organizing closets were probably not uppermost on the list of things most people who laid their head at the same place every night would call themselves lucky to do. Indeed, those fewpeers who had found out what they lived like while Dean was growing up had often professed themselves jealous that those sorts of mundane chores did not figure into Sam and Dean’s everyday life. Dean, however, would’ve given a great deal to have the opportunity to bicker over who was going to do the dishes and whether or not he needed to make his bed. He’d tried to explain to Sam, in their early days in the bunker, how much it meant to have a place to call home. Sam hadn’t really grasped it, although he did seem to regard the bunker as more than just a workplace that he happened to sleep in these days. Dean was still grateful for the bunker every day, but this—the feeling that suffused him as he watched Cas stack dishes into a cabinet—it was more than that. It was about more than having someplace to come home to. It was about having someone to come home to.

Sam was family. Sam would always be family. Sam was the glue that had bound his life together for nearly as long as he could remember. There was no overstating the importance of Sam, in his life and in his heart. Sam was the linchpin on which Dean’s life turned, and that was unlikely ever to change. Sam was his responsibility, his reason for pushing onward even when he wanted nothing more than to give up, what had kept him alive and fighting for nearly 40 years.

But.

It wasn’t enough.

Dean wasn’t enough for Sam. Had never been enough for Sam. Sam, who from the moment he had been old enough to know what he wanted, had yearned for nothing so much as to escape. To escape the life. To escape Dad. And, ultimately, even to escape Dean—if only because Dean also represented the life he didn’t want for himself. Sam had wanted more, and he had gone out and taken it. Sam had wanted Stanford, had wanted Jessica, had wanted Amelia, had wanted a hundred things out of this life. Some of them he’d gotten, some of them he hadn’t. Some he’d had and then
lost—but the uniting thread was that Sam had never hesitated for a moment, not only to want more, but to reach for it.

For years, for decades, Dean hadn’t dared to even consider wanting more. The good son, the good soldier, he had followed orders, lived the life that had been given to him, and called it enough. Had struggled desperately to understand the brother who never learned how to say “yes, Sir,” suck it up, and do as he was told. Indeed, if he were honest, some small part of him had resented the hell out of Sam and his endless quest for more. If it—the road, the life, Dad, Sam—was enough for Dean, why couldn’t it be enough for Sam?

Maybe the first time Dean had started to understand, had felt the twinge of yearning for more had been with Ben, when the kid ran to hug him after Dean gave him an ill-considered lesson in self-advocacy. He’d felt it again when he believed he was walking headlong toward handing his meatsuit over to Michael, had dared to imagine what it might have been like to have a different life. And then, he’d had a taste of it. After Sam toppled into the pit before his eyes, after Cas had simply vanished from the car without any real goodbye. Dean had gone to Lisa, because he had no place else to go, and he had been given the chance at more—but it wasn’t quite right. It never fit. He tried, God only knew he tried, but—even without the desperate, tearing grief that was eating him alive, even without the barely functional alcoholism, even without the nightmares—life with Ben and Lisa had never been right.

When Sam came back, and Dean returned to hunt with him, he’d simply told himself that it wasn’t meant to be. That he didn’t quite fit with Lisa and Ben because he would never fit. Because he was fundamentally the wrong shape. He wasn’t meant for more. He was meant to be the good son (even orphaned), the good soldier (whether or not there was a war), the good brother (no matter how much Sam resented him), and that was all. He had accepted this, resigned himself to it, acknowledged that this would be his life. He would travel, and he would hunt, and he would fight, and someday, he would die, without ever having more. Because, ultimately, he didn’t deserve it.

He wasn’t entirely sure when that changed. Couldn’t quite pinpoint when, between the moment that he and Cas had toppled headlong into bed together and the first time Dean had watched him messily attempt to tuck in a bedspread, his expectations had shifted—but they had. After Dean had already given up, not only on having more but on even daring to want it, more had come to him. And somehow, Dean had settled into it so readily, so naturally, that he only really became aware of it in these small, quiet moments. He knew now, with some regret for all he had put them through, that he had not fit with Lisa and Ben not because he was the wrong shape for more, but simply because he wasn’t the right shape for them.

The right more currently stood in front of Dean, humming Led Zeppelin (speaking of things Dean could be proud of) as he hung a dishtowel over the handle of the oven to dry. Cas was Dean’s more. And with Cas, Dean could have it all. He could live half his life on the road, he could hunt and fight and save—and still have some place and someone to come home to. He never had to worry that his job would get Cas killed, or that Cas would judge him for his (okay, fine, call it what it was) codependence with Sam. Cas knew exactly who and what he was. All of him. Had, in fact, rebuilt him from ash and bone, molded every piece of his body and soul back together again, seen every fault, every failure, every flaw—and wanted him anyway. This, in the end, was the biggest gift that Cas had given to Dean, and he continued to give it day after day. If someone who knew Dean as completely, as deeply as Cas did could love him—maybe, just maybe, he was worthy of love after all. Just maybe, he did deserve more.

Cas turned to Dean, brows lifting in surprise at the look that Dean was leveling at him. Dean could only imagine how many things were contained in his expression, and was unsurprised to see that Cas appeared to recognize all of them. The angel’s face softened in answer to them, and he crossed the
kitchen toward Dean, who lifted a hand to cup his face as he approached. Cas’s arms slid around his waist and he tipped his face into Dean’s warm palm, turning his head to press his lips gently against it. Dean’s heart felt full to overflowing, and he dropped his hand so his arms could wrap around Cas and draw him in closer, until they stood forehead to forehead.

They stood like that, in silence, for long moments, content merely to exist within the same space, to breathe the same air. It was enough.

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Thirty minutes later found Dean on his bed, Cas in front of him, leaning back against his chest as they watched Poltergeist on his laptop. He’d discovered purely by accident that Cas had never seen it. Regardless of Cas’s crash course in pop culture thanks to Metatron, Dean could not abide the idea that his lover had not actually had the full experience (or, as he had somewhat more colorfully put it to Cas upon this discovery, “I can’t believe I stuck it in you.” Cas had observed that more commonly, he was the one doing the sticking).

As the credits rolled several hours later, Dean could sense the wrinkle in Cas’s brow as he observed, “I do not believe I would have let Carol Anne remain in the house at all, even long enough to pack up.”

“Well, if that two-bit psychic hadn’t made them think it was over—“

“True, but nevertheless, out of an abundance of caution…”

“You’re so going to be the overprotective parent,” Dean joked.

Cas ignored this in favor of inquiring, “do you feel better, having completed this stage of my cultural education?”

“Much,” Dean assured him, “even though I’m sure by tomorrow you’ll have horrified me with some other gap in filmographic experience.”

“For the moment, however, you are once again comfortable with, as you might say, having me ‘stick it in you?’” The change in Cas's voice was so subtle that anyone else might have missed it. He still sounded playful on the surface, but below that, there was a new undercurrent of promise.

Dean found himself having to swallow a couple of times before he could respond, aiming for playful again but perhaps not entirely succeeding, “Yeah, I suppose you’ll do.”

“How fortunate for me,” Cas observed, and what had been an undercurrent now rested plainly on the surface of his words, in the slightly sly tone, as he went on, “that being the case, I do believe we have an appointment to keep.”

Dean wondered if Cas, still leaning back against his chest, could feel the way his heartbeat had sped wildly. Not trusting himself to speak, he didn’t bother to try, merely waited in breathless silence until Cas sat up, swinging his legs over the side of the bed, rising to his feet, and turning to reach out a hand to unnecessarily help Dean up.

Dean went ahead and accepted the assistance, wanting at least a brief moment of solid contact with Cas to steady him. The angel’s hand squeezed his in silent reassurance. Dean squeezed back before letting go, and felt more ready to deal with whatever was coming.

“Now,” Cas’s voice had settled into the cool, authoritative baritone that never failed to make Dean’s breath catch a little, “you are going to go to the dungeon, where you will strip and wait for me. You
will not,” he added, “make any detours, stop to do anything else, or delay in any way.”

It wasn’t a question, nor was it quite an order. Instead it was a simple statement of fact, a nearly bland accounting of what would be happening hence, with no room left for other possibilities. Trying to maintain some semblance of his usual swagger, Dean quirked a brow at Cas to inquire, “The dungeon, Cas? Getting a little stereotypical, aren’t we?” He was proud of how steady his voice sounded, although he knew perfectly well that Cas could read the mammoth force of will it took.

Rather than chastising him for the delay or the talking back, Cas merely allowed his lips to quirk in recognition of Dean’s point. “Sometimes,” he observed, “there is something to be said for going back to basics, as it were,” the angel’s own brow lifted in a mirror of Dean’s, only his was an inquiry as to whether he would have to employ more dramatic means of obtaining compliance.

Dean, recognizing the futility of further snark in delaying the inevitable, squared his shoulders and turned to leave the room. He could feel the weight of Castiel’s eyes resting on his back, following him until he turned the corner.

He didn’t entirely register the trip down to the dungeon, lost deeply enough inside his own head that he blinked a few times in surprise upon realizing that he stood immediately outside the storage room that harbored the secret entrance. Swallowing twice, hard, he suddenly became aware of a pressure in his bladder that demanded attention. He turned his face downward, glaring as though the rebuke might suddenly make his urinary tract change its mind. Unsurprisingly, this was unsuccessful, and Dean spent a few long moments battling with himself over his next move.

Cas’s instructions had been very clear, and although he didn’t say as much, Dean knew perfectly well that he would not be pleased at having them so blatantly disregarded. On the other hand, Dean was loath to disrupt the energy of the scene by leaving to relieve himself after Cas reached him, and there was no way they were going to be able to get started without Dean making a visit to the facilities ahead of time. From the wording of Cas’s directive, Dean knew Cas was planning on waiting a bit, leaving him to stew in his own juices before joining him. He just, Dean reflected wryly, hadn’t realized Dean had quite so many juices to stew in at present. It was Dean’s own fault for not realizing the issue and requesting permission to make the detour that nature was calling for on his way—but that was too late to remedy.

With a tiny shrug, Dean turned away from the room and headed for the small, rarely used restroom on this floor, resolving to take care of business quickly and come back. If Cas asked him, Dean would tell the truth, but there was no need to offer up the information if it didn’t come up.

After he finished up, he washed his hands and headed back toward the dungeon. He froze in mid-step when he saw that the door to the storage room, which had been closed when he left, now stood just slightly ajar. Either he had misread Castiel’s intention to make him wait, or Cas had sensed a disturbance in the force and come to investigate whether his instructions were being followed to the letter. Stomach fluttering apprehensively, Dean pushed the door open far enough to admit himself and stepped forward to the shelf of boxes that had been slid forward to reveal the well-concealed dungeon.

Sure enough, Cas waited for him within, facing the entrance, leaning back against the metal table with his arms casually crossed over his chest. Rather than speaking up, Cas let the silence spin out between them, and then raised one eyebrow in wordless challenge. Something dark moved behind his eyes, a secret pleasure at the opportunity to take Dean to task for disregarding his orders. Dean recognized it immediately and, with the easy understanding he had become aware of yesterday, knew without having to think about it what Cas needed.
Cas needed a fight.

That wasn’t to say the angel would be dissatisfied if Dean immediately owned up to his disobedience and begged for forgiveness. It was simply that he would find a greater fulfillment in the opportunity to force compliance, in much the same way Dean’s ready submission had fed his inner beast yesterday.

When the knowledge struck him, Dean found that he was not averse. If Cas wanted to do this the hard way, Dean could oblige him.

He gave the part of him that chafed at the idea of surrender free rein then, allowing it to take control. It knew exactly what to do, and wasted no time. In the space of a heartbeat, Dean found himself taking one shaky step backward and then pivoting away. He slid back through the gap in shelves, made it to the door in three strides, and was out in the hallway. He did not hesitate, choosing a direction at random and fleeing down the dim corridor. He expected Cas to be on his heels, but was also not entirely surprised to discover that the angel had opted to give him a few seconds head start. The knowledge that Cas felt no immediate urgency to follow caused Dean’s heart rate, already elevated to start with, to leap once more. It was as if the angel had him on an invisible leash and was playing out the chain, giving him the opportunity to test its length and, perhaps, to exhaust himself before methodically reeling him back in. The notion made him feel more confined than actually being bound hand and foot did. There was some manner of freedom in knowing that no matter how he fought he was held. Quite the contrary, there was a cornered-animal feeling that came in knowing that even unfettered and on the run, Cas still had him exactly where he wanted him.

He made it to the end of the hallway and another fork. He had no thought left for strategy, blindly turning left for no definable reason and speeding to an all-out sprint. He whipped past doors, moving in and out of pools of shadow, the dull bulbs that lit the hallway at regular intervals not strong enough to banish the darkness entirely.

He would forever wonder how Cas knew before Dean himself did where he would end up. Dean had made no actual decisions, had no gambit, and yet when he came to the end of the hallway and turned right, the angel loomed before him, feet shoulder-width apart, unwinded, merely waiting with the patience of a stalking lion, blocking the hallway. Dean practically ran headlong into him, the patch of shadows hugging Cas so tightly that Dean didn’t spot him until the last second. He skidded to a stop barely inches before the angel and, before he could even consider spinning to run again, Cas was on him.

With one hand on his arm, Cas twisted him, using the momentum that Dean had not entirely lost to his advantage as he swung Dean into the wall. Dean found his chest pinned firmly against that wall, one of Cas’s hands twisting his arm up behind him, the angel’s other arm pressed against the back of his shoulders. Dean jerked in the grasp, testing it, and found (to his total lack of surprise) that it held firm. All he succeeded in doing was coming perilously close to wrenching his shoulder. Cas did not admonish him, merely kept his weight where it was, pressed forward into Dean’s back. Dean could hear his harsh pants, mingled exertion and apprehension, but Cas was breathing silently and steadily behind him, every inch the composed predator. Eventually Dean subsided, going limp in Cas’s grasp. This, too, was a gambit—a test to see whether the angel would loosen his grasp when Dean stopped fighting, perhaps giving him the opportunity to break away and run again.

Cas didn’t fall for it. His grip, if anything, tightened further as he pressed forward, hips snuggling against Dean’s ass. His head came forward, chin brushing Dean’s shoulder as his lips grazed Dean’s jaw lightly. His murmur, when it came, had a nearly vicious glee that made Dean’s heart stutter in his chest.
“I am so going to enjoy,” he told Dean, “taking that little moment of rebellion out of your ass. What,” he went on, “a gift. Truly.”

Dean trusted Cas implicitly. Entirely. And yet—there were isolated moments when he was reminded that Cas was an angel of the fucking Lord, a creature so ancient and powerful that Dean could neither hear his true voice nor see his true face without being seared from the inside out. Moments when he realized how easy it would be for Cas to simply…put him down. No more challenging than squashing Curtis had been for Dean.

Oddly, these moments were less often terrifying for Dean than reassuring. If Cas had been so readily capable of destroying Dean with a thought, but had held himself back (even fighting against the weight of brainwashing—and winning—to refrain from striking the ultimate blow) for this many years, no matter how many times Dean had infuriated him past all reason—well, it spoke for itself. Nevertheless, the realization never failed to take his breath away, and now was no different. Dean stood for a moment, a pressure far heavier than the wall weighing on his chest. Just before he was sure Cas would’ve stepped in to remind him to breathe, his lungs managed to struggle their way back to functionality, and he rasped in a hoarsely audible breath. Cas waited until it became clear that Dean was once again breathing regularly before he made his next move.

A flurry of movement later found them in transit, his wrist still twisted up behind his back, Cas’s head pressed against his, the angel’s chin over his shoulder as the pressure of his entire body forced Dean to walk. It seemed to take much less time to return to the room than it had taken Dean to flee from it, although they were walking (rapidly, true, but still walking) rather than running this time. Before he quite knew it, Cas was pressing him inside the storage room and then, as they passed through the gap in the shelves, shoving him forward and away. Dean stumbled hard enough that he actually went down to one knee. He had barely managed to struggle back to both feet before Cas had him again, and the voice in his ear was dangerously soft.

“If,” Cas told him, “you have any particular attachment to this shirt, you will allow me to remove it from you without a fight. If you do not, I am more than happy to tear it from your back with my bare hands.”

Well. That left little room for imagination. Dean froze, feeling like nothing so much as a mouse trembling under the whiskers of a cat, and Cas chuckled a little. “Very smart, Dean,” he complimented smoothly, and then his hands were on the hem of Dean’s henley, pulling it up and over his head. Dean never saw where he put it, because he was suddenly being borne forward again, a hand on the back of his neck slamming him downward over the metal table which, incidentally, was freezing against his bare chest. Before Dean could even consider standing back up or fighting, he found his wrists encircled with cuffs designed to attach to the table itself, although Dean was pretty sure they had never been intended for quite this purpose.

Cas stripped his pants from him with ready efficiency. There were a few seconds of silent anticipation in which Dean shivered a little against the frigid table, before Cas appeared in his peripheral vision, pacing slowly around the table until he stood in front of Dean. Dangling loosely from his hand was one of Dean’s own belts, folded double. The goosebumps that rose on Dean’s entire body had little to do with the cold metal.

“Our agreement yesterday,” Cas told him, lightly tapping the leather of the belt against his own thigh (he made it look as if it were simply an absent gesture, but Dean knew better. It was intended to draw his eye and his mind toward the belt and its purpose), “was for twenty strokes. It could have been fifteen, but you suggested that I was being too lenient,” okay, that was some seriously revisionist history, but Dean was not exactly in a position to challenge this version of events, “so we settled on twenty. Now, of course, I am forced to wonder whether perhaps even that is not
sufficient.”

Dean found himself holding his breath again, this time while he waited as what felt like endless seconds trickled by, for Cas to pronounce his sentence.

“I think,” he mused, “rather than add to your current count, I will forego any warm-up,” oh, ouch. The belt hurt badly enough even when he’d been warmed up in advance, and was enough to tear the breath from his lungs when it came without that courtesy, “and employ somewhat more creative means to ensure that the lesson sticks.”

Wait. What? More creative means? What the hell did that mean?

Cas paced back around behind Dean, leaving him to strain his ears in the attempt to determine what the rustling sound was caused by. He found out in relatively short order. Cas’s hand on his ass made him jump just slightly, and his breath cut off on a strangled rasp when he found his cheeks parted in a businesslike fashion. He could guess what was coming next, and he was not wrong. The slick silicone of the plug teased his rim for only a few seconds before it was pressed steadily forward. It was of decent size, though not as big as Cas, and caused a low burn going in. Dean suspected the size was chosen carefully, so he would definitely feel it, but it would not prep him so thoroughly that there wouldn’t still be a burn when Cas entered him later.

Cas wasted no time in seating it fully within Dean before patting his ass firmly, directly over the base of the plug, causing it to jolt within Dean and rub against his prostate. Dean couldn’t restrain the little groan that leaked out of him.

“There,” Cas said with lazy satisfaction, “that should help the lesson sink in.”

Dean couldn’t exactly argue the point.

“It seems to me,” Cas went on, “that you are very much in need of this. You’re very lucky I’ve taken it upon myself to ensure that you receive adequate…guidance…in appropriate behavior. In fact,” the slight smile in his voice expanded now, so that Dean could hear the Cheshire cat grin, “it would only be polite for you to express proper gratitude.”

No. No way, Dean thought, Cas cannot possibly intend to make me—

“With that in mind,” the smoothness of the voice belied the underlying threat inherent in the declaration, “you will count off the strokes, and thank me for each one. Sincerely, or I might think I haven’t been diligent enough, and should be trying…harder.”

Okay, so apparently Cas could be intending to make him.

Dean found that his wrists were twisting restlessly inside the cuffs. Not trying to escape, not even really testing their sturdiness (which he already knew was absolute), just…feeling the restraint, which he knew he would need before they were done. There was a reason they didn’t play with the belt all that often. It was intense, and Cas did not, if the pun could be excused, half-ass it.

There was a pause as Cas retrieved the belt from wherever he had stashed it while he prepared and inserted the plug. Then the measured tread of his steps behind Dean, followed by the light drag of the leather, starting from the tip of Dean’s spine, just between his shoulder blades, and traveling downward all the way to where the base of the plug protruded from between his cheeks. It was a tease and promise and a threat, and Dean became aware suddenly that he was shaking like a leaf. The belt drew away from his skin, then, and Dean tried to steel himself as the sound of it splitting the air came to him.
The expected pain did not follow, however, and the belt cracked harmlessly in thin air. Cas laughed quietly behind him, clearly appreciating the effect the test stroke had had upon Dean, who was employing considerable effort to force his clenched fists to relax again. Cas’s voice rang out, casually conversational. "I do believe I’m ready to get started. And how about you?"

There was only one right answer to this question, although Dean’s teeth ground a little at what was being demanded of him. Was there anything more humiliating than being forced to ask politely for what he was going to receive either way? There was no way around it, however, and it was better to get it over with than to engage in a power struggle he knew he could not win. His voice was a little less than gracious, but the words were right, and Dean knew that Cas rather enjoyed hearing the strain of unwillingness in Dean’s voice, behind the proscribed words.

"Please punish me, Cas."

It wasn’t enough, he realized a scant moment later, as the sound of Cas’s tongue clicking in admonition rang out. Dean lowered his head for a moment, rubbing his forehead against his own upper arm as Cas responded, “please punish me…what?”

He knew what was being demanded of him, not just now but for the duration of this punishment, and was not entirely surprised.

"Please punish me…Sir."

The voice that responded was openly mocking, no matter how polite the words were. “If you insist.”

This time, when Dean heard the whistle of leather splitting the air, he knew it was no decoy. Sure enough, the sound of a solid crack preceded by a split second the line of searing pain that spread out from the meatiest part of his ass, ripping the breath forcibly from his lungs. Dean’s body stiffened, the sound of chain rattling against the table as his wrists jerked against the cuffs. Cas waited patiently, not speaking, until Dean finally managed to recover his breath and find his voice. With supreme force of will, his words came out sounding a hell of a lot steadier than Dean felt.

"One. Thank you, Sir."

"Very good, Dean,” Cas praised, and there was such sincerity in his voice that it warmed Dean noticeably. His pride in Dean’s obedience did not stop him from continuing to carry out the sentence, however, and no sooner had the words left his lips than the leather was again singing through the air to land immediately beside the first stroke, so close that Dean doubted there was a millimeter between them. He recovered a little faster this time, but waited until he was certain his voice would not crack before he spoke.

"Two. Thank you, Sir."

There was no verbal praise this time, but Cas’s hand briefly brushed against Dean’s bowed spine in gentle approval. The next stroke fell just below the previous one, and the sound was so sharp it practically echoed against the stone walls of the dungeon. Dean’s teeth ground together and the chain again rattled. Dean let his hands grasp the opposite end of the table, fingertips digging in hard. There was the tiniest waver in his voice this time.

"Three. Thank you, Sir."

Cas dispensed with the reassurance, either verbal or physical, this time. The next stroke came barely a heartbeat after the words died on Dean’s lips, and this one drove him up onto his toes, muscles tensing in agony that should not have been nearly as delicious as it was. He dropped his forehead to
the table, pressing it into the cold surface. His voice was a little muffled against the metal this time, but Cas let it slide.

“Four. Thank you, Sir.”

The next four strokes came quickly, Dean counting them off through gritted teeth as soon as he was able to drag breath into his lungs. He knew from past experience that trying to space out his responses in order to give himself more recovery time did not go over well. He could feel the searing line of each individual stripe in a way he knew he would no longer be able to when Cas was done, and Dean felt as though he might implode from the weight of sheer sensation. Nothing could be more intense—at least, until the next stroke fell, carefully aimed so that it struck directly over the base of the plug, driving it sharply against Dean’s prostate at the same time the pain of the strike overtook him.

His entire body locked up, muscles twisted into knots. His lungs emptied of air and refused to open enough to admit any back in, and his head jerked upward and then thudded back down, forehead making a dull metallic sound against the table. Behind him, Cas was chuckling, the sadistic bastard. Dean floundered for a few moments before he got back enough air, let alone the presence of mind to remember what was required of him. Forget steadiness, his voice cracked like a thirteen-year-old boy’s when he finally squeezed out the words.

“Ni—nine. Thank you, Sir.”

Just to prove Dean right about his sadistic tendencies, Cas went ahead and let the next stripe fall directly over the previous one, fucking the plug back into him and causing the searing pain to multiply exponentially. For the first time, Dean let out a strangled cry, unable to hold it back, and dimly heard Cas’s satisfied hum behind him. At some point his feet had come up off the floor, letting the table take the full weight of his torso, and Dean slowly stretched them back down, making his fingers release the edge of the table before he froze them into place with the force of his grasp. Speech was impossible for long seconds, and Cas gave him the courtesy of waiting patiently for him to find his voice, which was as strangled as his cry had been.

“Ten. Th—thank you, Sir.”

The next stroke did not fall. Dean had been holding his breath in anticipation of it, trying desperately to ready himself. He was tied up in an agony of anticipation until Cas’s words came quietly, no trace of mocking in them this time.

“Breathe, Dean. Take a break.” And then, the words he might never admit he craved, “you’re doing so well. So good for me.”

Dean released a shuddery breath and let all of his muscles release their tension at once. He settled loosely against the table, which still felt surprisingly cool against his heated flesh. The shift of his breath made him more intensely aware of his cock, swollen with blood and leaking copiously. The last time Cas had used a belt on Dean, he had come untouched from its strikes alone.

Cas’s hand settled on his back, rubbing up and down in gentle reassurance, his voice as kind as his touch, “you remember your safeword?”

The question was really unnecessary—Dean could have forgotten it and yelled ‘safeword,’ and Cas would have stopped instantly. Nothing was happening here that he didn’t fully consent to—hell, that he didn’t love, regardless of (or perhaps because of) the pain that stole his breath away with each stroke. Dean nodded confirmation, but the nonverbal cue wasn’t enough for Cas, who checked in again, “what’s your color, baby?”
Dean’s voice was a little steadier, given some time to come back to himself, when he responded. “Green, Sir.”

The response came without delay, the praise again settling over him like a blanket. “So good for me.”

The moment was so golden, so utterly perfect. The burning throb of the welts across Dean’s ass, the pressure of Cas’s hand stroking his back so lovingly, those craved words still echoing in the air. Why, then, shouldn’t this have been exactly when the man with the worst timing in the entire world appeared?

Dean heard the heavy thud of steps and the sound of the door to the storage room crashing open. He might have sworn, but Cas took care of it for him, muttering a heartfelt oath in the split second before Sam yanked open the shelves, worried voice halting in mid-word, “Are you okay? I heard a screa—oh. **OH.**”

Dean fully expected Sam to beat a hasty retreat. After all, that had been his M.O. when faced with Dean and Cas’s so-called “after dark” activities prior to now. What he could not have begun to anticipate was the possibility that Sam would not only stay, but be overcome by fury of such proportion that he was forced to vent it by flinging what Dean realized after a few projectiles was his own clean laundry at them. Sam punctuated each projectile with one bellowed word.

“YOU—” A pair of socks came flying past Dean’s head and bounced off the wall in front of him.

“ABSOLUTE—” His AC/DC t-shirt landed on the floor to his right.

“ASSHOLES—” A pair of sweatpants actually landed on top of his back and slid sideways onto the table.

“I—” Dean wasn’t sure what came next, but he heard it smack into Cas with considerable force.

“CANNOT—” Boxer briefs followed, balled up so they had the same force as the socks, and also bounced off the wall.

“BELIEVE—” Sam wasn’t the only one who was having a hard time believing. It wasn’t like Dean could move, what with being chained to the table, but to be honest, he wasn’t sure he’d have been able to move even if he wasn’t fastened. This took over from the German nightmare cat in a hat as the weirdest thing that had ever happened to him, hands down.

“YOU—” A pair of jeans barely missed his head.

“DID—” Apparently out of clothing, the laundry basket whizzed by on Dean’s left, hitting the floor and sliding across it into the wall. Dean never did get to find out what Sam couldn’t believe they did (really, there were a whole host of possibilities) because Cas, who had been stunned into motionless silence for the last fifteen seconds by this tantrum, suddenly came back to life. His roar far outstripped Sam’s bellows. Dean froze solid and suspected that behind him, Sam was doing the same.

“SAMUEL WINCHESTER, HOW **DARE** YOU VENT YOUR IRE WHEN YOUR BROTHER IS IN SUCH A VULNERABLE STATE?! HAVE YOU NO SHAME?”

Dean blinked at the wall in front of him, jaw falling open a few inches. Holy shit. Cas had turned into a lion, crouched protectively over Dean, snarling warnings at the perceived threat.

A split second later, the sounds of movement, of activity too hurried and complex for him to sort out,
hit Dean’s ears. He craned his neck to try to see what was going on, but it was entirely out of his sight lines. The sounds faded backward, past the shelves that marked the secret entrance, then farther, and as the noises that Dean now realized had to be Cas bodily ejecting Sam from the space concluded in the slam of a door and the turn of a lock, Dean suddenly was struck by what Cas had said. He had actually had the nerve to ask whether Sam had no shame. When over the past four days, Sam had witnessed more shameless encounters involving his brother than any man should ever be subjected to.

When the rapid beat of Cas’s feet returned to the dungeon, he found Dean with his head turned to one side, buried in his own upper arm, body shaking violently. Cas’s voice was still sharp, but this time with concern rather than rebuke.

“Dean? Dean!!” He could hear Cas rush around the table until he stood directly in front of Dean, and it struck him suddenly that Cas must have thought he was weeping uncontrollably. He lifted his head so that Cas could see that although tears were standing in his eyes, they were born of mirth. Dean was laughing hysterically, his entire body shuddering with the force of it.

“Oh, God,” Dean gasped out, dissolving into another round that barely let him edge words out, “you told Sam he was shameless. Oh my fucking God, that is just—that is priceless.”

He both saw and heard the worried tension go out of Cas, whose lips quirked upward a little reluctantly. “And so he was. He had no right to give vent to his anger with you in this state. He may harangue us all he likes later, but he should have had enough respect to leave immediately upon ascertaining that nobody was being hurt,” he paused briefly, then added, finally cracking a full grin, “against their will.”

That about did it for Dean. He dissolved back into uncontrollable laughter, a tear or two actually escaping as he shook helplessly. Cas leaned over the table, pressing his head against Dean’s, and in a moment Dean could feel him chuckling too. It took a long time before Dean started to calm down, the effects of adrenaline from the strapping, from Sam’s entry, from the combined fury of both Sam and Cas possibly adding a small edge of hysteria that took a little longer to recover from. Finally he was hiccupsing and gasping, lips still twitching but the peals of laughter that shook his entire body complete.

Cas pressed his lips against the top of Dean’s head, then his forehead several times, then stood up. He came back a few moments later with a tissue, which he used to wipe Dean’s face, and a water bottle, which he opened and tipped toward Dean in offer. Dean nodded gratefully, rising as far as the chain would permit him. Cas tipped the water into his mouth, letting Dean take a couple of swallows and then inquiring with his eyebrows whether Dean wanted more. He shook his head and Cas capped the bottle and set it aside. Dean took another few steadying breaths, finally able to shake the grin which had started to hurt his cheeks by this point. Stretching his shoulders a little, Dean glanced from the spot at which his hands were pinioned, back up to Cas. The angel was still smiling slightly, and ran a hand along Dean’s face affectionately before he spoke. The words came as a bit of a shock to Dean—and yet, didn’t.

“Do you need to safeword?” Without waiting for a response, Cas went on, “before you answer, know that I will completely understand if this little…interlude has taken you out of the proper headspace. We can pause or discontinue entirely. If you wish it, I will unbind you, no questions asked. I will be neither disappointed nor angry with you.” Honestly, this little speech was unnecessary. Dean had safeworded twice in their time together—neither time because Cas had gone too far, simply because Dean found himself in a headspace that was very wrong, and knew he needed to cut off the scene before he sank deeper. Both times, Cas had been immediately responsive, the very definition of caring and solicitous.

“Dean?” he asked, reaching out to touch Dean’s face gently. Dean shook his head, spreading his arms wide. “What the fuck…?” he started to say, then broke down into another histrionic laughter, tears streaming down his face. Cas looked at him a moment, their eyes meeting. “You’re welcome,” Dean said, then burst into laughter again.
Nevertheless, Cas knew Dean well enough to be aware that somewhere deep lurked just a hint of irrational worry that he would disappoint the man if he had to call it quits on a scene. Cas made it a point to address this with some regularity, reminding Dean that using a safeword was an act of bravery and trust every bit as complete as submission. Both times Dean had used his safeword, Cas had later told Dean that he had never been prouder of him, and Dean believed it. He was filled with a rush of warmth toward Cas—the man who could beat him with merciless force and intensity one moment, and defend his honor viciously in the next, the angel who would strip him naked in every imaginable way, demand from him everything he had to give, and then assure him that he would always be enough whether he offered himself up in this way or not.

Dean tipped his head into Cas’s hand and smiled back up at him before squaring his shoulders and responding. “No. I’m okay. Green, Sir.”

Cas leaned forward to press his forehead to Dean’s closely, brushing his lips against Dean’s, his murmur laced with what Dean would swear was awe at how much he was willing to give, “my good boy.”

Cas stood up then, his shoulders squaring too, as if in unconscious mirror of Dean. He tipped his head to each side and then moved back around the table. Dean heard him pace back and forth several times, and recognized that Cas was bringing himself back into the headspace required to finish the scene. He took the opportunity to do the same, shutting his eyes and breathing deeply. He let his full awareness fall back into his body, using sensation as a tool with which to sweep away the absurdities of the past several minutes. He synced up his breathing in time with the throb pulsing through the welts left by the first ten strokes and found that this did it. He sank back into the same space he had been in prior to the untimely interruption, letting his head fall so that his cheek pressed against cool metal once more. Behind him, he heard Cas draw in a low breath, and then Dean jerked slightly as fingernails skated ever-so-lightly across the most painful welt, the one that had received a double dose of the belt. When they reached the plug at the center, he tapped one finger against it almost playfully. Dean squirmed against the table and heard Cas chuckle behind him.

The sound was entirely different than the mirth they had shared just moments previous. It was deeper, smokier, and edged with self-satisfaction. Cas was taking a moment to appreciate his own artistry before he went back to work. The knowledge sent a shudder skating down Dean’s spine. Cas observed this. His hand lifted, then, steps backing away, and Dean was certain he was retrieving the belt. When the steps again paced back to him, Cas’s voice validated Dean’s suspicions.

“You will count, and you will thank me.” It was a reminder, yes, but it was also a warning. He did not wait for acknowledgment from Dean. The familiar sound of a swish broke the air, immediately followed by the crack. Dean was forced forward into the table, cock smearing precome against the underside of the metal as it bobbed with the movement. His words came as a grunt.

“Eleven. Thank you, Sir.”

They settled back into the rhythm of it, the give and take, and by the time Dean counted off the seventeenth stroke, he was writhing against the table, unable to stop his restless movements, wrists straining against the chains that held him bent forward. Rather than rebuking him, Cas merely stepped forward, pressing his groin against Dean’s left hip, his left hand settling onto Dean’s right hip, trapping him against Cas’s body so that his ass was held motionless for the next stroke, which wasted no time in falling with merciless force. This one hit directly at his ‘sit spot,’ the tender area where thighs met ass, and Dean realized only when he heard his voice break on the count that he had begun to cry.
“Eighteen. Thank you, Sir.”

“What’s your color, Dean?” The voice was no less firm for the question.

“Green, Sir,” Dean responded instantly. He could do this. He could finish this. He was okay. Hell, he was great. At least, his cock certainly thought so. He hadn’t been given permission to come during this strapping. Dean was pretty sure that this was the only thing that held him back. He knew how pleased Cas was with him. He knew how well he was doing. He wouldn’t soil that by losing control without being granted permission to do so.

Cas didn’t give him a verbal response, merely drew Dean in a little closer against his body, tightening the grip he had on Dean’s opposite hip. Dean recognized from these tiny tells that this stroke was going to hurt like hell, but rather than bracing against it, he opened himself up to it, and when the belt fell across his upper thighs, Dean was lost. He dimly heard his own voice, as if from a long distance, almost dream-like.

“Nineteen. Thank you, Sir.”

“Good boy,” Cas told him, and then the boon, “you can come if you need to, Dean.” The tears that were tracking steadily down Dean’s cheeks streaked a little faster. Cas gave him a few seconds to breathe, to rest in the space of safety and sensation in which everything melted away but the throb of his ass and the angel who held him close. Then, one last time, the belt fell, once again laying a stripe directly across the place where the plug was seated within.

Dean wailed, body locking up, the searing pain of the strike and the jolt of the plug against his prostate not so much pushing as catapulting him over the edge. His cock pulsed over and over, painting the underside of the table. Somehow (and he would never know exactly how he managed it), Dean remembered as though from a great distance that he wasn’t finished quite yet. He had one more thing to accomplish before he had done all that had been asked of him. He could hear the sincerity in his own voice through his tears, and hoped that Cas could as well.

“Twenty. Thank you for punishing me, Sir.”

The sound of the belt falling to the floor registered, but only dimly.

Dean was floating, carried along in the waves of what was no longer pain but instead pure sensation. Later, it would be pain again, but now it was so much more than that. He thought muzzily that he could happily drown in this feeling, but for the knowledge that Cas would always keep his head above water.

As soon as he thought of Cas, he became aware that the angel was speaking, his voice low and soothing.

“So good, Dean, you were so good for me. I am so proud of you, you beautiful boy. You brave man. You were perfect.” This was one of the few times that Dean did not have any trouble at all believing the praise. Yes. He was good. He was Cas’s good boy.

He let the praise carry him off, again, and when he next became aware, his arms were no longer fastened to the table, his face had been dried of tears, the plug had been removed at some point, and a robe was being wrapped, very gingerly, around him. He hissed as the soft fabric made contact with the abused skin of his ass, and Cas murmured in sympathy, “I know, I know, that hurts. We just need to get you to your room and then we’ll take it back off.”

Dean thought dimly about protesting but registered the wisdom in this, lest Sam come across him
naked in the hall, actually go postal, and murder both of them bloodily. He bore the pain, allowing Cas to carefully lift him upright from the table. Dean wondered dizzily whether his feet would even consent to carry him, and then the question became moot, because Cas was sweeping him up into his arms like a new bride. At any other time, he might’ve had some choice words about this, but in this moment all he knew was how good it felt to be wrapped up so safely, with the muttered words of praise still ringing out just above his head. His eyes fell shut again, and what felt like spare seconds later, Cas was gently lowering him facedown onto what he recognized as his own bed. The robe was drawn out from around him, leaving his ass to sting and throb without the weight of fabric pressed against it.

He could’ve sunk directly into sleep so easily, but Cas wouldn’t permit it, gently coaxing him up just enough to drink a glass of orange juice, which he swallowed readily, and then to eat a bar of chocolate. This, he tried to protest, muttering disjointed syllables meant to convey that he wasn’t hungry, but Cas would brook no objection, and it was easier to just eat the chocolate in the end so that he would be allowed to stretch out once more. Cas vanished for a few seconds, and then Dean was startled to awareness by the touch of something cool and sharply stinging against his ass. Cas hushed him, making soft soothing sounds, promising that it would feel better soon. He wasn’t lying—once the initial sting passed, the coolness felt good. The bed shifted slightly as Cas settled onto it beside him, and Dean reached out blindly until Cas took the groping hand in one of his own. His other hand settled into the hair just above the nape of Dean’s neck, carding through it softly. Dean barely heard the words Cas whispered, already halfway down the tunnel and into dreams.

“Sleep, love. I’ll watch over you.”

He did.

Chapter End Notes

Chapter-specific tags and warnings: intense consensual, sexualized corporal punishment with belt, butt plugs (well actually only one, but really, isn't that enough?), bondage, praise kink, and, unsurprisingly, Sam, interrupting. (Did I forget anything? Tell me if I forgot something)
Perfect. Proud.

Chapter Summary

In which Cas is not quite finished with Dean, Dean has a hard time letting go, and both of them discover that he likes pain a little more than even they realized. Also, there's a granola bar.

Chapter-specific tags and warnings can be found at the end, as always. Also, please see the end of the chapter for a special author's note.

A specific, even-more-than-usual shout out to AtYourCervix, who immediately figured out a very important word that I couldn't quite put my finger on, and who listens patiently to the mess that is my writing process and cheers me on every step of the way.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Ow.

No, really, ow.

There was no leisurely climb back toward awareness this time. He had slipped into sleep shielded from the full effects of the strapping thanks to that special, dreamlike headspace (yeah, yeah, he knew what it was actually called, but there was a difference between submitting and actually, you know, being a submissive, and he was allowed to still have a few mental blocks about this whole thing, okay?). Upon waking, he found himself back in full control of his faculties, and that meant he had no buffer standing between himself and the stripes of throbbing pain left in the wake of Castiel’s—or, no, it had actually been his own, and there was something even kinkier about that—belt.

The sound of his own gasp was the first thing that broke the silence of the room, and he felt Cas’s hand—which had been resting lightly on his head, as if in benediction—resume the same movement it had been engaged in when Dean had fallen asleep, softly carding through his hair. Rather than trying to come up with words immediately, Dean settled for groaning. From above him came a chuckle that managed to convey both affection and self-satisfaction.

“Smarts, does it?” Cas inquired, clearly trying to restrain a little bit of his glee, and failing almost entirely.

“Well, I don’t know, Cas. How about I take a belt to your ass almost two dozen times and you can see what you think?” So sue him, he woke up a little grumpy from naps. Sort of like your average five-year-old, but that was beside the point.

Cas laughed again, a little darker, and the hand in Dean’s hair tightened, drawing his head back just enough that his neck felt the strain. They looked into each other’s eyes.

“I would have thought,” Cas observed, and Dean, recognizing the undertone, understood with a slight start that despite the aftercare, despite the nap, despite Cas’s gentle hand soothing him as he slept—they were not done yet. The angel went on, “that your sarcasm might be a bit less prominent
at the moment. What good is a belt to the ass if it doesn’t produce some manner of attitude adjustment?” Dean was silent for a few seconds, searching Cas’s eyes for clues as to how he should play this.

“My attitude is pretty hard to adjust,” Dean observed, dispensing with the sarcasm and instead going for self-deprecating good humor. Cas huffed a laugh.

“A truism I know well,” the angel allowed, “and yet, I feel driven to carry on with my efforts.”

Lips twitching faintly, Dean observed, “you always did have a soft spot for hopeless cases.”

It was a joke. Honestly, it was, but Cas knew how close those words struck to the heart of Dean’s only somewhat controlled self-loathing. Something changed in his eyes, and although his hand did not release Dean’s head, Cas shifted his body until he and Dean were nose to nose, and it was no longer a strain to look at him. When Cas spoke, his voice was quiet but solid with the weight of conviction.

“Dean Winchester, you are many things, but hopeless has never been one of them. You are the very antithesis of hopeless. And I,” he added, perhaps even more intensely, “will never give up on you.”

Somehow they’d transitioned from playful post-scene (still mid-scene? Dean wasn’t totally sure) banter into deadly seriousness. Dean felt warmed by the words, but a little uncomfortable, as he always did at praise he wasn’t sure he deserved. Rather than forcing himself to fully absorb Cas’s words and the unshakeable faith behind them, he deflected.

“Easy, Cas, I was just joking.”

“Do not even joke about it,” Cas instructed softly. He shifted back to his previous position, so that once again Dean’s head had to tilt upward at an angle that was just slightly uncomfortable in order to continue looking at him. He was quiet for a second, but Dean could tell he wasn’t done speaking. There was a slight, almost imperceptible shift in the air before the angel’s next words, as if the very room could feel him shifting gears. “Now then. What did you call me?”

There was only one right answer to that question, and Dean’s throbbing ass was powerful incentive to go ahead and provide it.

“I said,” Dean took a deep breath and steeled himself again. This particular, fairly uncommonly used addition to the scene still chafed at him, and Cas damn well knew it, “I was just joking. Sir.”

“Mmmm,” Cas’s voice smoothed out and the hand that was not holding his hair cupped his cheek briefly in silent praise. “It appears perhaps the lesson was not entirely ineffective.”

Dean kept his mouth shut, because he didn’t trust himself not to say something extremely ill-advised. Cas smirked down at him. He was totally onto Dean’s internal struggle, and seemed to be enjoying it greatly.

“You know,” Dean observed, making sure his voice was just on the right side of sarcastic, “has anyone ever told you that you’re a sadist?”

Cas laughed heartily, throwing his head back, then dropping it again so that his eyes could find Dean’s with unerring accuracy. They pinned Dean in place and stole his breath away until the words slid over him, with quiet amusement. Then there was a flash of movement, so quick that Dean could almost have missed it, if it hadn’t culminated in the hand that was not twined in his hair settling—lightly, but inescapably—across Dean’s right ass cheek.
The pain was a living thing, roaring back to full awareness, causing Dean to choke on a breath. His cock, softened from climax and sleep, chose that particular moment to wake back up. Dean spared a brief second for silent accusation in its general direction. *Haven’t you already done enough damage? You know, this is all your fault.*

His cock was undaunted. It always was. Incorrigible little bastard.

Dean realized that he was arching into the bed, away from the touch, when Cas’s hand tightened on his hair in warning. For a few more seconds, Dean’s harsh breaths were the only thing splitting the room’s silence, and then Cas spoke, responding to the question as if no time had passed.

“I have, in fact,” amusement rang in his tone, underlain by the swirling darkness that glowed in Dean’s reactions and was ready to do whatever it took to draw still more from him, “heard that a time or two. And I will admit,” he mused, letting the hand on Dean’s ass shift so that his fingers could trace across one welt with proprietary satisfaction, “I find it hard to fault the accuracy of the assessment, at this particular moment.” His fingers pressed in a little harder and the sound that was wrung from Dean sounded dangerously close to a whimper to his own ears. “Still,” Cas continued, “I would challenge anyone to hear the tremble in your breath, to see the perfection of welts laid across that beautiful flesh, and not find pleasure in it.” His voice had again transformed by the time it caressed those final words, a soft undertone of worship added to its other layers.

Dean, who was now battling gamely against both his cock and those goddamn noises that kept trying to escape him (and losing both battles, dammit), dug his teeth into his lower lip. He had two goals when he finally spoke. The first was for his voice to be steady. The second was for his tone to again fall just on the right side of snarky. He was pretty impressed with how well he managed it, too, “Delighted that my sore ass has the power to inspire such poetry,” The fingertips that were pressed, still fairly lightly, into a welt shifted suddenly, until one fingernail was scraping across the edge where two welts just barely met. Welp. There went the steadiness in his voice, and, okay, he gave in to the wordless admonition, even if his not-quite-steady voice was also not-quite-respectful, “Sir.”

“No doubt,” Cas said in a voice that was damn near jovial, “it could inspire sonnets. Operas. Odes in its honor.” Dean might have been a little offended, except that despite the humor in his voice, Cas was not actually joking. He really did find the sight (and perhaps even more than that, the reactions) of Dean’s ass, peppered with the evidence of his handiwork, fulfilling. Perhaps even awe inspiring.

Finally, just about the time Dean was pretty sure he was going to get a hell of a crick in his neck from the awkward angle at which it was being held, Cas released his hair. Dean let his head fall back to the pillow, taking in a deep breath and releasing it as the fingernail withdrew. He wasn’t foolish enough to think this was over, but he wasn’t going to turn down a chance to regain some semblance of composure.

Cas gave him this, resting beside him quietly while Dean’s back rose and fell with deliberately steady breaths. There was something pregnant about the silence, however, something that made Dean feel squirmy and uneasy. He tried his best to wait Cas out, but was on the verge of cracking and being the one to break the silence when the angel spoke again. There was no hint of humor this time, only dark promise.

“You, my love,” the endearment sounded less like an affectionate caress than a statement of ownership, “have a decision to make.”

Cas really, really loved making Dean choose. It was something about letting him pick the manner of his own undoing, forcing him to be complicit in the ways in which Cas would dismantle him. It spoke to the angel, to what Dean would continue to resolutely insist was his sadistic side.
Dean’s cock, the irrepressible little shit, perked up further.

Dean took a few moments to try to let his heart rate even back out before he attempted speech. He spoke very carefully, aware that it would be only too easy for these particular words to emerge with a level of disrespect that Cas would not tolerate. “What decision is that,” sure enough, he could hear the ironic tone in his voice, and before it could make things worse for him, he hastily tacked on, “Sir?”

Cas, who had started to stiffen a little, relaxed again at the honorific.

“I’m going to give you the chance to fuck me,” he told Dean plainly. Dean’s eyes flared wider. That was quite a rarity. Not unheard of, certainly, but uncommon, and never an opportunity he was likely to pass up. Which meant, if it were a choice Cas was offering him, there had to be one monster of a catch. He waited for it, and unsurprisingly, it came. “But if you accept my offer, I’ll be riding you. And that means,” oh. Dean caught on and for half a second thought about knocking Cas into next week, because this was one hell of a dick move, “you’ll need to be sitting down. On your ass,” he added, completely unnecessarily.

Dean literally bit his own tongue to hold back the responses that really wanted to escape him. He counted to ten, slowly, in his head, then said the hell with it and counted to twenty. When he got there, he felt in somewhat better control of himself, and was able to speak in a tightly controlled voice. “What’s the other option?” Oh, fucking fine. If he had to, “Sir?”

Cas, of course, was not remotely fooled by the control in Dean’s voice, and the amusement that answered it was a serious provocation. “The other option, Dean, is that we go ahead and conclude the activities I had intended for us earlier. The other option is that I fuck you. You will not, of course, be expected to lie on your back or sit down, for that.”

‘Of course,’ he had said, as if Dean couldn’t put two and two together and realize what that meant. He wouldn’t be lying on his back or sitting down—so he would be lying on his front, which meant Cas’s hips, pressing repeatedly against the welts that were still so sensitive the touch of fingertips sent a symphony of sharp sensation along his nerve endings. Then again, that was likely better than having the full weight of not only his own body but also Cas’s pressing his ass into the bed.

And yet. The opportunity to fuck Cas. He certainly wouldn’t mind a little payback in the form of some rough thrusting into that tight channel right about now. In fact, the idea was damn near irresistible—and Cas had to know that. Which meant there was something Cas wasn’t telling him, was likely waiting to see if he would know to ask. Dean was pretty sure he knew what it was.

“How,” he asked, using great care to make his tone as respectful as possible, “would I be sitting, while you rode me, Sir?”

He could sense the grin, even before he heard it in Cas’s voice. He’d been right—this was the inevitable catch-22.

“You will be sitting, Dean,” Cas told him serenely, “right on this very blanket.” Oh. Huh. Well, that wasn’t half as bad as what he’d been worried about—“On the floor.” Aha. There it was. So Cas knew better than to think there was a chance in hell Dean would be able to sit on the bare floor—but how much better, really, was one fairly thin blanket? “That’s not all,” Cas interrupted Dean’s internal debate, and he started slightly. There was more? This could either be very good or very bad. Rather than speaking, Dean merely turned his head enough that Cas could see his eyebrow quirk in inquiry.

“If you opt to let me fuck you,” Cas told him, “I will heal you of the bulk of your welts afterward. If
you choose to fuck me, I will not consider healing you for a minimum of 24 hours, after which you
will have to come up with some extraordinarily compelling way to convince me.”

And there it was.

Dean sighed deeply, recognizing that he sounded about as put-upon as Sam did on the rare occasions
that Dean actually put his music up as loud as he liked it in the Impala. Cas chuckled quietly and
spoke up again. “If being offered some manner of control in our activities places such an untenable
burden on you, Dean, I am more than happy to simply choose for you.” Dean felt a spark of
resentment. He hadn’t even said any of the extremely colorful things he was thinking! He remained
quiet, being careful even to control his breathing since apparently that was enough to get him in
trouble now, too. Cas let the silence spin out for a few moments, “I am beginning to wonder
whether I am asking too much of you. You seem to be struggling with making a decision. Perhaps
we should merely—“

Dean cut him off, making sure to sound respectful, and playing for a little more time, “No, Sir, I can
choose. Thank you.”

Cas hummed agreeably, but added, “Of course, Dean. Lest you begin to get overwhelmed, let us
agree that if you have not managed to make a decision in the next thirty seconds, I will make the call
for you.”

Asshole, Dean thought, very clearly, feeling at least some small satisfaction in the mental rebellion.
He didn’t have much time to hang onto that, however, because time was ticking away, and Cas was
—wait a second, was he…?

Yeah. Yeah, he was. Castiel, angel of the Lord, was very quietly humming the Jeopardy theme
song.

Dean lost about five seconds in an internal debate about who he wanted to punch more: Metatron,
for providing Cas with the pop culture knowledge that enabled this moment, or Cas himself. Taking
the last fifteen seconds or so to run through his options, Dean recognized with some frustration that,
if only because of the offer to heal him up afterward, he had to go with door number two again.
With Sam on a rampage after catching them at it yet again, Dean couldn’t afford to be limping
around the bunker like a little old man for the next day—or possibly longer. While he recognized
that healing him was a boon not only for him but also for Cas, since he was a hell of a lot more use
when he could actually move, there was just no way he’d be able to sit on his tenderized ass for
however long Cas decided to ride him and then somehow manage to be functional with no angel
mojo assist. As the Jeopardy theme song wound to its inevitable conclusion, Dean spoke up,

“Oh, two things. First, I’ve made a decision. You can fuck me. Second, I’d just like to reiterate
my earlier point about you being a sadist. Sir.”

“Noted on both counts,” Cas told him cheerfully, adding, “don’t be too sad, Dean. It’s entirely
possible another opportunity for you to stick that gorgeous cock in my tight ass will come along
soon.”

You know, that was just mean. Taunting Dean with images of what he had just willingly given up?
Just mean. In fact, damn the torpedoes, he went ahead and shared that. “You’re a mean, mean
angel, you know. Sir.”

“Don’t sulk, Dean,” Cas advised, “it doesn’t become you.” Dean turned his head back into the
mattress so he could make a mocking face and mimic Cas’s most recent words under his breath. A
second later Cas’s palm cracked down, nowhere near as hard as it could, but still quite firmly, against
Dean’s left ass cheek. Dean’s head jerked up and he gasped out a strangled moan at the pain that reignited along his jangling nerve-endings. Cas’s voice was deceptively mild. “Superhuman hearing, Dean,” he observed, “and there’s potentially a great deal more where that came from. This can be as easy or as hard,” his hand lifted and cracked down again, with the same force, against Dean’s right cheek, “as you choose to make it.”

Trying to breathe with only limited success, Dean recognized the wisdom in, as it were, going along to get along. His voice was uneven but came quickly on the heels of Cas’s. “Yes, Sir. Sorry, Sir.”

“Quite alright, Dean,” Cas told him expansively. “Now, shall we get started?”

Dean was pretty sure that saying ‘thanks, but no thanks, you go on ahead’ probably wouldn’t go over too well, so he managed to restrain himself. Remembering instead the way things had gone the last time Dean had failed to mention to Cas prior to a scene that he had actual biological needs (the repeated slash of a belt across a certain buttplug came to mind), Dean tipped his head so that he could meet Cas’s eyes and made a face. “Not to spoil the mood,” okay, so maybe he was a smartass, what of it, “but I’m thirsty as hell. What do you think are the odds that I can get a water break?” He paused, then added with a mental eyeroll, “Sir?”

The look of self-recrimination that washed over Cas’s face was so intense and so sincere that Dean could actually feel himself melting. The angel spoke immediately, sounding as apologetic as Dean had ever heard him, “Dean. Of course. I’m so sorry.” Cas rose from the bed, sliding a hand through Dean’s hair in regretful affection. “I’ll be right back.”

Cas bustled out of the room and Dean drew a long, deep breath and released it. He had been telling the truth—he was quite thirsty, and definitely needed a drink before they could, as Cas phrased it, ‘get started,’ but he also didn’t mind having a few seconds to shift himself back toward the headspace that had been lost sometime while he slept.

He could, of course, easily have safeworded, but he didn’t want to. He wanted to finish this. Wanted to be able to be what Cas needed when he needed it. God knew, Cas always did the same for him. With a murmur of mental apology to Lisa for this perversion of what she’d first introduced him to in the year he lived with her, Dean went ahead and made use of one of the relaxation exercises she’d taught him. At the time he’d thought they were ridiculous, but since half the time his nightmares tore him from sleep, he woke her up too, it was only fair to give it a shot.

They had barely scratched the surface of the things that ate him alive then, but he’d discovered since he and Cas started this that they were actually really good at taking him out of his head when he got a little too cerebral during these moments. Now, the issue was less that he was overthinking and more that he was chafing at the invisible bonds Cas wrapped him in, but he figured the exercises couldn’t actually hurt. He set about envisioning his breath as a ball of light that expanded and contracted, and tightening and releasing various muscle groups one at a time. Okay, yeah, it sounded absurd, but there was something to be said for it. By the time he heard the doorknob turn and the door click open, Dean was feeling a lot more centered. He cracked his eyes open and pushed up until he rested on his elbows, quirking a half-smile at Cas, then blinking. “Whoa, did you get attacked by half the kitchen?”

Cas had brought the requested glass of water (full of crushed ice, Dean’s favorite), but hadn’t stopped there. He also had—Dean made a quick visual run-down and catalogued a granola bar, a Snickers, a banana, what looked like half a ham sandwich, and the last, probably slightly stale slice of a cake that had been purchased before the Snowpocalypse.

Dean would’ve gotten up to help Cas with his burdens, but there was no way he was gonna reawaken the burning pain in his ass that much before it was inevitable (which it would be, soon
enough). Cas grinned a little sheepishly, and Dean marveled again at how quickly he could shift between slightly awkward puppy and dangerous, perfectly controlled Sex God. It was one of the many contradictions that made Cas…Cas. The gravelly voice was still rife with apology when he spoke, “I should have had something waiting for you when you awoke, Dean. It was an unforgiveable oversight on my part. If you would like something else, I can—”

Okay, as tempting as it was to let Cas trip over himself, especially considering what he’d put Dean through so far today, not to mention what he still had planned, Dean wasn’t going to let him beat himself up unnecessarily.

“Hey, hey, easy, Cas,” he felt comfortable letting go of the honorific for the moment, given how clearly they had taken a break from the scene, “I’m fine. My blood sugar isn’t dangerously low, I’m not about to drop, you haven’t failed in your…responsibilities to me or whatever. I just need a couple swallows of water and I’m good.”

Cas nudged the door shut with an elbow while he continued to juggle his haul, then carried his burdens over to one of the bedside tables and began to set them down. Once he’d accomplished that, he sat down on the bed and extended the glass of water to Dean. The startling blue eyes were very sharp as they rested on Dean, who knew that Cas was reading him to try to determine whether he was being completely honest, if he was really as okay as he said. Dean smiled easily up at him before taking the glass. He chugged about half of it in one swallow and might have finished it except that he was a little worried about brain freeze, what with all the ice Cas had loaded it up with. Pausing for breath, he took another drink, then handed it back. Cas took it from him, set it on the bedside table, then turned back to Dean, finally nodding. “All the same, I would feel better if you would consider eating a granola bar.”

Dean did consider it, then shook his head. “Nope. Afterward. I promise my blood sugar is fine.”

Cas narrowed his eyes a little, searching Dean’s face again, no doubt trying to decide whether to insist on the granola bar or not. He seemed to decide at last that Dean wasn’t hiding anything from him. “Very well. What is your safeword?”

Dean blinked. Cas was known to ask him now and again whether he remembered his safeword, but actually asking him to repeat it was rare. Cas was treading carefully, still upset with himself for not anticipating Dean’s bodily needs while he slept, and working to ensure that he did not accidentally fail to notice or meet any other need. Dean gave him another reassuring smile. “It’s ‘perdition,’ and really, I’m fine. I’m good to go, unless whatever you’re planning includes making me eat that banana.”

The quip had its intended effect, making Cas chuckle. Dean watched a good deal of the tension go out of his shoulders, but was unsurprised by the question that rounded out Cas’s next words, “I assure you that, of the many torments I have dreamed of subjecting you to, I would not dream of being cruel enough to enforce banana-eating upon you. What is your color, Dean?”

He didn’t intend it, but Dean actually sounded just a hair long-suffering when he replied, “It’s still green.”

Cas apparently took him at his word, because one dark brow lifted and his expression melted smoothly from awkward puppy to controlled Sex God. “It’s green…what?”

There he was. Dean felt the answering tug in himself, pulling him from affectionately exasperated lover back into prey. “It’s green, Sir.”

“Mmmm. There we go,” Cas murmured approvingly, prowling to the opposite bedside table and
reaching inside it to pull out a bottle of lube. He brought it back around to the bedside table nearest Dean, then set it onto the surface with a solid thump that made Dean jump just slightly. It was kind of unreal, Dean thought, that Cas could literally send blood pulsing into his cock with the mere weight of his gaze.

The angel’s eyes settled on Dean and stayed there as his head tilted slightly. There was an assessing air to his expression, leaving Dean to feel like he was being methodically examined for weak points that could be exploited. It made him a little breathless and he realized when the corner of Cas’s lip quirked upward that he had started to squirm a little bit from the weight of that gaze alone.

“No, then,” Cas’s voice was quieter and deeper, “where were we?”

It was clearly a rhetorical question, which was just as well, because Dean was busy trying to convince his heart to stop stuttering in his chest. He had limited success, and it wouldn’t have mattered anyway, because in the next second, Cas was reaching down to the hem of the long-sleeved shirt he had borrowed from Dean this morning, pulling it easily over his own head. The expanse of his firm chest stretched out in front of Dean, mouth-wateringly sculpted, a dusting of hair trailing down his stomach and below the waistband of the sweatpants that hung low on his hips. The exposed vee of his hipbones made Dean’s mouth feel a little dry again, and this time it wasn’t from dehydration.

Cas let him look his fill, smiling just a little bit, before his hands went to his sweatpants. He took his time sliding them down until his cock, heavy and swollen with blood, popped up above the waist. The angel let the sweatpants fall carelessly to the floor after that and stepped out of them, leaving him as naked as Dean. Cas reached for the bottle of lube, then, clicking it open with deliberate slowness, making sure that Dean watched. Holding it in one hand, his other hand reached out to stroke a single finger up the line of Dean’s jaw, then higher, skating along his sideburn before the hand suddenly gripped tightly in Dean’s hair. His voice was a low growl as his hand shoved Dean’s head to the blanket. “Head down. You don’t need to see what’s coming, only to feel it.” Dean knew Cas wasn’t demanding that he suffocate himself in the blanket, but he left his face buried in it for a moment to gather his composure. Then he turned his head to one side. When his eyes blinked open, he jerked a little. Cas was practically nose-to-nose with him, having bent over with incredible speed and stealth. The expression on his face said that he had clearly been waiting for Dean to do just this, and was delighted to find that Dean had obliged him.

“Hmm. Struggling to follow a simple instruction already?”

“You didn’t say I had to keep my eyes closed, only that I should put my head—“ Dean started, indignantly, but didn’t get the chance to finish.

“Tsk. So little initiative, Dean. When I tell you that you don’t need to see what’s coming, it should be easy enough for you to recognize that I expect you to close your eyes.”

Okay, so that just wasn’t fair. At least, Dean was pretty sure it wasn’t fair. Now he was expected to be a mind-reader, too? Cas must have seen a hint of mutiny in his eyes, because without blinking, his hand flashed out and fell with a light but sharp crack across the center of Dean’s ass. Dean hissed in a breath past his teeth, back arching a little as his ass jerked forward. Jesus that was tender.

“I see that I’m going to have to provide a little assistance with this particular expectation,” Cas observed in a tone that was clearly intended to chastise. Dean snapped his eyes shut immediately, not anxious to earn another smack across his already roasted ass, but that didn’t seem to be what Cas had in mind. He huffed a laugh at Dean’s rapid change of heart, then went silent. Dean reached his other senses out, trying desperately to hear, to get any hint of what Cas was doing. For all he knew, the other man might have simply been standing there watching him, waiting to see if he slitted his
eyes open again.

Without any clothing to rustle, Cas could move more silently than a stalking mountain lion. He demonstrated this a second later when, with no warning, a strip of fabric came down across the line of Dean’s closed eyes and was swiftly knotted at the back of his head. It was, Dean realized, only too familiar with the feel of the cloth, Cas’s tie, which had lain discarded in a corner after Cas removed his suit last night. He couldn’t hear what happened next, but could sense Cas stepping back to view the full aesthetic of Dean, naked and splayed on the bed, blindfolded and holding his breath as he tried to anticipate what would happen next.

“Much better,” Cas told him, “and now you don’t need to worry about disappointing me by opening your eyes. What do you say?”

Dean breathed in deeply, then let it out before he responded with the expected answer, quietly, “Thank you, Sir.”

“What are you thanking me for, Dean?” Dean recognized from the tone of Cas’s voice that he wasn’t merely being toyed with. Cas recognized the rough edges of Dean grating against the control, and was trying to help move him back into his—oh, hell, call it what it was—submissive headspace. He accepted the assistance, working hard to drop a little bit further past his instinctive resistance and toward the deeper, more primal instincts. Dean aimed for them, dropping his head and baring his neck in a gesture of acceptance before responding, “for helping me follow your instructions, Sir.”

“Good enough, for now,” Cas told him, “but we’ll try for something a little less generic later.” Dean forcibly pushed back down the knee-jerk urge to chafe at the criticism, nodding quietly. There were a few more moments of silence, and while Cas might have been doing anything at all, Dean knew instinctively that he was simply watching him, assessing, reading his body language. This suspicion was validated when Cas spoke quietly above his head, “Do you need me to bind you, Dean?”

This time the offer was a sincere attempt at assistance. Cas could sense him straining against his own urge to resist, to talk back, to be difficult, and was offering him a little bit of help. If he was bound, it was one less thing he would have to force himself to do. He would be held still whether he fought it or not. And yet…he didn’t want to have to resort to that. He wanted to be able to stay still because it was what Cas wanted of him. With a dim sense that he might’ve been making a mistake, Dean shook his head. “No, Sir, I can stay still.”

Cas was quiet for a moment before he spoke again, “That offer is not without a time limit, so take a moment to think carefully about whether you are certain.”

Dean took a breath, then nodded once, “I’m sure,” and then, this time with real sincerity, “but thank you.”

Cas’s hand settled onto his head, and the next murmur from above him was unspeakably gentle. “You make me very proud.” The warmth of that touch and those words blossomed within him, further loosening Dean’s grasp on his resistance. As hard as it was to relax his death-grip, the more he let it slip away, the better he felt.

It was always like this. The submission itself was better than maybe anything else Dean had ever felt. Exhilarating, freeing—practically transcendent. The best analogy Dean had ever heard was that it was a little like skydiving. Once you were actually free-falling, it was the greatest experience of your life. You just had to get past the hard part; prying your fingers off the door of the plane. Sometimes, Dean flung himself out of the plane without a backward glance. Others, it took a crowbar to get him to let go, and he was never quite sure why.
Today, post-nap, was a crowbar day.

His awareness of that simple fact expanded again as soon as Castiel’s hand lifted off his head and the internal battle started up again. With a sinking feeling, he recognized that he really should have accepted the offer of binding. Too late, now.

Dean let his fingers curl into the blanket, bunching up little bits of it to cling to and telling himself he would not let go. The blanket would be his binding. He was strong enough for this.

The slight movement of the mattress heralded Cas, settling himself onto it beside Dean. One of his hands skated lightly over Dean’s back, words quiet. “Just let go, Dean. It will be so much easier,” he urged softly. Cas was not talking about the grip Dean had on the blankets. He was talking much more broadly than that, and he was right. And Dean felt like maybe he could, as soon as that hand rested upon him.

That was when it clicked. The moments when he was able to start letting go were the moments when Cas was touching him. Something about the earlier punishment—so intense, so good, but devoid of human touch, devoid of the press of skin on skin—now he needed the reverse. He needed to feel every inch of Cas pressed up against him, feel on a visceral level as deeply as he knew logically that the lack of contact before had been incidental to the scene and not designed. He needed Cas to touch him, to prove that Dean was still touchable, was still desirable, was not repellent.

Once he put it together, he didn’t let himself stop to think about it, did not dare to permit even half a breath in which to second-guess himself and stay silent.

“I need——” he had to catch in a breath past the unexpected lump in his throat.

Cas’s hand stayed where it was. “What do you need, baby?”

The touch combined with the gentleness of Cas’s tone when he spoke unlocked Dean’s voice again, and he went on, “I need you to touch me.”

With that uncanny ability he had to understand not only what Dean was saying but also what he was not, Cas immediately flattened his palm against Dean’s back, widening their point of contact. At the same time, his body shifted closer, so that his bare thigh pressed against Dean’s side.

It was like an iron band dropped away from his lungs, and he was able to take in his first really free breath in long minutes. He dropped his forehead onto the blanket, this time in relief. Cas rubbed his palm up and down Dean’s back, gently, and asked yet again, “what’s your color, Dean? Please be honest.” It wasn’t an order, it was a plea, and this time, maybe for the first time since he woke up, when he gave the answer it was actually true. “Green. For real, this time. Sir.”

Dean was pretty sure there was gonna be a conversation later about the fact that he’d been fudging it a little all the previous times he’d told Cas he was green, but for the moment, Cas let it slide.

“We don’t have to go on, Dean,” Cas told him soothingly, and Dean felt his chest tighten again—this time at the thought of stopping. When Cas was touching him, Dean could not only give in to what was coming, he could recognize that he needed it.

“No, please, Sir. Please. Green. Please.” It wasn’t the most eloquent he’d ever been, but Cas got the message.

Now with a much better sense of how to ground Dean, Cas spoke quietly. “I’m going to remove my hand from your back, Dean, but only for a moment, and only because I need the use of it briefly. I
Dean found that with the knowledge that the touch would be returning momentarily, he was able to let it go. He did not force himself to find words, simply nodded in acknowledgment and understanding. Only when he had the go ahead did Cas lift his hand. Dean focused on the press of Cas's thigh against his side, and a moment later the hand was back again, and Cas was speaking.

“What happens next is going to hurt. Maybe a little and maybe a lot. If you need me to slow down, you tell me ‘yellow.’ If you need me to stop, you tell me ‘red.’ If you need the scene to end completely, you say ‘perdition.’”

These instructions were not new to Dean. This territory was so familiar he could’ve repeated it all in his sleep, but he recognized why Cas was going over it again, and nodded once. “I understand. I will. Green, Sir.”

Cas took him at his word. A few seconds later, two slick fingers spread open the deepest, most painful welt—the one that had taken three solid strokes of the belt, directly across where the plug had been seated. The press of them against the stripe the belt had left behind was incidental—what Cas was aiming for was between his cheeks—but there was no way to Dean’s hole that bypassed the aftereffects of Cas’s handiwork. Dean released a low sound but made no effort to move away from the touch, and a second later the two long fingers had nudged past the ring of muscle and pressed in firmly. Well-slicked with lube, they slid in easily, and with the help of the plug that had been seated in him so recently, there was no burn of penetration. Instead of thrusting, Cas left the two fingers buried in him, their only motion a slight spreading, a scissoring, intended to stretch Dean. Even the slightest movement scraped across his nerve-endings, and Dean for the first time got a real sense of what being fucked was going to feel like. It was going to be agony.

And he wanted it desperately.

Dean could not have said whether it was thirty seconds or five years later that the two fingers were joined by a third. At no point did any of them come into contact with his prostate, they merely continued to scissor, to stretch him open. At some point he put together that Cas was taking such pains with the stretching so that there would be no burn of entry. Dean was pretty sure there was a bigger point to that, but whatever it was, he couldn’t quite land on it, and didn’t try too hard.

Another indefinable length of time later, Cas’s voice settled upon him, its caress as soothing to Dean as the touch on his back and the fingers buried inside him. “You,” Cas told him softly, “are the most beautiful thing I have ever seen. Barely holding back your whimpers, opening up for me, that gorgeous ass painted with my stripes. You are perfection.”

It felt like a benediction, and Dean felt himself settle deeper into the mattress, part his thighs a little further in welcome. Cas took this as a sign of his readiness, and spoke again, above him, once more ensuring that Dean knew what to expect.

“I’m going to remove my fingers in a moment, Dean, and then I’m going to take my hand off your back. I will only be out of contact with you for a few seconds, and I swear to you, I am coming right back.”

Dean believed him.

“First, tell me your color,” Cas instructed.

Dean didn’t even register choosing to speak, but heard his own voice and knew the words to be sincere. “Green, Sir. Please, Sir.”
Seconds later, the fingers buried in him withdrew, as did the hand on his back. There was a quiet sound that Dean recognized was Cas slicking himself up.

What happened next was twofold. First, Dean felt the press of Cas’s body, starting to cover him from behind. His legs settled onto the bed, inside Dean’s, pressed against him. One of Cas’s hands grasped his shoulder firmly, spreading over the brand that it had made. With every inch of increased contact between their bodies, Dean felt himself melt further into it, felt the tension within him ease a little more.

Cas’s other hand must have been guiding his cock, because when it pressed against Dean, it needed to do no searching, no wiggling. Instead, he slid instantly home, into flesh so well prepared that it welcomed him readily. There was no burn, no strain at the entry. At least, not internally. Externally, however, was a whole other story. As Cas bottomed out, his hips pressed down until every inch of Dean’s ass was covered.

It was…unimaginable. The pain was so intense it defied description, so exquisite that it threatened to fully cross the line into pleasure. It took long moments before Dean realized that the keening sound he was hearing was coming from his own mouth.

It was as if he had been turned inside out, the burning that the penetration usually caused within now transferred without, spread out and multiplied tenfold, a hundredfold. Cas remained totally motionless, buried inside, pressing himself against Dean but still supporting his own weight with perhaps only a single hand in what had to be a mammoth feat of strength. Dean realized at some point that Cas was only going to go ahead with his permission. He wasn’t sure whether Cas had spoken this aloud, or if he only understood it, but regardless—yes.

Dean wasn’t sure he had ever heard a sound so wanton as his own moan. “Oh, God, Sir, green. Please. Please move.”

Sometime later, Dean would find himself forced to do some soul-searching as to whether Cas was a bit of a sadist because that was simply how he was, or because Dean had one hell of a masochistic streak. He’d known for a long time that he didn’t mind pain, even enjoyed it to a certain extent, but this? This was a whole other ballgame. It was a whole other sport.

And he was loving it.

There was no time for these thoughts now, indeed, no room for thought at all, because Cas had heard him, and responded.

The movement started slowly, a smooth withdrawal and an equally smooth surge back inside. His nerve endings wept with relief when Cas’s hips drew away, then wailed their suffering anew when the pressure returned. Dean buried his face in the mattress, letting it soak up his noises as Cas settled into the rhythm, keeping his thrusts steady and slow. Dean could not even fathom the amount of self-control Cas was employing to maintain such a restrained, careful pace.

Dean’s plan to keep his hands twined in the blankets was moot. His fingers were open, raking across the bed for purchase, writhing restlessly. Cas recognized his need and settled his hands down, interlacing his fingers with Dean’s from above and pressing Dean’s palms down into the bed. Yes. He didn’t need to be bound because Cas would be his binding, Cas would be his anchor, Cas would be his everything.

Dean wasn’t sure when it happened, but he became aware that as Cas’s pace sped, a tiny measure at a time, Dean’s own hips were lifting rhythmically off the bed so that his ass rose to meet Cas’s hips. He was pressing his ass back into the thrusts, taking a little more from them than Cas was
demanding, creating a little more force in them than Cas was imposing.

God help all three of them, it really was just pure shit luck this time.

Later, he and Cas would piece together that when Cas returned to the room, arms full of food, the nudge his elbow had given the door must not have been quite sufficient to latch it. It had swung shut, yes, but at some point had swung back open and, as wrapped up in the scene as they were, neither of them had noticed.

They likely would not have noticed at all—hell, Dean still didn’t notice, since he was blindfolded and totally lost in sensation—but for the fact that Sam, long-suffering Sam, had to walk past Dean’s room to get from his own to the library.

The only thing Dean registered was that there was a moment in which Cas’s rhythm faltered, and a second later one of the hands entwined with his gently disengaged.

The next day, Cas would explain ruefully that when he glanced up to find Sam’s horrified face silhouetted in the doorway, he had done the only thing he could do—lifted his hand and pointed firmly toward the library, in clear instruction and dismissal. Sam, bless him, simply turned and blundered in the indicated direction.

Dean didn’t know any of that in the moment. The only thing he knew was the razor’s edge he was walking between agony and bliss. Cas’s hand returned to once again twine with his own, and his rhythm evened out once more. Cas leaned his head down, nudging it against Dean’s in clear instruction to lift his face from where it was buried in the mattress. Before Cas could even open his mouth to inquire, Dean let him have the broken whimper that was barely a word at all, “Green.”

He meant it, too.

Dean’s sense of time had not returned. If his very life depended on it, he could not even have begun to estimate how long Cas’s hips had been rolling into him, how long that cock had been spearing him, before the angle shifted just slightly and the next thrust drove it directly against Dean’s prostate. Had he been weeping before? It didn’t matter. He was weeping now, tears streaming from his eyes and soaking endlessly into the tie. By the time Cas unfastened it from around his head, it would be sopping.

The altered angle continued, and Cas pressed against his prostate over and over. It might have been ten times or a hundred or a thousand, he neither knew nor cared.

He would realize later that he had come at some point, but he could not have said when, and it hardly seemed to matter. There was no particular endpoint, no apex. There was, instead, the entire, earth-shattering experience, one undying blaze of pain and pleasure.

Cas came, too—Dean knew this because he asked and Cas assured him of it. Dean didn’t feel it when it happened. What he did feel was the moment when Cas withdrew from him, when the cock impaling him drew back and returned no more. Cas’s fingers disentangled from his, and Dean felt impossibly cold and empty, but only for a heartbeat. A moment later, Cas was pressed firmly against his side, angled in such a way that no part of him came into contact with Dean’s exquisitely sensitive ass.

So much of what happened in the hour and a half that passed between the time Cas’s fingers entered him and the time that he drifted into sleep would have to be reconstructed for him later. His memory retained only bits and pieces, isolated scraps of sounds, tastes, words—and an ocean of feeling.
Later he would learn that after Cas withdrew, he remained pressed against Dean’s side, holding him, until Dean’s sobbing quieted, until his shaking passed, until his breathing evened out. Only then did the angel remove his blindfold and step away from him for the seconds it took to get his cup of water and the granola bar he had refused before. Sip by sip, tiny bite by bite, Cas coaxed them into him, showering him with heartfelt praise at every step. Just before he toppled completely into darkness, Dean registered that the throbbing burn in his ass was fading, fading, fading—and then gone. Two words, spoken in that much beloved voice, laced with sincere adoration, followed him into sleep. Those words, they filled his heart to bursting.

“...perfect...”

“...proud...”

Yes.

Chapter End Notes

Chapter specific tags/warnings: pain kink like whoa, very mild spanking, blindfolds, mild angst, just a hint of sub drop

Author's Note:

Hey, gang,

I cannot begin to tell you how gratifying it has been to watch all of you become as wrapped up in the story as I am. Apart from Cumulonimbus, this is the first fiction I've written since I was an angsty 16-year-old, and I wasn't great at it back then. It has been an incredible experience to realize how naturally this comes.

With that in mind, please know that I love what I'm doing and I have every intention of continuing to follow where the boys and the story leads me.

However. This coming Monday I will be having pretty major surgery that I very much need. I've had it before, and the recovery was pretty brutal. As such, there will definitely be no update on Monday, and I can't really tell you when the next one will come. I hope, with the aid of some really good drugs, I'll be able to do some writing while convalescing, but I'm not comfortable making any guarantees or giving you potentially false hope.

I'm hoping to get one more chapter churned out before I go under the knife, but no promises on that either.

After surgery, when I get a sense of what my recovery is going to look like and whether writing is manageable, I'll give y'all an update, most likely in the comments of the most recent chapter (whether that's this one, or I manage to squeeze in one more), so watch that space if you want to have an idea of when to expect new chapters.

In the meantime, if you're reading but haven't yet taken the time to check in, comment, and let me know what you think, now's a great opportunity for you to speak up. I want
to hear what you like and what you don't, what the story means to you, the things about
it that speak to you. Don't make me guilt trip you. I have a Jewish mother. I have been
well-trained in the art of guilt trips.

At any rate, moving forward, please be patient with me, and know that Dean, Cas, and
poor, traumatized Sam are not stalled out permanently. I can't wait to get back to finding
out where the boys and the story take us next.

With Gratitude,

Your Author
In which Dean and Cas admit they have a problem (or at least that Sam does), Dean thinks some more Deep Thoughts, and trouble is a brewin’. Also, there’s a Snickers.

Once again, because your author also has a lot of Deep Thoughts, please see the end for an Author’s Note.

Chapter Notes
See the end of the chapter for notes.

Dean came awake to a hand on his back and the gentle urging of Cas’s voice.

“—have to eat something, baby.”

“Nrrrgh?” Dean managed an interrogative sound, but that taxed about all of his currently accessible brainpower.

“I know, and I promise if you want I will let you go back to bed immediately thereafter, but you have been asleep for hours. All you have eaten in the last twelve hours is a chocolate bar and a granola bar. You must eat.”

“Rmph.”

“I will have an easier time understanding you if you employ vowels,” There was mild amusement in Cas’s voice. The hand on his back was rubbing soothingly, and it made him want nothing so much as to slide back into sleep. It would have been so easy. He registered a little dimly Cas’s assertion that it had been twelve hours since he had eaten anything substantial, and was pretty sure that didn’t make sense. Hadn’t there been waffles at some point?

“Grb. Wrt tm st?”

Turned out Cas didn’t actually need vowels to figure out what Dean was asking him, although there were a few seconds pause before his response, presumably in which he was putting it together.

“It is slightly after 10 at night. How about sitting up?” Well, shit. When had it gotten so late? Didn’t matter. Sitting up wasn’t happening.

“Nnn.”

“Yes,” Cas told him gently but firmly, supporting his back with one hand and using the other hand on his shoulder to roll him to his back before the hand on his back pressed him upward. Dean squinted one eye open, rolling it at Cas in reproach. Cas smiled back at him sympathetically, but showed no signs of relenting. With a sigh, Dean forced his other eye to join the party and blinked a few times. He was wrapped in slightly surreal, foggy somnolence that reminded him powerfully of the times he had fallen asleep completely baked and woken up feeling the aftereffects. Dean shifted a little, stretching out his back, which boasted the kind of soreness born from not moving for a long time. He must have slept like the dead, barely twitching a single muscle for what had to have been
hours, if Cas was telling the truth and it really was 10 PM. A jaw-cracking yawn split his face and he shook his head a little, trying to clear his mind of cobwebs.

“Of all the things you’ve put me through today,” Dean grumbled in a sleep-heavy voice, “this is the cruelest. And I say that as someone whose ass is—” he cut off then, as it registered for the first time that he was sitting quite comfortably, with no painful protests from the ass in question. “—just fine?”

“I’m a man of my word,” Cas told him agreeably. “I healed you up just before you fell asleep.”

Dean fuzzily recalled Cas promising to do just that, and even more dimly recalled the all-encompassing throbbing burn from his well-fucked, welt-covered ass fading away to a pleasant warmth at some point. Pausing for a moment to continue orienting himself, Dean stretched his arms out in front of him, then tipped his neck to either side, earning a satisfying crack that eased some of the tension in it. “How long have I been asleep?”

“About three and a half hours. You went down hard, and were showing no signs of waking up. I would have let you rest, but you really do need to eat and, for that matter, drink something. Your body has been through a great deal. Healed or no, we must treat it with the kindness it deserves.”

The more Dean achieved some measure of wakefulness, the more acutely he became aware of his body. Cas was not wrong—as soon as he thought about it, a gnawing emptiness in his stomach roared to life, accompanied by a dryness in his throat that suggested he could use a large glass of water—or possibly two. His bladder was also complaining loudly that it was in need of urgent attention. Grumbling wordlessly, Dean swung his legs off the bed and rose slowly. His head felt full and a little dreamlike, a bit like it did sometimes after a fever broke. Nevertheless, nature wasn’t so much calling as clamoring now that he was upright, so he headed for the door.

“Bathroom,” he informed Cas, before being brought up short by a delicate inquiry.

“Perhaps clothes, first? At least put on boxers. It is the least we owe Sam at this point.”

Dean glanced down at himself, realizing for the first time that he was totally naked. He recalled the disproportionately hilarious moments in which Sam’s tantrum at coming upon them yet again had been interrupted by Cas’s righteous fury and snorted. “Yeah, okay, you might have a point. He’s probably still on the warpath.”

He crossed the room to his dresser and found that the same pair of sweatpants that had been flung at him while in the dungeon was now neatly folded atop it. He grabbed them and pulled them on, letting them hang low on his hips, then hunted for a shirt as Cas responded.

“That is not the case, actually. Sam has calmed down a great deal.”

The air was cool enough that Dean settled on a long-sleeved Metallica t-shirt. It was a little ragged around the hem, but still one of his favorites. He registered as he pulled it over his head that there was something a little odd in Cas’s voice.

“What?”

“I will tell you when you return from the bathroom. In the meantime, is a sandwich sufficient or do you wish to make something more complicated for yourself?”

“Sandwich is good,” he told Cas, pretty sure he was still fuzzy enough that any real efforts at meal preparation were likely to result in Cas-cooking-level disaster.

He padded his way to the bathroom on bare feet. Once he was done, he paused long enough to not
only wash his face but also brush his teeth, which felt a little furry after so much sleep. Feeling quite a bit more alert with the help of cold water, he returned to his room to find Cas waiting for him with a glass of ice water and a plate laden with a giant sandwich and a pile of chips. Suspecting that he was pushing his luck, he turned his most charming grin on the angel, cocking one hip against the doorframe and inquiring, “what, no beer?”

Sure enough, Cas gave him a narrow look. “Absolutely not. The last thing you require right now is alcohol, which is also dehydrating.”

Making a face but unable to argue Cas’s logic, he liberated the plate and plopped down in the center of his bed to eat. Once he was settled, Cas handed him the water, which he took a giant swig of, nodding gratefully. Cas took it back and set it back on the bedside table, and Dean grabbed the sandwich and took a giant bite, groaning in bliss. Not bothering to swallow first, his praise of Cas was a little muffled in the mouthful of ham, cheese, tomato, and lettuce. “Oh m’Gob, Cas, this’s mazing.”

“My pleasure, Dean. Chew and swallow, please.”

Slanting a gaze at Cas that was meant to convey that he wasn’t quite as funny as he thought he was (and earning a grin in return), Dean made short work of the first half of his sandwich, then inhaled at least ¾ of the chips before pausing for breath and returning to the previous topic. “So, what’s up with Sam?”

“When I had you settled, I left the room to locate him, as I expected he would be quite distressed after coming upon us yet again—“

“Wait, you don’t mean this last time, do you?” Dean wasn’t sure whether to be appalled on Sam’s behalf or horribly, somewhat meanly amused on his own.

“I do, in fact. You were rather occupied at the time, but it was entirely my fault.”

Cas went on to explain his failure to ensure that the door had latched, followed by Sam’s passage by the room, and Cas’s own somewhat inadequate but ultimately effective in-the-moment response. Dean couldn’t help but laugh, even though he was starting to feel sort of bad for Sam. The kid had the world’s worst luck.

“You know, one of these days he’s gonna end up gouging his own eyes out.”

“Funny you should say that, when I came upon him he was, um, reflecting upon a desire to do just that.”

Dean gave him a curious look, picking up the second half of his sandwich and taking a bite before inquiring, “what else?” It was clear from the way Cas spoke that there was more.

“He was not speaking to me. Or himself.”

“…okay? Then who was he talking to?”

“He was praying.”

“I’m sorry?” Dean goggled at Cas. The only praying he himself had done in decades was to Cas himself (and one memorable time, to any angel who might have been listening, but that was a whole other story), and as far as he knew Sam was no more prone to it than he was.
“I am quite serious,” Cas assured him. “In fact, he appeared to be…negotiating.”

“…with God?”

“Indeed. He was making quite a list of promises, in exchange for what I am to understand was a guarantee that he would no longer be subjected to our—er, extracurricular activities or, alternately, a dramatic rise in temperature that would expedite an earlier release than anticipated from the bunker.” Dean found his lips twitching, trying to imagine what kind of things Sam might be offering to the Big Guy in return for no more untimely interruptions.

“You can’t just leave it at that. What was he promising?”

“I did not hear the full list, but from what I was able to gather, among the possibilities were volunteering with the school for disabled children in town, attending church regularly, and, uh,” Oh, this was going to be good. Dean just knew it, “refraining from engaging in any further premarital sex himself.” Dean snorted so hard he ended up with some ham in his sinus and had an impressive sneezing fit before managing to dislodge it. Taking the offered tissue from Cas with a nod of thanks and still chuckling weakly, Dean raised his brows.

“So? Did it sound like he was getting an answer?”

“It did not appear so. He was requesting a sign, but I do not believe he received one.”

“Did he realize you heard him?”

“Oh, yes, I made no attempt to hide my presence. After he finished, he made similar attempts to negotiate with me.”

“He…what?”

“He endeavored to determine something he could offer that would convince me to abstain from any sexual congress with you until after he was able to leave the bunker and no longer risk coming upon us.”

Dean was torn between amusement and interest, and absolutely had to find out Cas’s response. “Well? Don’t keep me in suspense, here. What’d you tell him?”

“I expressed sympathy with his position, recognized that the past several days have been extremely difficult for him, and told him that we would make all reasonable attempts to ensure that there were no further incidents that he might come upon unintentionally. I did not, however, make any guarantees to refrain from sexual activity with you. I felt it unwise to make promises I would have little chance of keeping.”

Dean nodded his approval, then took another bite of the sandwich and shook his head a little. “I just can’t believe he’s, like, trying to bargain his way out of this now. Especially when he was so angry earlier. He’s got multiple personalities today or something.”

A strange look crossed Cas’s face, and he adopted the expression that meant he was in the process of having a revelation. Dean lapsed into silence to allow Cas to think, finishing up his chips and popping the last bite of sandwich in his mouth. He set the plate on his bedside table, exchanging it for the glass of water, which he took another large gulp of. By this time, Cas was nodding to himself thoughtfully.

“Okay, spill. You have your lightbulb face on.”
Cas blinked a few times and actually lifted a hand to touch his face gingerly, apparently for signs that it had any features that resembled a lightbulb. Dean grinned, “I mean you look like you just figured something out. What’s up?”

“I believe I now know the cause behind Sam’s rapidly shifting responses, but some further study is indicated.” Cas crossed the room to Dean’s laptop, then settled down on the end of the bed, flipping it open. Dean let him have at it, because he’d just noticed that a few of the food items Cas had brought into the room earlier were still here, including the Snickers bar. Snagging it and happily taking a huge bite, he waited patiently until Cas nodded to himself.

“It is as I thought. Sam is experiencing the stages of grief.”

“Hey—wait, what?”

“Elisabeth Kübler-Ross wrote a book in which she hypothesized that people experience five emotional stages when experiencing grief or preparing for a loss.”

“Oh, I think I’ve heard something about this before. What’s it have to do with Sam?”

“The first three stages are Denial, Anger, and Bargaining.” Cas was silent, looking at Dean expectantly. Dean stared at him for a moment before it started to come together.

“Oh. Oh! This morning, when he was acting like nothing was going on, all cheerful and shit! He was in denial!”

“Indeed. And then there was his response early this afternoon when he came upon us in the dungeon.”

“Yeah, he was mad as hell,” Dean confirmed, “and I guess it sounds like he was doing some bargaining this evening.” Cas nodded agreement. Dean grimaced slightly and tentatively inquired, “Just on the off chance that we don’t manage to keep him from more unwilling contact with our sex life, what are the other two stages? Neither of them is, like, homicide, is it?”

Cas cracked a grin and shook his head. “No, the final two stages are Depression and Acceptance.”

Dean considered this for a moment, then shrugged, “hopefully he stalls out here and that’s that. Jeez, is he gonna need therapy after we get out of here or something?”

Cas appeared thoughtful. “I do not know. I think we must acknowledge that it must be difficult to be trapped with no possibility of escape with two others, one of whom is the older brother you look up to, who are engaging in frequent sexual relations—much of which are distinctly outside the mainstream—which they take little pains to conceal from you.”

“I mean, it’s not like we’re doing it on purpose. We haven’t exactly gone and done the nasty on the floor of his bedroom.”

“Well, no, but certainly we could have been significantly more vigilant than we have.” Dean had to acknowledge the truth of this. He had never taken particular pains to protect Sam from accidentally stumbling across his sex life with Cas. It wasn’t like he was an exhibitionist, but they tended to live and work in pretty close quarters, and Dean wasn’t ashamed of Cas, nor was he likely to curtail their so-called after dark activities out of fear that Sam would stumble across them. In general, Sam, while annoyed with their tendency to do what he grumpily referred to as ‘humping like bunnies,’ was a pretty good sport about it. But after, what, four? five? days trapped in the bunker together, in which he’d come across them having sex at least—Dean knitted his brows as he thought about it, trying to come up with a figure. Let’s see, there had been the time in bed when Cas woke Dean up, their
activities in the boiler room, the floor of the library, the dungeon, and then once again the bedroom, so…five. five times.

“Yeah, you’re probably right. I’d be pretty unhappy if I were him,” Dean acknowledged. “I should make him a vegan, gluten-free kale cake or something.”

“You could. Or we could just work harder to ensure that it does not happen again.”

“I guess we could try making up a schedule or something. But I’d rather not remove spontaneity from the relationship,” Dean frowned a little.

“There is no rule,” Cas told him mildly, “which says you have to know the contents of the schedule in question. I am happy to provide one for Sam without giving you the same courtesy.”

Dean thought about that in silence for a moment, taking another bite of the candy bar and chewing appreciatively. Nothing beat pie, but he’d never say no to a Snickers.

“You don’t think that’d be a little traumatic for the big guy, too? Like, ‘oh hey Sam, you should probably avoid the showers for the next hour or two, cause I’m going to be rimming your brother until he screams, but have a nice day,’”

Cas tried to look stern but ruined it by chuckling. “I believe we would somewhat defeat the purpose of doing so if we went into that level of detail—but even so, would it not be better to hear that than to come upon the act itself unawares?”

Dean had to allow that Cas had a point. Then something occurred to him and he waved the Snickers at Cas. “Hey, what about Sam? If it’s been twelve hours since breakfast, is he dying of starvation? He still won’t go in the kitchen, and he needs a lot of fuel to sustain the dwarf planet he calls a body.” Cas’s lips quirked slightly.

“No, Sam is fine. Several days ago I took him a selection of fruit and granola to keep in his room so he would not require assistance each time he wanted a snack, and—“

“Damnit, Cas, we really need to stop enabling this shit. This is how phobias develop,” actually, Dean had no damn clue how phobias developed, but it sounded good and seemed plausible, so he went with it.

“Perhaps so, but I felt that at present the best course of action was to humor Sam, as he has suffered enough at our hands already. At any rate, what I was going to tell you was that earlier, after you fell asleep following your strapping,” It was really not fair that even the mention of it made Dean’s cock consider coming back to life. He gave it a stern mental order (Down, boy) then turned his attention back to Cas as he went on. “I heated up the rest of the bacon macaroni and cheese for Sam as a tentative peace offering. He was quite happy to accept it. I also fixed him a sandwich at the same time that I made yours. He is likely still hungry, but not in any danger of starvation.”

Dean was glad to learn that Cas had ensured that Sam wasn’t desperately calorie deprived, but at some point, he decided, he was going to have to give Sam a crash course in unlicensed exposure therapy. There was no way Sam was getting an eternal pass on doing the dishes from here on out.

“Thanks for looking out for him, Cas. It didn’t even occur to me to wonder how he was gonna stay fed before now.”

“That is quite understandable. Your attention has been occupied fully for much of your wakeful time today.”
Speaking of wakeful time, Dean mused, he had spent a huge proportion of the day asleep. Not just today, come to that. He and Cas had been engaging in enough scenes—some of them quite intense—that Dean had been sleeping more since the blizzard than he had in years. The one uniting factor between scenes, no matter what they did, was that they left Dean utterly wrung out in a way that little else could (with the possible exception of six sustained hours of combat thanks to a demented board game). Not that he was complaining. He was probably making up for months of chronic sleep deprivation, and if ever there was a time to do it, it was now, when nobody could get in or out and they were warded against all manner of evil.

Getting up to toss the empty Snickers wrapper in the trash can, Dean stretched again, observing that sometime while he slept, Cas had donned the same outfit he’d worn earlier today. Crossing the room to where he leaned against the wall, Dean slid his arms around the angel’s neck, drawing him in for a kiss. Cas went willingly, accepting the press of Dean’s lips, but was not satisfied for long with the sweet, relatively chaste kiss that Dean offered. After a few moments, Cas’s lips pressed harder, tongue sliding out to part Dean’s lips so it could sweep into his mouth. Dean was more than willing to go with the flow, tongue darting out to meet with Cas’s, head tipping further into him. One of the things Dean loved about Cas was that, despite the amount of mind-blowing sex they had, they were perfectly capable of just making out for hours, too, with no pressure to advance to anything more. Dean suspected that at least a piece of it had to do with Cas’s newness to all things sex and love.

Despite the fact that his lover was quite literally older than dirt, until recently Cas had spent most of his time as (in his own words) a multidimensional wavelength of celestial intent, and apparently multidimensional wavelengths of celestial intent didn’t have much sex. Personally, Dean was horrified at the thought of living for untold millennia without ever getting laid, but Cas assured him that angels outside of human form (and many of them within it) did not experience the same imperatives that governed humanity. Even when in a vessel, Cas didn’t require food or sleep, although he could have either if the urge struck. He could probably quite happily have gone without sex, and in fact had largely been doing so before he and Dean tumbled into each other and entirely failed to disentangle. Now, of course, it was a different story, and the angel had become damn near insatiable—not that Dean had any objections.

Still, so much of what they did still had the sheen of novelty about it to Cas, and he had taken to the new experiences with practically maniacal enthusiasm. To be fair, some of it was pretty new to Dean, too. Not sex, of course. He’d had a whole hell of a lot of sex, with both women and men, long before he knew that angels were more than a warm fuzzy invention of paternalistic religion. He’d even done some messing around with the BDSM world, although strictly in a dominant capacity. He’d known that the give and take of power and control called to him, but the idea of surrendering his agency to another person had set his teeth on edge—especially considering the job, and the wide range of creatures who would’ve dearly loved to get their hands on a helpless and bound Winchester.

It was not to say that dominating the willing had done nothing for him. It absolutely had, and it had also given him a familiarity with the scene that had proved useful now that he was generally on the other side of things. It was just that he’d been pretty sure that the most prominent emotion your average Dom felt when administering a spanking or fucking a bound sub was probably not jealousy.

Contrary to popular opinion, Dean wasn’t nearly as devoid of insight as he might appear. He was just also really good at denial, which he had employed quite enthusiastically rather than do any serious soul-searching over the not-entirely-repressed longing he felt when he watched another man get put through his paces. The idea of giving up control had been unthinkable, regardless of the siren’s song lure it held, and eventually Dean had almost entirely withdrawn from the BDSM scene. It was just too hard to play the perfectly controlled Dom when he was working so hard to avoid admitting to himself that what he really wanted was someone with the strength to take him apart
piece by piece.

He’d found that someone in Cas, but he would never, not in a million years, have actually gone after it (regardless of his acute awareness of the potential within the angel). Despite his general obliviousness to pop culture and any number of other ridiculously mundane things about the outside world, the one thing Cas had never been remotely oblivious to was Dean. In fact, his ability to sense what Dean wasn’t saying, to know the things that Dean was unwilling to admit to anyone, least of all himself, was uncanny.

Dean had asked more than once when Cas had become aware of how much Dean needed to have his hands forcibly pried off of his tightly held control. Cas had yet to actually answer him, only told him that it was not of import. Dean had the sneaking suspicion that what Cas was unwilling to say was that he had known from the start. It would make sense, honestly. When rebuilding someone all the way from an atomic level upward, it seemed to Dean that coming into contact with their most closely-guarded secrets would be inevitable. Dean guessed that Cas felt that using much of the knowledge he had gathered in this way would have been a violation, prior to the point at which Dean let Cas close enough for him to start gathering these closely held secrets with something resembling consent.

The deep friendship between them, what Cas referred to as their profound bond, had continued to grow, the tension of unspoken yearning expanding until it reached a breaking point—but that was a whole other story, and a rabbit hole that Dean didn’t go down unless he wanted to spend hours lost in hazy, sexually and emotionally charged memory.

Once things finally came to a head between them, Cas (who had done a truly mind-boggling amount of research, some of which he would not go into detail about, prior to the first time he’d ‘forced’ Dean to his knees) had proven to be an eager and apt pupil when it came to all things amorous. Dean was only too happy to teach him. Despite Cas’s almost unnervingly detailed knowledge of the etiquette, guidelines, safety rules, and even techniques that governed the BDSM world, he had been woefully ignorant of many of the basics of sex.

Making out, for instance, had been a revelation to him. He’d been astonished to discover that entangling his tongue with someone else’s could be so pleasurable (his words, not Dean’s). The first time Dean had given him a blow job, Cas had been reduced to speechlessness for nearly two hours afterward. Dean had been pretty fucking sure he’d broken Cas, and was trying to decide exactly how damned he was (again) for short-circuiting an angel of the Lord via fellatio when Cas finally recovered his faculties.

Considering how long they’d been doing this, Cas was pretty much up to speed with everything sex had to offer. At least, between two dudes. Every now and then Dean would mention something about heterosexual sex and turn to find Cas goggling at him in amazement. Considering the way Cas regularly took him apart and put him back together again, his damn near virginal innocence in some topics would never stop being funny to Dean.

As far as heterosexual sex went, Dean had tried a time or two, purely for kicks, to determine where Cas fell on the Kinsey scale. Cas had been of precisely zero help with this quest, repeatedly telling Dean that he was utterly indifferent to sexual orientation. Sam, overhearing one of these conversations once, had promptly declared Cas to be “Deansexual,” which Dean guessed was at least better than Sam trying to engage them in deep, heartfelt discussion (complete with powerpoint slides, probably) about the range of sexual orientations and the acceptability of identifying anywhere along the spectrum. They hadn’t, however, escaped a brief lecture about the insufficiency of the Kinsey scale, along with a strong recommendation to abandon that particular tool.
Dean had wondered aloud where the hell Sam came by all this knowledge about alternative sexual orientations (he was promptly instructed not to refer to non-heterosexual orientations in this manner) given that, as far as he knew, Sam was straighter than uncooked spaghetti. Sam had not denied his heterosexuality, but had archly informed Dean that he had taken a “Queer Studies” (seriously, that was a thing?) course at Stanford, and that one didn’t have to be a member of a given minority (Sam had referred to it as an “oppressed class,” for fuck’s sake) in order to educate oneself. This was the point at which Dean had told Sam to stop trying to educate the bisexual dude about what it was like to not be straight, and Sam had immediately looked appalled and apologetically assured Dean that he wasn’t trying to downplay his “lived experiences.” Having learned his lesson pretty thoroughly, Dean endeavored not to discuss orientation anywhere Sam might be able to overhear these days.

At any rate, Dean had a sneaking suspicion that Sam might not find his “Deansexual” joke nearly as funny these days, having been forced to confront Cas’s Deansexual tendencies in such detail of late. Dean was pretty sure there was a joke to be made somewhere in there about ‘lived experiences,’ but it was probably best to leave well enough alone. Sam had been through enough.

As far as lived experiences went, this one was pretty damn good. Dean shifted forward a little, until the weight of his body was pressing Cas’s into the wall as the kiss deepened further. He was all set to live some new experiences when Cas turned his head away and gently pressed Dean back with a slight smile. “Not now, Dean. I’ve imposed upon you enough for one day, I think, and I’m certain you’d like to shower.”

Now that he mentioned it, Dean did feel distinctly gross. Cas had clearly done his best to clean him up over the course of the day and the duo of orgasms, but Dean could still feel a couple of crusty patches that suggested Cas had missed a few spots, and that wasn’t even mentioning the multiple times that Dean had been bathed in sweat today. Frowning a little, Dean turned his head to sniff at his armpit and recoiled in horror. “Jesus Christ, Cas, why didn’t you mention sooner? I smell like…” Dean trailed off, unable to come up with an analogy foul enough. Cas, who looked slightly puzzled, picked up smoothly.

“You smell like you have spent the day giving endlessly of yourself and meeting every demand I placed on you, no matter how extreme. I do not tell you to shower because I am disgusted by you, but because I know that you will feel better once you do.”

Grinning slightly, Dean stepped forward again to brush a quick kiss against Cas’s lips. “Sweet talker.”

Cas smiled back. “Go shower. I will strip and remake the bed—“ Yeah, come to think of it, Dean had thought there was a pretty stiff patch under where he’d been lying, and that would make sense, considering. “—and I will meet you in the library when you are finished.”

With a nod of acknowledgment, Dean stripped and shrugged into his awesome Men of Letters robe before heading for the shower room. All of his shower things were already in there, along with a ton of big, fluffy towels. Had he mentioned lately how much he loved the bunker?

Grabbing his shampoo, conditioner, and body wash off the shelf they lived on, Dean headed for his favorite showerhead (so, fine, it wasn’t actually different than any of the other ones, but people were creatures of habit, okay?) and turned on the water. It heated up almost instantly, and the pressure was amazing. After popping back over to the hooks on the wall and hanging his robe up, Dean stepped under the steaming spray and huffed out a deep breath. Cas was right, this was exactly what he needed.

He shampooed his hair twice, just to be decadent (although he’d never admit it to Sam, who he relentlessly mocked for his stringent hair-care routine). He was squeezing conditioner into his hand
when it happened. His thoughts had been skipping over the events of the past day like rocks on a pond, never landing on any memory long enough to sink into it, and he got a momentary flash of Cas’s face turning away from his kiss.

It wasn’t the first time it had happened. Quite the contrary, it happened an awful lot in the early days. It had just been a very long time since the last time. Months, at least. In the past, he’d learned that there were almost inevitably warning signs, and he’d learned to recognize them and communicate to Cas what was happening so that Cas could intervene. Eventually they’d gotten good enough at it that they could cut it off at the pass before it even really got started.

There was no warning, this time (or at least, none that he would recognize until, much later, he sat down and seriously thought about his headspace during the second half of today’s scene). No, one moment he was fine, getting ready to condition his hair, humming Black Sabbath, and the next, he was on his knees, breath knocked out of him by a force that hit as hard, that felt as visceral and as physical, as the impact of a freight train.

From a great distance, some tiny part of him recognized what was happening, but he was entirely powerless to do anything to stop it. The last truly rational thought he had before he lost it altogether was a single, simple, devastating word.

Drop.

Chapter End Notes

Author's Note: Apparently, I did have some more writing in me pre-surgery. I realize I have left you at quite the cliffhanger today. I promise I am not going to leave you hanging here for an unknown length of time. I've got a fair amount of travel time tomorrow in which to write, and I fully intend to have another chapter (my last prior to my hiatus) finished and posted for you late tomorrow evening.

As you may have noticed, we are entirely smut free in this one. I'm sorry, I'm sorry, every now and then I find myself getting sucked into these things called plot and character development, which is funny, because I didn't actually intend for this piece to include a whole lot of plot or character development. Best laid plans, eh?

At any rate, enjoy the chapter, forgive me for the angsty cliffhanger (I promise Dean's gonna be okay), and I'll see y'all tomorrow.
Bloody But Unbowed

Chapter Summary

In which Dean tumbles off a cliff, and it just so happens that his would-be savior has wings.

A chapter-specific warning is posted at the end of the chapter, as is a special Author's Note.

NOTE: The title of this chapter comes from a line in the poem "Invictus," by William Ernest Henley. It is an absolutely gorgeous piece of writing, which everyone should read. I won't C&P the entirety of it here, but I will give you the stanza that the title is taken from:

In the fell clutch of circumstance,
I have not winced nor cried aloud.
Under the bludgeonings of chance,
My head is bloody, but unbowed.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Oh God oh God oh God ohgodohgodohgod

Cas’s face as he turned away. Rejecting the kiss. Rejecting Dean.

Of course he did Jesus Christ who wouldn’t—what kind of person what kind of monstrously fucked up person what kind of monster lets someone hurt them and likes it—how could anybody want to touch

“I’ve imposed upon you enough for one day and I’m certain you’d like to shower” and I can’t bear to touch you I can’t even look at you don’t kiss me you twisted fuck get out of my sight

That’s what he was really thinking and I made him hurt me

An angel of the Lord an honest-to-God angel what kind of unimaginable unspeakable twisted excuse for a human being would demand that kind of thing from a fucking angel—and he was tasked by heaven with handling me and that’s why that’s the only reason why and

oh God how can he even bear to hide his disgust when he looks at me, when he touches me—that’s why—bent over the table with cuffs attached in the dungeon—so he wouldn’t have to touch and the dungeon that was meant for demons, bound atop the demon trap and

Not a demon anymore but no better than one maybe even worse because they are what they were made into they can’t help it but I’m supposed to be a human and

Oh God I came back wrong or no I was like this before, I started out wrong wrong wrong all wrong and
He knows he knows he knows he knows that’s how he can do it, that’s why he can hurt me he knows I’m wrong barely human not even human—just a shell something God never intended that’s why, that’s how, it’s not like hurting a person

Angels are guardians of humanity he could never hurt a real person dear God what am I and

Lying on the dried out remnants of my own jizz after coming from the pain, how could pain feel so good, how could I like that—and lying there stinking of sex and sweat and how could he even bear to look at me to touch me to smell me and

He’s trapped in here with me can’t escape can’t get away and the second the snow melts he’s gone and he’s never looking back and

Probably gonna go ditch the vessel because it touched me and now it’s unclean too so unclean never be clean and

Under hot water but not hot enough never be hot enough to clean off the stain of wrong wrong so wrong tainted unclean stained foul worthless untouchable and

Twice, only twice, had it looked like this. Usually it was the creeping depression, the irritability, the overarching sense of wrong that pervaded everything and dragged him downward. Only twice had this happened, each time after particularly intense scenes.

It was not a secret to those who really knew Dean well (okay, so that was pretty much Sam and Cas—Dad never really knew, but then, Dad never gave two shits about Dean’s internal life as long as he did as he was told) that deep down inside, somewhere in his core, Dean absolutely loathed himself.

It was mostly under control these days, had even been soothed by what he and Cas did, by the way the angel normalized it. He put it into context, made sure Dean knew that it wasn’t because there were things in him that deserved to be made to hurt. That it could just be about needing to let go of control in a life in which so much control was constantly demanded of him. That it was okay to want this, to need it, that it didn’t mean he was wrong or broken. Cas had spent a lot of time and careful effort to plant those seeds in Dean, watering them, tending to them, warming them not with the sun but with his own glow. And eventually, bit by bit, the seeds had sprouted and begun to flower. Dean was largely able to accept himself in a way that had been alien until recently.

Most of the time.

But buried under concrete, shoved behind a brick wall as thick as a fortress, the same old self-disgust lurked. It was always there, waiting for its opportunity, ready to pulverize the barriers holding it back and roar to the forefront. Ready to seize the wheel in the rare moments that found Dean too vulnerable, too drained, too wrung out to fight against it.

It didn’t like how little power it had these days, how much smaller the space in which it lived had gotten. It resented the hell out of it, and when the opportunity came to escape, it was merciless. In his current state, Dean didn’t have a chance in hell of fighting and winning the monumental battle to shove it back where it belonged.

Monster beast thing inhuman subhuman less than human less than animal less than a dog and Cas, oh God preferred a cockroach to me an actual honest to God cockroach no wonder I killed it I knew it was more worthy of love than me lower than a cockroach and

Of course Sam wanted to escape to be free of me no wonder he didn’t look for me in purgatory—it was his chance to break free, to shrug off the crushing weight of his worthless brother and he would never have looked back if I hadn’t come out and dragged him back and look what he got for it,
death and pain and loss and who does that to their brother who refuses to let him have the real life he wants and deserves

I dragged him down with me and I dragged Cas down with me into the mud and

Jesus Sam was willing to close the gates of hell to die just to escape me and I pulled him back again what kind of twisted disgusting monstrous hellish couldn’t even last 40 years in hell without breaking without taking the razor and cutting ripping tearing helpless souls monster monster monster MONSTER

His knees were imprinted with the pattern of the tile below him but he didn’t register it, didn’t register the water pounding down on his head that mingled with the tears streaming down his face. On his knees, bent almost double in agony too intense to be physical, shaking violently with the force of his weeping, back bowed under the weight of the truth that he tried so hard not to see, the reality of himself, of his place in the world.

“Dean? You have been in there longer than even Sam—“ the voice was coming down the hall and oh God he couldn’t let Cas see him like this, couldn’t let Cas see him at all, had no right to expect it. He should stand up, should get himself together, put on a good face, smile, but his legs wouldn’t work, nothing would, and the sobs were wracking him so hard that he couldn’t see straight, and his thoughts were a nonstop stream of self-recrimination, a recounting of every sin, every failure, every misstep and then it was just too late and the voice changed, sharpened, deepened with a hint of horror that had to be disgust, because what else could Dean inspire?

“Dean, oh Father, no,” and there were cool hands on him, cupping his face, gripping his shoulders, wrapping tightly around him, drawing him in close to the impossibly solid, intimately familiar chest. Cas was dripping, sopping, water streaming down over him, soaking through the sweatpants and long-sleeved tee, but he didn’t seem to care. Dean let it happen, let himself be dragged against Cas’s chest, drawn into his lap, cradled like a baby, like someone precious—and it wasn’t true, none of it was true, he wasn’t any of the things that Cas’s strong arms seemed to suggest, but he was too weak to do what he ought to and draw away. Much too weak to reject the offer of comfort, even if he was woefully unworthy of it. His thoughts continued to spiral out of control, dragging him through the mud of his own self-hatred, threatening to pull him under for good and drown him in their quicksand.

A second later, Cas was shifting back just a little and Dean knew, he knew that it was a prelude to Cas shoving him away, throwing him back down on the cool tile floor, unable to stand the sight of him, let alone the touch.

But that didn’t happen. Instead, Cas was inexplicably struggling with his own shirt. A second later he got it off and flung it carelessly to one side, then drew Dean back in, pulling him in until his shower-warmed skin was pressed closely against Cas’s bare flesh. It was this that grounded him just enough that what happened next worked. The voice came out, no longer the pained cry of realization but a thundering command, shattering the steam-filled air and rumbling through the chest pressed against his ear.

“DEAN WINCHESTER. STOP.”

Dean froze solid, his body and mind both screeching to a halt at the order that was too powerful and all-consuming to disobey.

He caught in a startled breath, eyes wide, body still shuddering uncontrollably. His sobs and the litany of accusations he leveled at himself were both brought up short. Bare seconds after he froze, Cas was speaking. Dean had the dim sense that maybe he had been speaking all along but Dean had been buried too deeply in his own misery to even register, let alone hear him. Perhaps Dean had also
been speaking (wailing?) some of what was going on in his muddled mind, or perhaps Cas just knew Dean well enough to guess, because every word he spoke was a razor-sharp rebuttal to Dean’s assaults on himself.

“You listen to me, and you listen well, Dean Winchester. You are not broken. You are not wrong. You are exactly as you should be. You are made in the image of God and you are holy. You are the righteous man. You are my righteous man. You are mine as I am yours, and you are perfect, and you are exactly enough. Nothing is wrong with you. You are not sick or twisted or any of the thousand other things that, in this moment, you believe yourself to be. Your distressing tendency toward self-hatred has overtaken you in a moment of great vulnerability. What is happening to you right now is not born of any truth. It is all lies, and it is entirely my fault. I should never have left you alone. I should never have sent you away from me at such a time, after I took so much from you. I was foolish and careless with the most precious gift I have ever received, and in this moment, I am entirely unworthy of it.”

Dean’s mind was not exactly the clearest it had ever been, but he was registering enough of what Cas was saying to be confused by these words. His own voice surprised him when it came out, a strangled croak, barely recognizable. “…gift?”

“You, you foolish, perfect, unlikely, dear creature,” Cas told him. His voice was laced with such tenderness, such clear adoration—and so many other things: Worry, regret, reassurance. The arms around Dean tightened, gathering him in still closer. Cas’s lips pressed against his forehead hard, and a second later he realized Cas was rocking him gently, cradling him against his chest as if Dean were truly as precious as he said. Dean’s brain, which appeared to have been completely short circuited by Cas’s bellowed command, was trying futilely to get itself back online. The good news was that the horrible downward spiral seemed to have been halted in its tracks, and the more Cas spoke, the more Dean listened, the more that horrible, overpowering, all-consuming voice within seemed to lose its power over him. It wasn’t over—his heart was still thundering in his chest, breath still coming in strangled gasps, body still shaking violently—but he was no longer drowning. Cas was still speaking, still going, oblivious to the water pouring over him, streaming down his face and chest, and the more the words flowed out of him, the more Dean was able to focus on his voice, the better he felt.

“My beautiful boy, if I were given the choice between my grace and you, I would shed my wings in a heartbeat. I fought the forces of hell for you without hesitation and I would do it again, a thousand times over, without complaint or a moment’s pause. There is nothing I would not do, nowhere I would not go, no battle I would not fight for you. How can you ever doubt that you are everything to me? How can you begin to doubt how profound, how complete, how encompassing my love for you is? I have failed in my most important job if you, for the space of even a single heartbeat, feel less than adored in every atom of your being.

“The gifts you gave me today, your submission, your acceptance, your pain and your pleasure—they are beautiful. They are sacred. There is nothing profane or unclean about them. They are pure and shining and I cherish them far beyond anything the meager descriptive powers of language can express. So much was asked of you, and you gave it all without hesitation, without holding anything back for yourself. Nothing has ever been so perfect. I love you, Dean Winchester. I will love you until the universe itself crumbles to dust, and still longer than that. I will love you every day of your life and every moment thereafter.”

Whoa. That was…whoa. The weight of those words, their meaning, settled over Dean with such gravity that he felt pinned beneath them. What it meant, what it was, for an angel of the Lord, as old as creation itself, to feel that way about him—and, hearing the naked sincerity in Castiel’s voice, it was impossible to doubt the truth of it. The screaming agony of the drop was finally beginning to
loosen its grip on him. Dean was able to take his first truly unencumbered breath in what felt like hours but could not have been nearly that long—the water that poured down upon them was still warm. Surely, if half as much time as it felt like had gone by, the water would long have gone cold above them.

Finally, Dean’s arms, which had hung limply in his lap, twitched tentatively in Cas’s direction. Immediately, one of the arms around him reached down to pull one of Dean’s hands up, so that his arm wound around Cas. His other arm joined it momentarily, this time without assistance. His arms tightened and he clung desperately to the angel, burying his face in the warm, bare chest before him and giving in to the tears that demanded release. More tears, yes, but these were different. These were the healing kind, the sort of cleansing sobs that would leave him drained but once again complete. The power of Cas’s words, the arms that held him close, cherishing him, cradling him—these things would gather him back together, fitting each shattered piece into its place, smoothing away the thousands of tiny cracks. Cas could do this, knew exactly how, knew just where each piece fit because he had done it before. He had rebuilt Dean from ash and dust and rage and agony back into a man, damaged but not broken, imperfect but whole. This was his promise to Dean—to reconstruct him every time he shattered, to put him back together as often as necessary, with the gentlest and most worshipful of hands.

As his breathing slowed, as he came slowly back to himself, as his shuddering eased and his body stilled, Cas stood slowly, setting Dean carefully back on his feet. His legs were shaky but, somewhat to his surprise, they were willing to hold him. Cas settled him under the spray and turned it just a little hotter. It was not the additional warmth of the water, however, that chased away the last of the icy fingers gripping Dean’s heart. What did that was the solidity and certainty of the fingers that touched him. Cas bathed him, unhurried but efficient, seeming to sense that, as drained as the drop had left him, Dean’s legs would only support him for so long. At some point he must have stripped off the sweatpants as well, because the body that Dean rested back against was entirely bare. Cas’s hands were everywhere at once, shampooing his hair again, rubbing conditioner through it, lathering body wash over him. When he was clean and so utterly exhausted that he felt as unsteady as a baby lamb, Cas shut off the water and led him across the room to the towels. He would accept no help and Dean was too spent to insist, allowing the angel to rub him dry and wrap him tenderly in his robe. Then, rather than leading Dean out of the bathroom, Cas simply scooped him up in his arms, laying his cheek atop Dean’s still damp head as he bore Dean down the hallway and back into his room. The bed had been stripped and remade, the sheets fresh and cool when Cas pulled them back with one hand and then set Dean down.

There was no need for speech between them, not any longer. Cas had said all that could be said, had worshipped Dean with his words, with a poetry so deeply felt and so overwhelming that to give into banal conversation would be to cheapen it. Gently removing Dean’s robe, Cas crossed the room long enough to hang it up and double check that the door was latched (apparently he had learned his lesson, albeit a little too late). Then he returned to the bed, soft fingers pressing on Dean’s shoulders, urging him to lie back. He worked in perfect silence, no more words offered—but Cas wasn’t finished, nevertheless. His tribute, his worship of Dean went on, and this time it was his hands that spoke for him.

Settling on the bed beside him, Cas went to work. He started with Dean’s face, a single fingertip tracing its lines, sliding down the curve of one cheek, skating over his bottom lip and then up the line of his nose. Across one eyebrow, then grazing the eyelid itself, a feather-light touch that ruffled his eyelashes so gently it was nearly imperceptible. Another finger joined it soon, and together they mapped out every angle and plane of his face, the touch telling Dean every bit as eloquently as his words had that he was loved in every fiber of his being.
The hands did not stop there, sliding down over his arms next, fingers fitting briefly over the brand they had left behind, then moving on, skating over his elbow and forearm, tracing each finger before entangling their hands for just a moment. Then his chest, both hands sweeping firmly across its expanse before the fingers went back to work, playing connect the dots with the freckles that sort of annoyed Dean, but that Cas openly adored.

There was nothing sexual in the touch. Cas was asking nothing of him, expecting no particular response. This, Dean recognized, was an entirely selfless act born of Castiel’s need to heal the bone-deep gashes that Dean had torn in himself (but that Cas clearly blamed himself for). Whoever went on about the healing power of touch was onto something, because as much as the words Cas had spoken had staunched the bleeding, it was the gentle slide of his hands over every inch of Dean that truly began to stitch the wounds.

He had known that the things Cas whispered as he cradled Dean close were deeply felt. He did not doubt the truth of them—or, at least, he did not doubt that Cas believed every word he spoke. The press of fingers currently tracing his hipbones, then sliding across his waist, and onward, though—it imprinted the lesson upon Dean on a different level. Although the touch was light, there was a weightiness to it far beyond its physical pressure. Dean could not, those fingers whispered, possibly be the broken, mutilated creature he believed himself to be. He was, instead, something precious. Something to be protected and worshipped, cradled close, guarded jealously, adored. And because this was transmitted via touch rather than word, the vicious, traitorous rebuttals that came so easily from that dark place inside Dean could find no traction. No words it could produce would offset what was unspoken but still so clearly communicated.

Dean could not have said how long the angel’s hands slid over him, and he had no particular urge to learn. It might have been minutes or hours. At some point, Cas gently urged him onto his stomach, then started over, from the crown of Dean’s head, delicately tracing the whorls of his ears and down to his neck. The sweep of his touch, sometimes fingers, sometimes the flat of his palms, was warming, although not in the obvious way. Indeed, the touch itself was cool against Dean’s shower-warmed flesh, bleeding off some of the excess heat that all the time spent curled into himself underneath the pounding spray had imparted. It was internally that Dean was warmed, the ice that edged the freezing, frayed places deep within beginning to melt.

The longer it went on, the more evenly Dean’s breath came and the more his heart rate slowed. The remnants of those harsh tremors that the hot water had never quite managed to eliminate eased, slowed, and finally stopped altogether. Finally, as the last physical aftereffects of the drop faded, Dean realized that above and beyond the brutal words he had flung at himself—which had long since gone quiet—the inaudible but no less intense wail of pain had finally faded into silence as well.

It seemed that inaudible or no, Cas had been able to hear that wail. Dean registered that in the same moment this last remnant of the drop finally loosed its jaws, all of the tension went out of Cas as suddenly as the air going out of a balloon. It was just further evidence of the bond, of how closely they were tied. His agony, however deeply buried, resonated with Cas. His own pain had caused the angel pain as well. Dean recognized this and spared a moment to mourn having caused Cas even the tiniest fraction of the agony that had so overwhelmed him. They were joined, he and Cas, and it seemed that Dean could not tear himself apart without ripping into Cas as well. As much as Dean might’ve regarded himself as expendable, Cas was not an acceptable casualty. The collateral damage was too high. Distantly, in a way that required no immediate attention, Dean recognized that if he truly cared for Cas as much as he claimed to (as much as he did), he would have to figure out how to stop doing this to himself.

In the moments after the spaces within Dean finally went quiet and still, Cas finished his unhurried
trek across the landscape of Dean’s body. Turning the covers back further, he slid into bed beside Dean, stretching out next to him and then gathering him in. Cas settled onto his back, tucking Dean’s head into the crook of his neck, under his chin, arms winding tight around Dean. He did not speak, but no words were necessary. He would not let go. He would not leave Dean again. He would hold Dean and guard him through the night, and when the sun broke over the horizon, Cas would look upon him with every bit as much adoration and affection in the morning light. He was safe, and warm, and loved.

The last thing Dean registered as sleep finally took him back was the light brush of feathers against his bare back. The warm weight of wings he could not see wrapped around him, guarding him against every enemy, against anything that would dare to do him harm—even himself.

Chapter End Notes

Warning: This chapter contains vivid descriptions of a panic attack that occurs in the context of sub drop. While neither of those terms is used in the story (mostly because Dean is a stubborn bastard who won't actually use the word sub for himself), that's what's happening.

Author's Note:

Well, there you have it, dear readers. I promised you Dean would be okay! I leave him here, cradled in the safety of Castiel's arms--and wings. I don't think he'll mind being stranded there for a little while, do you?

As you'll know if you read my note from Chapter 11, I have an appointment to keep in the morning, and it may be a little while until I can bring you the rest of Dean, Cas, and Sam's Snowbound adventures.

What you should know is that this story--the writing and the researching and the editing and the obsessing over it--have made the last two weeks fly by, when otherwise they would have crawled. This story has my undying gratitude and affection--and so do all of you.

Thanks again for reading and commenting. Until we meet again!
Turnabout

Chapter Summary

In which Dean feels a lot better, Sam and Cas have a heart-to-heart (which somebody may or may not be eavesdropping on), and Dean reassures Cas the best way he knows how. Also, there's Cap'n Crunch.

Please find chapter-specific tags, as well as an author's note, at the end of the chapter.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

There was nothing like waking up still wrapped in the same arms that soothed him to sleep to make Dean feel loved, particularly since he knew that Cas had no need to sleep. The angel had not only lain awake, but done so without the benefit of a book or movie or other entertainment, his attention focused intently and entirely on cradling Dean close to him.

As he swam toward consciousness, Dean registered warmth first and safety second. His head was still tucked into the crook of Cas’s neck, the angel’s arms snug around him. If not for the dueling demands of his bladder and his stomach, Dean could happily have spent the entire day exactly like this.

Rumbling out a contented sound that he would forever resolutely insist in no way resembled a purr, Dean shoved his bodily needs to the background for a few moments, burrowing himself further into Cas’s neck and squeezing his arms tighter around the angel. He could hear the warmth of the smile in the angel’s voice when it hummed against the ear pressed to Cas’s chest.

“Good morning, Dean.”

Dean allowed the massive yawn to crack open his jaw widely before he turned his head to brush a kiss across the warm expanse of Cas’s chest in wordless response to the greeting.

Cas was content to stay put, letting Dean define the shape of the morning. Dean could tell that the angel was feeling him out, using both human and angelic senses to determine whether he was truly recovered from last night’s drop and to assess what he needed. Releasing his hold on Cas just long enough to stretch out his limbs, Dean re-entangled their arms and legs before offering sleep-roughened comfort.

“’m fine, babe. Really. ‘m good.”

Cas turned his head to dust his lips several times back and forth across Dean’s forehead. Dean could feel the lingering concern and met it with reassurance. “Only things I need are a toilet and a bowl of cereal. Promise.”

He could feel the moment when the angel decided to really believe him, and but for the increasingly insistent pressure of his bladder, he might’ve just curled back around Cas like a spider monkey and dozed off for another couple hours. Nature’s call was steadily increasing to a dull roar, however, and Dean grudgingly wriggled his way to a sitting position in order to deal with it. Swinging his legs
over the side of the bed, he swiveled enough to lean back down and plaster a loud, overly sloppy smooch on Cas’s mouth, earning a groan of half-disgusted amusement from the angel.

Grinning to himself, Dean stood and snagged his robe, the bathroom’s demands too insistent to allow for real clothing first. He heard the rustle of Cas sitting up behind him, and the angel’s amused words followed him down the hall.

“I will go see about that bowl of cereal and meet you in the library.”

Registering that Cas really did believe that the drop was over—there was no way he would’ve allowed Dean out of his sight if he had any lingering concerns—Dean called back over his shoulder, “Cap’n Crunch!”

The requested cereal, flanked by half a gallon of milk, was waiting for him on the long table in the library when he ventured down the hall after washing his hands and face. Cas was nowhere to be found, but Dean was way too interested in the Cap’n Crunch to spare any worry for that particular mystery yet. By the time he had methodically polished off a bowl and a half of cereal, it had solved itself. Cas appeared through the doorway trailed by an alert-looking Sam, who seemed to have been lifting weights if the sweat-stained spandex he was sporting was any indication. Cas exited the room again as Dean grunted a greeting through a huge mouthful of cereal, earning a snort of grossed-out amusement from Sam, “Jesus, Dean, it’s not going to grow wheels and roll away if you slow it down a little.”

Dean was too busy stuffing his face to come up with a verbal rejoinder, and instead settled for a rude gesture that required only the hand that wasn’t currently wielding a spoon. Sam laughed, but any response he might’ve offered was forestalled by Cas’s reappearance with a box of some fiber-oat-cardboard shit Sam loved which claimed to be cereal. Dean took the liberty to doubt these claims, after the one time he’d run out of Frosted Flakes and been reduced to trying it. He’d ended up eating cold and slightly suspect pizza for breakfast instead, that day. It was even worth the noise he’d had to hear from Sam about wasting his breakfast wood chips to avoid finishing a bowl of it.

Dean had only mildly shredded the roof of his mouth by the time he finished the second bowl of cereal. It was one of the hazards of eating Cap’n Crunch, but worth it every now and then when he needed a break from Frosted Flakes or Froot Loops. Pushing the bowl away with a satisfied sigh, he glanced over at Sam, who was taking a much more leisurely approach to his breakfast. Privately, Dean thought if he was forced to eat that crap, he would’ve gone for the bolt-it-so-fast-you-barely-taste it option, but since Sam seemed to actually enjoy the stuff, all bets were off. Watching him with a poorly concealed grimace of distaste, Dean shook his head and observed, “I’m still not convinced that you’re not the mailman’s dirty little secret. No self-respecting Winchester would voluntarily eat that crap.”

Sam snorted incredulously. “If you really want to have a conversation about self-respect, you’re guilty of at least three recent crimes against decency I can think of off the top of my head, not to mention—“

Unwilling to let this injustice stand, Dean interrupted hotly, “hey, it’s not like anyone asked you to wander in and—“

“I wonder,” Cas broke in mildly, “whether you might like to start the day with a hot bath, Dean.”

It was the most blatantly obvious attempt at redirection that Dean had maybe ever seen, but since it was Cas, and since that suggestion actually sounded pretty awesome, he let it slide.

“Yeah, good call,” Dean told him with a smile, letting Sam get back to his Cardboard Chex or
whatever.

Sam unearthed himself long enough to threaten, “I swear to God, if you use my shower gel as bubble bath again, I will flush all your cereal down the toilet.”

“That,” Dean reassured him, “is not something you need to worry about me doing again. I smelled like a pond in Scotland or some shit for like, three weeks afterward. That was punishment enough. Besides, Cas got me my own bubble bath, and—“

“Every now and then,” Sam cut him off, grinning, “I find it damn near impossible to believe that I spent so long unaware of your unbelievably gay side.”

Dean was already headed for the hallway, too eager to sink into hot, soapy water to waste time on more than flipping Sam off. Besides, Cas was way better at handling quips like that. In little more than a sidelong glance, the angel could hit Sam with so much deeply felt guilt at saying something that could in any way be interpreted as poking fun at non-heteros that the kid was ready to go crawling into the nearest gay bar to beg forgiveness of any queer he could find.

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As he pulled the plug with his toes and climbed out of the draining water an hour later, Dean wondered, not for the first time, exactly how much ridicule he’d have to deal with from Sam if he got himself some bath toys. A dude was never too old to play battleship, and they actually had some pretty awesome toys for the bath that definitely hadn’t been around when Dean and Sam were kids (honestly, it wouldn’t have mattered if they were, since Dad wasn’t exactly a bath toys kind of parent). He’d even seen a camo-clad rubber ducky on Amazon this one time that he was definitely not looking at bath toy selections.

Probably best, Dean decided, to wait until he got some really good leverage on Sam. He needed some truly golden mockery material that he could drag out to rebut any bath toy ridicule, although if all else failed, he could always threaten to leave little plastic cockroaches in Sam’s bed to shut him up.

Briskly toweling off before he padded across the room to turn off the tape player (he was probably the only person on the planet who listened to Motörhead during a relaxing bubble bath and called it soothing), Dean grabbed his robe and shrugged into it, tossing his towel into the hamper and making a note to wash its contents later. Shivering a little in the comparatively cool air of the hallway, Dean made a beeline for his room and donned a clean pair of jeans and a fresh henley, finishing off the outfit with a pair of warm wool socks. Once again no point in shoes, since they didn’t appear to be going anywhere in the immediate future, as far as he knew. Dean made a mental note to check out what the weather forecast was looking like, although he was pretty sure that if there was any likelihood of imminent release, Sam would’ve been singing gospel music at the top of his voice in heartfelt praise.

He wasn’t making any particular effort to be stealthy when he left his room to head back for the library—at least, not at first. It was just that wool socks on tile didn’t make much sound, and it had been second nature to move silently in jeans and henleys since he was about 6 years old. When you spent so much of your life hunting things that were hunting you right back, knowing instinctively how to move without making a sound was about as important to survival as the ability to effortlessly convert oxygen into carbon dioxide.

The sound of Cas and Sam’s voices going back and forth were so familiar and comforting that Dean nearly tuned them out. He might just as easily have come around the corner into the library, obliviously interrupting their conversation without ever getting to hear what came next.
He couldn’t have said what slowed and then paused him altogether, he simply found himself standing motionless two or three feet from the turn that would deposit him into the library. Head cocked, his ears tuned in to the give-and-take of the familiar voices that echoed within, and for the first time Dean really registered what was being said.

“—not saying that, but you cannot know the level of openness that is asked of him,” Dean wasn’t sure what Cas wasn’t saying, he hadn’t caught that part.

“No, I know, but it’s not like you’re forcing him into anything, either, Cas. Come on, you have to know that he wants it.” Sam sounded compassionate but just a hair long-suffering, as if this was not the first time he was saying the same thing in a different way.

“Of course I do, Sam, but I also believe that Dean demands near perfection of himself when it comes to giving me what he believes I want from him, regardless of how careful I am to reassure him that I want only what he wants to give,” Cas responded earnestly.

Dean realized that he was holding his breath, and very slowly exhaled, taking care to maintain perfect silence. Just like that, without really registering any moment in which he made a conscious decision, Dean found himself eavesdropping on—and very invested in—a conversation that was clearly not intended for his ears.

“That’s just Dean, though,” Sam observed with that characteristic perceptiveness that had always come so naturally to him. “He’s always trying to figure what the people he loves need and give it to them before they even think to ask. You’re basically describing my entire childhood, minus the kinky shit. Or, you know, the sex,” Sam even managed to restrain how revolted he sounded, presumably in deference to the weight of the conversation topic.

“Indeed, the purity of his selflessness is one of his finest qualities,” Cas agreed readily. Dean was pretty sure the heat spreading across his face was a flush at the praise that was offered with such easy matter-of-factness, “but given the things that we do, it is even more important that he reserve attention and a place of importance for his own needs. Knowing, as I do, that this is difficult for him, I must work all the harder to remain attuned to him, particularly when I am demanding that he lose himself entirely in whatever I am subjecting him to.”

Okay,” Sam said hastily, “we don’t need to actually get into details. I’ve seen more than enough to get the gist of it,” Cas chuckled in acquiescence and Sam went on, “but are you really suggesting that you’re not tuned into him? Because I gotta tell you, I’ve never known anyone who had as perfect awareness of anybody in every sense of the word—emotionally, physically, mentally—as you have of Dean. Shit, Cas, he and I are so intertwined we’re practically codependent—“ Cas cleared his throat delicately, “—okay, fine, we are codependent, and I’ve never been a tenth as aware of his inner life as you are.”

The low sound Cas made wanted to be belief but carried an undercurrent of distress. Dean heard a quiet noise that his mind immediately translated as Sam clapping Cas reassuringly on the back before he went on, “Look, I only know what I see, and please believe me when I tell you I didn’t want to see most of that.”

“Sam, you have to know that—“

“Shut up, Cas,” Sam interrupted kindly, “and listen to me. I only know what I see, but even from those few brain-boiling, eye-searing, trauma-inducing seconds, I do know that I’ve never seen Dean so completely and entirely trusting. Not even with me. You get that? He doesn’t trust me that much, setting aside that I have less than no desire to do any of the shit to him that—anyway. You know what I mean. The fact that you can actually tie down my brother so he can’t get away, and he
relaxes instead of losing his mind? Look, all I’m saying is that you’re doing something right.”

Dean was pretty sure his innards were melting in horrified humiliation at hearing his brother and his boyfriend/(okay fine call him what he was) Dom discussing their sex life. Still, to the degree that he was able to set that aside, he registered that Sam was giving Cas quite a gift, offering reassurance that Cas wouldn’t have believed coming from Dean’s lips but might just be able to accept when it came from Sam’s.

Because, of course, it was all true, and—damn Sam and his incredible perspicacity—he wasn’t done.

“I’ve known Dean a hell of a lot longer than you have, and believe me when I tell you that, however fucked up he is—” hey, what the hell, Sam? “—he’s a damn sight healthier mentally and emotionally with you than he’s ever been before. And the longer you guys do…whatever shit you’re doing, and the deeper in you get, the more well-adjusted he gets. That has to mean something. It should mean something to you.”

“It does,” Cas’s response was fervent and came right on the heels of Sam’s words, “and I would like to take you at your word, Sam, but you must understand that I do not have the luxury of simply assuming I am what is best for Dean when I put him in such a state as I found him yesterday,” Dean could practically hear Sam opening his mouth to speak before Cas forestalled him, “No, listen. You did not see him. He was undone. I did that. I took him apart, yes, with his consent, but I failed in my most important job if I did not put him back together again properly afterward. If I cannot do that simplest and most critical of tasks, I am unworthy of him. I cannot demand such vulnerability from him if I cannot reconstruct his armor for him when we are through.”

Sam was quiet for a few minutes, presumably as he processed Cas’s words and thought them through. “I don’t pretend to know all there is to know about this stuff, but from what I gather, the issue isn’t that you left him vulnerable to some outside attacker, the issue is that some of what you do shines a light on the spaces inside himself he’s not comfortable with, yeah?”

Now it was Cas’s turn to be quiet and consider. “I suppose that is one way to look at it, yes.”

“So maybe it’s not as simple as rebuilding his armor. Maybe what you need to do is work on helping him develop the strength to face the pieces of himself he doesn’t see clearly, or more clearly see the things he hates about himself or—whatever. I’m not saying him falling apart like that is a good thing, but do you think it’s any better for him to just carry on full speed ahead, a nearly 40-year-old man who’s almost but not completely in denial about the fact that at his deepest levels, he’s repulsed by himself?”

Whoa. The nearly casual tone in which Sam dropped that truth tore the breath out of Dean. He leaned back until the stone wall bolstering him was all that kept him upright. Head spinning with the weight of Sam’s words, Dean nearly missed Cas’s response.

“No, of course not, and I recognize your point—but there is a controlled, safe way in which to help guide him through that landscape, and last night was not it.”

“Maybe not, but sometimes you finally get the opportunity to build something right when the damaged foundation burns to the ground and you can just start over,” Dean was pretty sure there was something deeply profound there, but he didn’t think he could handle looking at it head on just now, and Sam wasn’t done anyway, “I’m not recommending that you tear him to shreds every night or two for fun, I’m just saying that maybe some good can come out of moments like that if you can’t always avoid them. I know this isn’t the first time that’s happened, and I also know that Dean is ten times more whole than he was back when you two were just insufferably, unendingly making googly eyes at each other without making the first move. So. Maybe the moments where he falls
apart and the overarching growing he’s doing into a healthier person aren’t mutually exclusive.”

This time the silence spun out longer. Dean was still trying to wrap his mind around even ten percent of what they’d just covered. He couldn’t shake the sense that he would be feeling a lot more stable if he’d spent an extra twenty minutes in the bathtub before wandering down the hall. What he did know Sam was right about was that Cas was the furthest thing from bad for Dean. If the angel was starting to worry about that, Dean needed to do a way better job of making sure Cas was aware of just how much goodness he brought into Dean’s life.

Sam seemed to have finally broken through to Cas, too, whose voice echoed with a recognition of spoken truth. “I think perhaps you are right. As Dean observes, you have an uncanny ability to find and recognize the heart of things.”

“Pretty sure that’s not how he phrases it, but I appreciate the recognition nevertheless.”

“Indeed,” Cas agreed reflectively, “he generally seems to regard your perceptiveness as an imposition rather than a gift, but that is largely because you are usually right about him.”

Traitor, Dean thought in Cas’s direction, the hint of sourness in the accusation eclipsed by affection.

“Do you suppose he’s done in the bath yet? I could use a shower myself. Pretty sure I’m starting to smell a little ripe.”

“I was not going to mention it,” Cas told him kindly, and Dean stifled a snort of amusement as he recognized his cue and strolled through the entranceway, leaning over to drop a kiss on Cas’s lips.

“That,” Dean told them, pleased with how nonchalant he managed to sound, “was exactly what the doctor ordered. Good call, Cas.”

From the ease with which Cas returned the kiss and the casual way Sam glanced at him, Dean felt confident that neither of them suspected he had overheard a decent portion of their heart-to-heart.

“You better have left me some hot water,” Sam sighed, “not to mention my shower gel.”

“Your less-than-perfectly groomed head can rest assured that there’s plenty of hot water and that foul-smelling stuff you seem to think is body wash waiting for you,” Dean did it just for the reaction he knew he’d get, and he wasn’t wrong. At the mention of his hair, one of Sam’s hands rose to gingerly pat it, even though he’d just been working out and had to know he was not currently in any position to challenge Rapunzel for hair dominance. Tipping his head back down to Cas so he could hide a grin, Dean waved Sam toward the hallway, “go on, get out of here, before your stench summons flies.”

Something he was pretty sure was a napkin bounced off the back of Dean’s head as Sam stood up and decamped. Despite the typical mocking banter, Dean made a mental note that he owed Sam, and should figure out something nice to do for him later today.

As Sam disappeared down the hallway, Cas tilted his head upward and smiled warmly at Dean, who felt his face break into an answering grin without any conscious decision to do so.

“I thought,” Cas told him, snagging one of the hands Dean had rested on the back of his chair and brushing his lips across its back, “we could sort out the breakfast dishes and then perhaps you would like to select another movie you feel is critical to my cultural indoctrination.”

Dean recognized immediately that Cas was aiming for an easy, low-key day without any of the high-intensity play that had marked the past several days. He clearly felt strongly that he had been
demanding too much from Dean and that some recovery time was in order. Dean didn’t necessarily
think that a laid back day or two was a bad idea (although if asked, he would’ve argued vociferously
that Cas hadn’t been pushing him too hard). They could probably stand to get their feet back under
them, if not from the heavy play, certainly from the drop that had shaken them both hard. He only
now truly understood that it had been at least as hard on Cas as it had been on Dean himself. Indeed,
Dean mused, perhaps in some ways it had been even harder. Considering how he felt when his
loved ones were hurting and he couldn’t fix it—let alone in pain he felt that he had some part in
inflicting—it wouldn’t surprise him if the drop had actually been more damaging to Cas.

Dean gave vent to the rush of affection these thoughts sent through him via a strong squeeze of Cas’s
hand, but kept his conclusions to himself, merely nodding approval. “Good plan. I’m thinking our
best bet is gonna be either Psycho or The Shining next. I’m gonna have to give you a full college-
length lecture before we tackle The Exorcist, maybe even with PowerPoint slides, or it’ll just confuse
you,” Dean stifled a grin at the nonplussed look on Cas’s face.

“You have been giving this some thought,” Cas observed, seeming only half-surprised by this.

“Well, of course. There’s no excuse for a hunter,” okay, it was still a pretty damn generous
assessment to call Cas a hunter, bless him, but it was worth it for the way his face lit up when Dean
said it, “not to have at least basic familiarity with the real horror classics.”

Dean grabbed his cereal bowl and the box off the table and headed for the kitchen, leaving it to Cas
to trail in his wake while juggling the other bowl, box, and half gallon of milk. Pausing to stash the
cereal back in the pantry in which it belonged, Dean made a quick assessment of where they stood
on dry goods (some of their supplies were looking a little depleted, but they were well-stocked in all
of the real staples and should be fine for at least another week or two, if the lock-in stretched that
long). He left the pantry door open for Cas to tuck Sam’s Unfrosted Mini-Drywall or whatever back
where it belonged, then headed to the sink to dump the remaining milk from his bowl before picking
back up his assessment. “Now, if we were really aiming at job-related stuff specifically, we would
probably have to skip some of the classics that don’t actually have anything supernatural in them.
I’m figuring we can afford to not be too puritanical, since we’ve run up against just plain twisted-ass
people from time to time. At least, enough that we can probably count that kind of thing at least
semi-appropriate to your continuing education.”

He could feel Cas’s amused gaze leveled on his back, but when Dean turned his head to glance over
his shoulder, the angel’s expression was one of perfectly earnest focus. With nothing to call Cas out
for aside from well-honed instinct, Dean shrugged and reached out a hand to take Sam’s empty
bowl. Turning back to the sink, he set about hand-washing the dishes. Dean could feel the
continued weight of Cas’s eyes upon him and sensed the depth of concern and affection that would
be damn near maternal (at least in intensity) if not for the decidedly non-familial desire that was
always present between them, even in moments of latency like this one.

“Why don’t you,” Dean suggested casually, not glancing back again, “poke through the pantry and
see if you can find some snacks for me to munch on during the movie or movies? Maybe check if
we’ve got any popcorn still hiding in there. I’ll even settle for the microwave crap if that’s all you
can find.”

Cas hummed wordless agreement before Dean heard the soft tread of his shoes carrying him over to
the pantry. He finished up washing the second bowl and set it beside the first in the dish drainer
before grabbing the sponge to wipe down the counters. They probably didn’t need it, but making
sure he left the kitchen spotless was a habit from one too many temp jobs short-order cooking to
make sure there was enough to feed Sammy while Dad went off for weeks at a time.
After finishing off the counters, he dropped the sponge into the sponge rack. Sam had been astonished to learn that those were a thing, and totally boggled that Dean insisted they have one. Since the kid had probably seriously considered selling his soul to Crowley just so he never had to do dishes again, and still somehow managed to almost never get stuck with that particular chore, Dean supposed it shouldn’t surprise him that Sam was oblivious to how foul sponges could smell when they weren’t allowed to dry properly. Cas had stared at him with such utter befuddlement the last time Dean had tried to complain to him about Sam’s lack of kitchen awareness that Dean had pretty much given up on venting to him, and settled for grumbling mentally these days.

Washing his hands in the sink (because even sponges maintained with proper hygiene didn’t exactly smell awesome), Dean dried them off on a clean dish towel. He turned toward Cas, opening his mouth to make some probably-not-quite-as-witty-as-he-wanted-to-believe quip about his snack hunt, then paused. Cas stood at an angle, such that Dean could see his expression but Cas, still focused on snack selection, remained oblivious to his scrutiny.

He held a cellophane packet of peanut butter crackers in one hand and a bag of Milano cookies in the other. Either was a decent snack option, and neither was what had brought Dean up short. No, what stopped Dean in his tracks was the expression on the angel’s face, a look of focus so intense and dedicated that he might have been selecting which wire to cut on a bomb that was bare seconds from exploding and taking all of Kansas with it rather than between high-fat, low-nutrition munchie options for movie watching. He looked, Dean thought, as though he had never been tasked with a more important decision, as if Dean’s current and future happiness depended upon the angel making the correct call.

It was actually a familiar expression, Dean noted with a rush of affection. Cas looked like this, albeit perhaps just a hair less intensely (he was not, after all, always barely 12 hours out from a hell of a drop), pretty much every time he needed to make a decision that would impact Dean. Cas really did regard tending to Dean as a sacred trust, an imperative of paramount importance. Even these tiniest of things earned the kind of intensely focused dedication that was probably unfathomable to the human mind, considering how many more dimensions Cas operated on than your average homo sapiens sapiens. It was, Dean registered breathlessly (not for the first time), incredibly humbling to have his needs—hell, even his most mundane of desires—be given such high priority by an ageless celestial being.

Dean was struck by the overwhelming urge to transmit to Cas, in some way that he would truly understand and believe, that he was a force for good in Dean’s life. That the words Sam spoke were true—Cas made him a better person, made his world a brighter place. That the things he demanded of Dean were things Dean would have pressed upon him, would’ve begged him to take if he had not insisted upon them. It ought to come as no surprise to any of them that Dean loved it when Cas took from him—when he broke Dean open and caressed his deepest, most secret inner spaces with the warmth of the angel’s celestial glow. In his own deepest levels, Cas had to know that—but he was doubting it this morning, after seeing Dean in such pain last night. Dean needed to allay those doubts, which had led the angel to engage in the self-flagellation he had inadvertently given Sam (and, although he did not know it, Dean) a glance at. Dean couldn’t think of any better way to reassure Cas, to soothe his self-recrimination, than by offering up the pieces of himself, freely and readily, without Cas having to demand it. How better to comfort the angel than by uncovering his own inner spaces and inviting in Cas’s glow?

The barest thought had no sooner brushed Dean’s mind than it had settled onto him, a fully-formed idea, ready to be executed. He didn’t give himself a chance to second-guess—the well-established keenness of his instincts demanded free reign when it came to him and Cas, and Dean handed over the wheel readily.
Three seconds later, Dean had slipped around Cas’s arm, until he stood with his back to the open pantry, facing the angel. Cas lifted his head, blinking in surprise which turned to astonishment when Dean’s hands settled onto his shoulders with firm weight that pressed him backward. He went with it, backing up until his ass collided lightly with the front of one of the counters. His mouth was opening, no doubt to give voice to the puzzlement on his face, but Dean forestalled him with a finger against his lips.

“No. Shhhh. I wanna do this. For you. Let me give you—“ what? Let Dean give him what? A thousand things that there were words for, and ten thousand more that there were not. He let the words trail off, because they were inadequate. Cas seemed to get the general picture anyway, because his mouth closed again, expression still slightly bemused but mostly open.

Dean stepped forward, burying his nose in the side of Cas’s face and inhaling deeply, soaking in the faint scent of sunshine and honey and things both older and sweeter that there probably weren’t even words for anymore. Cas tilted his face just slightly into the gesture, and Dean let his nose slide downward, past Cas’s jawline and onto his neck for another deep inhalation followed by the press of his lips, the slide of his tongue. Dean let his face drag him lower, a little bit at a time, pressing his lips and nose against the clothing-covered hollows and curves of the much-beloved, intimately-known body.

By the time he hit his knees, Cas’s hands had slid back to grasp the edge of the counter behind him. This, more than anything else, told Dean that Cas recognized at least a part of what he was doing here, and had opted to let it unfold however Dean wanted it to. Whether conscious or not, Cas’s decision to keep his hands on the counter rather than letting them slide into Dean’s hair was also an acknowledgement that this was about what Dean needed to give rather than what Cas wanted to take. Dean hoped fervently that Cas would recognize the deeper message to this—that he would always want to give at least as much (or, quite regularly, a great deal more) to Cas than Cas wanted to take from him.

In different circumstances, Dean might have put on a good show, unzipped Cas’s pants with his teeth, that sort of thing. This wasn’t that kind of day, though. The two may not have been mutually exclusive, but Dean was aiming for perfect clarity between them that he was not performing, he was giving of himself. With that in mind, he let his hands slide up the back of Cas’s thighs, briefly cupping his ass cheeks before they came around to make short work of his zipper. With a rapid tug, the suit pants slithered down around Cas’s ankles, his boxers unceremoniously following a second or two later.

Cas was only half-hard, lagging a bit behind, no doubt due to the suddenness of Dean’s assault. Dean didn’t mind helping him catch up. Dean’s mental mapping of Cas’s erotic needs was no less complete, no less detailed than Cas’s was of Dean. It required no true thought, only a surrendering to instinct, for Dean to know just what to do. Leaning forward, he let his eyes settle on Cas’s cock before they started a steady, slow slide upward. When his gaze finally climbed to Cas’s face, he let his eyelashes sweep down as if in modesty. It was a farce, of course—there was nothing modest or shy about the way he leaned forward and, wide gaze resting steadily on the angel’s eyes through the fringe of those long lashes, breathed on his cock.

That did it. Cas stiffened to full erection so quickly Dean practically had to get out of his cock’s way so he didn’t get smacked by it. It took a little bit of effort not to vent his moment of smug satisfaction with a shit-eating grin, but Dean managed to restrain himself by focusing on his task. Dropping his gaze back to the now fully engorged cock in front of him, Dean leaned forward, tilting his head just so, until the very tip of his nose rested against the outline of a vein that ran up the side and to the tip. He followed it down Cas’s cock to the base, a portion of his brain that he had set aside to be attuned to the reactions he earned noting with approval that Cas caught in a jagged breath
and the counter creaked ominously, suggesting that the angel’s grasp on the wood had tightened precipitously. That was good, but Dean was aiming to do a whole lot better than that before he was through.

Sliding his nose past the base of Cas’s cock, Dean followed the vein downward until it met the delicate, softly furred flesh of Cas’s balls. Only then did he actually open his mouth, once again releasing a single hot breath. Cas’s cock jerked involuntarily and Dean watched admiringly as the muscles in his thighs corded tightly. Following the breath with the tip of his tongue, Dean traced the solid weight of Cas’s balls until the positioning of their bodies impeded him. Lifting his hands to wrap around the back of Cas’s thighs, Dean shifted until he could draw the warm, velvety soft sac into his mouth. He held their weight on his tongue for a moment, remaining still, enjoying the sound and feel of the harsh breaths that shook through Cas’s body before a quick glance showed him that the angel’s fingertips were blanched pale with the force of his grasp on the counter.

Dean could tell that it was taking unimaginable willpower for Cas to refrain from twining his fingers into Dean’s hair and forcing his mouth to go where it was wanted most. As much as he appreciated Cas’s willingness to let him dictate the terms of this, Dean wasn’t aiming for this particular rendezvous to be about torturing Cas or taxing his self-control. He had just gotten carried away in the simple pleasures of tasting and feeling Cas a little bit at a time. Honestly, he could’ve spent hours mapping out every inch of Castiel’s flesh with hands and mouth—he had been known to do just that now and again—but that wasn’t what today was for.

Drawing back enough to gift Cas with a sheepish smile, he leaned forward and offered both apology and fulfillment when he let the leaking tip of Cas’s cock slide into his mouth, shortly followed by the full length. A muted groan broke from somewhere above Dean, but his attention was too fully focused on the task before him to register it more than abstractly. The rhythm he set with the rise and fall of his head was unhurried, but the firm suction seemed to more than make up for it, if Cas’s reactions were any indication. Hollowing his cheeks and relaxing his throat, Dean drew in a deep breath through his nose and let Cas’s length slide past the protesting clench of his gag reflex, swallowing repeatedly around him. The noises that he was drawing from Cas blooded into one another now, soft but intense, leaking from him as steadily as the precome he left smeared on Dean’s tongue.

Dean sped his pace just slightly, tightening his mouth around the base of Cas’s cock, tongue swirling against him as the tip brushed, lightly but repeatedly, against the back of his throat. This time it was Cas who was the oblivious one, and Dean was the one who realized a moment too late what was about to happen.

The voice was just a little bit too close once Dean processed it as distinct from the quiet keening Cas was making. He heard enough that later, when he and Cas were trying to coax Sam out from underneath his bed, he would be able to reconstruct what had likely occurred.

“All right, Sam, you can do this,” who knew the kid actually gave himself pep talks aloud? Weirdo. “Dean’s had a rough day, he’s been doing all the cooking and cleaning, least you can do is throw some stuff into the crock pot and call it dinner, let him and Cas have some quality time to talk things through. You can do this. It was just one cockroach,” okay, Sam might actually need legit therapy if he couldn’t even say the word without tripping over it, “nobody’s seen any since then, you’re perfectly safe, and—"

All of that, the overheard muttering, Dean’s internal commentary in response to it, happened in the course of about 10 seconds, leaving Dean with only enough time to freeze into stupefied solidity. Maybe, if he had moved really fast and thought even faster, this time could’ve been averted. In the end, it was immaterial, because sure enough—
“Oh, Christ almighty, not again,” it wasn’t a scream this time. It wasn’t even a yell. He didn’t sound angry. Nope, Sam sounded nothing so much as defeated. Dean was pretty sure that was a bad sign, but before he could decide what to do about it, the heavy tread was retreating, and he was being left alone with a Cas who had frozen no less solid than Dean himself. Dean’s eyes slid upward until they locked with Cas’s and then, in perfect synchronization, they both shrugged. Their agreement was clear: the damage was already done, and it was unlikely that going after Sam thirty seconds sooner would make much difference at this point. Might as well not waste the moment.

Feeling pretty guilty (but probably not nearly as guilty as he should), Dean nevertheless settled back to his task with enthusiasm. It couldn’t have been more than two or three minutes later when a loud groan coincided with a suspicious sound of snapping wood as Cas’s grasping fingers actually broke through the countertop. Dean swallowed through the climax, then drew back, taking a second to catch his breath and watching as Cas clinically fished a splinter that had to be two inches long out of his palm. Damn, that looked like it hurt, but Cas appeared to be feeling no pain. Dean reached down to snag the angel’s boxers and pants, pulling them into place and helping Cas zip himself back up appropriately. Then he accepted the offered hand upward and let himself be drawn into a kiss so deep that Cas must have been tasting himself on Dean’s tongue.

“That,” Cas told him in a growl against his lips, “was entirely unnecessary, but very much welcome, my love.”

Dean grinned and shrugged slightly, settling his forehead against Cas’s, “The next time you get worried that I’m just going with the flow and letting you debauch me because I think it’s what you want, take a minute to remember how much I enjoyed doing that to you.”

There were a few moments of silence as Cas puzzled this out. When he spoke, tone rife with mild astonishment, it wasn’t what Dean was expecting. “Did you just use the phrase ‘debauch me’?”

Dean paused, considering this, reviewing his own words in his head before he snorted, “Yeah, I guess I did. I mean, can you fault me for accuracy?”

Cas mulled this for a second, then shrugged agreeably, “indeed I cannot. At any rate, consider the message you were sending received and acknowledged. In the future, I will endeavor not to doubt your freely given consent ex post facto.”

Dean was pretty sure that promise was the gist of what he was looking for, although he did take a second to be deeply impressed that Cas could still talk like an Encyclopedia Britannica less than five minutes after an orgasm that had clearly been (far be it from Dean to toot his own horn, but let’s be honest here) mind-blowing. There was probably still a conversation to be had later on, in which Dean put into words all the things he had just tried to say non-verbally (albeit still with his mouth). For the moment, though, they had bigger fish to fry.

“Good enough for me,” he told Cas, “now remind me what Elizabeth Kelly-Roth's next stage of grief is?”

“Her name,” Cas corrected mildly, “was Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, and—“

“Hey,” Dean interrupted suddenly, eyes widening, “do you hear crying?”

Cas sighed deeply and went on as if he had not been interrupted, “—the next phase is depression.”
Tags: blow job and (depressingly enough), Sam, interrupting.

Author's Note: 

I'm back, y'all! After a very long two weeks post surgery, I finally managed to get something that my beta readers assure me is actual writing done. They might be wrong, because I'm still on enough opiates to fell a small elephant, but I was going stir-crazy not writing and absolutely had to get back to the boys.

Thanks so much for all of your words of support and encouragement about my surgery and health and, just as welcome, your thoughts about the story thus far. I'm so glad y'all are enjoying the journey as much as I am.

I can't promise you that updates are going to be coming as frequently or as reliably as they were prior to surgery, but I'm going to attempt to get back into a fairly regular writing schedule, which should mean an update every few days. As always, if there's going to be a delay, I'll keep you in the loop about why.

Thanks for being patient with me, and I hope you enjoy our return to the bunker!
Depression

Chapter Summary

In which Dean and Cas would make truly terrible therapists, but get lots of points for effort. Also, there are oatmeal chocolate chip cookies. With walnuts.

As usual, please find a brief (okay, so the briefness isn't usual) note from your author at the end of the chapter.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“No, really, Cas, I think you should go talk to him. You’re better with…feelings and…stuff…” Oh, great, Dean. Really eloquent. Very convincing.

“But you are his brother. The one who knows him best. Surely it would be better for you to console him?”

“No, that’s exactly why it’s a bad idea. It’s because we’re brothers that he’s so…upset by seeing us,” Dean reasoned, then added, “again. Much better for his best friend to talk to him.”

It almost worked, too. Dean could see the flattered look start to settle onto Cas’s face at being referred to as Sam’s best friend, but he caught on at the last minute. “Nonsense. He will not wish to speak to the man who assured him not two hours ago that every effort would be made moving forward to ensure that he did not witness anything untoward. He no doubt feels that I have betrayed him, which makes me an exceedingly poor choice to go to him now.”

…and that was how, about thirty seconds after realizing what sounds they were hearing from the library, Dean and Cas ended up with heads pressed close together, each trying to convince the other in heated whispers that fixing this was definitely not his own job.

So far, nobody was getting the upper hand. The only thing that had been established clearly, Dean noted ruefully, was that he and Cas were both unabashed cowards when it came to mopping up this particular spill for the—sixth? Seventh? Hell, he wasn’t even sure how many times this made.

“Oh, and you think he really wants to see his brother (who, incidentally, he was trying to bravely face down his phobia in order to cook dinner for) after finding him blowing some guy on the kitchen floor?” Dean felt pretty good about the strength of this particular argument, failing to notice the hole he’d left in it.

“You think he’d prefer to speak with that ‘some guy?’” Cas rebutted triumphantly, earning a groan from Dean. Yeah, he’d walked right into that one.

“Oh, come on, you know you’re not actually just some guy. You’re an angel of the Lord. Sam is a believer. It’ll…sound better, coming from you.”

“What, exactly, will sound better? What do you imagine I might say to him that will fix this?”

“Hell, Cas, if I knew I’d be in there already!”
“Okay,” the angel sighed and leaned back, rubbing each temple with two fingers in a gesture so entirely human that Dean was pretty sure he must’ve picked it up from one of them, “it is clear that ultimately, neither of us has any idea how best to handle this, nor has any particular desire to ‘wing it,’ as you might say.”

“Well, yeah,” Dean agreed warily, wondering whether he was stepping into yet another trap, “So what do we do about it? If I go in there I’m just gonna end up uncomfortably mumbling random syllables at him that may or may not actually form words.”

“Likewise. It seems that perhaps we must go together, and then we can—“

“—both mumble random syllables in the hope that at some point between the two of us it might sound like something comforting?”

“…yes?” the angel responded with doubtful resignation, “unless you have any better ideas.”

“…yeah, no. I got nothing.”

“In that case, we had better—“

“—make cookies? Oh, hey, that’s it, I can make cookies for him while you go talk to him!” Dean was still desperately looking for a trapdoor through which he could escape, but was largely unsurprised to find this one was a dud as well.

“I believe we are past the point at which sugary, high-fat offerings will mend the damage, Dean. And you are not convincing me to go out there alone.”

“Heavenly fucking host,” Dean grumped, “a warrior of God, no less, too scared to face up to one traumatized sasquatch.”

“I beg your pardon,” Cas told him with great dignity, “but my particular battalion was not trained in therapeutic techniques. We were warriors in the truest sense of the word.”

“Wait, there were battalions that were actually trained in therapeutic—oh, hell, never mind.” Dean set that aside for the moment, but made a note to ask about it later, because that could not be a real thing, “fine, fine, fine, we’ll go together.” There was a moment of silence, presumably in which they both attempted to steel themselves for the upcoming disaster. In that lull, something Cas had said more than a minute ago finally clicked. Dean blinked and shot him a gaze that was equal parts accusatory and impressed. “Oh, my God, you made a wing pun, didn’t you?”

Cas tried to look modest and failed entirely, a small but proud grin breaking over his face, his words colored with relieved pleasure “Oh, thank Father, I was starting to think you would miss it altogether. That would have been a terrible waste.”

Dean groaned and scrubbed both hands through his hair, tipping his head skyward and leveling a skewering gaze at whatever higher power might be gazing down at them. “Seriously? This is what you give me? A weepy yeti and a punning angel? This is my reward?”

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“You could,” Cas told him mildly, lips twitching in barely concealed amusement, “do a great deal worse, you know.”

Finally letting the encroaching grin have dominion over his face, Dean tipped his head toward Cas and leaned in for a quick but thorough kiss. “I do, in fact. Know that. Now c’mon, Sam’s mood ain’t a fine wine. It doesn’t seem to be improving with age.”
This was true enough. The sounds from the library had become increasingly heart-wrenching, enough so that it was starting to actually alarm Dean a little. Without any damn clue how to approach this, Dean settled for tackling it in the best way he knew how: like a combat situation. Taking a deep breath, he turned toward Cas to lay out their strategy.

“Okay, I’m going to take point, you bring up the rear. It doesn’t sound like he’s even capable of violence right now, let alone considering it, but we’re safer not assuming anything off the bat. No weapons, but stay alert.” Cas was staring at him, head tipped slightly to one side, brow furrowed, and Dean groaned, demanding, “what? What now?”

“He is your brother, not an enemy combatant, Dean,” Cas told him with an air of long-suffering patience.

“At the moment, I’m not entirely sure what he is, apart from making an ungodly racket that I haven’t heard from him since around the time he got out of diapers,” Dean bit back grimly.

“He is distressed, not dangerous. He needs compassion, not an assault,” Cas argued, shaking his head in evident exasperation.

Throwing his hands in the air, Dean jabbed a finger in the direction of the library. “You see? That’s why I said you should go! You’re the one who knows how to handle something like this. Fine, you take point, I’ll bring up the rear, and you can pick your own strategy. But if he goes for your throat, don’t say I didn’t warn you.”

Cas didn’t even bother with a verbal response to this, merely shook his head censoriously and beckoned Dean to follow him. With little choice but to do so—he would never have used a dick move like letting Cas go ahead and simply failing to follow him (whether or not he briefly considered it, however, nobody but him needed ever know)—Dean trailed in his wake.

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Their plan of attack, tenuous almost to the point of nonexistence in the first place, fell apart entirely once they reached the library and were able to assess the situation.

Sam was lying in the middle of the largest bare patch of floor, staring sightlessly up at the ceiling with an expression of utter wretchedness etched on his face. Forget aiming violence at them, he didn’t appear to even notice their appearance or gradual approach. Cas and Dean’s steps, already hesitant, slowed to a stop by silent mutual agreement when they got within about four feet of Sam. Squinting a little bit, Dean could see that his brother was still leaking tears although the eardrum-rattling sobs had faded into silence.

Grimacing with the combined weight of guilt and doubt as to the best next step, Dean leveled an expression of total perplexity at Cas only to find that Cas was aiming what had to be an identical face right back at him. With little choice but to do so—he would never have used a dick move like letting Cas go ahead and simply failing to follow him (whether or not he briefly considered it, however, nobody but him needed ever know)—Dean trailed in his wake.

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Grimacing with the combined weight of guilt and doubt as to the best next step, Dean leveled an expression of total perplexity at Cas only to find that Cas was aiming what had to be an identical face right back at him. Dean nudged Cas lightly with his elbow in Sam’s general direction, urging him to do something. Cas nudged Dean right back, his meaning (“You do something yourself!”) perfectly clear.

Narrowing his eyes at the angel, Dean jerked his chin toward Sam, trying to make his own meaning just as readily apparent. Get over there and be comforting, you feathered jackass! Be a man, not a junkless Ken doll!

Cas’s eyes flared wide and then narrowed to glittering slits that pinned him instantly in place. Dean had an uncomfortable second in which to suspect that he had just transmitted his thoughts so clearly that Cas had actually picked up on them verbatim. Oops. He’d only done so a couple times before,
always in moments of intense strain. If, damn his luck, he had managed it inadvertently now, he’d know for sure soon enough. The last time he’d mumbled something (not quite as under his breath as he imagined) along those lines in Cas’s direction, he’d slept on his stomach for a week afterward. One did not simply question the manhood or courage of the angel who routinely dominated and fucked you into next week without paying dearly for it.

Twisting his face into a grimace meant to signify apology (which he didn’t necessarily mean, but felt like he sold pretty well), Dean opted to take one for the team on the off chance that Cas would be more inclined to let his snark slide. Sliding his hands into his jeans pockets, he shuffled forward a step or two, until he was ostensibly within Sam’s line of sight. Sam’s eyes didn’t so much as flicker toward Dean, and there was no acknowledgment within his facial expression.

Damn. He was going to have to talk. With no earthly clue where to start, he went for simplicity.

“Hey, Sammy. Hey, bud, how you doing there?” He recognized his voice as sounding the way it had when Sam had come home from preschool crying. He had a sneaking suspicion this probably wasn’t quite the appropriate tone to be striking but, lacking any better ideas, Dean went with it.

Sam blinked silently up at the ceiling, a tear trickling from one eye into the hair that lay carelessly on the tile floor. The floor that they walked on. This had to be bad, for Sam to abandon his hair care mores so entirely.

Frankly, if Dean was honest, it all seemed a little ridiculous to him—this was a hell of a lot of noise for what probably amounted to a cumulative 60 seconds or so of witnessing acts Sam had already known (at least in the abstract) were taking place between Dean and Cas. Still, despite what he knew both of them believed to be his utter lack of perceptiveness, Dean was astute enough to recognize that ribbing Sam about his hypersensitivity was possibly the single worst way to handle this. Setting aside his own feelings about the extremity of the kid’s reactions, Dean took a couple more steps toward him and sat down on the floor. Then he stretched out on his back beside Sam, turning his head toward him and trying again.

“Hey, kid, I know you’re a little upset right now, but I need you to talk to me. If you don’t talk to me, we can’t fix this. We want to help fix this.”

He shot a quick sidelong glance at Cas, and found the angel, who might be the least goddamn subtle being in the whole of creation, giving him two massive thumbs up signs. Closing his eyes and offering a rare prayer for strength upward, Dean tipped his head back toward Sam to look for any signs of life. After a few quiet moments, he got one. Sam’s voice sounded vaguely familiar, but Dean couldn’t quite place it initially.

“No point in talking. Can’t be fixed.”

Great, Dean thought grimly, he’s been reduced to monosyllables. That’s going to make this so much easier.

“That doesn’t sound like the Sammy I know. Where’s that can-do attitude? We’re three pretty smart guys. If we all put our heads together, I bet we can make something happen.” Dean heard the hearty tone in his voice and took a moment to despise himself for it. This kind of cheesy shit wasn’t his game. In his peripheral vision, he could see Cas, who was ostentatiously pantomiming vomiting. Apparently, he also thought this had been a little too much. Restraining with considerable effort the urge to get up just long enough to kick Cas in the shin (while reserving a moment to wonder where the hell a Cas who waved thumbs ups and mimed throwing up had come from), Dean dialed it back a little. “Look, I know you’re hurting, man. That’s our fault, and please believe me when I tell you we are really goddamn sorry.”
Absurd though he might have thought this whole thing was, Dean wasn’t lying. He really was sorry. Whether it was an overreaction or not, he loathed seeing Sammy hurting, let alone in pain that he was directly responsible for. Out of the corner of his eye, Dean registered that Cas was nodding with such absurd overenthusiasm that it was amazing his head hadn’t flown off.

This time, when Sam responded, the familiarity of his tone came to Dean in a flash of insight. He sounded, no shit, exactly like Eeyore. For the third time that week, Dean was forced to admit he might have to reconsider what topped the list of his weirdest experiences.

“Sorry,” if it was possible for a voice to plod, Sam’s voice was plodding along. “You’re sorry, I’m sorry, we’re all just sorry sons of bitches. Doesn’t matter who’s sorry, there’s no escaping it.”

How the hell did you respond to that kind of gloominess? Dean was completely at a loss. Jaw working a little bit, trying to wrap itself around words that simply were not coming, he turned his head just enough to shoot a pleading glance at Cas.

Come on, man, he sent silently to the angel, you can’t just leave me to handle all of this solo while you play mute cheerleader. I’m drowning here. Throw me a life preserver or some shit.

Cas, who apparently gathered the gist of this, took pity on him at last, stepping around to Sam’s other side and sitting cross-legged beside him. “Sam,” Cas said with transparent compassion, “I told you earlier that we would take all reasonable measures to ensure this didn’t happen again. I can only beg your forgiveness that I so soon proved myself a liar. There is no excuse. Please do not doubt Dean’s or my sincerity when we tell you that we will do everything we can to make this up to you.”

Dean shot a quick, worried glance at Cas. That kind of no-strings-attached offer seemed pretty damn risky right now. Who knew what Sam might demand in his current state of mind? Was he upset enough to try for a quick and dirty castration of one of them? It seemed unlikely, but a man couldn’t be too careful when Mr. Happy was at stake. Dean glanced at Sam’s pockets, slightly relieved when he didn’t see the shape of anything particularly pointy in them, and was further soothed a moment later when Sam simply rolled his head far enough to one side to settle his gaze on Castiel’s earnest face. Even from where he sat, Dean could see how haunted Sam looked, and took a moment to be glad that his creepily intent, tear-filled eyes were directed at Cas rather than himself.

Speaking of Cas, even he seemed just a hair nonplussed when the full weight of Sam’s gaze rested on him. The morose words Sam offered up didn’t help any. “Unless you can get me out of here, there’s nothing. And you can’t get me out of here, because none of us are ever getting out of here.”

The hushed voice reminded Dean powerfully of Carol Anne’s sing-song voice intoning “They’re heeeere.” Twitching slightly, he made a note to ask Cas whether Sam’s too-calm, toneless words had the same evocative effect on him. At least, he noted grimly, he’d managed to give Cas the requisite film experience he needed to fully appreciate the macabre nature of this moment. Indeed, Dean observed as he watched Cas’s mouth open slightly, gape for a second, and then slip back shut, Sam’s proclamation seemed to have left the angel flustered enough that he had been temporarily struck dumb. Well, fuck. It seemed like Dean was going to have to go this alone.

He aimed to have the same depth of compassion in his voice that had been so openly evident in Cas’s. “That has to be a really shit way to feel, like you’re going to be trapped here forever running across things you don’t want to see. You know what? Why don’t you go ahead and lie down for a little while. I’m going to bake you some oatmeal chocolate chip cookies. I’ll even put walnuts in them.” The bitter debate over whether to add walnuts to those cookies had spanned the better part of three decades between them, and Dean actually capitulating, even offering to include walnuts was damn near unheard of. He thought maybe Sam’s eyebrow twitched a millimeter or two at this offer, and was heartened by this sign of life. “Then I’ll bring you some cookies warm out of the oven and
we can come up with a plan to make sure this doesn’t happen again.”

Sam shifted his gaze from Cas to rest on Dean, who saw in it dull mistrust—but possibly just a hint of interest, too. He’d take it. He nodded encouragingly to Sam, whose eyes slanted pointedly back to Cas. Dean, instantly divining the problem, hastened to reassure him. “Cas,” he promised firmly, “is going to help me make cookies. With,” he rushed to add as Sam’s brows started to draw together, “all of his clothes on. Mine, too. Cross my heart and hope to be Crowley’s bitch if I’m lying to you. For real.”

Sam still had enough vigor in him to look revolted at the mention of such a thing, which Dean found reassuring. After appearing to gather himself, Sam got to his feet with the speed and creakiness of an arthritic 80-year-old rather than a mid-thirties man in peak physical condition. Dean waited until he was upright, then slung an arm around Sam and drew him in for a quick but hard one-armed hug. Sam made no effort to return the embrace, but didn’t deck him either, and that was about as good as Dean figured he was likely to get right now. Pulling back, he nodded toward the hallway that led to Sam’s room.

“Go on, Sammy. You get some rest, maybe check the weather report—I bet the snow’s gonna melt any day now—and remember that you’ve got some Oatmeal Chocolate Chip Walnut cookies coming up.”

A tiny spark of hope came back into Sam’s eyes at the mention of the snow melting, and Dean nodded with pleased self-satisfaction as Sam turned to slouch his way down the hall. Once he was sure the kid was actually headed for his bedroom, Dean pivoted and turned to head back for the kitchen, keeping his mouth shut until he got there.

Once Cas followed him into the kitchen, however, Dean rounded on him with a glare.

“What the fuck, dude? You didn’t just throw me under the bus, you practically did a little dance to celebrate what it looked like when I splattered!”

Cas had the nerve to look mildly surprised and a little offended. “Nonsense. I allowed you to take the lead because I knew that your instincts would not lead you astray, and I offered silent encouragement as it seemed appropriate.”

Dean snorted so hard it was a miracle the entire kitchen didn’t end up getting pulled into his sinus. “That,” he told Cas, turning the oven on to preheat before he headed to the pantry and began pulling the necessary ingredients off the dry goods shelf, “is some of the most impressive bullshit I’ve ever heard. Waving around your thumbs like the Fonz and pretending to vomit on my shoes is not nonverbal support!”

Cas opened his mouth, clearly to defend himself further, and then paused, an expression of total befuddlement taking over his face. “What is a Fonz and what does it have to do with my thumbs?”

Dean groaned and shook his head. “Figures that’s where Metatron’s sociological crash course would’ve missed a spot. Forget it, doesn’t matter. The point, which you know perfectly well, is that you were about as useful in there as a tutu on a garden slug.” Cas once again looked deeply confused. He opened his mouth, but before he could drag them onto another tangent, Dean cut back in. “I mean, you were totally useless. You froze up on me, man. Abandoned me in the foxhole. Left behind a brother in arms.” Grabbing the final canister, this one of rolled oats, Dean waggled a finger in Cas’s face as he stepped past him, then started combining the dry ingredients with ready ease, not bothering with measuring cups. He’d done this more than enough to eyeball the amounts.

Cas was quiet for a moment. When he finally spoke up, he sounded somewhat sheepish, which
went a long way to defusing Dean’s ire. “You are right. In the moment, I did not know what to do, so I left it to you. That was unfair of me—but you did very well,” he actually sounded sincere, which was ludicrous.

“Don’t be ridiculous. That was a complete, raging fiasco and we both know it.”

“Perhaps,” Cas allowed, “but I do not know that it could have gone any better than it did, and I feel quite confident that it could have been dramatically worse.”

He might, Dean reflected, have a point there. Whisking together several eggs, he mixed them with melted butter and combined all of the ingredients, then beat them together, grateful for a useful outlet for his overflow of nervous energy. Sighing a little, he handed the growing stack of dirty dishes over to Cas with a nod toward the sink, then set about starting to drop generous spoonsful of batter onto the cookie sheet. He and Cas worked in silence for long moments, Dean letting his remaining irritation with the angel bleed out of him. He felt calmer—albeit still entirely at a loss for how to handle Sam—by the time the first batch of cookies went into the oven. Turning to where Cas was carefully drying dishes, Dean grimaced as a thought struck him.

“Oh, shit, you don’t suppose Sam’s hanging himself from the light fixture with a tie or something, do you?”

“Certainly not,” Cas assured him without hesitation, “he is far too tall to be able to do so.”

Dean, who had been sneaking a taste of the batter, choked on it, coughing violently for a few moments before he managed to recover his breath. Wiping his streaming eyes, he grinned at Cas, shaking his head. “Nobody,” he told the angel, “does comfort quite like you, babe.”

Cas returned the smile, a little startled but pleased by the unanticipated praise. Dean grabbed a dishtowel and wiped his face, realizing a second too late that he had just smeared flour all over himself and shrugging. It was the nature of baking. Extending an arm out to Cas, who had just carefully set the final dish in the drying rack, Dean waited until he crossed the few steps and then drew the angel into his arms.

Liberally dusted in flour and a few stray soap suds (Cas was the only person Dean knew who could even clean messily), they stood motionless in an embrace until the ding of the oven announced that the first batch was done. Detaching himself a bit reluctantly, Dean switched out the cookie sheets, grimacing as he prodded at one of the finished cookies. “Walnuts. I ask you. That kid is definitely the mailman’s dirty little secret,” he confided to the angel in a faux-whisper. Cas just shook his head, then went to the fridge. Dean watched, a little perplexed, as he dug around in there before popping up, triumphantly wielding a half-empty carton of vanilla soy milk.

“Aha,” Cas exclaimed happily, “I thought I remembered seeing this when I got the milk this morning. It is Sam’s favorite, yes?”

“Yes,” Dean confirmed with a smile, heart clenching a little bit at this evidence of Cas’s attention to the mundane details that governed not only Dean’s life, but Sam’s as well. “and that’s gonna make him really happy with his cookies. Good call, Cas.”

Cas carried the carton across to the cupboard the glasses lived in, pulling one out and filling it up with the liquid that Dean privately thought tasted more like scummy vanilla water than any kind of milk. His feelings about it didn’t matter. This was about placating Sam, at least enough that he hopefully stopped talking like a clinically depressed donkey. The second batch of cookies finished up just as Dean was moving the first batch from the cookie sheet and onto a cooling rack. He performed the final exchange, then handed the empty cookie sheet to Cas to be washed.
Not for the first time, he registered how readily he and Cas worked around one another in a kitchen. Dean had, for many years (ever since watching his Mom and Dad effortlessly dodge one another while preparing a meal in the tiny kitchen in Lawrence), secretly believed that one of the simplest measures of how well a relationship worked was how easily the partners were able to navigate a kitchen together without tripping one another up. If he was sticking to his childhood standards, he’d done pretty damn well for himself.

By the time the third batch emerged from the oven, the second batch was ready to be moved to cooling racks and the first batch could be plated. Dean eyed the eight giant cookies critically before nodding in satisfaction. That ought to at least give Sam a good start. Despite Cas’s earlier doubts, Dean knew it was hard to stay mad at someone who’d just baked you cookies from scratch. Maybe even more importantly, if Lisa’s obsession with his homemade cookies while she was PMSing had been any indication, it was nearly impossible to be sad when under their warm, chocolate-chip-laden influence.

“Do you think this is enough, or should we wait for the next batch to cool enough to be plated too,” he asked Cas, kind of hoping the angel would play along and give them an excuse to wait a little longer before facing Sam again. To his total lack of shock, Cas sailed right past Dean’s fishing.

“I can hardly believe that after finishing 8 large cookies in a row, Sam’s desire for more is likely to be so urgent that it cannot withstand the time it would take one of us to venture back to the kitchen to secure some,” he told Dean with an earnestness that would’ve been endearing in other circumstances.

“Yeah,” Dean acknowledged with a sigh, “you’re probably right. You grab the milk and I’ll take the cookies.”

Cas was more than happy to oblige, picking up the glass with a level of care that told Dean he was intently focused on not ruining the peace offering with an inadvertent spill. This was just as well, since Cas sometimes wore his vessel with the clumsiness of an overly large puppy trying to manage its paws.

Figuring that based on recent experience he couldn’t trust Cas not to wimp out on him in the lurch, Dean led the charge this time, heading down the hall and for Sam’s room. At least, he noted based on the lack of additional howls of distress, Sam still seemed to have his hysterics under control.

The door to Sam’s room stood ajar, which Dean considered a good sign right up until he nudged it open. He drew to a halt so abrupt that Cas actually bumped into him, sloshing a little soy milk down the back of his shirt. Dean had no attention to spare for that just now, however, too focused on the empty room laid out before him.

There was no sign of Sam, whose bed appeared untouched since he’d made it this morning. Indeed, the only sign that anything in the room had been disturbed was the glow of the laptop screen where it sat on a desk in the corner. Huffing out a breath that was equal parts concern and frustration, Dean took a couple steps further into the room, scanning it one more time to look for anything he’d missed and finding nothing.

Cas followed him in, taking in the deserted room for a few seconds before his voice rang out.

“Sam?”

Dean turned his head, ready to deliver a bitingly sarcastic quip mocking Cas for speaking up, as if his voice alone would suddenly cause Sam to appear out of thin air (and, God damn it, Sam must have been rubbing off a little bit, because Dean’s exact thought used the word ‘apparate’). He never got around to the sneering remark thankfully, since as it turned out, Cas’s unlikely tactic yielded results.
Sam didn’t exactly speak up, but there was the distinct sound of a muffled grunt of acknowledgment. Dean stared blankly at the empty room, then turned his head to Cas, whose face was just as littered with question marks as Dean knew his own must be.

Silence spun out for another ten seconds before Dean decided to try again. Maybe they’d been hallucinating. Paying much closer attention to the room this time, he spoke up a little tentatively. “Sammy?”

The same grunt came again. How a single, muffled sound managed to transmit both lackluster disinterest and irritation at being forced to repeat itself, Dean would never know, but Sam had always been impressively expressive. Dean shook his head a little bit, as if doing so might dislodge the extra sheen of weirdness that had overtaken their lives. It was unsuccessful, but bore some results, if not the desired ones. His eyes caught on the glow of the computer screen, and he was suddenly flattened by the wild thought that somehow, Sam had been sucked into his laptop, like Carol Anne into the television in Poltergeist. Maybe watching the movie with Cas had been a bad idea, since Dean seemed to be struggling to separate it from reality—although, to be fair, Sam getting sucked into the computer wouldn’t have been anywhere near the strangest thing that had happened to them. Maybe not even the strangest this week. Cas, thankfully, had chosen to approach the situation with somewhat greater rationality. Dean’s attention was summoned by the sound of the angel lightly clearing his throat. Turning in his direction, Dean saw Cas, who was crouched next to the bed, gesture pointedly underneath it.

Dean blinked stupidly at him for a few moments before he caught up. Brows shooting upward, he tilted his head toward the bed, wordlessly asking for confirmation of what Cas had been implying. The angel nodded definitively.

Okay. Awesome. The good news was that Sam hadn’t been dragged into a hell dimension through his laptop. On the down side, fearless hunter Sam Winchester had now literally retreated under his own bed and showed no immediate indications that he planned on emerging.

Grinding his teeth together, Dean rolled his eyes upward for a few moments, although whether he was seeking strength from or offering heartfelt curses toward a higher power, he wasn’t entirely certain. Then, since he had no evidence to suggest that said higher power was going to offer any more direct intervention here than he had in the last several thousand years, Dean resigned himself to handling this without divine assistance (unless you counted Cas and, considering his general uselessness thus far, Dean did not).

Drawing in a deep, strengthening breath, Dean stepped forward and then crouched beside the bed near Cas. Schooling his voice to what he hoped would be gentleness and patience, he spoke without really having any idea ahead of time what the hell he was going to say.

“Hey, you. Decided against actually getting in bed, huh?”

Sam grunted, and Dean mentally kicked himself. That was just great, ten points to Captain Obvious.

“You know, Cas here found you some soy milk to go with those cookies. It’s gonna be pretty hard to drink it from under the bed.”

Sam grunted again, but there was a brief pause before this one, as if he was actually considering Dean’s words first.

“The cookies are looking really damn good, too, I gotta tell you. I might’ve eaten them myself already, except for all those walnuts in them.”
Another grunt, this one sounding somewhat more noncommittal. He glanced over at Cas and discovered that the angel was leveling possibly the most unimpressed look that had ever graced his face upon Dean. With great effort, Dean restrained himself from balling a cookie up and flinging it at Cas. Jerking his brows up in what he hoped was a clear indication that Cas should go right ahead and take over if he thought he could do better, Dean turned his attention back to the darkness beneath the bed. Cas took up the challenge (for once, Dean thought just a touch bitterly), speaking up before Dean could try again. “Sam,” Cas spoke firmly, “did something…happen since you left us in the library?” Dean turned toward Cas, intending to aim a scathing ‘what could possibly have happened, are you out of your mind’ look at him, but he was forestalled by Sam’s response.

“…yes.” The kid’s voice was, if anything, even more morose than it had been out in the library. That didn’t bode well.

Dean lifted his brows at Cas, inquiring wordlessly how he’d thought to ask. Cas nodded toward the still glowing laptop screen, which indicated that Sam had done something on it. Dean actually smacked the heel of his palm against his own forehead at his own obtuseness, then nodded impressed gratitude at Cas, who responded with a wan smile and a modest shrug. Dean spoke up this time, trying for the same firm-but-kind tone Cas had struck.

“Do you want to tell us about it?”

“…no.”

Well, shit. So much for that. Pressing two fingers of the hand that wasn’t holding the plate of cookies to his temple, Dean swiveled his gaze toward Cas only to discover that the angel had two fingers planted against his own head in exactly the same manner. Biting back the entirely inappropriate urge to snicker, Dean reverted to the only trump card he had, no matter how pathetic it was. “Okay, no problem. Do you think maybe you want to try a cookie? I can, uh, pass them over to you.”

The silence stretched out for a few moments this time, but there was a considering air to it, so Dean let it ride. Finally, Sam responded, just a little grudgingly. “…okay.”

Counting this as a victory, Dean removed his hand from his temple so he could shoot a quick thumbs up at Cas, who shrugged and nodded. Setting the plate on the floor, Dean slid it forward until it was under the bed, then nudged it further. Once it got about a foot underneath, a large hand appeared from the shadows just long enough to fasten around its edge and draw it deeper into the darkness. Dean shook his head, silently marveling at the utter absurdity that was his life at this moment. Deliberately not speaking, he tilted his head and closed his eyes so he could listen even closer. After about thirty seconds, he heard something he was pretty sure was chewing. Shooting a raised eyebrow at Cas, Dean inquired wordlessly whether he’d heard the same thing. Cas nodded, his expression suggesting that he also felt this was at least some measure of progress. Dean let what he judged to be about enough time for Sam to eat a whole cookie go by before speaking up again.

“How about maybe some of that soy milk? It’s vanilla, your favorite.”

After another few moments of silence, the same hand reappeared from the darkness, extending until the fingertips were within a few inches of the bed’s edge. Cas seemed to take this in stride, and pushed the glass of milk forward until Sam’s hand closed around it, then slid back until it vanished again in shadows. The visual of Sam’s hand poking out and then disappearing once more, like a timid fish from the depths of a coral reef, suddenly and inappropriately struck Dean as so hilarious that he had to bite down hard on his own lower lip to refrain from bursting into laughter. Cas narrowed his eyes at Dean, who wasn’t entirely fooled, since he could see the faint twitching at the corners of the angel’s lips. Dean left it to Cas to speak, since he was pretty sure he couldn’t do so
steadily.

“Would you like us to leave you alone for a little while,” Cas inquired, “and perhaps come to check on you in another twenty or thirty minutes?” It was quiet while Sam considered this for a bit before responding.

“…yeah.”

Shrugging, Dean pushed up from his crouch as Cas did the same. He headed for the door, pausing just before leaving. “We’ll be right in the library if you need anything, o—“ he cut himself off as his eyes grazed the laptop screen and recognized the color scheme of Sam’s favorite weather site. He was too far away to see what it actually said. With a feeling of foreboding, Dean turned back toward the bed to speak to Sam. He did his best to keep his voice casual. “Hey, buddy, did you check the weather when you got in here like I suggested?”

Sam’s voice, when it came, managed to transmit both bitterness and hopelessness in one single word. “…yes.”

The feeling of dread growing, Dean pressed Sam, “…and?”

“And,” Sam offered the first complete sentence he’d said since they got into the room, a terrible kind of hilarity edging the creeping horror in his voice, “they’re calling for snow.”

Chapter End Notes

Part of me sort of feels like I need to apologize when I post chapters that are completely devoid of smut. I'm resisting that urge this time however, because if there's anything even better than sexy, it's funny, and anyone who doesn't giggle their way through this chapter has no soul.

Seriously, though, I hope you got as much of a kick out of reading this one as I got out of writing it.

In other news, if at some point any of you discover that through a "French Mistake" style comedy of errors, Sam and Dean Winchester have actually come to life, please give me a call so I can go into hiding before Sam comes after me with an ax.
Moratorium

Chapter Summary

In which Cas finally admits defeat, Sam becomes steadily more insufferable, and Dean has what is either the best or the worst idea of his life. Also, there's peanut butter.

Please see chapter specific...something...at the end of the chapter, along with an author's note.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Ten minutes later, when Cas came around the doorway into the library to skewer him with a look that could only be called unamused, Dean was forced to concede that the uselessness scales had largely evened out.

It wasn’t like he’d planned on being overcome with hilarity so sudden and overwhelming that it could safely be termed hysteria. And, really, who could blame him? Even Sam clearly saw a little bit of the humor in it (even if his hint of mirth was edged with…instability). Honestly, Dean thought he’d handled the whole thing very well. He hadn’t burst into ear-splitting cackles in Sam’s room, in front of the kid. He’d managed to throw himself out of the room and down the hallway as if catapulted from a slingshot. He even nearly made it back to the library before he couldn’t hold it back anymore. And then he’d had the courtesy to find a throw pillow in which to muffle most of his guffaws, while Cas presumably ran damage control back in Sam’s room.

By the time Cas re-entered the library, brows a solid line of reproach, Dean had mostly gotten himself under control and was laid out on the floor in that wet-eyed, sore-stomached, sighing stage that was occasionally broken by a residual and uncontrollable giggle. Cas, whose sense of humor was always a bit of a mystery, clearly neither saw the humor nor approved of Dean allowing himself to be overcome by it. Trying to straighten his face into an appropriately solemn expression, Dean sat up, opened his mouth, then snapped it shut when an irrepressible snicker chose that untimely moment to emerge. If possible, Cas’s eyebrows had knit together further in accusation. Dean took a deep breath, let it out slowly, and tried again.

“I…uh…yeah. I’m sorry about that. It was…unavoidable.” Cas just stared at him, apparently waiting for something. Fairly sure that he was getting it wrong, but without any better ideas, Dean changed tactics to inquire, “so, uh, how’s Sam handling things? Any…progress?”

While this clearly wasn’t what Cas had been looking for from Dean, it served the admirable purpose of distracting him. He sighed, crossing the room to lean back against the long table, shaking his head. “He remains under the bed, although he did deign to ask, without much hope, whether I might consider melting the snow away from the door despite the risk to the wards.”

Dean’s brows lifted a little. Damn, this was serious, if Sam was willing to potentially throw away the bunker’s most important function as a space protected from all the forces of heaven and hell that were so often after them. Pretty sure he knew the answer, Dean checked anyway. “Damn. What’d you tell him?”
Cas sighed and shook his head. “I told him that, while I knew it seemed as if I was being senselessly cruel, I could not place in jeopardy the safety of not only the three of us, but the secrets, lore, and dangerous objects that the bunker guards, solely in order to save him further angst.” Dean nodded approval. It simply wasn’t a viable solution without a guarantee that the warding would be undamaged. Then Cas went on, and his next words made Dean immediately reconsider whether maybe the wards were acceptable collateral damage after all. “I did, however, assure him that until further notice, you and I are putting a moratorium on all sexual activities.”

Dean could feel his eyes bug out of his skull, jaw opening to herald what would no doubt be impressively vociferous protests, but Cas forestalled him, raising a hand and going on. “No, Dean. I know how you feel, and you can hardly think that this was something I conceded lightly. I simply do not see any viable alternative. Clearly, despite our best efforts, we cannot guarantee that Sam will not inadvertently come upon any—indeed, every—given sexual encounter. I have real concerns that we risk doing lasting damage to his psyche if the pattern continues unchecked. Set aside your desires and ask yourself which is more important—your own sexual fulfilment, or the well-being of your brother?”

It was a mark of how good the sex was that Dean actually had to take a minute to think about this, and when he eventually nodded grudging agreement, he could feel something that felt suspiciously like a pout settle onto his face. “Oh, fine. You’re right. But if we’re not having any more sex, we’re devoting all that saved time to hitting the books and figuring out some way out of here that won’t damage the warding.”

Cas nodded readily, smiling encouragingly at Dean. “That is an excellent idea. Perhaps if we tell Sam of our new plan, he will even consent to emerge from beneath the bed and join us. His research skills could not help but speed the process.”

It was a good idea, but ultimately came to nothing. Sam could not be coaxed from beneath the bed, even when the carrot of potential escape was dangled before him. He was simply too deeply ensconced in melancholy.

When Dean popped into his room to check on him thirty minutes after his refusal to join them, he was slightly heartened to see that the empty glass of soy milk rested neatly in the middle of the likewise empty plate of cookies, both of which had been nudged to the space at the edge of the bed. Grabbing them, Dean remained in a crouch to inquire.

“Do you think you’d like any more cookies? Another glass of milk maybe?” The silence was considering, but ultimately Sam grunted in clear denial. With a sigh, Dean nodded to himself. “Okay, no problem, but I’m gonna come back in here in another hour or so and bring you a sandwich. Any requests?” At this point, Dean figured any direct interaction he could get from him was a good thing. He was no therapist, but simple instinct told him that letting Sam sink further into his solitary misery couldn’t be a good thing. Sam was silent for another few moments, but at least his answer was in actual words this time.

“No ham, extra tomatoes.”

Delighted at this evidence of an actual preference, Dean let his response get away from him a little. “You got it, buddy!” With a grimace at the return of that slightly too-hearty tone, Dean shook his head and pushed himself upright.

Back in the library, he found Cas surrounded by a pile of books so tall that they practically made a small fortress around him. Leaning against the doorframe, Dean quirked an eyebrow when Cas looked up at him. Cas blinked blankly at him for a moment, then glanced around and seemed to catch on, grinning a little sheepishly. “Well,” he said, somewhat helplessly, “I thought that perhaps if
I did not have to keep getting up to reference other texts, this would proceed somewhat faster, but—“

“—that way lies madness,” Dean finished for him. “I’ve tried that. Before you know it you’ve got
the entire library stacked up around you, and Sam is threatening to set your head on fire if you don’t
resemble all of it exactly where it belongs.” Grinning at the memory, Dean started slightly as an idea
struck him. “Hey, maybe I could get him out here if I make him mad enough at what you’re doing to
his library?”

Cas considered for a moment, but shook his head. “Ultimately, I do not think that inciting him to
anger would represent progress. Speaking of which, what is his current status?”

Dean lifted the empty plate and cup into Cas’s line of sight, earning a nod of approval from him. “I
offered to get him more cookies but he didn’t want any, so instead of asking I told him I would bring
him a sandwich in an hour or so. He did find his voice long enough to request no ham and extra
tomatoes.”

“That seems a good sign,” Cas observed, smiling a little, “and, just incidentally, gets you out of
research long enough to make and deliver a sandwich as well as, presumably, eat your own.”

Dean had to marvel sometimes at just how effortlessly Cas was able to follow his train of thought.
Not even trying to deny it, Dean shrugged and offered his most charming grin. “Well, it would be an
extra waste of time if I made Sam a sandwich, brought it to him, came back, and then had to interrupt
my research a second time to go make another sandwich and eat it. Combining my efforts is really a
time-saver in the end.”

Cas chuckled, turning back to his book, but not before offering a warning, “I know how you feel
about research, but considering our current strategy, it would be wise for you to resign yourself to
how much of it you will be doing until we settle on a plan.”

Dean sighed deeply, gazing with dismay at the piles of books around Cas. The angel was right.
With no sex on the horizon, a practically catatonic brother, and no way out except, possibly, through
these dusty tomes, Dean needed to get his head right or he was going to be as wretched as Sam
before long.

“Okay. You’re right. Let’s do this. You seem to have some kind of strategy worked out. Where
should I start?”

~*~

Five days later, the piles of books around the library had grown taller and more plentiful, notepads
covered in pages of nearly indecipherable scribbles littered the long table, and they were no closer to
an exit strategy than they had been the first morning after the blizzard, when the three of them stood
gaping at the snow-covered windows.

Nearly a week without sex had done neither of their moods any good, nor had the increasingly
bizarre meal requests from a no-less-morose Sam. If Dean managed his requests (How the hell did
he even think of a kale and pine nut salad with citrus vinaigrette?) he got a grudging grunt of
acknowledgment at best, and if he failed (in what universe would he have been able to produce a
teriyaki portobello steak or sweet potato and bison fricassee with nothing but the dwindling stores of
the bunker’s kitchen, for God’s sake?) Sam retreated further, reduced to caveman sounds of
existential angst for at least the next six hours.

The best that could be said was that Sam had, eventually, deigned to emerge from under his bed,
presumably because a body that size was simply not designed to be scrunched into a space that small
for long periods. Things weren’t a whole lot better, however. In the overnight hours between the first and second day, he had somehow managed to construct a blanket fort on his bed. Impressively, it was big enough to harbor his moose-like proportions easily as long as he sat, crouched, or curled up (any of which positions seemed to jive with his current dolefulness). Somewhat less impressively, it had taken what Dean and Cas were pretty sure was every goddamn blanket in the bunker. Including Dean’s.

Neither of them had a fucking clue how Sam had not only managed to traverse the entire bunker enough times to grab all those blankets (never mind the intensely creepy fact that he’d somehow secured Dean’s blanket out of his room while Dean was sleeping under it), but done so without ever crossing paths with either of them. Sam, Dean had opined to Cas with mingled awe and exasperation, must’ve taken a class or two in how to be a goddamn ninja at Stanford. After all, he had to be using the bathroom somehow, since he was presumably still human and his room hadn’t started to smell foul—and yet, neither Dean nor Cas had encountered him on the way to or from the facilities. Dean had started to wonder, half seriously, whether Sam had dug a secret tunnel from his room to the bathroom using a spoon Dean had inadvertently left in there with him.

What was increasingly clear was that their current strategy wasn’t working. The weather was no help, either. Thankfully, the forecasted snow had come to nothing more than an inch or two, but the record-breaking amounts that the original blizzard had dumped showed no signs of departing.

If nothing changed, Dean had told Cas in a horrified whisper yesterday (it wouldn’t do to have the first thing Sam heard when finally reemerging from his bedroom be a doomsday scenario), theoretically they could be stuck down there until spring. All it needed was the temperature to stay below the mid-30s with no breaks and limited direct sunlight, and here they would stay. Honestly, there weren’t even that many people they could call for a bail out. A few years ago, they could’ve picked up the phone and called Bobby. He would’ve called them idjits at least a few hundred times, but somehow he still would’ve had a massive snow plow digging them out inside of 6 or 8 hours. Nobody else had anywhere near the network of connections Bobby did.

With a sigh of regret (only about half of which had to do with what Bobby could’ve done for them), Dean slammed the latest book shut and dropped it back onto its stack. There was an ominous creaking sound, and before Dean could do more than gasp in anticipatory horror and leap to his feet, the four-and-a-half-foot tall pile of (ancient and priceless, as a less despondent Sam would no doubt have reminded them) tomes toppled over and spilled its contents across the library floor with a series of thumps so impressive it probably registered on the Richter scale.

Groaning loudly, Dean flung himself back into his chair hard enough that it, too, practically toppled, and let his head fall onto the long table’s surface with a satisfying thud. So satisfying, in fact, that he lifted his forehead a couple inches and then did it again. It stung, sure, but there was still something satisfying in venting his frustrations in such a (literally) in-your-face way. For good measure, he repeated the process another three or four times. He didn’t have time to consider whether to push onward past the point at which it would’ve gone from a mildly amusing and eccentric way to respond to unmanageable frustration to a legitimate attempt at self-harm, because Cas came tearing down the hall and through the library doorway at that particular moment.

“Dean!” he gasped, “is everything alright? Are you hurt? I heard an awful—I thought perhaps the snow had caved the ceiling in, or Sam had attempted to blow his way out of the bunker!” Dean picked his forehead up off the table and started to nod reassuringly, then threw his hands in the air, unable to simply carry on.

“No! And no!” Cas looked perplexed, so Dean clarified. “No, everything is not alright, and no I’m not hurt. Sorry about the noise, it was—“ Dean cut himself off to motion helplessly to the books
now scattered across the library floor.

“Ah,” Cas sighed, stepping into the room and starting to gather the toppled volumes to return them to their pile, sending a quick consoling glance toward Dean. “Indeed. It is difficult to maintain the integrity of the stacks.”

Dean watched him, frowning, then shook his head firmly in decision and pushed back from the table. “Forget it, Cas. Don’t bother. We’re done.”

Cas paused with a book halfway to the stack, raising his brows at Dean. Then he glanced back at the book, frowning from the floor to the stack. Dean immediately recognized that, having been told not to bother, he was trying to figure out whether to set the book back on the floor (which went against his general instincts toward order) or go ahead and put it on the pile. Stifling what wanted to be an affectionate smile, Dean stood up and reached out to take the book from Cas, breaking his paralysis by removing the dilemma. He set it down on a corner of the table carelessly (Cas’s eyes widened in what was either consternation or amazement that there was a third option he hadn’t considered, Dean wasn’t quite sure) and started to pace back and forth in the small spaces afforded by book piles. Cas, watching him and frowning, spoke up at last. “We are done? What are we done with?”

“This! Researching! Digging through books for fourteen hours a day! Catering bizarrely and increasingly elaborate meals for the least grateful, most emo moose on the planet! Jumping guiltily every time we accidentally brush past each other, like we’re two 16-year-old Mormons! All of it! I mean,” he broke off, reaching out to grab Cas’s hand. Cas went to pull back. In deference to their vow of sexlessness, they’d been pretty careful about how much physical contact they allowed themselves, since one thing had often been known to lead to another and they didn’t want to be overcome. Dean didn’t allow Cas to break the contact, just tightened his grasp and tugged him back into the hall. They took a right, then a left, the volume of a particularly eardrum-grating sound growing with each step.

When Dean could force himself no further, he stopped, still a good fifteen feet down the hall from Sam’s open door, and stabbed a finger in its direction. Even Cas (who, despite Dean’s best efforts, couldn’t tell a good song from what it sounded like when a truck carrying a full orchestra’s instruments collided with a freight train) was grimacing and cringing back from the door as if what was taking place in the room was physically painful to him. Dean didn’t endeavor to speak—Cas wouldn’t have heard him over the almighty racket emerging from Sam’s room.

The music itself was playing at ear-splitting volume, but that might not have been so bad. They weren’t really his genre, but Dean had to give R.E.M. the respect they deserved (Losing My Religion was a classic, not to mention often appropriate to the point of absurdity in his own life). No, what threw this over the edge—indeed, over the cliff that stood a few miles past the edge and into the goddamn abyss—was the creative interpretation, such as it was, currently taking place inside Sam’s blanket fort.

Dean was the first to admit that his little brother was a man of many skills and talents. Sam was a hell of a guy, and Dean relied on him, his expertise, and his abilities a great deal. He would never hesitate to toot Sammy’s horn where appropriate and to recognize the many wonderful things he had to offer. The problem was when he decided to offer something he didn’t actually have to give—like anything resembling a singing voice.

Flinching as the tuneless warble broke against him, Dean held his ground and kept a hold on Cas’s hand when he would’ve otherwise pulled back and fled back down the hall almost immediately. Shaking his head, Dean again stabbed his finger at the door to Sam’s room. Cas opened his mouth,
leaning in, probably to plead for Dean to, for God’s sake, let them get out of here, but at that particularly unfortuitous moment, Sammy hit the chorus. Together, they stood for as long as they could collectively stand it. It couldn’t have been more than thirty seconds.

“EVERYBODY HUUUUUUUUURTS SOOOOOOOOMETIIIIIIIIIIIIMES
EVERYBODY CRIIIIIIIIIIIIIIEEEEEEEEEEEEES!
AND EVERYBODY HUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUURTS—“

Sam was far from done, but by mutual agreement, Dean and Cas sprinted down the hallway and toward the library. Dean allowed Cas to take his hand back so that he could plaster it over his ear. This was not an act of mercy—mostly Dean needed his own hand back to block out the cacophony that followed them toward the library.

Silence finally reigned again once they reached the sanctuary of the library’s thick walls, much to their joined relief. They stood there in blessed quiet for a moment, panting as if they’d run a marathon rather than just listened to Sam’s attempt at a creative outlet for his existential angst. Eventually, Dean gathered himself enough to finish making his original point.

“Sam,” he told Cas grimly, “is not getting any better. This whole handling him with kid gloves, giving him whatever he wants, speaking gently, not daring to go near each other bit is not working, Cas, and we. are. done.”

Cas opened his mouth as if to protest, then just shook his head, shoulders slumping in defeat. “Very well. I cannot argue, and if he has devolved into producing that indescribable crime against nature—“ Dean didn’t think he’d ever heard a description so apt as that one. Yeah, that’s exactly what Sam was doing, “—then, yes, clearly we need a new strategy.”

Grimacing a little bit in anticipation of Cas’s reaction, Dean took a deep breath and went for it. “I’ve been thinking, and I have an idea.” Cas quirked a brow in inquiry and invitation, and Dean forged ahead. “So, I did a little bit of side research on this Elisabeth Kübler-Ross chick and her theory. Depression is stage four. Once this…weird little mourning period of Sam’s started, he’s reliably gone through one phase every time he caught us. But there’s five phases, not four.”

Understanding was starting to grow in Cas’s eyes, his brows climbing on his forehead. Dean expected him to immediately veto the idea but, not for the first time, Cas surprised him, narrowing his eyes and starting to nod, a slow smile spreading across his face as he spoke, “And the fifth is Acceptance. You know, I think you might just be onto something, Dean.”

Dean felt an answering smile start to settle on his own face. “Okay, so here’s what I’m thinking…”

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Forty-five minutes later, they were ready to put their plan into action. Dean delivered Sam’s lunch (a peanut butter sandwich, instead of the requested Turtle Bolognese and grilled asparagus, because Dean had never been more done in his entire life), wearing both earplugs and headphones, although their combined powers were still utterly inadequate against Sam’s serenade. He was extra generous with the peanut butter and provided a massive glass of soy milk, knowing that Sam would need it. Trusting to the soy milk to have the expected effect on Sam’s bladder, Dean left the room after ensuring that the plate and glass had both vanished into the blanket fort.

When Dean came around the corner to the library’s entranceway, he found Cas anxiously awaiting him, doing what looked suspiciously like fidgeting. Quirking a brow in a way he hoped looked more
inquisitive than entertained, Dean took Cas’s hand and entangled their fingers. He pulled the angel back into the library and headed for the table, where his own peanut butter sandwich awaited him. Cas, who was practically vibrating by this point, finally lost control and demanded, “well?”

Dean, who had just taken a massive mouthful of the sandwich, chewed as quickly as peanut butter would allow him, holding up his free hand in the universal signal for ‘hang on a second,’ but nodding reassuringly so that Cas wouldn’t literally explode in the interim. He finally forced the bite down his gullet and, after grabbing a quick sip of water, nodded again. “No problems. I’m sure he wasn’t thrilled about the change in menu, but the music was way too loud for him to actually grunt at me. He’s gotta be hungry enough to eat it. I’ll go back in there in about twenty minutes to pick up the plate and glass, and I’d say another 30 minutes after that, we’re a go.”

Cas nodded resolutely, then crumpled into himself, dropping into the nearest chair and gazing at Dean in despair. “Are we certain this is really our only recourse?”

Dean at least pretended to consider the question, but his mind was made up and there was no going back. “Absolutely. We can’t go on like this any longer. If I have to hear one more request for the kind of dish I know perfectly well he’s never eaten in his life, he’s not going to live until the snow melts. It’s time for an intervention.”

Cas took in a deep, steadying breath, and Dean rested his free hand reassuringly on the angel’s knee for a second. Finally, Cas nodded once, committing himself, as he settled a hand atop Dean’s and squeezed firmly. “Very well. You are right. And, Dean?” Dean, who had turned his attention back to his sandwich, glanced up, mouth full, “I may not be entirely comfortable with it, but I cannot deny that the idea is both clever and logical.”

Dean grinned at Cas through a mouthful of peanut butter, offering wordless thanks for the acknowledgement.

~*~

Fifteen minutes later, Dean returned from Sam’s room for the second time, now carrying an empty plate and, much more importantly, an equally empty glass. On his way past the library, to deposit the plate and glass in the kitchen, he gave Cas a smile and a thumbs up. Cas was waiting for him when he returned to the library, leaning against the table with his hands in his trench coat pockets.

“I’m pretty sure we’ve got a little time,” Dean told him, “but since we can’t risk missing our opportunity, I think we should get the stage set right away and plan on waiting a little bit.”

Cas nodded agreement, and together they set off for the communal bathrooms. Once they reached the room, Dean went ahead and made precautionary use of the facilities, because it wouldn’t do to be in mid-piss when the moment of truth finally arrived. After he finished up and washed his hands, he turned to Cas with a grin.

“Okay, basically, we’ve got two choices. It’s been a long goddamn five days, and honestly, I’m all for us making up for lost time with the assumption that at some point, Sam’s bladder is gonna get the best of him and we’ll end up with a witness, but…” He trailed off with a slightly rueful grin at the expression on Cas’s face.

“Dean,” the angel told him earnestly, “please do not for a second believe that I am not just as anxious as you are to, as you say, make up for lost time. I just do not believe I would be able to lose myself in the moment, all the while anticipating being interrupted. It was one thing when it was inadvertent, but…” he trailed off helplessly and Dean waved whatever else he might have said off, wrapping an arm around his shoulders and squeezing gently.
“Hey, hey, it’s okay. I get it. No worries. Not everyone can perform in front of an audience, and there’s definitely no shame in that. I’m not exactly turned on by the idea of Sam walking in on us, I think I just lost the ability to give a shit somewhere between his requests for mango crème brûlée and oysters meunière.” Cas grinned, acknowledging that Dean had somewhat more reason than he did to feel a touch vengeance-minded, despite the fact that their plan was more of a last, desperate attempt at exposure therapy than actual revenge. Dean went on. “Listen, it’s fine, this is gonna work anyway. Do you remember the pizza man?”

Cas frowned a little bit, although he nodded. Then realization seemed to strike and his brows shot upward in wordless question. Dean nodded back, grinning. “Yeah, exactly. We’re going to stage our own little porno. We’re just gonna fake it. It doesn’t have to be real, it just needs to look real enough that Sam thinks we’re actually going at it. Do you think you can manage that?”

The look of solemn consideration on Cas’s face was so earnest that Dean had to bite his tongue so he didn’t start laughing. He was pretty sure, if this worked, it would either be a story they would never stop telling, or one they would never speak of again. There would be no in between. After a few moments, Cas nodded once, firmly. “Yes. No matter how uneasy I may feel about the method, the cause is a noble one. Let us proceed.”

Ten minutes later, they’d sketched out the basics, and Dean estimated that they had anywhere from five to twenty minutes until zero hour. They doffed their clothes with no more precision but a great deal less passion than usual, although Dean made sure they ended up in random piles around the room to suggest that they had been torn off in haphazard need. Dean had messed up Cas’s hair and stolen a few hasty rough kisses so that both of their lips looked appropriately swollen and bitten. After several brief pauses for mini-pep talks to keep Cas in the proper mindset, Dean was pretty sure they were good to go.

“Okay,” he said bracingly, “let’s get into position. Don’t forget to move but remember not to make too much noise before he gets around the door. It probably won’t work if he doesn’t actually see us.” Cas nodded once, decisively, and Dean stole a much lighter, encouraging kiss. “Let’s do this, babe.”

They took their positions, Dean bending over the side of one of the sinks, gripping its far edge, Cas standing directly behind him, grasping his hips. A couple of moans and groans, a little bit of rhythmic faux-thrusting when Sam walked in and, hopefully, they’d be looking at an end to the miserable, demanding, insistently tone-deaf wretch that had replaced Sam Winchester.

They settled into place, Dean spreading his legs and planting his feet, making sure he was stable enough to hold position for as long as they needed to wait. After a few moments, he released the sink with one hand, reaching back to squeeze Cas’s hand on his hip in reassurance. Cas squeezed back, a hint of a smile in his voice. “I am fine, Dean. You are quite right, this is our best—our only—option. I am fully committed.” His voice deepened into a tone Dean was all too familiar with. “Now get your hand back where it belongs. It has just occurred to me that if this works, thirty minutes from now we can reenact this scene without the pretense.”

Well, that about did it. The authoritative tone in his voice, along with the promise of the (soft, for now, but that could change easily) cock he could feel brushing against his thigh buried inside him for the first time in almost a week—it gave Dean all the incentive he needed to add one more critically important (how had they forgotten this before now?) detail to the scene. He felt himself harden at the mental picture Cas’s words implanted and went with it, closing his eyes for a second and imagining all the ways the two of them could make up for the long celibacy of the past five days. His breathing sped of its own volition and before he knew it, his cock hung, hard and swollen, between his thighs, his hips moving a little, involuntarily. His own movements must’ve had an impact on Cas, because
suddenly the velvety softness he felt against his thigh was still velvety but not nearly as soft. Another two or three minutes, and they might not have needed to fake anything, might have made liberal use of the bottle of lube that rested carelessly on the sink, turning it from a prop into a participant—but as it turned out, they didn’t have two or three minutes.

Dean heard it first, the quiet drag of bare feet coming down the hall. Well, at least that confirmed that Sam had actually been coming to the bathroom like a normal human being and had just managed to avoid them so far. Dean knew the instant that Cas caught on, a few seconds later, because the hands on his hips tightened sharply. It was perfect, really, because it pulled an authentic gasp out of Dean the second that Sam came around the corner and stood silhouetted in the doorway.

If you’d asked Dean ahead of time, he would’ve said that Cas could provide at least a passable performance, given the critical importance of their strategy. What he didn’t anticipate was how seriously Cas took Dean’s allusions to the pizza man. The second Sam hit the doorway, Cas was in motion, his thrusts sharp and fast. That wasn’t the part that left Dean burying the lower half of his face in his own bicep so he didn’t burst into laughter. No, what did that was the fact that one of Cas’s hands broke from Dean’s hip to begin porn-slapping his ass. Even without seeing it, Dean could feel the ridiculous theatricality to the movements, and his suspicions were reinforced by the words, uttered with impressive enthusiasm, that broke from his beloved’s mouth. “Take it, bitch!”

Oh, God. Dean was never letting Cas live this one down. For his own part, it took a couple seconds before he remembered that he had a role to play, too, and pulled his face away from his own bicep so he could moan unintelligibly in time to the staged thrusts. He slitted his eyes as if in ecstasy, but kept them trained on Sam’s face, looking for the reaction.

Sam, as he had every time, froze solid when his eyes lit upon the scene. He had appeared wrapped in a blanket, as if the pitiful survivor of some natural disaster (an affectation that reminded Dean powerfully of his frequent recent urges to smack Sam), but it slid from his nerveless fingers to the floor as he stood, struck motionless by the scene before him. He was thankfully clad in sweatpants, since a nude Sam would’ve added an unspeakably creepy edge to a scene that already felt suspiciously like a cheap porno. Dean kept up the moaning for the several seconds of suspense in which they waited to see what Sam would do. His expression, which had altered from abject misery to numb shock, melted off his face after a few seconds, leaving behind the most normal, Sam-like face they’d seen in days. His voice, when it emerged, was damn near casual, apparently unperturbed by the scene before him.

“Hey, are you guys almost done? I really have to pee.”

Chapter End Notes

Chapter-specific tags: I...don't even know. Uh...porn-slapping? Pizza-man references? Fake sex? Seriously, I have no idea.

Author’s Note:

Y’all...please just know that nobody laughs harder at my writing than I do. Nobody.

Now, I realize that you’ve been waiting several days for the smut to reappear (take comfort in knowing that Dean and Cas have been waiting even longer than you). Let me assure you that everyone’s wait is over next chapter, in which Dean and Cas have every intention of enthusiastically making up for lost time. Look for it probably
sometime late tomorrow or early Wednesday, although no guarantees.
In which Dean and Cas start making up for lost time, and Sam has regained his chill.

Please see the notes at the end for chapter-specific tags and warnings as well as thoughts from your author.

“Can’t believe,” Dean wheezed, for at least the fifth time, “you called me a bitch. Oh, God, my stomach hurts.”

“I was in character,” Cas said again, with great dignity, “and you were the one who mentioned the pizza man.”

“I sure was,” Dean agreed, wiping his eyes yet again and trying desperately to get his giggles under control. He’d been going on and off for at least fifteen minutes, and it was clear that Cas’s patience with his uncontrollable mirth was wearing thin, “and I have never been so glad of any throwaway reference in my life. That was amazing.”

“If,” Cas told him grouchily, “that was not what you wanted, you should have been more specific.”

“Oh no,” Dean assured him, “that was exactly what I wanted. I just didn’t know I wanted it. Damn, I wish we’d gotten it on camera.”

The look Cas threw at him could only be termed accusatory.

“Had there been a camera,” he pointed out, still frowning, “we would have been producing an actual pornographic film.”

“Oh, I know,” Dean agreed merrily, “and it’s a damn shame we didn’t. The world is missing out.”

“I feel I should mention,” Cas was looking more put out by the second, and Dean knew, he knew, he needed to get it under control, but come on. It would’ve taken a far better man than he to take Cas’s unexpected performance in stride, “that my genitals still hurt.”

Ah, yes. That. That had been…unfortunate. As it turned out, Dean should probably have been more specific with Cas about the endpoint, but in all fairness, without any idea of how Sam was going to react, there was only so much direction he could have provided. Cas, who had clearly taken his role very seriously, had not recognized that Sam’s casual statement about his bladder’s needs served the same function as a director yelling ‘cut!’

Indeed, he had carried right on his ass-smacking, hip thrusting merry way as Sam looked on serenely. It had been one of the more surreal moments of Dean’s life, his boyfriend theatrically fake-pumping away at him while his brother observed blandly. Unwilling to spoil the charade and risk undoing their progress, Dean had blanked out for a good thirty seconds, bouncing back and forth against the sink as his mind spun, trying to figure out the appropriate next step.
Eventually, while still producing moans that he thought were far less impressive than Cas’s continued recitations (which Dean couldn’t even think about without dissolving into hilarity—the least impressive had been “that’s right, open up for it, cockslut!”), he had remembered that one of the last stages of plays and other theatrical performances was the climax. That seemed to Dean to be a reasonable way to bring things to a close, but how to transmit to Cas the plan? There was no way, especially with Sam’s bright hazel eyes focused intently on the action. So Dean had done the only thing he could think of. Reaching back, as if to spread himself wider for Cas (never let it be said Dean entirely lacked a sense of theatricality), Dean had instead gotten a good handful of Cas’s half-hard cock and squeezed. The resultant groaned yell that Cas produced served as a pretty damn good simulated orgasm, and Dean went ahead and offered up some climax-worthy yells too. Then, while Cas was still trying to catch his breath from the unexpected assault, Dean stood up, grabbed Cas’s hand, and yanked him toward the door. Sam had obligingly stepped out of the way, and Dean had hauled Cas down the hall with a quick yell over his shoulder toward Sam.

“Yeah, uh, sorry about that! Our bad!”

Sam’s cheerful voice followed them down the hall. “No problem. Sorry to interrupt the party!”

The only response Dean offered had been the slam of his door. He had promptly dissolved into hysterics that he muffled in the nearest pillow, while Cas carefully examined his cock for any signs of damage. Dean could’ve told him there was none—he hadn’t squeezed that hard, and his own dick had bounced back from far worse insults—but he couldn’t actually manage any words for the first several minutes. Every time he started to get himself under control, he remembered the sound of Cas’s gravelly voice melodramatically telling him to take it, bitch, and he lost it again.

Now he’d mostly gotten it under control and was able to produce what he hoped was an appropriately penitent demeanor, coming over to where Cas stood with one hand carefully cradling the injured party, looking like the poster child for “consternation.”

“I know, babe, I’m sorry. Really, I am,” he told Cas, with perfect honesty. He, unlike certain people in the room, wasn’t a sadist. He hadn’t actually gotten any pleasure out of hurting Cas, but it had been the simplest expedient for ending the scene without blowing their cover, especially since Sam had been oddly intent upon them. Cas continued to eye him with sullen mistrust, cupping Cas, Jr. as if Dean might randomly execute another assault upon it. Dean bit back a grin and very gently reached out to pull Cas’s hand away. “C’mon, now, let me see it. You gotta let me see if there’s any real damage.” There wasn’t. He already knew there wasn’t, but humoring Cas was definitely the way to go here.

Cas, however, appeared in no mood to be humored. He did not allow Dean to pull his hand away, continuing to jealously guard the offended area and making a small sound that was clearly intended to transmit disbelief at Dean’s concern. With sudden insight, Dean knew his best bet was to change tactics. He took half a step forward, until he was crowding just inside Cas’s personal space, then reached out to settle his hands on Cas’s waist. Before this could either alarm or piss off the disgruntled angel, Dean slid to his knees, lightly smoothing his hands down over Cas’s naked hips, then along the outside of his thighs before sliding around to grasp the back of them. Dropping his lids, he gazed up at Cas from under the lashes he knew were long and gorgeous, mostly because women never stopped telling him so. Dean settled his ass onto his heels, splaying his thighs wide, and slowly ran the tip of his tongue along his bottom lip. When he spoke, it was in his most sensuous, smoky voice.

“Please allow me to inspect the damage I so carelessly inflicted on your cock,” he could see interest warring with the continued instinct to sulk on Cas’s face, and mercilessly brought out his trump card. “…and let me have the honor of kissing it better,” he could see in Cas’s eyes that interest was
winning out. Very good. Dean knew just what cherry to dangle atop it. “Sir.”

Boom. Mission accomplished. Cas’s hand released his cock and shot forward, fingers tangling into Dean’s short hair and jerking, hard. Dean gasped, his own cock taking immediate notice at the sharp stabs of pain that spread from his scalp downward. His head was pulled up sharply, until his eyes met Cas’s, and the thunderclouds that roiled in them were as far from sulky as anything Dean had ever seen. Indeed, what roared to life in Castiel’s eyes was simmering vengeance, feeding on the desire of five long days of self-denial. Dean took a moment to be profoundly grateful that CBT was down as a hard limit, because the look in Cas’s eyes made Dean think he might’ve gotten great pleasure out of enforcing an ‘eye for an eye’ repayment plan. The voice that emerged from the angel who towered above Dean bore no resemblance whatsoever to the stiff, slightly awkward grumbling of moments ago.

“You really think you deserve the honor of getting that smart mouth anywhere near my cock, boy?”

Oh, it was like that, was it? Cas’s willingness to take Dean up on his invitation to play had not, apparently, done much to dim his ire. Dean took a moment to wonder whether he’d just signed himself up for trouble then, with a mental shrug, reflected that after five days he was ready for some damn trouble. Sliding his lashes lower over his eyes, Dean dug his teeth lightly into his lower lip, exaggerating the stretch in his neck. He was pulling out all the stops here, aiming both to defuse the angel’s ire and soothe the hurt feelings lurking beyond it. Despite the whole angel-of-the-Lord thing (or maybe because of it, and his general lack of knowledge of the human experience), Cas tended toward sensitivity.

It had taken Dean awhile to realize how easily he could injure Cas via a careless word or gesture. Over time, he’d gotten better at instinctively avoiding danger zones, but every now and then it was unavoidable. Like when the angel had fallen so deeply “in character” that he appeared likely to fake-fuck Dean indefinitely while Sam watched brazenly. Later on, when the insult was far enough removed for them to talk about it calmly, Cas would almost certainly acknowledge Dean’s dearth of options and forgive him. The issue was that Dean had no desire to wait long enough for that to happen. There was no way in hell he was sleeping alone for another few nights while Cas decided whether to forgive him (the thought of sleeping briefly reminded Dean that he needed to steal his goddamn blanket back from Sam now that he appeared to have returned to the land of the living), hence the nuclear option. Dean selected his wording and tone very carefully before offering a response, knowing perfectly well that if he played his cards wrong, Cas would make sure that (although they both knew some part of him would like it), Dean would regret that hastily-executed squeeze for days.

“Certainly not, Sir. But I beg that you nevertheless allow me to start making up for my carelessness.” The minute the words were out of his mouth, Dean knew that, despite his best efforts, he had fucked up. Carelessness? Definitely the wrong word. The almost imperceptible hardening in the lines around Cas’s mouth confirmed his assessment, and Dean rushed onward, hoping to repair the damage before it was too late. “Forgive me, Sir, I misspoke. It was not carelessness, it was cruelty.”

That wording carried danger of its own, but Dean knew he was better off going for overkill than understatement at the moment. Those lines around Cas’s mouth softened just slightly and Dean let go a tiny breath. Then he saw that the softening heralded the mouth in question twisting itself into a smirk that—quite deliberately—mirrored the word that Dean had selected with greater care.

There was cruelty lurking in there.

Dean actually had to take a second to remind himself that he had the protection of three colors, a
safeword, and the fact that Castiel loved him profoundly and would never truly harm him. Cas
must’ve seen some of this reflected in Dean’s eyes, because his face softened for just an instant, and
the hand that wasn’t harshly twined in Dean’s short hair brushed his cheek lightly, lovingly. Dean
felt bolstered, reassured. He still had hell to pay, but he had never been anything but perfectly safe in
Cas’s control.

The moment was over as quickly as it had come, and the smirk that reappeared had no less chilling
promise in it. Cas’s voice, when it came, was deceptively soft—and all the more dangerous for it.

“Mmmm. Carelessness. Cruelty. So very different, aren’t they?” He wasn’t looking for a response
and Dean didn’t try to provide one. No, he stayed very, very still, briefly flashing back to the
moment in which Cas had pointed out that his visual acuity wasn’t based on movement. He may not
have been a velociraptor, but the shadow of an ancient, lightning-fast predator lurked in his eyes and
in his graceful, ready stillness. He was, Dean remembered with an internal shudder, both ancient and
lightning fast—and in this moment, he was most definitely a predator. Dean’s lungs felt shrink
wrapped, unable to draw air in or expel it out as he waited for Cas to go on. The angel took his time,
letting his eyes graze Dean from the top of his head, tilted back harshly by the grasp on it, to the
place where his bare knees pressed against the cold tile floor.

They were both unclad, but the look made Dean feel more naked, stripped bare on more levels than
his lack of clothing could begin to account for. Cas had always been able to do this—to ruthlessly
(or infinitely gently, depending upon the moment) blaze past the countless layers of protection Dean
wrapped himself in and lay bare his deepest, most secret spaces. Dean’s head swam, whether from
the power of the gaze or oxygen deprivation, he could not have said. At that moment, the grasp on
his hair jerked just a little bit, startling him into drawing a rasping breath. He had the uneasy sense
that the action had been choreographed to produce exactly that result, and, not for the first time, had
reason to wonder just how many moves ahead Cas was able to see, when he was really looking.
Once his lungs had gotten back to work, unsteady but functional, Cas went on. His tone was almost
lazy, unhurried, as if he had all the time in the world to toy with the man kneeling at his feet. And,
after all, didn’t he? For the first time since the snow had blanketed the bunker and sealed off the exit,
Dean felt legitimately trapped.

“For instance,” Cas’s pause between the last sentence and this one couldn’t have been more than ten
or fifteen seconds, but Dean had entered that space in which time shrank and expanded with little
rhyme or reason—as if it, too, had been made to bend to the angel’s will. “I make it a point never to
be careless with you, my beautiful boy.” The words may have been complimentary, but the
emphasis was less on beautiful than on whose boy he was. “Cruelty, however…” he trailed off,
tilting his head to one side as if in contemplation. Dean wasn’t fooled. Cas knew exactly what he
was going to say, he was just drawing out the suspense, enjoying the agony of anticipation in which
he held Dean. “Well. A little cruelty certainly has its place.”

You would think, Dean mused, that a threat would be far more unnerving than a promise. Really,
what was a threat but a promise with menace behind it? Somehow, Cas managed to make the line
between the two crystal clear—and his wordless promises were infinitely more chilling than his
threats. The apparently casual observation about cruelty left no doubt as to the promise behind it.

There was a deliberate obliqueness to Cas’s expression. Usually, something in his face that Dean
could not quite have pinpointed told him whether or not his response was expected. This time, he
could not have said, and recognized that he was being tested. His stomach flip-flopped and he drew
in a shuddering breath. Whether or not he was expected to speak really became immaterial in the
moment that Dean realized he could not have done so if his life depended upon it. His jaw had
opened a spare half inch, and he forced it to shut again, pressing his lips together tightly. Cas
laughed quietly.
“Oh, no, no, no, sweet boy,” Jesus, something about the endearments was absolutely terrifying, “you put that pretty mouth on offer. It’s unspeakably rude to try to take that back, in word or in gesture.”

The press of his lips together had, of course, in no way been intended to be a withdrawal of the offer he’d made to Cas, but as he opened his lips to plead his innocence, Cas moved with startling speed, two fingers of his free hand pressing deeply into Dean’s mouth. Instantly, instinctively, Dean closed his lips around the intruding digits and sucked hard, wrapping his tongue around them. Cas made a low noise of appreciation.

“Certainly, you don’t deserve my cock anywhere near that pretty mouth, but then again, it wasn’t your mouth that sinned against it, was it?” Dean’s right hand clenched involuntarily, as if to deny the unspoken accusation—or perhaps admit to it. Cas clearly saw the movement, his lips ghosting upward slightly. “Indeed, and rest assured that lovely hand will get what is coming to it, in good time. For the moment, however…” Cas withdrew his fingers from Dean’s mouth, spreading his thumb and index finger to wrap around the bottom of Dean’s jaw. They probed in just the right spots (Dean wondered briefly whether human anatomy was taught in angel school or something) and Dean’s jaw opened involuntarily.

At some point in the discussion, Cas had gone from flaccid to rock hard. Dean’s attention was drawn to it suddenly, and he heard the little shameless whine escape him without giving it permission to do so. Cas drew in a breath through his nose, clearly not unaffected by the needily pathetic noise. Then he was moving forward, crowding suddenly all the way into Dean’s space, and before Dean could do more than take in a hasty gasp in realization, Cas’s cock was in his mouth.

No. Not that—or not just that. Cas’s cock had buried itself to the hilt in Dean’s mouth, the head and a few inches of the shaft pressing mercilessly into the back of his throat. Dean made a choked sound as he did battle with his gag reflex and narrowly won (thank God—was there anything less sexy than inadvertently throwing up on someone?), his throat opening to permit the intruder as he swallowed repeatedly.

The instant Dean had won his battle, the brief seconds Cas had permitted him to acclimate were terminated. The pubic hair Dean’s nose had been firmly nestled against was gone as Cas drew back so far that the head of his cock slid across the very tip of Dean’s tongue. This time, he was prepared, and his throat opened readily as Cas drove himself forward for a second time. There was no second or two in which to prepare and grow accustomed this time—just like that, Cas was fucking his mouth.

Dean tasted the tang of precome on his tongue only briefly—Cas was riding him far too deeply for much of it to hit his tongue. Instead, he could feel the drops smearing across the back of his throat and took a second to mourn that he wouldn’t be able to taste them, the unique taste of Cas that he craved so much.

There was really very little Dean could do to participate. This wasn’t something he was doing, it was being done to him. He had made the offer, but in the moment, he was not being permitted to give—Cas was simply taking. Dean kept his mouth open widely and swallowed repeatedly every time Cas’s cock drove into the back of his throat. Saliva dripped from the corners of his mouth, meeting up with the tears that escaped his eyes. Although he wasn’t weeping, his tear ducts were responding enthusiastically to his continued battle against his gag reflex. His hands tightened around the back of Cas’s thighs, steadying himself, and the voice above him lashed out as sharply as the crack of a whip, leaving no possibility of disobeying the harsh order.

“Oh, no,” Cas told him, “that hand doesn’t get to touch me until I’ve determined that it’s paid the price for its cruelty,” he put a special emphasis on the word, as if to remind Dean that he had chosen
it himself. All the while, his thrusts came, just as hard and fast as ever, offering no respite as he went on, “put it behind you. Both of them, crossed at the small of your back. You don’t get the privilege of steadying yourself on me with that hand or its mate.”

Jesus. This was one hell of a way to break their five days of celibacy. Dean’s cock was hard and throbbing between his legs. He could feel the drip of precome stain his thigh, and wanted nothing so much as to wrap one of his hands around it and jerk himself off in time to the thrusts deep in his throat. Despite the overwhelming urge, he did not for even half a second consider disobeying the barked order. Even if he opted to, his hand wouldn’t make it halfway to his cock before Cas responded with some punishment that would no doubt redefine ‘cruelty’ for Dean. As it was, he was pretty damn sure only one of them was going to be coming at the close of this blow job—really, it wasn’t a blow job at all. You gave blow jobs, and Dean wasn’t giving a damn thing—Cas was taking it.

He wasn’t sure when it had happened, but Dean found that his hands were crossed tightly at the small of his back, fists clench hard enough that his fingernails were digging half-moons into the skin of his palms. Cas continued to pound away, Dean dragging in harsh inhalations through his nose, finding the only rhythm that would permit him to get enough air.

The last time they’d done this, Cas had clung to the counter in the kitchen, fighting desperately against his own instincts, letting Dean maintain control. This was the same act in theory only. In reality, it was the polar opposite, Cas’s control absolute. Dean was just along for the ride, holding on for dear life—except he wasn’t even doing that, not even permitted that much. Instead, it was Cas’s brutal hold, his fingers tangled in Dean’s hair that kept him upright.

He couldn’t have said how long it went on. It felt like hours, but when you were fighting for each breath, desperately trying to brace yourself without the use of your hands, it made sense that time would seem to slow. Dean could feel the tightening of Cas’s skin, hear the increased instability of his breathing that heralded his oncoming climax. He was not altogether surprised when, at the penultimate moment, Cas drew back and did not drive forward again. Dean had just enough time to close his eyes before the hot spatter of Cas’s jizz painted his face, dripping from his eyelashes. Catching in his first unobstructed breath in what felt like hours, Dean found it in himself to give Cas just a little more, sliding his tongue out to graze his lips, gathering up the spray as if he had never tasted anything more desperately delicious in his life.

The indrawn breath, even shakier than the fading climax warranted, told Dean (although he couldn’t see, eyes still closed against the liquid gumming his eyelashes) that his show did not go unnoticed or unappreciated. A second later, Cas’s hand released Dean’s hair, one simple word spoken, firmly but not harshly. “Stay.” He sensed rather than felt Cas turn away, but heard the indrawn breath of shock. Dean knew better than to try to open his eyes—jizz stung like hell—but he was desperate to know what had caused Cas’s gasp. He didn’t have long to wait before the question answered itself—or, rather, Sam answered it, voice completely normal, as casual as though he’d run into Dean and Cas in the hallway rather than come upon them with Cas’s cooling come dripping down Dean’s face.

“Oh, hey, good, you’re done. I was thinking maybe we should make some popcorn, watch a movie, what do you think?”

Dean was absolutely, 100% certain that he had shut and latched the door behind him when he and Cas had fled in here from the bathroom. That meant that at some point, Sam had actually wandered down the hall and chosen to open the door. Not only that, he hadn’t slammed it shut immediately, and had failed to herald his presence by swearing, gasping in horror, or expressing his revulsion in any audible way.
Come to think of it, he didn’t actually sound revolted. Dean was completely at a loss. He couldn’t even open his eyes, let alone think of something to say. Thankfully, Cas picked up the slack, if a little artlessly.

“Sam…” he broke off, as if struggling to come up with the appropriate words. Sam responded with easy good cheer.

“Yep?”

“…could you, perhaps, let your brother and I have a moment before attempting to engage us in a discussion about afternoon activities?”

“Oh, yeah, sure, no problem!”

There was a moment of silence in which Dean tried desperately, by hearing, to determine what was happening. The problem was, he heard nothing. No tread of Sam’s receding steps, no movement from Cas to get a washcloth or anything to start wiping Dean up. After a few seconds, Cas spoke again, sounding a little bewildered, but with authority nevertheless.

“I meant,” he said, “for you to leave, Sam.”

What the fuck? Sam hadn’t left? What was happening here?

“Oh! Yeah, yeah, of course. I’ll just…be in the library, when you’re ready to pick out a movie. And I brought your blanket back!”

There was the sound of Cas stepping forward, presumably to take the blanket from Sam, and then the sound of a door closing firmly. Dean had the distinct sense that Cas had just closed the door directly in Sam’s face. There was a moment of silence in which Dean was pretty sure Cas was standing in dumbfounded stillness, trying to figure out what had just happened. Dean understood; he was pretty mystified himself, but he needed access to his eyes before he could give into bewilderment too.

“Uh, Cas? Little help?”

“Oh! Dean, of course!” The sound of footsteps hastened across the floor and the door creaked open again. There was a startled “oof!” sound which Dean immediately translated as Cas running into something—but it couldn’t be. Could it?

“Sam,” Cas’s voice broke out, in clear annoyance.

“Sorry, sorry, go ahead.”

“Sam,” Cas said again, quite clearly, “Go to the library. Now.”

“Okie dokie,” Sam said cheerfully, and finally the sound of his footsteps receding came. They were followed by the sound of a second set of footsteps receding, much faster. A few moments later, those footsteps returned. The door clicked shut again, and then a warm washcloth was gently cleaning Dean’s face. When his eyes were clear, he blinked them open and found himself staring into the equally dumbfounded face of Cas, who opened his mouth at the same moment Dean did.

“What,” Cas demanded, then broke off in utter perplexity. Dean picked up the thread.

“…the everloving fuck was that?”
Chapter specific tags and warnings: Rough oral sex, face fucking, mild come play, manhandling, D/s

Note: Someone inquired in the comments to last chapter whether I was close to done or not. The simplest answer is that I'm not entirely sure. I can't give a chapter estimate, although I have the rest of the plot at least basically sketched out, because I'm always failing to predict accurately where chapter breaks will fit best. We're more than halfway done, but that's about the most I can tell you.

In related news, thanks for all of the wonderful comments on last chapter! You've got no idea how much I love the fact that y'all are enjoying this as much as I am. As Cas would say:

these make me very happy
Five Finger Discount

Chapter Summary

In which Cas lays down the law, Sam discovers what happened to the library in his absence, and Dean and Cas realize that sometimes, solutions create other problems. Sadly, there's no food.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

If you’d asked him three minutes earlier, Dean would’ve predicted that nothing could have taken his mind from his painfully engorged cock once Cas had taken his pleasure and it had become clear that he had no intention of giving Dean release. Really, it just went to show that Dean lacked imagination.

The cock in question, while still swollen with blood and desperate for attention, had actually fallen below his brother’s extremely strange behavior in Dean’s constantly-updating mental List Of Things That Required Attention. In the aftermath of their shared question, Dean and Cas goggled at each other. Finally, Dean shifted his knees on the floor, grimacing at their soreness. Cas leaned over and helped him to his feet. Dean stretched out his stiff muscles, pressing his hands to the small of his back, then leaned his head in close to Cas to begin a whispered conversation.

“Do you think we broke him?”

“I…do not know. Our mission appears to have achieved its objective…?”

“Yeah, Eeyore-Sam is gone, but what kind of creepy, socially oblivious Stepford Brother has he left behind?”

Cas just shrugged helplessly. A second later both of them jumped as a voice thundered down the hall from the library and broke against Dean’s closed door.

“What in the name of all that is holy have you bastards done to my goddamned library?!”

Dean blinked several times, mind returning to the haphazard piles of books, the discarded notepads, plates, and glasses that littered the big table, and the remains of the toppled book pile that were still scattered across the library floor. Oops. Yeah, if he’d thought far enough ahead, he could’ve predicted this response from Sam. Grimacing a little at Cas, he shrugged and opted to look on the bright side.

“Looks like he’s still Sam. Getting the place back into shape should keep him busy for a while, anyway.”

“You do not think he will expect our help?” Cas inquired, squinting toward the door as if he expected Sam to come break it down at any moment.

“No way,” Dean reassured him. “He’s way too proprietary. He probably won’t let either of us touch any of the books for the next month in penance for leaving it in that shape. His own fault,
honestly. He’s the one who decided to live in a blanket igloo for almost a week.” Tipping his head to one side and the other, Dean heard his neck crack and sighed with relief. One hand absently dropped to his cock—he couldn’t have said what, exactly, he was planning to do with it. Certainly he hadn’t planned to start jacking off, randomly, in mid-conversation and while standing in the middle of his room. Maybe just to adjust it to a slightly more comfortable position. It was still painfully hard, although continued discussion about his brother promised to deal with that in fairly short order. What he’d intended with the gesture was largely immaterial—he never got that far.

His hand was maybe a few millimeters away from his cock when the sharp smack of flesh against flesh sounded. Dean had just long enough to think ‘huh, that sounds like—’ before sensation caught up with sound. Cas had, honest to God, slapped his hand away from his own dick. He hadn’t pulled the force, either. Dean looked down in astonishment to find a bright red handprint blossoming across the back of his own hand, courtesy of the angel who (despite being several inches shorter) was managing to loom over Dean. Somehow Cas, who had been four or five feet away, still staring with concern at the door when Dean looked at him half a second before, had ninja-ed his way across the room to get between Dean and his dick. Jaw hanging partway open in surprise, he lifted his gaze from his hand to Cas—or tried, anyway. Before his eyes had actually managed to settle on Cas, they were both in motion so sudden that it practically short-circuited Dean’s brain.

He was used to combat situations, and those tended to move pretty fast, but considering the non-stop action (from fake-fucking, to face-fucking, to Sam’s creepy interruptions, to this) of the past hour or so, Dean was having a hard time getting his metaphorical feet under him. Come to that, his real ones, too, because suddenly he was no longer on his feet. He couldn’t have said how the angel managed it, but Dean found himself face down on the bed, right wrist twisted awkwardly up behind him, held in Cas’s iron-clad grip. The angel held him down with a knee on the small of his back, just below where his hand was pinned. Dean blinked in astonishment at the wall before him, trying to sort out just what the hell was going on and why. Cas, apparently feeling at least a modicum of mercy, didn’t leave him in suspense for long.

“What makes you think,” the angel’s voice was smooth as satin, and all the more dangerous for it, “that I would let that hand anywhere near your cock?” He paused, as if waiting for a response from Dean, who was so totally perplexed that he managed only a few noises that might have solved the age-old mystery he’d long wondered about: what did “…” sound like? Cas appeared not to mind Dean’s abortive attempts at speech, and went on. “That hand,” Cas told him with concern so patently false that Dean was pretty sure it crossed the line into smarmy, “has not shown appropriate respect when handling cocks of late. In fact,” his tone quieted until it sounded confiding, and Dean knew with a sudden sinking feeling exactly what this was about, “it’s been known to hurt them.

Now, Dean,” Dean wondered if anyone who didn’t know Cas as well as he did would be able to tell how entirely the angel was enjoying himself, then shrugged off the question as immaterial, “you know I am sworn to protect and defend you. Surely you cannot think I would allow something as risky as that hand near your cock?” Oh, God. Dean was pretty sure he knew where this was going, and totally sure he didn’t like it. “No, we certainly can’t have that, can we?”

A few seconds of silence spun out before Dean realized that this time, Cas was absolutely expecting an answer, and had no intention of going on until he got it. This became clear when the hand holding his wrist down twisted, jerking a strangled gasp from Dean as his shoulder bent at a deeply awkward angle to try to accommodate the movement. Let it never be said that he wasn’t a fast learner—he spoke up damn quick.

“N—no, Sir.” It didn’t even occur to Dean to leave off the honorific. There might have been a gap in the scene thanks to Sam’s odd appearance, but clearly they weren’t quite done yet, and Dean, quite clear on the danger oozing from the angel’s every pore, was letting his sense of self-preservation have the driver’s seat.
“No, indeed. In fact,” Cas went on, downright gleefully, “I think we’d better put a few guidelines in
place. For everyone’s…safety.” Oh, this was not good. This was not good at all. “Until that hand
has redeemed itself,” Cas told him, and the cheer in his tone had been joined by an underlying band
of steel that, under ordinary circumstances, Dean knew better than to even think about arguing with,
“I had better not catch it anywhere near any cocks.” Since there were only two cocks that his hand
regularly (or ever) came into contact with, and judging by the stinging, raised handprint he could feel
on the back of his hand, he knew where this was going, “including yours.” Yep. There it was. “If I
do, there are going to be…consequences. Very serious consequences.” Dean wasn’t sure he wanted
to ask for more detail. Just when he thought he was going to have to interrupt with a ‘yellow,’
thanks to the intensely uncomfortable angle at which his shoulder was being held, Cas lightened his
grasp. He did not release Dean’s wrist, but let his shoulder settle back into a much more natural
bend. Dean caught in a shuddering breath in relief and let it back out, realizing only when the
silence started to stretch out that Cas was waiting for something from him.

“I…uh.” There was only one right answer, but this was…complicated. Dean struggled to come up
with appropriate wording, and before he managed to settle on anything, a sudden thought struck him
and words he had most definitely not intended came tumbling out of his mouth. “Dude, I’m gonna
have to pee sometime.” Oh, hell. Definitely shouldn’t have said that.

He couldn’t see Cas, but he’d have bet just about anything that the brief pause was while he tried to
fight off a snicker so he could regain his appropriately authoritarian demeanor.

“It seems to me,” Cas’s implacable voice betrayed no hint of it, if indeed he had needed to suppress
his own humor, “that if you are unable to manage stabilizing your cock with one hand—even your
non-dominant hand—while you pee, after nearly 40 years of peeing, you should consider the
possibility that it might simply be better to sit down.”

Dean bristled. He could deal with a lot of humiliation in the name of Cas’s dominance, but by God,
there was a line. There was no way in hell he was sitting to pee like a girl, and Cas damn well knew
it. He was baiting Dean, and God help him, he was so bone-deep offended by the suggestion that he
nearly took the bait. He had opened his mouth to give voice to the full indignance of his protest
before he managed to get a handle on himself. Closing his mouth long enough to grind his teeth
together, Dean took a deep breath before he spoke again.

“Thanks for that helpful suggestion, but I’m sure I’ll manage fine with one hand. Sir.” Whoops.
So, while he had managed to restrain himself from the offended words that wanted to tumble out,
apparently the sarcasm that came so naturally to him hadn’t quite suppressed itself before he spoke,
because damned if he didn’t sound as derisive as he ever had. He barely had a second to brace
himself before, predictably, Cas shifted slightly and the hand that wasn’t holding his wrist exploded
with incredible force against his ass, about ten times in rapid succession. Dean didn’t have time to
count, barely had time to fight for his breath as the merciless spanks fell, an immediate reprimand for
what Dean had to admit had been one impressively disrespectful tone of voice. The nerve endings
across the meatiest part of Dean’s ass cheeks yowled with surprised offense as he tried to convince
his lungs to do their job. Bare seconds after the final smack fell, Cas’s voice broke over him with
calm interest.

“I’m sorry, would you perhaps like to rephrase that or strike a different tone? I am more than happy
to provide further incentive if you think it necessary.” Nope. Definitely not necessary. In the
meantime, Dean again became aware of his cock, which had been rocked backward and forward
against the bedsheets with the fall of Cas’s hand, and which (irredeemable bastard that it was) had
not flagged for an instant at the news of Cas’s bizarre new restrictions upon it. It felt almost
impossibly swollen, pricklingly painful with need. Even the brush of the sheets was too much and
not quite enough, and Dean knew if he rocked his hips forward forcefully another quick two or three
times, he could be spilling his load across the sheets before Cas could do a damn thing to stop him. Was he tempted? Yes. Was he so totally devoid of a sense of self-preservation that he would indulge himself? Oh, hell no. Nope, instead he went ahead and rephrased, like a good boy.

“I...am sure that I can manage sufficiently with my left hand, Sir, and I apologize for interrupting you with insignificant matters.” That was pretty good, right? He even managed to sound impressively respectful!

It was good enough for Cas, apparently, who somewhat eased the pressure of the knee that held Dean’s lower half immobile. The hand that had fallen so ruthlessly on his still-tingling ass slid with light fondness through the sweat-dampened spikes of Dean’s hair. A few moments of silence spun out between them, and in them, as Dean revisited the bizarre conversation he and Cas were having, a question stuck out at him. He’d learned his lesson, though, and used great care with approaching it.

“May I ask for…clarification on something, Sir?”

Cas’s voice was once again cheerful—hell, it was fucking jovial. “Certainly, Dean! Ask away.”

“How, exactly, might my hand go about redeeming itself, Sir?” The split second of slightly startled-sounding silence told Dean that Cas hadn’t given the first thought to that particular question. Dean bit down hard on both his lower lip and the irrational urge to break into laughter at this clear evidence that, even at his most controlled and smoothly domineering, Cas was totally winging it. He had to give Cas credit, though, for how quickly he picked up the pieces. Anyone else wouldn’t have had a clue that there was anything behind the pause.

“That, my dear Dean,” Cas told him fondly, “is need to know.”

Dean had heard worse stalling tactics, and had certainly come up with more than a few himself. It occurred to him that if he could come up with something good enough, Cas might be willing to let Dean dictate the terms of redemption. Rather than throwing something together off the cuff, Dean resolved to think about it. Now that he knew that Cas didn’t have a clue, and was just enjoying the opportunity to torment Dean with the inconvenience of having to keep one of his hands away from his cock, he figured he had a little time to come up with something good.

Cas seemed quite content with the moments of silence that had expanded between them. Dean had the sense that he knew perfectly well that Dean’s brain was chugging away, picking up the new developments and turning them over, examining every angle of them, and that Cas was just waiting to see what conclusions he came to. The hand whose tingling aftermath Dean could still feel painted across the curve of his ass continued to card through his hair, fingernails lightly grazing his scalp in the way Cas knew he loved so much. The juxtaposition of Cas’s hands—one of which held his wrist twisted ruthlessly (if painlessly) behind him, while the other slid through his hair with infinite gentleness—might’ve been confusing to someone who didn’t understand the dynamics of their relationship. Indeed, anyone who didn’t understand the nature of relationships in which power and pain played as vital a role as pleasure and partnership would likely have struggled to grasp how natural the contradiction (hell, that it wasn’t necessarily a contradiction at all) really was.

Not for the first time and certainly not the last, Dean took a moment to reflect that, despite all the shit that he’d had to deal with—a life that, from his earliest years, had been littered with loss, shaped by tragedy, all overlain with the kind of responsibility that would’ve made lesser men crumble under its weight—despite all of it, or maybe because of it, the universe (God, Cas would’ve said) had offered him a gift of such purity, of such preciousness, that the mere contemplation of it made the weight of Dean’s burdens all seem to melt away. Cas—all that he was, the awkward puppy and the smoothly controlled Dom, the perplexed, semi-humorless angel and the harshly demanding master—he was Dean’s. He was Dean’s reward. Companion and friend and defender and support and lover and so
much more. He was, in any moment, the perfect shape to fill Dean’s empty spaces, and Dean had no
goddamn clue how (despite all the good he knew he’d done in the world) he had ever managed to
deserve Cas.

The realization—the simple but profound knowledge that Cas, this perfect creature, this literal child
of God was his—it was not new, by any means, but no less powerful each time it hit, each time it
broke over him and filled him with the wonder of it. The rush of warmth that overtook Dean was so
profound, so consuming that it demanded voice be given to it. Dean used the colors in a way he’d
never done before, because what needed to be spoken were words he didn’t often use, and he
wanted to offer them in a moment of true equality, uncolored by the power play of the scene.

“Red,” he told Cas, and then, before the angel could release him, could pull him upright and check
him over, could start to cluck over him like the strangest but most protective mother hen imaginable,
Dean went on, “it’s okay, don’t let go. I’m fine. Just—listen.”

Cas, who had frozen at the word that Dean almost never resorted to, relaxed. The hand in Dean’s
hair continued to move soothingly, wordless reassurance and encouragement. Dean turned his head
a little, until he could just see Cas’s face in his peripheral vision. It was not quite good enough, but it
would have to do. God knew, he had every beloved millimeter of it memorized in infinite detail,
could fill in the blanks left by the angle. Cas must have sensed what Dean was doing, because he
shifted, adjusting his position, smoothly switching out which knee anchored Dean. In doing so, he
placed himself much more centrally in Dean’s vision. Much better.

“I just—“ he was no Shakespeare. He did just fine with words, but he lacked the relationship with
them that some people had. He had no trouble making the English language give him what he
needed of it, and of the many regrets in his life, the fact that he did not possess greater gifts of prose
or poetry was not even in the top thousand—except, perhaps, in moments like this. Thankfully, in
deferece to the weight of them, there were words—normal, ordinary, everyday, commonly used (at
least by others) words that he reserved for moments of particular importance. He pulled them out
now and set them before Cas, an offering so deeply felt that it was poetry enough. “I love you. I—
really. I love you. Every bit of you. Every moment. I…that’s all. I love you.” This unburdening
left him feeling light enough that he thought, but for Cas’s weight holding him down, he might have
simply floated away.

Cas shifted, leaning down. He pressed his forehead to the back of Dean’s neck and let it rest there,
his murmur vibrating against Dean’s upper back. “And I you.”

The moment—it was perfect, exactly as it was. Rather than risk spoiling it by letting it spin out
further than necessary, Dean brought it to a close and tucked it away, safely, where he could pull it
out and examine it in darker moments, in times when he was lost, letting its light lead him home.

“Green,” he told Cas, and just like that, time started again.

When his awareness returned to the more mundane realities of the now, Dean discovered that the
delay had made his other needs only more immediate. With some level of creeping desperation, he
wondered what the odds were that he could convince Cas to tend to his neglected cock. The
chances seemed somewhat grim, but perhaps he could inspire the angel to mercy. Clearly there had
been no real damage, permanent or otherwise, done to Cas’s anatomy if the impressively enthusiastic
rendezvous with Dean’s face was anything to go by (the ache in Dean’s jaw likely dwarfed whatever
lingering soreness Cas might be dealing with).

Nevertheless, all the evidence was that Cas had big plans to exact all manner of delicious (or
mundanely irritating, e.g., the hand-cock-ban) revenge for Dean’s ungentle treatment of him. At this
point, it was clearly just a convenient transgression Cas could point to as deserving of punishment
rather than something that truly angered the angel. Still, convenient excuse or not, attempts to draw Cas’s attention to the fact that any discomfort Dean had caused him was fleeting would probably not be well-received. Discretion being the better part of valor, he kept these observations to himself. In the meantime, an idea had begun to assemble itself in the back of Dean’s mind. It was a risky move, but it played into Cas’s most recent rules, and the sheer cheek of it appealed irresistibly to Dean’s natural mischievousness.

“You know,” Dean said, pleased as punch to discover that he sounded as earnest as a Catholic schoolboy, “if I’m going to manage to keep myself on the straight and narrow, I might need to ask for help sometimes.” He knew he was aiming toward a particular endpoint, but he was pretty sure he was managing both wording and tone such that Cas wouldn’t necessarily know it. And, as long as Dean had known Cas, long before they had finally acknowledged and given into what was between them, he had been totally incapable of resisting a plea for help. Some things, thankfully, never changed. When Cas responded, he sounded curious but not at all closed off.

“Is that so? Well, far be it from me to deny you aid if you require it to hold to your new… guidelines. Do go on.”

“Well,” Dean told him reasonably, “it’s going to be pretty hard to shower thoroughly if my hand use is restricted,” he observed, then decided to really lay it on thick, “if we weren’t trapped down here, I guess I could get one of those loofah things and that might be kosher, but since there’s eight feet of snow between us and the nearest drugstore…” he trailed off, the equivalent of a verbal shrug. He’d have given a real one, too, just for good measure, but his current position didn’t exactly permit that.

“Presumably,” Cas told him, sounding mildly amused, “you could muddle through with one usable hand, given that your right hand is perfectly allowable for every other body part, but if you feel you would be better served by seeking my support, I am more than happy to provide you with whatever assistance you might require. What else? We have already established that if you find it challenging to urinate with only the use of your left hand, other options are available to you. Unless you are requesting that I aid you in that as well?”

“Yeah, not so much,” Dean assured him. “I’m glad we’re so close, but there’s a line,” Cas laughed openly at this, and Dean couldn’t help but grin, too. Watersports had gone on the list of things neither of them had the slightest interest in exploring, and apparently they were both still on the same page as far as that was concerned. “It’s not that, but it’s comforting to know you’re willing to step up and help me relieve myself, if that’s what I need.”

The smile was still audible in Cas’s voice as he responded, “Dean, in our long history, has there ever — the knee on Dean’s back lifted and Cas interrupted himself to address his change in position, “I do not need to tell you that this does not constitute permission to move, do I?” Rhetorical. Definitely rhetorical. Cas confirmed this when he went on with barely a pause for breath, “—has there ever been a time in which I have proven unwilling to do anything within my power to ensure your needs are met?” Dean actually afforded Cas the respect of seriously considering this question. As he thought about it, Cas shifted, settling down to sit on the bed beside where Dean was laid out, at an angle that allowed him to maintain his grasp on Dean’s wrist easily. Dean, after a quick review of the last, Jesus, close to a decade, came to the conclusion that he’d expected from the start. Cas, unwilling to meet his needs? No examples of such a time came to mind.

“Never. You’ve never been unwilling to give me what I need. Occasionally unwilling to throw your lot in with some of my more, uh, ill-advised ideas, maybe, but I think we’re about even on that count.”

“Indeed,” Cas agreed, “and while I would be more than happy to while away the afternoon...
reminiscing about the many times that one or another of us has been recklessly foolish, despite the wiser counsel of the other,” Come to think of it, Dean mused, there had actually been a fair number of those times. The real problem times were when both of them were recklessly foolish at the same time, and it fell to Sam to try to rein them in. Poor Sammy. That was beside the point, though, and a slight shift of Dean’s hips sent a cascade of near-painful sensation through his overstimulated—wait, understimulated?—whatever, not-properly-stimulated cock, reminding Dean that he had an endgame here, and to stop fucking around. Cas, apparently, was of the same mind, and proved it by redirecting conversation back to the point, “I did not get the impression that you were quite finished with the recitation of tasks for which you anticipate needing my aid.”

“This true,” Dean acknowledged, “but before we get back to business, I’d just like to take a second to draw your attention back to the part where we both agreed that you’re really good at making sure my needs are met.”

“For the love of my father and all else that is holy, Dean,” Cas told him, somehow managing to merge amusement and long-suffering, thoroughly tested patience, “stop dancing around it and get to the point.”

Well, shit. Apparently, he wasn’t quite as slick as he thought he was, because something in Castiel’s tone made it perfectly clear that he knew exactly what Dean was about, and had from the very first. Dean took a second—but no longer, since trying Cas’s patience further was not likely to end well for him—to throw his first strategy out the window and decide on a new one. Damn-the-torpedoes-full-speed-ahead honesty was the best he came up with, and he sent a quick prayer upward that Cas would find it charming.

“Okay. I’m not gonna lie to you—” Cas cut him off before he could go on, and Dean had the distinct sense that now he was being fucked with.

“I would strongly recommend against doing so. It would be exceedingly ill-advised, particularly when that extremely becoming blush is just starting to fade out of your ass, leaving me only too willing to renew it.”

Dean couldn’t quite hold back a little squirm at the threat. The friction that produced caused a wave of sensation in his cock that neatly straddled the razor’s edge between pleasure and pain. Dean could just make out the knowing smirk that flashed across Cas’s face. Yeah, the angel knew exactly what was going on here. Dean took a second to catch his breath, then allowed himself a long-suffering sigh before he went ahead and responded to the interruption with some good-natured, gentle teasing, “you know ‘I’m not gonna lie to you’ is actually just an idiom, right? I mean, don’t get me wrong,” he added hastily, spotting potential trouble and cutting it off at the pass, “I definitely wasn’t planning on lying to you, but mostly it was just a stalling tactic while I tried to decide exactly how shameless I really am.”

There was a two-second pause, and then Cas burst into laughter. “Well, I did demand honesty,” he chortled, then added, “and if other opinions are welcome, I would posit that the answer is ‘impressively, awe-inspiringly shameless.’” Dean, grinning a little himself, went on.

“That’s pretty much the conclusion I came to, yeah, and with that in mind, let’s just put it out there: my cock is about ready to explode, and I don’t even just mean in the good way, I mean in the it-has-been-so-goddamn-long-since-I-have-cum, Holy-crap-I-just-got-fake-fucked-and-then-face-fucked-by-my-hot-boyfriend, If-my-erection-goes-on-much-longer-I-might-need-to-call-a-doctor-like-they-tell-you-in-those-commercials, this-is-verging-on-actually-painful, literally explode in a shower of blood and gore way.”

Dean was polite enough to wait patiently while Cas tried to get his laughter under control, although it
took a couple minutes. Once Cas had quieted down to mostly gasping, Dean went on, “So, basically what I’m aiming at here, Mr. Hello-Dean-My-Name-Is-Castiel-I-Am-An-Angel-Of-The-Lord-And-I-Am-Here-To-Meet-Your-Needs,” he had to pause again because Cas lost it for another minute or two, “is that I have a pretty glaringly unmet need, and if there’s any way in hell I can convince you to, uh, meet it, I am all ears. Except for my cock. That’s still a cock.”

It was, Dean had long known, really hard to say no to someone who could make a good case while also making you laugh. He wasn’t sure how good his case was, but he’d definitely nailed the making Cas laugh thing, anyway.

“Very well, Dean,” Cas told him, voice still colored with the last shades of his laughter, “you make a valid point regarding unmet needs. It has indeed been some time since you have had the opportunity to climax, and it would be needlessly cruel,” oh, shit, was this the precursor to another lazy lecture on cruelty’s place and how he had it coming? Dean almost wept with relief when Cas went on, “to force you to go still longer when you so clearly need release.”

“I owe you so big, thank you, thank you, thank y—“ Cas cut him off before Dean could really get his pre-emptive gratitude off the ground.

“Hold that thought,” Cas told him kindly, “and listen closely. You clearly need release, and as you have noted, it is my job and my calling to ensure that your needs are met. Therefore, I am prepared to meet this need. However,” Damn it, there was always a but. Or, in the case of an overly formal boyfriend, a however, “considering that, given your appalling behavior in the bathroom, I had no intentional of permitting you to climax until tonight, if at all, if you choose to have me take care of your discomfort now, you will be incurring a debt, to be paid in a manner of my choosing, at a time of my choosing. And I may not provide you with advance warning.”

Future Dean, not for the first time, was going to want to kick the shit out of Present Dean, because Present Dean couldn’t be arsed to care about what trouble he was signing Future Dean up for.

“Done and done,” he told Cas instantly. There really was no describing how incredibly desperate his cock was for some focused attention.

“As you wish,” Cas agreed, releasing Dean’s wrist with a squeeze. Dean rolled his shoulder a few times, then sat up, grinning.

“Showing you The Princess Bride was one of my better decision—whoa!”

He wasn’t seated for more than two seconds before Cas was on him again. Dean wondered idly what it would be like to have a boyfriend who didn’t treat you like a glorified hand puppet, then decided he didn’t really need to know.

Especially when the boyfriend who did had flattened him onto his back with one powerful palm to the chest, leaned down, parted his chapped lips, and engulfed Dean’s cock to the root.

“Omigod,” Dean panted, staring down at the dark, mussed head where his cock had been five seconds ago (and probably still was, if the hot wet pleasure that was currently suffusing it was any indication). Maybe not the most eloquent statement he’d ever made, but it was a hell of a lot more astute than anything else he would be producing in short order.

Cas didn’t blow Dean often—not that he wasn’t open to it or didn’t enjoy it, they were just more likely to get lost in other activities first—so this, while certainly not unheard of, was a treat. Dean threw his head back, wrapping one hand in the bedsheets and settling the other lightly atop Cas’s messy head. The chapped lips Dean was so fond of guarded a mouth that boasted impressive skill at
this particular pastime. His tongue was doing something around the head—he couldn’t have said what, but it felt incredible, and a moment later he had fully engulfed Dean again. He didn’t even seem to be fighting a gag reflex, as Dean had to in order to deep throat him. It was as if he just… didn’t have one—which, come to think of it, was entirely possible. One of the perks of not being human.

Cas set a pace no less brutal than the one he had forced upon Dean when their positions were reversed. Dean gasped and moaned and nearly bit through his lower lip trying to stifle his noises before giving up and let them come as they would, a filthy series of grunts and whimpers that seemed to feed Cas and urge him onward. Dean would’ve anticipated that, with the overstimulation and what felt like hours of an unsatisfied erection, he wouldn’t have lasted ten seconds in Cas’s mouth, but he’d outlasted that by quite some time. It took him a few minutes to realize that he had some angelic mojo help with that particular task. Ordinarily, he might have expressed indignation at having his release stolen from him, even temporarily, but he had no problem with taking some extra time to appreciate what it felt like to be buried fully in the mouth of an angel of the Lord—his angel of the Lord.

A few seconds later, Cas withdrew from his cock, drawing a desperate whine of protest from Dean. Chuckling a little, Cas dropped his head further, mouthing at Dean’s sac, laving it with his tongue before he drew it between his lips and sucked lightly. Dean had released Cas’s head, both hands clawing at the bedsheets beneath him, unable to find purchase. Cas let it stand, making no move to restrict Dean’s motions, apparently enjoying this evidence of his pleasure. After a few moments, his mouth once again withdrew, earning a grunt of open complaint. Cas was unmoved, raising a hand to Dean’s face and pressing two fingers against his lips. The order was terse, but since Dean could connect the dots and recognize what drove it, he had no objections to obeying. “Suck.”

He wrapped his lips around the encroaching fingers, sucking them as deeply as they would come into his mouth. Cas’s lips echoed Dean’s, returning to his cock with no less enthusiasm than Dean had shown for the fingers that Cas now withdrew, dripping, from his mouth. Dean hadn’t been wrong about Cas’s intentions. Spare seconds later, the wet fingers probed between Dean’s cheeks, unerringly finding the familiar furled muscle. A quick, merciless drive forward parted it, and Cas’s fingers, slicked only by Dean’s own saliva, buried themselves to the hilt inside of him. The burn was sharp after five days with nothing to maintain the elasticity that frequent use generally imparted the tight ring of muscle, but Dean welcomed it.

Cas twisted his fingers at the same moment that his mouth surged forward until his lips and nose were nestled in the dark blonde curls of Dean’s pubic hair. The fingers hit their mark, pressing directly against Dean’s prostate just as Cas swallowed powerfully around his cock, and that was it. Dean arched off the bed with a shout, cock pulsing and shooting its load deep into the angel’s throat. Cas swallowed it easily, fingers continuing to work Dean’s prostate through the climax, which seemed to go on forever. The hell with Future Dean, Present Dean was completely satisfied with his decision. His eyes fluttered open, eager to watch Cas nurse him through the fading waves of orgasm. Instead, he found himself jerking upright with such suddenness that he actually knocked Cas off his cock as it feebly pulsed out the last of its load. The angel’s eyes flared wide in shock, mouth opening, presumably to ask just what the hell Dean was doing. Then he spotted the direction of Dean’s astonished gaze, and pivoted toward the door, where Sam leaned against the once again open doorway, a smile of greeting overtaking his expression of mild interest.

“Hey, guys. It’s gonna take me hours to get the library back in order, so I figured I’d let you know that the movie’s been postponed, and you could go ahead and do whatever was already on the agenda. Since you seemed busy, I thought I’d just let you finish. Cheers!” With a casual wave, Sam pushed off the doorjamb and sauntered down the hallway, leaving the door hanging open behind him.
A moment of stunned silence followed his departure, and then Cas dislodged his fingers from Dean with a wet sound, earning a stifled grunt from Dean that he barely noticed escape himself. His head turned, eyes latching unerringly upon Cas’s. The angel’s face had the same expression of dumbfounded confusion that Dean imagined colored his own. They sat for a moment, trying to gather themselves enough to speak. Dean got there first, shaking his head as he observed, “I think… we’re gonna need to have a talk with Sam.”

“That,” Cas responded faintly, “seems like an excellent idea. Clothes?”

“Clothes,” Dean affirmed, frowning down at his stomach, which was lightly streaked with the very last of his climax. “But first, where’s that washcloth?”

Chapter End Notes

Chapter specific tags/warnings: blow jobs, manhandling, brief spanking, D/s, nonconsensual voyeurism (or would that be nonconsensual exhibitionism? I don't know. Whatever. Sam, interrupting, as usual)
Dear Readers,

This is not a chapter. I posted it as if it was, and if you’re subscribed, you got an email and maybe you even got a little excited, seeing that the latest update came two days early.

You’ve been had. Sorry about that.

Allow me to assure you that I am indeed hard at work on the next chapter, and I have no reason to think it won’t be ready for you on schedule on Monday. In the meantime, I have something to say about a couple of people, and it’s important that I share it. I referenced them at the beginning of the fic, and each of them gets a nod in other chapters for specific reasons, but I want to take a minute to write them a love letter, and since for some strange reason you people actually seem invested in what happens next to our snowbound friends, you’ll just have to bear with me.

Snowbound is, as I mention at its beginning, only my second foray into writing fanfic. The first one was the short story that comes before it. I’m very new at this—my fanfic writing career is only slightly over a month old, and I was on a post-surgical hiatus for about half that time. Somehow, in slightly under 3 weeks of actual writing time, I’ve managed to produce nearly 90,000 words (7000 more than that, if you count Cumulonimbus, the short story that precedes Snowbound) and we’re still going (for reference sake, the average word count for novels ranges from about 75,000 words to 120,000).

And I haven’t done it alone. Oh, I am the sole writer. The words, with very few and extremely limited exceptions, are mine. But from literal day one, I have had the support, assistance, and encouragement of two remarkable women. I’ve been lucky enough to call them both friends for some time (nearly two years and somewhat over one year), but not lucky enough to meet them in person. Nevertheless, they have chosen to selflessly dedicate what must amount to many, many hours toward this work. This work, which will live and die under my name (or pseudonym-based-on-my-cat, but whatever), but which could not exist without them.

For some months now, I have been too ill to work. I had to leave a job of nearly four years when my medical leave ran out, and since then, while we explored medical intervention after medical intervention, I have struggled to occupy myself and not go stir-crazy. I spent my time watching far too much television (including a complete second watch-through of Supernatural—my first watch through was in mid-2015), knitting, dicking around on the internet, conversing with my cats, trying to get out of the house as much as possible, doing the occasional jigsaw puzzle, reviewing professional literature, and reading a truly astonishing amount of fan fiction. Once we knew the surgery I recently took a hiatus to recover from was going to happen, the task of keeping myself busy and occupied became both significantly harder and more critical. When you are dangerously ill, it’s dangerously easy to go down a rabbit hole of what-ifs and get lost. When you are dangerously ill and facing major surgery, it becomes practically inevitable.

Having read so much fanfic, and fancying myself a good writer (of nonfiction, in the past), I had long been idly toying with the idea of trying my hand at writing some. I even went so far as to solicit prompts, a number of months back (you may find it of particular interest that the one I received that stuck with me was “Castiel has never been in a snowball fight. Fix that.”) but never actually got as far as writing it. Until I found myself with two and a half weeks prior to major surgery, and in desperate need of something to keep me busy.

Just for the hell of it, I decided to give it a shot. I had a small group of friends who loved
Supernatural as much as I did, and if they’d consent to take a peek at what I wrote and declared it unreadable, no harm done. So I opened a blank word document, typed out a couple paragraphs, and then reached out in a Facebook group I am a member of. The two people who responded assured me that my duo of paragraphs were far from unreadable, so I carried on. I found myself returning to the same pair of friends for their opinions, and they provided thoughtful, detailed, complex feedback. Before I knew it, they had taken on the decidedly weighty (and labor-intensive) work of beta readers. Each of them fills a different, equally important role.

**AtYourCervix** is my big picture girl. She monitors the overarching shape of the fic, keeps track of the shape of the relationships and the chapters. She flails and squee and cheers. She listens patiently to the stream-of-consciousness that is my writing process and reassures me that what I am writing has value and weight when I have moments of doubt.

**Phaelsafe** is boots-on-the-ground, deep in the muddy trenches. She combs through the work one sentence at a time, spotting every typo, pointing out redundancies (and there are many), recognizing when a phrase or a sentence doesn’t quite work, or trips up the flow. She goes back and forth with me, hashing out in excruciating detail the paragraphs that get away from me, the sentences that are not quite right but that I have grown attached to and can’t bear to let go. She has countless ideas (if you loved the board game, that was her suggestion). She is endlessly patient, and indescribably generous with her time.

These women—they are my ground crew. They are my stabilizers, my foundation, the wind beneath my yes-I’m-actually-using-this-phrase-and-no-I-am-not-ashamed wings. I don’t imagine they had half a clue of what they were signing on for slightly over a month ago when I started this, but neither of them has balked once in the intervening time.

So, in a slightly unconventional format, consider this my dedication.

Phaelsafe, AtYourCervix, this is for you. Snowbound could not exist without you, and I dedicate every word of it to you. To your selflessness, your patience, your humor, your ideas, and your support. As we know, words are not something I lack for. If anything, I tend to have somewhat an excess of them, so it is saying something when I tell you that, truly, I have no words to express my gratitude.

With so very much love always,

Jess
Parlay

Chapter Summary

In which Dean and Cas sit down with Sam, who is astonishingly amenable, and Dean's thoughts get away from him. Again. Also, there's maple-bacon popcorn, because, let's face it, Dean is the man.

Chapter Notes

Y’all should know that tonight's chapter was delayed in part because of a seriously in-depth debate regarding parenthetical punctuation, brought to you by myself and phaelsafe. Trust me, you love your beta readers more than you know. In the lady’s own words, after I accused her of stealing all of my commas: "Lord almighty, I'm stealing a few so the parenthetical asides look like asides, and the commas that aren't necessary don't look like you flavored your screen with pepper."

She ain't wrong, either.

With that brief introduction sorted, please continue to the main event*

*but wait, there's more! In a new and exciting development, I can be found on tumblr!

One quick wipe-down later, Dean outfitted himself in a pair of jeans and still another henley while Cas pulled on sweatpants and Dean’s faded Black Sabbath tee. It was a mark of how unnerved they both were by Sam’s bizarre behavior that Dean didn’t even try to cop a feel (there was something about seeing Cas in his sweatpants, let alone one of Dean’s favorite band tees—it shouldn’t have been sexy, but the angel so rarely wore anything but his old, familiar uniform that Dean couldn’t help but be into it) before they exited the room and headed for the library.

Something Sam probably called music but Dean felt confident hardly qualified was playing at medium volume from Sam’s Bluetooth speakers, which had been set on the long table to serenade him as he worked. The plates and cups that had been littered along the table (after five solid days of research, Dean had so totally lost the will to live that he practically stopped showering, let alone making sure he always bused his dishes) had been piled up neatly and set on the floor nearest the kitchen door. Apparently, in a world gone mad, at least Sam’s continued refusal to enter the kitchen could be counted on. Currently, Sam appeared in the process of consolidating the piles of books that had been scattered throughout the library. Dean suspected that Sam’s aim was to get them all in one place so he could start cataloguing them and organize them by section before he went about reshelving them. Come to think of it, Dean was actually kind of annoyed that somewhere along the way, Sam had forced him to listen to so much crap about libraries that he even knew all of the steps that needed to happen.

Dean entered the library with Cas half a step behind him, and suddenly realized that he and Cas hadn’t actually hashed out who was going to do the actual talking. Turning his head so his eyes could meet Cas’s, Dean raised a single brow in inquiry. Cas pressed his lips together and frowned, a
gesture which probably would’ve meant nothing to anyone else, but which clearly suggested to Dean that Cas thought, as Sam’s brother, Dean should be the one to handle this. Dean felt his brows contract and his lips purse into an answering expression which Cas would no doubt recognize as a demand to know why Dean was always expected to handle these things himself. Cas rolled his eyes upward and motioned toward himself with one hand, which Dean took to mean that he generally got stuck taking point because Cas, quite frankly, sucked at this stuff and was well aware of it. Dean had to concede the point, which he did with a shrug, although he gave Cas a narrowed gaze, indicating that he wasn’t allowed to sit this one out entirely, and would be expected to provide at least moderately useful back up. Cas nodded, although he continued to look vaguely doubtful, and the two of them turned back to the library.

At that exact moment, Sam bustled into view, toting a pile of books that had to be close to three feet high. Dean, sensing that spooking Sam into flinging books in every direction was probably not the best way to start a delicate conversation, held off on speaking up until Sam had set the pile down on the long table and split it into three smaller piles. Then he stepped forward, Cas bobbing in his wake like a slightly smaller and infinitely more clueless sailboat.

“Hey, Sammy, got a minute?”

Sam turned to face them, holding up a finger and pulling his phone out of his pocket. A few second later, the volume of the so-called music leaking out of the speakers dropped precipitously. Sam slipped his phone back into his pocket and turned back to Dean.

“I am kind of occupied trying to reassemble a library out of the horror-show the two of you left in here,” he told Dean, sounding half bitchy and half good natured.

“You know,” Dean told him, thoroughly unimpressed, “the reason the library was a horror-show was that someone was refusing to come out from a literal blanket fort, leading Cas and I to conclude that if we didn’t find something in the books that would let us break out of here stat, you might actually have a complete nervous breakdown.”

Sam shrugged, conceding the point, although he looked unapologetic. “Fair enough, but was destroying the library really compulsory? You couldn’t have, like, used the card catalogue while desperately seeking a solution?”

“I tell you what,” Dean told him, trying to remember why shooting your brother was a bad idea, “the next time I’m scream-singing “Everybody Hurts” so loud I’m actually causing cracks in the bunker’s foundation and threatening to bring the whole goddamn place down, you can use the card catalogue while you try to figure out how the hell to make it stop. How’s that sound?”

Sam looked for a second like he wasn’t quite sure whether to feel moderately offended, or sort of guilty. He decided on offended. “My singing isn’t that bad.”

“No,” Dean agreed readily, “it’s worse. Way worse. Pretty sure your dulcet tones made the angel over here question the existence of God.”

“That,” Cas told them, “is an exaggeration.” He paused for a moment before adding, “Somewhat. I did not actually question the existence of my Father, merely whether He could still be alive in a world in which such monstrosity could exist.”

It was easy to forget, if you got too focused on the generally deadpan, sort of oblivious demeanor Castiel wore much of the time, that he could actually be a funny son of a bitch if the urge struck him. Then again, Dean still wasn’t sure how many of the funny things he said were actually intended to be funny, and how many were just Cas being deadpan, oblivious Cas in a way that happened to be
hilarious. Either way, Dean snorted so hard he choked. Sam didn’t seem to find Cas quite as funny as Dean did, at least in this particular instance. Frowning at both of them, he turned back toward the piles of books he’d started to arrange on the long table, apparently deciding that if they were going to mock him he might as well get back to work. Cas elbowed Dean urgently and unnecessarily in the side, his meaning quite clear: ‘He’s getting away! Quick! Do something!’

Rolling his eyes upward and silently demanding to know why he always had to be the one to do something, Dean hastily spoke up.

“No, Sam, c’mon. I’m sorry, that wasn’t fair. I know it was our fault you were in the blanket fort to begin with. Listen, how about I grab us all a beer and we…uh, have a chat. Then maybe the three of us can go ahead and watch a movie like you wanted. The library can wait. I promise.”

Castiel’s accusatory expression seemed to suggest that this wasn’t the way he would’ve gone about it. Dean was pretty sure that had something to do with the beer, or possibly committing to watching a movie with Sam right after having what was sure to be an awkward as hell conversation, but honestly, Cas had had the chance to lead this charge, and he’d put it on Dean to handle, so the hell with him and his disapproval.

Sam, meanwhile, had paused to consider this before shrugging. “Fine, but one more word about my singing and I’ve got nothing more to say to either of you, got it?”

“Capisce,” Dean assured him, “no more criticism of your vocal skills. I’m gonna go grab the beer. Cas? You want?”

It was a mark of how the angel seemed to be expecting the conversation to go that he nodded with what could almost be termed enthusiasm at the idea of a beer, even though they all knew perfectly well that a single beer would do fuckall to actually inebriate him.

Abandoning Sam and Cas to each other and whatever awkward small talk they managed to muddle through in his absence, Dean headed for the kitchen, pausing long enough to grab the stack of plates and dishes that Sam had left by the door.

Resisting the urge to actually do all the dishes right now just so he didn’t have to actually have the anticipated conversation (maybe Cas would have it for him while he was lurking in the kitchen?), he settled for leaving them in the sink before he headed for the fridge.

To his abject horror, Dean discovered upon pulling out the three promised beers that they were the very last ones. Scouring his mind to try to remember whether there were any more tucked away in the storage room, he concluded with a sinking feeling that there almost certainly were not.

It shouldn’t have come as a surprise—they’d been trapped in here for, what, close to two weeks now? Something like that? Of course their supplies were going to start running low. Dean vowed fervently that the second they got out of here, he was going on the most righteous shopping trip ever done. He was going to stock this kitchen, pantry, and storage room with such overenthusiasm that they could be trapped down here by an actual Armageddon for years and not run out of anything as critical as beer. In fact, maybe he should consider talking to Sam about buying by the barrel, or even learning how to brew their own? Some things simply couldn’t be gone without.

Despite his need to share this horror with someone who would at least sort of understand it (although he knew perfectly well that neither Sam nor Cas would be nearly as appalled by it as he was), Dean recognized that now was absolutely not the time to derail the needed conversation with a detour into their newfound scarcity and how to avoid it in the future. Setting aside his admitted borderline alcoholism (hey, at least he was a functional semi-alcoholic), Dean went ahead and popped open the
three final beers, firmly instructing himself that it would not be kosher to lie to the others and hoard all three for himself, regardless of how pressing the urge to do just that was.

Trekking back into the library, he found Cas had spent the time earnestly relating to Sam his thoughts about Poltergeist. Sam, unsurprisingly, had drawn the angel into a discussion about the ramifications of the fact that although the one in the movie was fictional, native burial grounds and other holy sites were frequently desecrated in reality, sometimes producing legitimate supernatural phenomena. Sam, Dean gathered as he paused in the doorway to listen, lips twitching, wanted Castiel’s opinion on the ethics of hunting and neutralizing threats from native spirits or cursed objects, given that the supernatural threats only existed due to the effects of what he referred to as “unrestrained colonialism.” Cas’s point seemed to be that the individuals who were inevitably victimized by the vengeful spirits or cursed objects in question had not been directly responsible for any of the colonialism in question, and thus should not be left to pay the price for it, regardless of how terribly native populations had been treated.

Taking a swig of one of the beers to bolster himself, Dean took a moment to wonder why the hell Cas couldn’t have just opened up with the actual conversation that needed to happen, rather than letting Sam drag him into yet another discussion that somehow combined the supernatural with his penchant for social justice. He didn’t have much time to reflect on this (although he did make a note to question Cas about it later) because the angel, apparently sensing him, turned his head unerringly to where Dean was watching with one hip cocked against the doorjamb.

Taking this as his cue, Dean joined the duo, passing out the beers, and if Cas inadvertently got the beer Dean had already stolen a swallow from, well, it wasn’t like a single beer was actually going to have any real impact on him anyway, was it? If he noticed, Cas appeared unperturbed by being short-changed, and went readily when Dean motioned the pair of them to the end of the long table that Sam had not yet begun to pile books for organizing on. They all settled into chairs, and Sam, instincts apparently undamaged by the trauma that appeared to have entirely destroyed his sense of social appropriateness, raised his brows at the pair of them in bright interest.

“You’ve clearly got something on your minds. Shoot.”

Dean took a moment to slant his gaze toward Cas, in the futile hope that maybe, just this once, he’d decide to take point. The angel’s implacable gaze met his, blinking blandly, as if he hadn’t the first idea what Dean’s inquiring (urging?) gaze could possibly be about. Dean made a note to put itching powder in Cas’s suit pants later, and damn the consequences. Without half a clue how he was going to manage this, Dean plunged in.

“So, uh, first of all,” he told Sam, “you should know how glad we both are to have you back among the land of the living. We were really worried about you.” Oh, sure, now the brick wall that was Cas cracked open enough for him to nod earnestly when Sam glanced at him.

“Good to be back,” Sam told them cheerfully, having apparently decided to entirely let go of any resentment he might have understandably held over the cause of his depressive episode. “If I never feel like that again it’ll be twenty years too soon.”

“I think we’re all on the same page, there. So please take me seriously when I tell you that neither of us wants to make you uncomfortable or make you feel like you’re being attacked, ‘cause you’re not.”

Cas again nodded agreement, and Dean reflected sourly that a small Cas-shaped bobblehead would’ve been able to fulfill the same role without stretching its capabilities any. At that precise moment, Cas appeared to choke on a swallow of his beer. Dean wondered whether perhaps his own consternation had led him to once again telegraph his thoughts verbatim to the angel. Served Cas right if it had. Let him have a sense of just how much trouble he was in for once again expecting
Dean to take the lead on this shit.

In the meanwhile, Sam was nodding his understanding, the look of bright interest on his face suggesting that he was all about the fact that his no-chick-flick-moments brother was actually bringing up shit like feelings voluntarily. Dean took a healthy swallow of his beer, both as a bolster and to take advantage of the brief delay to attempt yet again to get his thoughts in order before he really dove into the meat of this. Sam, apparently recognizing easily the tells that indicated that his brother was stalling, grinned a little bit. “Dude. Spit it out. You’re squirming so much in your seat that if I didn’t know better I’d think that Cas had just—“

“All right!” Dean broke in, his too-loud word both cutting off Sam before he could go any further and muffling the sound of the angel’s incredibly unhelpful snort of surprised amusement. Feeling reassured about the importance of this conversation, Dean went on. “So, here’s the thing, man. I hope you know that Cas and I would never—“ Dean crossed his fingers under the table. Then, just for good measure, he went ahead and crossed his toes, because he was about to tell a whopper, considering the events that had so recently taken place in the bathroom, “—deliberately subject you to our sex life. I know that we’ve had, like, a legit series of fucking unfortunate events here,” Sam looked proud that Dean was actually referencing a book series, “and your poor eyes have gotten way more than their fair share of shit you really didn’t wanna see. I feel terrible about it, and I know Cas does too,” even if that feathery junkless Ken doll (Cas again made a low choking sound) won’t say this shit himself.

Sam smiled wryly at both of them and shrugged easily. “I’m not trying to say it’s been a picnic, but at no point did I think that you guys were doing this on purpose. Sometimes shit just works out in funny ways.”

Dean shrugged in acquiescence before correcting, “I don’t know, I’d say sometimes the universe is a big bag of dicks, but same general idea.”

Sam grinned at this colorful rephrasing of his point, swigging his beer and cocking a brow at the pair of them, “Look, if all you wanted to do was apologize, don’t worry about it. We’re cool. I’m not gonna lie and say it wasn’t touch and go for a minute there, but we’re good now. I’m okay. I wouldn’t mind having a chance at a few breaths of fresh air, but I’m not gonna go completely around the bend before the snow melts.”

Dean sensed his opportunity slipping away from him. Cas apparently agreed, because a foot that was definitely not Sam’s came down atop Dean’s, the light pressure clearly urging him to get on with it. Dean swiveled his gaze from Sam to Cas, staring at him for five seconds or so and attempting to infuse an on-the-surface fairly bland look with an undercurrent that spoke multitudes. Cas’s lips twitched slightly, apparently amused by what Sam had accurately characterized as Dean’s squirming. Then again, Cas always had liked making him squirm, the bastard.

Turning from the angel, who wouldn’t be getting laid for at least another week if Dean had better self-control (he knew better than to think he could restrain himself for that long after they’d already been on...hiatus. Hell, he knew better than to think he could restrain himself for that long either way, barring emergency situations like his brother having a complete breakdown), Dean centered his attention back on Sam and tried desperately to claw his way back to some control of the discussion.

“We definitely wanted to apologize, but we also thought that maybe, uh, given all the crap that’s happened in the past couple weeks, it would be good to have a general conversation about...” Dean floundered, trying to find the appropriate word that would transmit what he meant without alienating Sam. Miracle of fucking miracles, Cas actually picked up the slack, speaking up to finish Dean’s sentence, which had been in some danger of hanging in limbo indefinitely,
“...boundaries, Sam. We wished to speak with you about boundaries, as these things have understandably grown somewhat confused of late.”

Dean huffed out a relieved breath and sent Cas a nod of thanks, even though what he really wanted to do was get up on the table and do a fucking touchdown dance because, at last, some goddamn help. In the meantime, Sam appeared to be considering this. Ordinarily, Dean would’ve found it a little hard to believe that Sam seemed to have no idea exactly what they were talking about, but since it seemed at least semi-miraculous that Sam was still actually Sam after the psychological whirlwind he’d been on for the past week, Dean could let it slide.

“Sure, guys,” Sam told them eventually, sounding quite sincere, “happy to go over boundaries. What’s on your mind?”

“Sam,” Dean said seriously, determined to stop dancing around this, “we love you, man, but I speak for both of us and, God knows, most especially for me, your brother, when I tell you that we love you platonically.” Welp. There it was. Dean looked toward Cas, proud as hell of himself, only to find the angel staring at him with an expression of exasperated disbelief. Dean’s expression immediately morphed to a glare as he silently demanded of the angel, WHAT?! What now? I didn’t see you doing any better, Captain Cowardly! Cas’s expression shifted immediately, eyes narrowing to glittering slits that, if Dean had to give words to, would be saying ‘Just you wait until we are alone and we will see exactly who you call a coward.’

Whatever. Dean had never been less inclined to cower at Cas’s wordless threats of payback. The angel could go ahead and take it out of his ass, Dean was never going to let him live this shit down. Even if he had actually stepped in with something resembling help at the last minute, he’d still spent most of the last half hour happily watching Dean try desperately to muddle through the kind of conversation that he’d enthusiastically resort to violence (albeit against supernatural threats) to avoid. Sam, meanwhile, was blinking in clear astonishment and had apparently totally failed to notice the abortive three seconds in which Dean and Cas argued silently. “I…what?”

Well, the good news, Dean reflected, was that Sam’s weird and uncomfortable interruptions quite clearly hadn’t been driven by any horrifying, nauseating, incredibly unwelcome desire to join the festivities. In fact, as his mind wrapped around what Dean was saying, he looked increasingly horrified at the sheer notion that he had any non-platonic or sexual feelings about either Dean or Cas. Dean, who hadn’t quite allowed himself to really worry that this was the case, was nevertheless incredibly relieved. He might’ve been a kinky bastard, but he was not that kinky.

Cas, apparently deciding that Dean could not be trusted with this (which, to be fair, Dean had been trying to tell him from the get-go), cast a narrow glance at Dean before turning a much kinder one on Sam.

“What Dean has poorly attempted to convey, Sam,” Hey, what the hell? He was doing his best! “Is that, while we are relieved that catching us in the act is no longer as discomfiting for you as it may have once been, and while I would never state that I have not benefited from your willingness to help me work through challenges, even when they center upon Dean’s and my sex life,” Dean, who knew perfectly well what conversation Cas was referring to, barely remembered at the last moment that he wasn’t supposed to know, and threw a sharp glance at Cas in deference to this. Sam, meanwhile, was nodding along with Cas, suggesting that Cas’s strategy was a better one than Dean’s. This came as a surprise to nobody, least of all Dean, who tuned back in as Cas went on, “our sex life is perhaps the most private portion of our lives together.”

Sam was nodding agreeably, but still looked totally bewildered as to the point that they were trying to make. Dean took a moment to wonder whether Sam had actually reached newfound levels of
obtuseness, or if he was just fucking with them. Cas turned a hopeless gaze onto Dean, as if to inquire what the hell to do next. Dean shrugged and made an “after you” gesture at the angel. ‘Poorly attempted to convey,’ huh? Well, Cas could just go right ahead and do better, then, couldn’t he?

Cas set two fingers against one of his temples, took in a deep breath, and tried again, apparently giving up entirely on beating around the proverbial bush. “Sam, it makes both Dean and I extremely uncomfortable when you watch us engage in sexual congress. While we certainly are in no position to judge anyone for their proclivities, we would strongly request that you vent any voyeuristic urges elsewhere.”

Welp, Dean reflected, that was one way of going about it. Sam blinked a few times, before an expression of understanding dawned on his face. Dean was a little concerned that he might lose it (things were still a little touch and go—he had only been out of the blanket fort for, what, an hour? Maybe two, if you counted the time he had spent showering before he barged in on Dean and Cas?), but Sam exceeded his expectations, as he so often did.

“Oh, shit! Yeah, of course, guys. No problem. But for what it’s worth, I’m not—a voyeur, or whatever.” He again appeared appalled at the idea that he had been getting any sexual gratification out of his observation of their activities, which Dean could only find additionally reassuring. Recognizing that Cas had definitely reached the end of his proverbial tether, Dean stepped in smoothly.

“Hey, no problem either way. Cas wasn’t saying you were getting off on it or anything, and I should’ve been clearer that I was joking. Nobody thinks anything creepy is going on here.” Okay, that was a damn lie. It didn’t particularly matter what Sam’s motivations were, having your brother stare openly while your boyfriend gave you a blow job—or vice versa—was, in fact, creepy. It would never be anything but creepy. For right now, though, glossing over that seemed best, and he knew he had made the right decision by how relieved Sam looked. Dean smiled reassuringly at him and went on. “So, we’re all on the same page now? If, God forbid, at some point you should accidentally,” yeah, he definitely put some stress on that particular word, “come upon us going at it, it’s not going to fuck your entire world up at this point, but you’re also not going to go barging in past closed doors or hang around to watch, if you should stumble across us. Right? That sounds good to everyone?”

Sam grinned at them and nodded readily, tossing back the last of his beer. “Yup, I’m on board. Is that all you guys wanted to talk about, or is there some other elephant in the room?”

God bless him, Cas actually looked around, apparently trying to determine whether there was an actual elephant in the room. Come to think of it, given their recent board game experiences, Dean couldn’t really fault him for making sure. He thought he’d explained that particular colloquialism to Cas a time or two before, but wouldn’t really mind if Cas never got it straight. There was something unspeakably adorable about watching Cas, jaw gaping slightly in astonishment, scan rooms for literal elephants. Dean nevertheless had pity on him and clarified, “Metaphorical elephant, Cas. Just a saying, and yeah, Sam, that covers it.” Cas appeared relieved and immediately ceased his visual assessment of the room, turning his attention back to Dean and Sam.

“If you were serious about that movie, I think I can delay the library long enough to watch one, especially if you’re willing to make that unbelievable maple-bacon popcorn.” Dean considered this for a few moments, and gave in for the same reason he generally gave into various food requests—he wanted to eat it, too.

“I think that can probably be arranged,” he allowed to Sam, rising and turning for the kitchen. Cas
smiled between them, apparently as pleased as Dean was that that incredibly awkward conversation was over. Taking a deep breath to steel himself for the incredibly selfless thing he was about to do, Dean glanced over his shoulder on his way toward the kitchen and added, “I’ll even let you pick the movie, Sammy. You’ve had a rough week.”

Sam’s face lit up the same damn way it did when he was about four and Dean let him pick which cartoon to watch, and forget it. Dean was the biggest sucker on the planet for his little brother, and anybody who didn’t know it hadn’t been paying attention. Turning his head away to mask an affectionate grin, he grumbled, “just better not be any of that cerebral foreign drama bullshit. I ain’t reading subtitles.”

Just before he made it out of the library, Sam’s call halted him. “Hey, Dean, could you maybe grab me a fresh beer real quick? I’ll come to the door to grab it.” Apparently, Sam’s newfound blasé attitude about their sex life had not extended to his feelings about entering the kitchen. The cockroach phobia seemed to be firmly intact.

Turning back to face him (bad news should be delivered face-to-face—it was only respectful), Dean sighed deeply. “Brace yourself, Sammy.”

Sam blinked blankly at him.

“Unless you know something I don’t about a secret stash somewhere, all the evidence is that we’re out of beer.”

Sam frowned, clearly thinking about whether maybe there was a cache he had tucked away from Dean at some point, then shook his head, sighing. “Nope, don’t think so. I gave up on hiding beer from you about eight years ago. You’re like a goddamn bloodhound when it comes to that stuff.”

This was true enough. Dean had a knack for figuring out the hiding spots Sam tried in order to protect his girly craft beers. Not that Dean generally favored them, but when his respectable beer had run dry, a man had to make do.

Most of the time, Dean was proud of his gift for hunting down beer wherever it might hide, but at this particular moment it felt more like a curse than anything else. Sighing a little, he nodded toward the liquor cabinet. “I think we’re still pretty well stocked as far as the hard stuff goes. Why don’t you go take inventory while I get the popcorn started?”

Sam nodded agreeably and rose to do so as Dean turned back to the kitchen. Digging through their supplies to confirm that he had everything he needed for maple-bacon popcorn, he discovered (to a level of horror that nearly exceeded his beer-inspired feelings) that it looked like they were running fairly low on bacon, too. Enough so that the popcorn would about kill their remaining supply. He resolved to check the walk-in freezer before raising a panic, then got the bacon started in a skillet while he heated up the oil in one of the larger pots.

Turning around to head for the pantry to snag the popcorn kernels (if you put a couple into the oil while it heated, they obligingly let you know when the oil was ready to go by popping), he jumped about a foot when he found himself practically nose-to-nose with Cas, who also happened to be holding the jar of kernels.

“Jesus Christ, Cas!” he yelped, taking a step back and actually clutching his heart (although he dropped his hand as soon as he realized he was making the somewhat melodramatic gesture), “I should put a damn bell on you so I’ll know when you’re coming! With that sneaky shit.”

He took the kernels from the angel’s hand, turning around to head back for the stove. Half a second
after he dropped three kernels into the pot and covered it once more, Cas was suddenly right there, every inch of him plastered against Dean’s back. Dean could neither turn around to face him nor move forward, unless he had the desire to dive headfirst onto a hot stove. Since his sense of self-preservation was at least moderately more well-developed than that, he found himself trapped. This was no doubt exactly as Cas had intended, a conclusion which the angel verified when his lips brushed the side of Dean’s face so the low, threatening voice could leak into his ear.

“That,” Cas told him, one hand coming up to cup the opposite side of Dean’s neck, holding him against the side of Cas’s face, “was the second time in a week that you have called me a, let me see,” the pause to ostensibly remember the exact wording was blatantly unnecessary. Cas remembered perfectly well what Dean had mentally called him. No, the pause was entirely for Dean’s benefit, so that he would have a moment to register that his suspicions had been correct on both occasions. Cas had, indeed, picked up on his exact wording both times that he’d, perhaps unwisely, snarked silently at him with particular venom. This suspicion was borne out when Cas went on, “a ‘junkless Ken doll.’” It was also,” Cas extended the thumb of the hand that held Dean’s neck, until it rested lightly atop Dean’s Adam’s apple. He put no true pressure on his throat, but the implication was quite clear. If he wanted to, he could, and unless Dean wanted to risk a burner-shaped brand on his face, there wasn’t a goddamn thing he could do to stop it. The hint of a smile in Cas’s voice as he continued said that he was rather enjoying watching Dean come to these conclusions. “the second time that you have called me a coward.”

He clearly was not done, but there was nevertheless a sense of finality to the way he closed out those words, as if he had pronounced sentence, although no such thing had happened. He let the silence spin out between them—because Dean, frozen solid, had no intention of opening his mouth and potentially making a bad situation worse (even if he had meant every silently flung word that he was now being made to account for). The only sound for long moments was the bacon starting to crackle a little in its pan. Cas’s hand on Dean’s throat tightened almost imperceptibly. Not enough to even begin to impede his breathing, just enough to make its presence inescapably known.

Dean waited in an agony of anticipation for what would happen next. He was pretty sure Cas wasn’t going to, like, bend him over the table and start whaling on him with Sam right next door, especially after the conversation they’d just concluded, but the angel could be fairly unpredictable. If the satisfaction oozing out of Cas’s every pore was any indication, he was greatly enjoying this. What else was new? The silence spun out a little longer, and Dean started to think that Cas was waiting for him to say something before he was going to go on. He hadn’t a goddamn clue what he might say, and was extremely relieved when Cas went ahead without further delay. “I just thought I would step in here and remove any doubt as to whether I had, indeed, heard you. Give you something to think about, while you fix the popcorn for Sam.”

Of course he had. Of fucking course. Dean had to clamp down hard on himself lest he say—or, for that matter, think, since apparently his own mind was no longer safe territory—something extremely ill-advised. Instead he focused intently on the bacon in front of him, reaching out with a hand whose steadiness impressed even him, to flip it over with the tongs placed there for that purpose. At that exact moment, the first of the kernels popped, followed in short succession by the other two. As if it had been some sort of secret signal, Cas suddenly stepped back, releasing his hold on Dean’s throat in the same moment that his lips suddenly abandoned the side of Dean’s face.

Cas turned away from him, heading back to the door before glancing over his shoulder, eyes unerringly locking on Dean’s gaze (since Dean, of course, had not been able to restrain himself from turning to watch Cas depart). One corner of his lips ghosted upward and his eyes glinted with the sensual hardness whose aftermath could dismantle Dean in ways he hadn’t even known were possible ten years ago. Then he turned and was gone, leaving Dean to stare blankly after him until crackling oil reminded him that he had two rather delicate culinary processes to manage.
simultaneously.

First, though, he really needed to readjust something.

With his left hand.
Phantom

Chapter Summary

In which Dean's debt comes due very quickly, and quite unexpectedly.

Please see notes at the end for chapter-specific tags and warnings.

This chapter is a gift for and dedicated especially to the marvelous phaelsafe

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Chapter Notes

By the time Dean made it back to the library half an hour later, he’d fully regained his composure. The Castiel who awaited him seemed to have transitioned back to adorably awkward and clueless if the sunny smile he gave Dean was any indication. Setting the bowl of popcorn in front of Sam, who looked as if someone had given him a puppy for Christmas, Dean leaned over to brush his lips against Castiel’s (the angel was more than happy to reciprocate). By the time Dean stood back upright, Sam was practically doing laps in the bowl of popcorn, and Dean had to stifle a snort of amusement.

Sometimes the kid reminded him so powerfully of himself at much earlier ages that Dean had to restrain himself from totally losing his chill and pulling him in for a hug. They’d been very free with their affection as little kids, if only because they weren’t likely to get it from Dad, and kids needed to be hugged. As they got older and Dad’s insistence upon Dean acting like ‘a man’ grew, the physical affection waned. He and Castiel had absorbed the lesson well—they pretty much hugged only when one of them had returned from the dead, and even then Dean kind of felt like Dad was looking disapprovingly over his shoulder at him for ‘coddling’ Sam. Yet another wonderful legacy of John Winchester, but Dean had to put the brakes on when he started thinking like that, because his relationship with his father, even (especially?) so many years after his death, was…complicated.

Maybe because the last week had been so touch and go, and his very real worries that he and Castiel might have damaged Sam beyond repair were not so far removed, Dean went ahead and gave vent to his feelings just this once. Reaching down, he mussed Sam’s hair affectionately, resting his other hand on his shoulder for a few seconds. Dean could even let himself believe (on the surface, at least) that he’d just done it to elicit Sam’s squawk of protest at having his precious hair messed up. It was even better than usual this time, since Sam’s hands were both covered in maple-bacon residue, and he couldn’t immediately dive in to fix the damage Dean’s hand had wrought. Stifling a snort of amusement, Dean handed Sam the roll of paper towels he’d brought in with him (this popcorn was a messy snack, and Sam always got inordinately enthusiastic about it. Honestly, Dean should probably have brought a frigging container of wet wipes).

As Sam went to work cleaning his hands, grumbling all the while about Dean’s sacrilegious assault on his hair, Dean failed entirely to hide his grin. Castiel was watching the two of them with a small, fond smile on his face from his seat at the table. Dean knew that if anyone understood the depth of Dean’s feelings for his brother, it was the angel, and it probably did Castiel’s heart good to see Dean go ahead and be affectionate, despite his upbringing. Clearing his throat pointedly at the angel (Dean’s underlying message was simple: ‘stop giving us the aww that is just the sweetest face, you’re fucking
with my machismo’), Dean turned his eyes back to Sam just in time to watch him finally give up on
the paper towel and rise, scowling.

“I gotta go wash my hands before I can fix my hair. You’re such a friggin jerk, Dean!”

“Get a haircut and you won’t have this problem, bitch,” Dean told him easily, stepping aside to let
Sam lumber off toward the bathroom.

Dean took advantage of Sam’s abandonment of the popcorn bowl to grab a couple pieces and pop
them into his mouth. He paused to offer a bit to Cas, who shook his head with a regretful smile.
Dean dropped into the seat beside Cas that Sam had been occupying, because it was his prerogative
as the big brother to steal any seat that Sam had vacated, even momentarily. The angel quirked a
brow at him, clearly noting Dean’s choice to be deliberately (if playfully) antagonistic, and probably
accurately tracing it back to the fact that part of Dean still wanted to punch Sam for scaring him so
badly this week.

Dean noted that someone, probably Sam, had already unearthed the projector from the closet that it
generally lived in and gotten it set up for the movie. Back when Charlie stayed with them at the
bunker, she had taken one look at the ancient projector and took it upon herself to update all the
equipment to be compatible with their laptops (Sam had been over the moon when they then began
digitizing the archives for easier access). It had made it a hell of a lot less weird when the three of
them wanted to watch something together. Squishing onto a bed with his boyfriend and his giant of
a little brother so they could all hunch over a laptop screen had just been uncomfortable, and not only
in the physical sense.

Dean munched on the popcorn, waiting in companionable silence with Cas until Sam popped back
up, hands apparently clean and hair perfectly groomed. Dean was pretty damn sure that Sam had
actually detoured for a hairbrush—there was no way just his hands had returned it to that level of
silkeness—but figured that he could give Sam a pass just this once, and didn’t tease him for it.
Instead, he waited till he approached the table and rolled his eyes at the sight of Dean in his erstwhile
seat before inquiring, “so, what’s the verdict, Sammy? What movie are you gonna subject us to?”
Swear to God, if Sam picked something with subtitles…

“Thor!” Sam told them, sounding pleased with himself for selecting a movie that all of them would
probably enjoy. Dean, who hadn’t seen it but was generally down with superheroes, nodded his
approval.

“Cool, solid choice. Batman’s better, though.”

Sam made a face, shaking his head, and Dean immediately realized that he had made a tactical error
at the look on his face as he opened his mouth with a rebuttal. “No way. The Marvel universe is far
superior to the DC universe. Don’t get me wrong, Batman’s great, but the Marvel characters are
much more representative of actual real-world demographics. They’re racially diverse, they have
queer characters, and they’re not political symbols, except when it’s explicitly addressed that they
are. It’s just a better universe all around.”

Dean opened his mouth to respond, then shook his head and closed it for a moment, overwhelmed
by the unsurprising but still impressive depths of nerdiness Sam revealed almost every time he
opened his mouth. “Dude, I cannot believe—yeah, actually, I can—that you have put that kind of
thoughtful analysis into comparing comic book universes.”

Sam looked deeply offended. “It’s not like I’m the first one to do these kinds of analyses, you know,
and since superhero stories are so popular, representation is incredibly important. As a cis white
male, even a bisexual one, you’re a hell of a lot more likely to have representation in media than
people from pretty much any other demographic. It’s easy for you to be blasé about it.”

Dean raised his hands in surrender. He knew way better than to really go head-to-head with Sam on this. First of all, he didn’t actually think Sam was necessarily wrong, it was just sometimes fun to mock him for his nerdiness. Secondly, unless he had hours to kill, really getting Sam started was just dangerous. “Okay, okay, you’re the boss. Marvel’s better, but Batman is still my main man.”

Sam subsided, mollified, and Cas spoke up from beside them, idly. “Gabriel insisted that I reenact a superhero movie with him once. I would not have minded, but the costume he provided for me was quite revealing, and I was appallingly objectified by the angels he corralled to be our audience. It was an eye-opening experience.”

Silence reigned in the room for long moments as Dean and Sam slowly swiveled their heads around to face Cas. He gazed back at them blandly, clearly totally unaware of the impact this revelation would have. Five seconds later, Dean was literally laid out on the floor, having slid out of his chair altogether from the force of his hysteries. The mental picture was absolutely priceless, although he really, really wished there were pictures somewhere, because Cas in a skimpy superhero costume? Yum. Come to think of it, he might insist on a reenactment of the reenactment one of these days.

Sam, meanwhile, who had also gotten a good chuckle over it, got over it a lot faster and started to engage Cas in a discussion of the value of experiences that allowed one to put themselves more fully in the shoes of what he referred to as ‘oppressed populations.’ Cas, he seemed to feel, could now better understand the plight of women in superhero movies and in the population at large, as they were often objectified.

By the time Dean got himself back together enough to climb back into his chair, catch his breath, and wipe his eyes, Sam and Cas had progressed to discussions regarding the objectification of female hunters by their male colleagues, who tended to be somewhat more plentiful. Sam was of the opinion that women made up the minority of hunters largely because of what he referred to as a “hostile environment.” Dean had heard this argument before, and secretly agreed with Sam completely, but it would make him too happy for Dean to actually admit it. Actually, when push came to shove, Dean almost always agreed with Sam on this kind of thing, but it wouldn’t do to let him actually know it, and he was pretty sure Sam actually liked honing his arguments on Dean, even when he restricted his responses to noncommittal grunts.

Finally, when he was able to get a word in edgewise, Dean managed to kick Sam’s ass into gear, and he got the movie queued up on his laptop, which he linked to the projector (Dean said a silent thank you to Charlie, and didn’t bother to wonder whether there would ever be a time that thinking about her would no longer hurt. He already knew there wouldn’t. She was one loss that would stay raw forever). Dean got up to flip off the lights, Sam pushed play, and as the movie flickered to life on the wall, the sound of a chair scraping against the floor broke through the first few notes of the introductory music. Under the cover of the room’s darkness, Dean tipped his head down and smiled. Usually the process was quieter, when they were sitting on a bed together, but every time the opening credits of a movie or a show started to roll, Cas edged closer to Dean. Something about the particular medium made him cuddly, and Dean wasn’t complaining.

It came as no surprise when the chair that had been a foot or so to his left was suddenly pressed right next to his. When Dean’s eyes slid to the left, Cas’s expression was schooled into careful innocence, as if he had no idea how his chair had suddenly shifted, or possibly hadn’t even noticed. Rolling his eyes upward indulgently, Dean went with it. For the angel’s amusement, he ostentatiously stretched his arms above his head, then let one settle around the back of Cas’s chair when they fell. He could feel Cas’s body shake with suppressed laughter at the age-old gesture. Dean took a moment to wonder whether maybe they should replace some of the chairs around the table with benches or maybe a little loveseat. Okay, fine, maybe Cas wasn’t the only one who got a little snuggly during
movies.

Trusting the distinct sensation of being watched, Dean swiveled his head until his eyes unerringly caught Sam’s. The expression on his face said that he had been watching Dean and Cas march down the totally unstealthy path toward movie cuddles with some level of enjoyment. The smile on his face was a quiet one, a gentle one. Dean knew damn well that it did Sam’s heart good to see his older brother settled, happy, and openly in love. Sam honestly wouldn’t have given two shits if Dean had chosen an alligator. In fact, he probably would’ve marched in (started?) alligatorsexual pride parades. Hell, Dean had needed to do some seriously fast talking to convince Sam that, no, the fact that he was comfortably bisexual and with a dude did not actually mean they were going to start going to pride parades now. Sam had seemed pretty disappointed by this revelation. Maybe one of these years, Dean would make Sam’s life and actually let him drag the two of them to a parade. It would be worth it, just to see what Cas made of the spectacle.

Frowning as the sense of being watched intensified, Dean swiveled his eyes back to the left and discovered that now Cas’s eyes were on him as well. Rolling his eyes heavenward and seeking strength from aloft, Dean interrupted the movie’s opening dialogue to inquire wryly, “I thought we’d agreed to watch a movie, but if the two of you would rather spend the next two hours watching me, we can turn that shit off and put the lights back on so you’ve got a better view.”

Sam snorted, Cas rolled his eyes, but both of them turned their attention back to the wall on which the movie was being projected. Mission accomplished. The three of them settled to the movie, although it couldn’t have been more than five minutes in before Cas was hotly objecting, “that is not how that works! Gross inaccuracies! In reality—“

Dean took one look at the interested look on Sam’s face, realized that the kid would actually be into Cas interrupting the movie every five minutes to provide more historically accurate versions of the Norse Gods, and concluded that he had to get out ahead of this before it went all the way south. “Hey, hey, okay. I have no doubt that you could do a lot better than the screenwriters, but we’re gonna watch the movie, not talk about how much it got wrong.”  Turning his head to encompass Sam in his admonition, Dean looked between them before going on, “Okay? Yes? This is not a new policy. If we watch a movie, we appreciate it for what it is, we don’t tear it apart.”

Dean had learned many years ago that this rule was critical if he were ever going to be allowed to watch a movie in peace again. Between Sam and Cas, there was almost no movie on the planet that would’ve been free of constant interruptions, so he’d set this guideline in place and hammered it endlessly into their heads. They were mostly pretty good about it now, but every now and then something so egregious happened that one or the other of them forgot themselves completely. Dean was not about to let that happen now. The movie might’ve been Sam’s choice, but Dean was starting to get into it already, and he didn’t want to end up having to slap duct tape over his boyfriend’s mouth to enjoy it.

Finally, Cas nodded, although he still looked pretty damn sour. Lips twitching, Dean settled back into his chair, using the arm around the back of Cas’s to pull him in closer. For a second, it seemed like Cas was going to pull away, still irritated that Dean was enforcing the movie rules despite what he clearly saw as irredeemable inaccuracies that needed to be pointed out. Then, Dean couldn’t have said why, the angel suddenly appeared to change his mind, letting Dean fold him inward, even
shifting lower in his chair so he could rest his head against Dean’s shoulder. Smiling a little, Dean dropped a kiss atop the mussed head and settled in more comfortably to enjoy the movie.

He had maybe ten minutes before it started. Just enough time to really get into the plot. He was focused enough that when it first began, he absentmindedly lifted his free hand to scratch at his nipple, figuring that a loose thread or something in his shirt was irritating it. It didn’t feel like much; just a slight prickling. It wasn’t until the same sensation started up on the other side a few seconds later that Dean actually started paying attention. For the next few minutes, the sensation would pop up in various spots for five or ten seconds, then disappear. He was trying to figure out if he was having the world’s weirdest allergic reaction and what he might be reacting to when suddenly, the sensation recentered itself with what seemed to be great purpose.

On his cock.

The full length of him was engulfed in the same prickling tingle. Dean jumped a few inches, briefly dislodging Cas’s head. The sensation suddenly broke, and Dean caught in a breath. Cas tipped his head to look up at Dean, brows lifting in inquiry as he murmured, “something wrong?”

Dean shook his head, giving the angel a half smile. Cas dropped his head back against Dean’s shoulder. The sensation didn’t return and, a little uneasily, Dean tried to shrug it off and return his attention to the movie. By the time another ten minutes passed, he had mostly succeeded.

Which is why, when something that felt distinctly like teeth closed around his right nipple, he damn near hit the ceiling. Again, he jumped, and again, Cas’s head was jounced off his shoulder. The nonexistent teeth relinquished their grip. The angel frowned at him and again murmured quietly, so as not to disturb Sam (who was clearly greatly enjoying both the movie and the popcorn), “Dean?” Cas set a concerned hand on his shoulder, and suddenly the teeth closed around his left nipple. That was when Dean suddenly became aware of a nearly imperceptible sense of pressure in his left shoulder. It was in the same area that Cas’s hand currently rested, but did not perfectly line up with the angel’s hand. In fact, it felt as if there were two hands on his shoulder, overlapping, one of them almost impossibly light.

That was when he figured it out. His eyes flared wide and then narrowed, zeroing in on Cas’s face. Now that he was paying attention to more than just his body’s bizarre reactions, he recognized that the look on the angel’s face was just a hair too innocent.

The handprint on his left shoulder had been so much a part of him for so many years that Dean rarely consciously considered it. Occasionally, in moments of passion or great affection, Cas would place his hand over it, fitting his fingers to the brand that they had made when he pulled Dean out of hell. Otherwise, it went mostly unremarked upon. They’d figured out a long time ago that Cas had a bizarre power to affect him through the handprint via direct contact with it (even through clothing, oddly), but by mutual agreement and sheer lack of need, this particular capability was rarely used. It was far more gratifying for them both when Cas actually touched him, his hands and teeth laying claim to every inch of Dean—not to mention, it was unnerving as hell to be touched without actually being touched. No wonder it had taken him awhile to put two and two together and come up with Cas.

Dean raised one brow in combined accusation and inquiry at the angel. Cas shrugged slightly and tightened his fingers around Dean’s bicep. The teeth that were not actually teeth shifted off his nipple and trailed down his chest, nibbling their way toward his belly button. Dean drew in a sharp breath and moved to shrug Cas’s hand off his shoulder, but the fingers tightened further, until they were digging in with a force that was just shy of bruising. In a flash, Dean remembered Cas’s words, spoken what couldn’t have been more than 90 minutes before. “If you choose to have me
take care of your discomfort now, you will be incurring a debt, to be paid in a manner of my choosing, at a time of my choosing. And I may not provide you with advance warning."

Well. So that was how he was going to play this. Dean’s shoulder stilled, recognizing that, by agreeing to Cas’s terms, he had revoked the right to shake that hand off his shoulder and go back to the movie unperturbed—unless, of course, Cas’s raised eyebrow seemed to say, he wanted to invoke his safeword? He could do so, even without speaking. A specific series of squeezes to Cas’s hand and everything would halt immediately. Dean actually considered it for half a second, not because he thought he couldn’t handle it, but because this was a dick move by Cas. The thought was discarded nearly as soon as it arose. That wasn’t what his safeword was for. He’d made a bargain with the angel. Cas had lived up to his end, and it would be churlish to renege on it just because Dean was annoyed by the terms of repayment.

Sighing a little and giving Cas a look just sour enough to transmit his disapproval, Dean ceased his efforts to shake off the fingers on his arm. The angel tipped his head in acknowledgment of Dean’s protest then, very slowly, smiled.

Cas had at least a thousand smiles, and Dean knew them all. There was his kid-on-Christmas-morning, delighted smile. That one popped up when he was having some particularly exciting human experience for the first time. Back during his human phase, Dean had seen that smile a lot (only, perhaps, eclipsed by the number of times he’d seen the scowl or pout when he encountered not-so-great human experiences). Then there was his tender smile, the one he wore when his feelings for Dean were particularly loving and nurturing. Every now and then Sam earned one that was similar to (but significantly less intense than) that one. There was his proud smile, when he figured something out or managed a new skill (the first time he successfully made microwave popcorn without burning it came to mind). He had a confused smile, a guilty smile, a self-deprecating smile, and one that was quizzical.

And then there were the ones that were reserved only for Dean. The come-hither smile, that promised sensual delights if Dean would only give into it. The darkly sensual one. The threatening smile, and the slightly cruel one that promised swift and painful punishment. The challenging one that just begged Dean to fight him and lose. The exhausted, sated smile that came at the end of a really intense scene, and the smile so feral that it could’ve graced the face of a wolf in the wild. And then, finally, there was a smile that Dean privately thought of as the “you did this to yourself” smile.

That was the one the angel was currently directing at him, and much as he would’ve liked to protest either in word, thought, or look, Dean couldn’t argue with his accuracy. He’d made his choice, demanding relief from his painful arousal stoked by five days of abstinence. Now, although the angel had barely started, Dean could guess well enough what the name of the payback game was. He had opted for relief from arousal, and Cas had given it—but now he had every intention of returning Dean back to a state of unfulfilled torment, perhaps even more overwhelming than the one that Dean had willingly agreed to any consequences at all to escape.

God dammit. If he’d thought harder about it in the moment, he might’ve been able to predict something like this, but perhaps not. Cas was endlessly creative, and Dean had been in no shape to conduct a thorough, well-reasoned assessment of the offer before accepting it. Now there was nothing to be done but endure it, and try his damnedest not to clue Sam in to what was going on, given that they’d just covered boundaries with him. That, maybe more than anything else, annoyed Dean. If Sam figured out what was going on here it could easily destroy all the progress they’d made in their recent conversation, and Dean wouldn’t have that.

Shooting a meaningful glance in Sam’s direction, Dean looked back at Cas and raised his brows, as if to point out this potential pitfall in his plan. Cas shrugged and smiled again, this time a little
toothier, a little more challenging. It was, this smile said, entirely up to Dean and his level of control over his own reactions, whether Sam was able to figure what they were up to.

Huffing out a silent breath in exasperation—at Cas, yes, but also at himself (he knew better than to take an open-ended deal! Cas always made him sorry, if deliciously so), Dean settled back into his chair, set his jaw firmly, and attempted to turn his attention back to the movie. Cas returned himself to their previous positions, cradled against Dean’s side with his head resting sweetly (or, as the case may have been, diabolically) against Dean’s shoulder. As he did so, his head rested against the handprint through Dean’s henley and once again, Cas had the power to make Dean feel any form of touch sensation he desired. He could mimic firm pressure or a caress, the nip of teeth or the light scrape of fingernails, a fingertip or a sweeping palm. He had the power to inspire pain or pleasure of staggering intensity, although any cruelty Cas employed in its use was more likely to be in the clever and creative application of just the right amount of pain and far too much pleasure than the reverse. Dean had the sinking sensation that this was exactly the name of today’s game.

The fact that the movie was actually pretty good might, Dean hoped a little desperately, be to his advantage. Perhaps his interest in the plot and special effects could be at least moderately distracting from the sensations his body was currently experiencing—and there were plenty of those.

Now that the cat was out of the bag, now that Dean had figured out what was happening and why, Cas dispensed entirely with the restraint he had previously been employing. First came the fingertips, sliding across his shoulders and down his arms. They would’ve been a pretty mundane thing in any other circumstances, maybe, but by this point, Dean was practically vibrating with tension and even something so mild had him twitching. There was no way to describe what it was like to know that you were about to be touched, and not know where, or how, or exactly when. It wasn’t that the actual touches themselves were so terrible—they weren’t. After all, whether it was his hands or his mind, it was Cas touching him. Not only did Dean trust him implicitly, Cas knew the right ways to touch Dean, whether he was causing pleasure or pain. He knew exactly how much of each Dean liked, and exactly how to deliver them.

No, it wasn’t the sensations. It was the uncertainty that had him tied up into knots within moments.

Dean had learned a long time ago that there was only one way to make it less jarring when Cas did this, and it was simple. He had to close his eyes. It was one thing having hands or teeth on you that you just plain couldn’t see. That was, at least, a relatively ordinary experience. When your eyes were wide open and could see perfectly well that there was nothing anywhere near your nipples, despite the fact that they were currently being rolled lightly between what felt like fingertips? That was a little more unnerving.

He thought about closing his eyes now, but was unwilling to resort to it yet. It felt like a copout, and if Sam looked over and spotted him with his eyes closed, it would inspire questions, since Dean had never slept through a movie (that didn’t have subtitles) in his goddamn life. Instead, he resolutely looked at the screen, keeping his eyes firmly away from his own body, in the hopes that not looking directly at the areas that both were and were not being touched would make it more bearable. It worked, a little. For a while.

He was able to keep his eyes on the screen and even halfway focus on the movie while the fingertips ran down his chest, pausing to tauntingly circle his nipples before sliding down the vee of his hipbones (and incidentally, maybe the only thing weirder than being touched by invisible hands was being touched by invisible hands on your bare skin while you were wearing clothes. Rarely was Dean as acutely aware that Cas was not, in fact, human. Not even close.

The sliding fingertips transformed into sweeping palms that started at his hips and moved down the
outside of his legs before encircling his ankles and slowly, inexorably, pulling them apart. He hadn’t been sitting with his legs pressed tightly together, but by the time the hands were done, his legs were sprawled widely on the floor. A tighter squeeze on each of his ankles made it clear that they were expected to stay put. Dean ground his teeth together lightly, but when the hands moved on, he kept his legs where they’d been placed. He couldn’t quite restrain his little in-drawn breath when the palms slid rapidly up the inside of his legs, but they diverted just before reaching the apex of his thighs—or, no. They didn’t divert, they just…vanished. For perhaps thirty seconds, nothing happened, and it was worse, dramatically worse, than the actual touches were. At least when he was being touched, he knew what was happening.

Dean’s tension grew to almost unbearable levels, and his mind started to spiral away from him. He couldn’t do this. He couldn’t handle the tension, the uncertainty. He couldn’t—he jumped again, entirely disproportionately to the touch, when what felt like a single fingernail dug in lightly, directly between his shoulder blades, scraping a line straight downward to the very tip of his ass crack. This time, Sam turned his head to glance at Dean, jerking his brows in inquiry. Dean managed a smile that he hoped looked easy. He was impressed at how steady his own voice sounded. “Sorry, you know I get fidgety. Wasn’t made to sit still for long.” Sam chuckled and turned back to the movie.

Crisis averted. At least, that crisis. Inside Dean’s mind, it felt like another one was brewing, or maybe already here.

Cas, who had lifted his head to look at Dean (thus pausing the festivities entirely, once he was out of contact with the handprint), frowned slightly, brows knitting as he took in Dean’s posture, the lines of tension etched on his face now that Sam was no longer looking at him. Leaning in, he pressed his lips against Dean’s ear, but when he spoke this time it was neither promise nor threat. He was not the perfectly controlled Dom, meting out the promised punishment, he was simply Cas, the love of Dean’s entire fucked up life. The kindness and concern in his voice were palpable, as real—even moreso—than the phantom touches. “Dean. Do you need me to stop? Do you need to use your safeword?” That warm voice didn’t merely give permission, it provided the absolution which Cas would resolutely insist Dean would never need for using a safeword (but which he would likely still always feel he needed). Just like that, with the permission, with the concern, as the gentleness and adoration of those bright blue eyes washed over him, Dean didn’t need to safeword. He was okay, and he could do this. Taking in a deep breath and letting it out, Dean let the incredible tension bleed from his frame. He tipped his chin, pressing his head into Cas’s, then drew back enough so that they could look at each other.

Once their eyes had locked, Dean smiled again, but this one was real, and this one belonged only to Cas. Once the angel could see his face, could see his eyes, could see the truth in them, Dean shook his head. He was okay. As always, Cas had known just what he needed—not to safeword, but to be reminded that he could, that the ultimate control always rested with him.

Cas searched his face for a good ten seconds, making up his own mind, but what he saw there must have satisfied him, because he nodded once, then returned his head to Dean’s shoulder. Dean’s arm, still wrapped around the back of his chair, again tightened around Cas’s shoulder, and Cas lifted one of his hands to tangle his fingers in Dean’s. This, too, was what he needed. An anchoring point.

Moments later, when the phantom touch returned, it was an entirely different experience. Dean was able to simply give himself over to it, and while there was still a form of tension—Sam could not know what was going on—it was a very different kind. Letting his eyes drop to half-mast, open enough that he could still see the movie unfolding on the wall, but closed enough that he could allot most of his attention to what was happening to his body, Dean breathed as steadily as he was able while the hot wetness of a tongue traced each of his abs in turn. Castiel seemed to feel that Dean’s affirmative consent was his signal to escalate the situation, because when that tongue finished with his abdominals, it headed south. With purpose.
The fingers that were twined with Cas’s tightened precipitously. Cas returned the squeeze unhesitatingly in the seconds before the tongue licked a slow, wet strip from the base of Dean’s cock to the tip. He went from half hard to painfully erect in what had to be nanoseconds, biting into his lower lip nearly hard enough to draw blood to force himself to silence. The tongue jabbed into the slit at the head of his cock and one of Dean’s legs jerked a little, involuntarily, causing Sam to again glance at him before looking back to the screen. Damn. He’d need to exert better self-control if he didn’t want to end up with a situation on his hands (one that would be a much larger pain in the ass, and feel a lot worse, than the situation currently on his dick).

Ninety seconds of invisible blowjob later and Dean realized he didn’t have half a clue what was going on in the movie anymore, and didn’t give a damn, either.

Thirty seconds after that, one hand was clutching the chair arm so hard his fingers were numb, and the other was wringing the blood out of Castiel’s fingers as Dean fought to control himself lest he give them away. His breath came in short but silent pants, the muscles of his thighs trembling with tension. The invisible mouth that was currently deep-throating him knew exactly what it was doing. In another five seconds, Dean would’ve been painting the inside of his jeans—but it wasn’t to be. Just as he was about to drop off the cliff, the mouth was suddenly gone as if it had never been there, leaving Dean trying to even his breathing.

The jeans that had narrowly missed being decorated with the evidence of Castiel’s ministrations were uncomfortably compressing Dean’s cock, and he damn near made a fatal mistake. His left hand was twined with Cas’s, and he didn’t want to break the connection. His right hand was a spare few inches from his crotch when something in Cas’s breathing stopped him short, and he realized with seconds to spare what he had been about to do. Granted, his cock was covered by his jeans, but Dean was pretty sure Cas would consider that a technicality in assessing whether Dean had violated the whole right-hand-cock ban. Curling his fingers ineffectually into a fist, Dean returned his hand to the armrest. Cas’s head lifted from his shoulder and the lips again settled against his ear just long enough for a low, caressing murmur. “Good boy.”

Dean flushed with some mingling of humiliation and pride, but kept it all to himself, merely extricating his left hand briefly from Cas’s so he could adjust his jeans a little. Then he wrapped his arm back around Cas, re-entangled their fingers, and settled back in his seat.

Cas was kind enough to give him a good minute or two to get himself fully under control before it started again.

An hour later, Dean had been on the verge of orgasm another four times, brought to the brink by phantom hands, tongue, teeth, and even, the last time, the press of invisible fingers against his prostate (and come on now, that was just cheating). His henley was plastered to his chest with sweat and his chest hurt from how hard he’d had to focus not to make a single sound. Sam had glanced at him a couple more times when he’d shifted particularly sharply or failed to do a good enough job at stifling a gasp or grunt, but in general his focus had remained on the movie, and if Dean didn’t deserve a goddamn Academy Award for his performance (way more than any of those bastards in this movie) nobody did.

He had totally lost track of the movie’s plot ages ago. Pretty much the only thing he had registered in the past hour apart from his own body was that he was both attracted to and didn’t especially like Chris Hemsworth. He’d never have admitted it, but he didn’t approve of a guy who was both as beautiful as and more masculine than himself. That was just not cool.

Any thoughts of the leading man’s attractiveness were blown away on the wind scant seconds later as Cas started yet again. Dean almost groaned aloud, certain that he couldn’t handle being brought
to the edge one more time only to be delayed, but Cas had mercy upon him.

This time, it was all of the forces together. There were fingers driving into his ass, fucking against his prostate hard enough that he was astonished his body wasn’t actually rocking back and forth at the force of them. There was a mouth deep-throating him. There were fingers pinching and rolling his nipples back and forth. All of it, at once, and as Thor acknowledged to his father that he wasn’t yet ready to be king, Dean shot way past the edge Cas had been dragging him along and into the abyss. He would never know how he maintained silence, let alone stillness, given that the force of the orgasm that overtook him literally blinded him for a good few seconds. He couldn’t have said for certain, but he had suspicions that Cas might have actually bound him up entirely, preventing both movement and sound for the thirty seconds that Dean was completely lost in the peak. If so, Dean owed him bigtime.

By the time the closing credits started to roll, Dean had regained both vision and his breath, but discovered that his entire body was shaking almost imperceptibly, but no less violently for that. There were a few moments of silence, and then Cas’s voice broke into the credits, brightly.

“You were quite right, Dean. Once I let go of my original expectations, I greatly enjoyed the movie after all.”

Asshole.

Chapter End Notes

Chapter-specific tags: Again, y'all, I'm not even sure, aside from the obvious handprint!kink. Phantom blowjob/handjob/nipple play/anal play? Sort of secret exhibitionism? Don't even know. D/s sexy stuff, basically.

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Payback's a Bitch, and She's Wearing Silk

Chapter Summary

In which Dean realizes he's had the power inside himself all along (okay, okay, inside his underwear drawer), and can't resist using it to get revenge.

NOTE: This is actually half of what was supposed to be one chapter, but has turned into two, because (as so often happens) it got completely away from me. The next chapter/next half of this one should be up tomorrow, with any luck (but might not be).

This chapter is a gift for and is dedicated especially to the magnificent AtYourCervix

The second half of this chapter, which will be along shortly, is also a gift for and dedicated especially to the marvelous reluctant, in thanks for the squealing fangirl moment I had when I discovered that she actually read and liked my work.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Dean realized almost immediately that he had to get out of the room before someone turned the lights back on, or Sam would see the damning wet spot darkening his jeans (not to mention the sweat stains on his henley and, no doubt, the high flush in his cheeks) and connect the dots. The good news was, either Cas was well aware of what a disaster that would be to their endeavor to get Sam to respect boundaries, or he was simply driven to protect Dean from what would have been an intensely humiliating few moments. Whichever was true, as the credits continued to roll, the angel began laying out in excruciating detail the historical inaccuracies in the film.

Predictably, Sam was immediately enraptured and began asking pointed questions of Cas, who seemed more than happy to expound upon the topic indefinitely. This gave Dean the perfect opportunity to get the hell out of dodge and clean up. Sketching a quick nod of acknowledgment to Cas, who actually shot him the slightest hint of a wink, Dean pushed up out of his chair and took several steps toward the door, not speaking until his back was firmly to Sam. It wouldn’t do to draw his attention when he might still spot the aftereffects of climax staining Dean’s jeans, despite the relative darkness of the room. “Damn, I gotta piss. Might grab a shower, too. I think I’m starting to smell. I’ll make dinner when I get back.”

Sam barely glanced at him, chuckling, “You’re not fooling anyone, dude. You just want an excuse to escape any historical conversation that doesn’t relate directly to an active case.”

Dean snorted. He wanted an excuse to escape, yeah, but that was the sum total of what Sam had gotten right. To be fair, in any other circumstance, Sam likely would’ve been correct, he was just (thankfully) missing a big chunk of the relevant information this time around. “Trust me, escape or no, you should thank me for showering. More than happy to shove my armpit in your face if you doubt me. Care for a little eau de Dean,” he snickered.

“Gross, dude! I give, I give, go shower. Cas and I will pick out another movie for after dinner.”

“Nah, enough movies,” Dean told him hastily, not anxious to give Cas another golden opportunity to
start all over again—Dean didn’t think his heart or his cock could handle it. “Figure out something else to do. Maybe we can play cards or something. Or help you get the library back in order.” You had to know he was desperate when he made an offer like that.

Dean could hear the scowl in Sam’s voice. “No way in hell. The both of you are banned from touching any of the books for the next month. You obviously can’t be trusted with them, so hands off.”

Stifling a snicker, Dean glanced over his shoulder at Cas. The angel’s lips were pressed together, clearly suppressing a grin at the discovery that Dean had perfectly predicted the punishment Sam would mete out for the disarray in which they had left the library.

Just before he hit the hallway, Dean grinned over his shoulder at Sam. “Hey, you’re the boss. You wanna do it all yourself, have at it.”

Once in the hallway, Dean wasted no time in making a beeline for his room, where he peeled off his stiffening jeans with a grimace of distaste, dumping them in the hamper before the rest of his clothing followed. He hadn’t been kidding—he did need a shower, though not for any reason he was likely to share with Sam. Shrugging into his robe, Dean headed back down the hall and into the shower room.

~*~

Fifteen minutes later, feeling much renewed, Dean kicked the door to his room closed behind him and hung his robe back on its hook before padding to his dresser. He actually had his boxers pulled halfway up one leg before the idea hit and stopped him in his tracks.

A slow grin breaking across his face, Dean let the boxers drop back to the floor and stepped out of them, snagging them and refolding them before he returned them to their drawer. Then, grin widening irrepressibly, he plunged his arm into the same drawer and dug to the very bottom, fingers pushing past one pair of boxers after another. He let his sense of touch guide him to what he was looking for until finally, his fingertips slid against fabric that was both softer and finer than any he had touched so far. Jackpot.

Snagging the silky material, Dean withdrew his arm from the drawer and stood, gazing down at the trump card he’d had buried in the recesses of his underwear drawer for several months now.

Cas’s assault during the movie had been dirty pool. True enough, Dean had to hold himself accountable as well, since he had signed a blank check in exchange for the stellar blowjob and a much-needed orgasm. It was no shock, really, that Cas had milked every metaphorical penny (and every literal drop) out of both Dean and the deal. That did not, however, mean that Dean couldn’t want a little payback, and this? This was the best kind.

Cas wasn’t the only one who knew how to tease, and while he had certain capabilities that Dean definitely lacked, Dean had the advantage of knowing the angel and his turn-ons extraordinarily well. Given the fact that his legs had only just stopped trembling about five minutes ago from the aftermath of the edge play and the eventual mind-blowing orgasm, Dean was sure as hell not above exploiting every edge he had.

He’d discovered entirely by accident a few years back that he wasn’t the only one who enjoyed the sight and feel of himself in panties from time to time, when Cas came upon him modeling his well-loved pink lacy pair. That the angel likewise appreciated them hadn’t particularly surprised Dean. What had come as a surprise was the fact that, while Dean found them fun and erotic, Cas was damn near undone by them. They drove him so wild that no pair of panties Dean had bought himself had
yet survived more than 24 hours once the angel had gotten his hands on them (or, more accurately, on Dean in them). Eventually, they ended up torn to shreds, either by the hands or teeth of the entirely overcome angel. It became so ridiculous that the last time, four or five months ago, Dean had declared a moratorium on panties for the foreseeable future, insisting that he wasn’t going to buy things for them if Cas couldn’t control himself enough to refrain from destroying them almost instantly. Cas had sulked rather impressively, but eventually appeared to move on.

Dean, of course, had not actually had any intention of eliminating panties from their sex life, he’d just decided to take a break in order to make their impact even more striking the next time he brought them out. This particular pair had been sitting in the bottom of his underwear drawer for the last two months or so, waiting for their moment.

That moment, Dean was quite certain, was right now.

With some slight regret, Dean gazed down at them. He really liked this pair, and would be sad to see them destroyed, as they no doubt would be.

Shaking the wrinkles out of them, he held them up, reacquainting himself with them. They were a gorgeous, icy blue, the shade carefully and deliberately chosen out of hundreds of blues because they perfectly matched the intense blue of Cas’s eyes. Silky and trimmed in ivory lace, two tiny bows adorned the waistband. Their cut had been described by the shop that sold them as “cheeky,” with good reason. The bottom of said cheeks peeped out underneath the ivory lace trim when the panties were in place, a sight that Dean knew Cas would find irresistible.

Despite two powerful orgasms in the past three or four hours, Dean could feel himself start to stiffen a little at the sight of them and the feel of the cool silkiness against his fingers. Shaking them open, Dean stooped to step into them, pulling them up his legs and settling them into place, biting back a soft moan at the feeling of the thin silk hugging his ass and cock.

The plan took shape quite naturally, and Dean was pleased with himself for already laying the groundwork for it without even knowing he was doing so. He’d already promised Sam that they would spend the evening with him, had already said he would make dinner and then they could play cards or whatever Sam and Cas decided on. It would keep the two of them busy and engaged with Sam for at least the next several hours, effectively tying Cas’s hands so that he could not do anything about the panties for some time. He would simply have to stew in his own juices, getting progressively more turned on and squirmy as he thought about Dean in the panties and planned what he wanted to do about it.

The only thing Dean needed to do was ensure that Cas caught a quick glimpse of the panties peeking above his waistband in a moment when Sam wasn’t also looking, and vengeance was his.

And, just for a bonus, the sensual payback once Cas finally did get him alone would be delicious, whatever form it might take.

Crossing the room to his pajama drawer and shuddering just a little at the way the silk moved against him as he walked, Dean pulled out a pair of flannel pants and stepped into them. He topped them with an ancient plain black long-sleeved tee, so old and worn it was nearly as thin and at least as soft as the panties hiding beneath his pants. Then he padded back down the hall toward the library on bare feet.

He arrived in the midst of what sounded like a friendly argument.

“—you totally sure? I’m just saying, we haven’t had great luck with them—“ Sam was saying, a pained look on his face.
“This is hardly the same thing,” Cas protested, “you said yourself that this one is well-known and commonly played in households around the country.”

“Well, yeah, but appearances can be deceiving, especially around here. I just think it might be wiser to steer clear of them altogether,” Sam coaxed, uneasily.

“You were the one who told me to select an activity,” Cas said reproachfully, and that was when Dean spotted the object of debate. He had to stifle a snort of laughter, because, naturally, Cas had picked a board game. Granted, it wasn’t an ancient-looking, unnamed board game, it was “Sorry,” but still. That explained Sam’s evident concern.

Dean wasn’t particularly worried. He’d taken a look at the other board games in the aftermath of the Board Game From Hell, and they all appeared to be kosher. Nothing strange or dangerous, just the typical Hasbro or Milton-Bradley games. If Cas really wanted to play one, Dean was down, but he also couldn’t fault Sam for his reticence, all things considered.

“I see,” Dean interrupted, “that there seems to be some debate about our after dinner activity.”

“Dean!” Sam exclaimed in relief, clearly certain that Dean would put a stop to this, “Can you please tell Cas that there are lots of fun card games that he’ll enjoy that don’t carry the same…potential risks?”

“Oh, no,” Dean told him cheerfully, “I’m staying out of this one. I leave it to you two to sort out. I’m gonna go make dinner.”

Ignoring the groan of frustration from Sam, Dean strolled past the pair of them and into the kitchen, where he dug through the fridge and freezer before deciding on fairly straightforward baked chicken and mashed potatoes. He got to work on the prep, slicing the potatoes and setting them to boil while he preheated the oven and made the marinade for the chicken. He could dimly hear the sounds of Sam and Cas bickering floating in from the library, but it was no more than a pleasant, comforting background hum as he worked.

By the time the chicken was in the oven and the potatoes were ready for mashing, the noise from the library had smoothed out, suggesting that one of the other of them had won the debate and the evening’s activity had been settled upon. Dean made a bet with himself about which one would be sulking when he returned to the library, brother or boyfriend. Given that Cas seemed to be on a bit of a roll today, he hedged his bets and put his nonexistent money on the angel, figuring that Cas could’ve talked Sam in circles until the kid finally threw his hands in the air and surrendered. God knew, Cas had done the same to Dean more than once.

Just shy of thirty minutes later, the chicken was steaming, fresh out of the oven, the potatoes covered and ready to go. Grabbing two plates from the cupboard, Dean dished up generous amounts of everything on each before (with a deep sigh of mourning over the lack of beer) pouring them two glasses of ice water to accompany the meal. Then, biting back a grin, he called into the library.

“Hey, Cas! Come help me carry this stuff out, would you?”

As expected, the angel popped up scant seconds later. He was almost always happy to assist, unlike Sam, who did his share of grumbling. That, however, wasn’t what drove Dean’s choice to request Cas specifically this time around. Sam wouldn’t have whined at being asked to come grab his own dinner plate. No, Dean’s choice was quite deliberate and served a deeper purpose. Just before Cas appeared in the doorway, Dean adjusted the waistband of his flannel pants, tugging it down so it rode a scant centimeter below the ivory lace waistline that framed blue silk.

Dean motioned to the plate and glass that still rested on the counter, and Cas grabbed them. Dean
dropped a quick kiss on his cheek in thanks, then stepped past him, headed for the door to the library. He needed to time it perfectly—if he got it wrong, Cas would see it too soon and reel him back into the kitchen. Dean held his breath in anticipation, and he was not disappointed.

The timing was perfect. A bare half second before his foot hit the doorway that would take him back into the library, Dean heard the harshly indrawn breath from behind him that heralded the angel spotting what Dean had so carefully set up for him. Before he could do anything about it, though, Dean was past the threshold and it was too late. Cas was at his heels, close enough that Dean could practically feel his hot breath against the back of his neck, and could, in fact, hear the way his breathing was slightly too fast and shallow.

Just before Dean opened his mouth to offer consoling words to Sam (who was staring moodily at the “Sorry” box, indicating that Dean had been right and Cas had managed to win the after-dinner activity argument), the low, growled whisper broke against his ears. It sounded nearly agonized, as if Cas were in actual, physical pain from the effort of controlling himself. As if it were taking every ounce of inhuman self-control he possessed not to carelessly fling aside the plate of food, slam Dean against the wall, and get a good look at those panties he now knew were hiding beneath worn flannel.

“Dean…”

Dean absolutely could not restrain the grin that cracked his face wide open, and honestly probably wouldn’t have, even if he could. It was too satisfying to know that he had managed to turn the tables so neatly, leaving the angel hovering impotently (well—not in the traditional sense, of course), desperate to react but unable to do so without pulverizing their carefully delineated boundaries for Sam. True, that agonized hiss of his name had caused the tiniest of shudders to skate down Dean’s spine. The vivid mental image of being thrown against the wall by the angel, plates tumbling carelessly to the library floor as those strong hands jerked his pants down to gain access to the blue silk—well, it would’ve taken a stronger (or, at the least, a straighter) man than Dean to remain unaffected.

Nevertheless, he tossed that irrepressible grin over his shoulder at Cas, even topping it with a saucy wink, and thoroughly enjoyed the way the angel’s eyes flared wider and then narrowed dangerously. Those eyes promised all manner of things, as soon as Cas got him alone—particularly because, as the angel well knew, that moment would not arrive for some time now.

Returning his attention to the larger room and Sam, who had perked up as the savory smell of dinner wafted across the library toward him, Dean gave his brother an easy grin.

“I take it Captain Feathers over here won the debate?”

Sam grimaced at him. “I still don’t really know how he does it. One minute I’m completely secure in my argument and I know there’s no way I’m going to give in, and the next I’m agreeing that, absolutely, of course he has a point.”

Dean barked a laugh. “Story of my life, man. Forget the choir, you’re preaching to the altar boy.”

Come to think of it, that particular wording inspired a couple of extremely sacrilegious role play ideas, but Dean set them aside for later.

Cas, who ordinarily would’ve had some self-satisfied observations to offer, or at the least a smug look, appeared to have been entirely short-circuited by Dean’s little plan. Dean pushed ahead, aiming to avoid drawing attention to the angel and raising Sam’s suspicions.
“So, I tried something a little different this time around, since we’re running kinda low on a lot of the stuff I would normally use. We’re out of milk, so I made some substitutions with the mashed potatoes, and they’re killer. Might make ‘em this way from now on—you’ll tell me what you think. The chicken,” he added, setting the heaping plate he was carrying onto the table in front of Sam with a dramatic flourish, “I really had to improvise with for the marinade. I mixed up some olive oil and balsamic vinegar with a few spices and just a couple drops of truffle oil.”

Sam appeared interested, if a little surprised that Dean was actually laying out in detail what he’d done with dinner. He was generally more likely to plop a plate in front of Sam and say something like ‘stuff your face, bitch.’

While the detailed description of his food prep choices served as a distraction from Cas’s near-catatonia, they also satisfied Dean’s pride. He was incredibly pleased with himself for how well his experiments had turned out. Anybody could make basic meals—mashed potatoes and baked chicken with some Italian dressing? Easy. Figuring out how to make a reasonable facsimile without half the ingredients? Now that was a challenge worthy of a talented chef. The fact that he was pretty sure this meal was even better than what he would’ve produced if he had access to a fully stocked kitchen was just icing on the proverbial cake. The least Sam could do was listen to a little bit of bragging.

Dean had to give the kid credit, he was pretty much always appropriately grateful for Dean’s efforts in the kitchen, and even if he hadn’t said a word, his penchant for third and occasionally fourth helpings would’ve been compliment enough. As Sam grabbed his fork and dove in, Dean took the opportunity to do a lightning-fast waistband adjustment, ensuring that the ivory lace no longer peeked out above flannel. It wouldn’t do for Sam to spot the same thing that had driven Cas so wild, after all.

A couple seconds after he dropped into the chair opposite Sam, Cas set the plate he’d been carrying in front of Dean, following it up with the glass of ice water. Dean tipped his chin up with a smile of gratitude (quite sincere, even if there was a whole universe of food-unrelated meaning hovering just under its surface). The smile Cas granted him in response was no less fraught with subtext, which the angel demonstrated additionally by setting a hand on the back of Dean’s neck. At any other time, it could’ve simply been an absent, affectionate gesture, but not today. The hand squeezed lightly, no harder than if Cas had been giving Dean a shoulder and neck massage (he gave killer massages when the mood struck), then relinquished its hold with the light slide of a single finger down the line of Dean’s spine until it hit his shirt collar.

With considerable effort, Dean managed to entirely restrain the shiver that wanted to escape. He could feel the angel’s intently observant gaze on him, lighter but no less present and palpable than the touch of his hand. Thankfully, he had a ready-made and delicious distraction from the growing sexual tension heaped on a plate in front of him. Grabbing his fork, Dean had his first bite of chicken halfway to his mouth when Sam groaned in such deep appreciation it was nearly indecent. Dean snorted in amusement, grateful he hadn’t started eating yet, or he might’ve ended up with chicken in his sinus.

“Good to see you’re enjoying it, Sammy,” he told his brother with a grin, before taking the bite waiting on his fork and making a sound nearly as filthy as Sam’s. The chicken really was unbelievably good. Dean spotted Cas twitching faintly at the noise that had escaped him, and buried his grin in a massive bite of mashed potatoes.

For a long few moments there was relative silence, broken only by the sound of silverware scraping against plates and the occasional grunt of satisfaction. Finally, when their plates were nearly empty, both of them came up for air around the same time.
“Jesus, Dean,” Sam told him almost reverently, “this is incredible. You gotta tell me what you did with the mashed potatoes—they’re unreal.”

“Subbed out cream cheese and a little sour cream instead of milk,” Dean told him smugly. “I don’t think we’re ever going back to the old way.”

Sam nodded vigorously in agreement, shoveling a last spoonful of potatoes in and rolling his eyes upward in ecstasy. Through the mouthful, he suggested, “maybe next time, add a couple drops of truffle oil to the potatoes, too.”

Dean generally ignored Sam’s meal preparation suggestions, since ramen was about the extent of his cooking capabilities, but that particular idea stopped him with the last bite of chicken halfway to his mouth. He went ahead and took the bite, humming thoughtfully. “You know, that’s not a half bad idea, Sammy. We’ll try it next time.”

Now that he was nearly done with his first helping, Dean became aware that Cas still had not been seated and was instead standing just a couple feet away from Dean, eyeing him with intentness that would’ve been creepy, coming from just about anyone else. Slanting a gaze at the angel, Dean’s lips twitched. “Dude. You’re hovering. Why don’t you start setting up the board for the game down at the other end of the table?”

Sam, who was busy literally scraping the remaining mashed potato residue off his plate with the edge of his fork (Dean half wondered why he didn’t just go ahead and lick the plate), didn’t see the way Cas took half a step forward at Dean’s words. He stood for four or five seconds, looming over Dean, fingers curling and uncurling restlessly. Then, his hands clenched fully into fists, hard enough that his fingernails had to be digging tiny half-moons in his palms. Dean easily recognized the gesture as the only outward sign of a monumental feat of self-control. But for Cas’s totally unfair use of the handprint earlier, Dean would’ve had mercy on the angel (or at least, wouldn’t have deliberately made it worse). Now, however? He felt totally comfortable giving as good as he got. Letting his lids fall so that he was gazing at Cas through those thick lashes, Dean dug his teeth lightly into his lower lip. He dropped the hand that wasn’t still holding his fork into his lap (where Sam wouldn’t have been able to see it even if he hadn’t been totally absorbed in getting the last molecules of food off his plate) and traced one fingertip along his waistline.

The lightbulb in one of the lamps far down the long table shattered in a burst of sparks.

All three of them swiveled to face it, and Dean had to employ considerable effort to keep his gaze from landing accusatorily on Cas, lest Sam start to catch on. Dean couldn’t remember the last time Cas had lost control like that. He took a moment to recognize that, goddamn, was he ever in for it when Cas finally got him alone. Figuring it was too late to do any true additional damage, Dean schooled his voice to its most casual and spoke up.

“Damn, I’d been meaning to check out the wiring on that lamp. I saw it flickering the other day. I’ll take a look at it tomorrow before we put another bulb in there. Meantime, Cas, you mind sweeping it up so nobody ends up with glass in their foot?” Without waiting for a response from the angel, Dean turned to face Sam. “I’m gonna grab seconds, you want me to get you some, too?”

Unsurprisingly, Sam nodded enthusiastically and passed his plate over to Dean, who took a moment to be grateful that the cleaning supplies were kept in a small closet just down the hall from the library and not in the kitchen. Cas, who had apparently opted to keep his own counsel, headed for the hallway while Dean hurried into the kitchen. He dished out the seconds hastily, figuring he should make sure he got his ass back out into the library before Cas had a chance to make an excuse to Sam about some needed supply not being in the closet and corner him in here. He made it back to the library what seemed to be just in time, because Cas snapped his mouth shut with the hint of a scowl
when Dean appeared in the doorway. Sam’s attention immediately zeroed in on his refilled plate, which Dean plopped in front of him before setting his own plate on the table, dropping back into his seat, and grabbing his fork.

Cas swept up the broken glass in silence, dumping it into a trash can and then crossing to the opposite end of the table, where he started to set up the board game. He checked the rule book occasionally to verify his set-up was accurate, and Dean was merciful enough (or at least mindful enough of the remaining electronics) to leave him to it without any additional distractions.

The angel worked quietly, and by the time Dean and Sam had finished up their second helpings, the game board was good to go and Cas seemed to have gotten himself under greater control. At least, he was able to meet Dean’s eyes relatively blandly.

By the time he had methodically shoveled his way through three-quarters of the food on his plate, Dean was slowing down. Sam, who had finished his second helping in what had to be record time, was eyeing Dean’s plate with all the subtlety of a tiger hovering over a slab of raw meat. Shrugging mentally, Dean set his fork down and slid his plate across the table toward Sam, who lit up like a Christmas tree, and immediately set to making short work of what was left.

“You know,” Dean told Cas, watching Sam with fond amusement, “the bunker really could’ve done without the garbage disposal altogether.”

“Indeed,” Cas agreed mildly, watching Sam with his head tilted to one side, “it does seem somewhat redundant.”

Sam, whose mouth was packed with chicken, vented his feelings via several gestures in a row that used only his free hand and required little interpretation.

“Touchy, touchy,” Dean snickered, as Cas shook his head at Sam with that unique blend of avuncular indulgence and stern-teacher disappointment that always made Dean feel both turned on and horrified by his own arousal simultaneously.

Sam chose to ignore them while he finished mopping up Dean’s plate, and Dean had mercy and left him alone, crossing the room to the small bar and pouring himself three fingers of whiskey, then lifting the glass toward Sam, inquiring silently whether he wanted in. Sam nodded with a last mouthful of potatoes and Dean went ahead and poured him a glass, too, then quirked a brow at Cas, who shook his head.

“As it would take a great deal more alcohol than the bunker currently holds to actually inebriate me, and our supplies are limited, it would be churlish to consume any until we have freed ourselves and have the option of restocking,” the angel demurred.

Dean paused in mid-pour, set down the bottle, and crossed the several steps to plant a kiss on the angel’s slightly startled face. “That,” he told Cas, pausing to kiss him again, “is the sexiest, most selfless thing I have ever heard.” He concluded with a third kiss, then strolled back over to finish pouring, while Sam watched indulgently. Cas stood in pleased but puzzled silence for a moment, as if he wasn’t entirely sure what had just happened but was fairly certain it was a good thing. Then, with a slight shrug, he headed over to the other end of the long table where the board game was set up and sat down, turning his gaze expectantly to Sam and Dean.

Dean suspected that Cas’s eagerness had less to do with excitement over playing the actual game and more to do with the fact that the sooner they got started, the sooner they’d finish and he would have a chance to get Dean alone. Dean, who had learned his lesson with the bulb shattering and had no intention of instigating further than he already had, finished pouring Sam’s glass of whiskey and
trekked over to the table to pass it off to him. Sam nodded his thanks, setting his fork down on the plate with a decisive clink, suggesting that he was actually done this time.

Nevertheless, Dean double checked. “You good? Full? Don’t need one of us to go slaughter a bison for an after-dinner snack?”

Sam reiterated his earlier nonverbal gesture, earning a grin from Dean, who snagged both plates and forks from in front of him and headed for the kitchen, tossing over his shoulder, “10-4. No bison til later. Let me dump these in the kitchen and then we can start the game.”

Had he been thinking clearly, he would have sent Cas into the kitchen with the plates rather than going himself. Instead, ensconced in the pleasant semi-somnolence that came in the immediate aftermath of a good meal, he miscalculated and went himself.

It shouldn’t have surprised him, and in fact, after the initial shock of startlement it didn’t, when immediately after he set the plates and forks down in the sink, a rock-hard hand slammed into the middle of his back and forced him forward over the counter, pressing so hard that he was actually lifted onto his tiptoes. He barely had time to draw in a startled breath when the hand’s mate seized the waistband of his flannel pants and jerked, yanking them down to mid-thigh. The breathing behind him, which had been steady, if rapid, was suddenly a hell of a lot faster and less steady. Cas’s strained whisper said it all, even if he could only manage a single, practically pained-sounding word.

“Dean…”

The hand that had jerked his pants down settled, lightly, across the curve of one panty-clad ass cheek, fingers spreading to encompass more of the flesh before it squeezed once, hard. Dean, who was still reeling from the initial shock of assault, drew in a strangled breath, back arching so that his ass pressed into the firm grasp. Unable to resist, he did manage a strangled whisper in response. “Like them, baby? Bought ‘em special, just for you.”

Okay, so that was obvious, but it never hurt to say it. Cas groaned, a bone-deep sound that vibrated in his chest. “If you are trying to kill me, you are doing an excellent job,” he hissed, his hand releasing the cheek it clutched only to transfer to the other one and repeat the harsh squeeze.

Dean, who was unable to restrain himself from one slow writhe (there was something about being accosted like this, taken by surprise, shoved over the counter and pinned there—what self-respecting okay-fine-he’d-say-it submissive dude wouldn’t be undone?), fought hard to get some semblance of composure back and managed what he thought was impressively.

“Sam is going to start wondering what’s up any second now,” he told the angel. Cas snorted, an indication of just how little he cared, and buried his face against Dean’s ass, his nose slotting neatly between his cheeks, nudging at Dean’s balls through the silky softness before sliding upward. He shifted, just slightly, and bit down lightly on one of Dean’s cheeks.

Dean couldn’t quite bite back his whimper, and perhaps it was that sound that drove the feral tone in Cas’s voice when he spoke, words vibrating against Dean’s ass. “I,” Cas told him, “am going to take you apart the moment we are free of Sam, and with every second that passes, the less mercy I will show. Keep that in mind while you decide exactly how long to drag out this little game of yours.” Then, with a low sound that suggested it took incredible effort to tear himself away, Cas was gone, leaving Dean bent across the counter, gasping, his pants tangled around his thighs.

Chapter End Notes
Chapter specific tags: panty kink, teasing, D/s (do I even need to tag that at this point? Like, if you've been with us all along and you haven't figured that out yet, we might need to have a talk), semi-but-secret-exhibitionist-hints.

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Crime and Not-Quite-Punishment

Chapter Summary

In which Dean is not punished, but it feels a whole hell of a lot like those times when he was, and things take an unexpected turn. Again.

This chapter is the second half of a gift for and a dedication to AtYourCervix

It is also, and especially, a gift to and dedication for reluctant, whose buttons I greatly enjoy pushing (if only because they're the same as mine).

Please see the notes at the end for chapter-specific tags and warnings.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Dean wasn’t sure how long it took him to get it together enough to push himself upright and return his flannel pants back to their place. Even once he had them settled firmly around his waist, he could still feel the angel’s palm, tightly squeezing a handful of his ass through the panties.

He’d planned on just dropping the plates and heading back out to the library, but when it became clear that he would need a moment to compose himself (okay, mostly he needed a moment to let his rock hard erection calm itself some), he went ahead and washed the flatware, then grabbed the remaining unwashed pot and took care of that as well. By the time both plates, the pot, and the silverware were sitting in the dish drainer, Dean’s breath was coming calmly and evenly and his cock had reluctantly acknowledged that nothing especially exciting was going to happen just yet.

Adjusting his panties, then double checking the waistband of his flannels to make sure no ivory silk was peeping above it, Dean padded back out of the kitchen and into the library, where he found Cas and Sam seated around the game board and waiting for him. They seemed to be discussing the history of board games. Cas had apparently delighted Sam by providing him with conclusive information regarding the first use of a board game. If Dean was to understand correctly, with a single sentence, the angel had just blown away half a century of historian debate about the topic in question. It wasn’t the first time he’d been known to do so, either. Nothing could shut down a scholarly disagreement about prehistoric events quite like someone who’d actually been there to see them.

Recognizing that this could easily devolve into the kind of discussion that went on indefinitely and bored Dean to tears (and that the clock Cas had so compellingly referenced in the kitchen was continuing to tick), Dean hastily spoke up. “Okay, guys, we can either talk about the history of board games or we can play one, but if you’re gonna go with door number 1, my whiskey and I are gonna go hang out in the sauna.”

Sam looked like he might be just fine with that, which could’ve had something to do with the fact that he still seemed a touch nervous about playing a board game, even one as clearly mundane as ‘Sorry.’ Cas, however, was not about to let that happen—especially since getting in the sauna was something accomplished in the nude, and that meant Dean would be removing his panties first. Shooting Dean a silent dare in the form of a quirked brow (even if Dean wasn’t quite sure what he
was being dared to do), Cas made an ‘after you’ motion toward the game board. “Perhaps you will consent to begin, Dean?”

Dean, who always found that damn quirked brow sexy as hell, was glad that he was now seated where Sam couldn’t see his lap. His cock had decided to return to irrepressible mode, which was actually kind of impressive for a man of nearly 40 who’d come twice in the past five hours or so. He took a moment to silently congratulate Mr. Happy for its ageless fortitude before requesting that it chill out some. When that didn’t work, he mentally shrugged and grabbed a card, drawing a one and pumping his fist melodramatically as he set his first pawn on the board.

It was the same simple, straightforward game he remembered from childhood, even if he’d only played it a couple times, generally in classrooms or gyms, at recesses that were forced indoors due to weather. John Winchester hadn’t been the board games type of parent, not to mention that they hadn’t had space to store anything so frivolous, living out of the Impala as they did.

What had changed since childhood was that the game, which had seemed fun and exciting to an eight-year-old Dean, now seemed interminable and impossibly slow-moving. While that probably had something to do with what Dean knew was coming when they finally finished it, he was fairly confident that it was also just a game best left to young kids. The fact that Cas seemed totally enchanted by it did not actually do anything to disabuse Dean of this belief. After all, half the time Cas reminded Dean of nothing so much as an overgrown, perpetually excited and wonder-struck child, delighted by the silliest and most mundane of discoveries. Dean actually felt sort of bad the first time he drew a ‘Sorry’ and found it was most expedient to replace one of Cas’s pawns that was only a couple spaces from Dean’s ‘home.’ Grimacing a little in sympathy, Dean tapped Cas’s pawn with his own and offered him a regretful smile. “Sorry,” he said, not insincerely.

Cas leaned over a little further than necessary to grab his pawn and, turning his head, murmured nearly inaudibly against the side of Dean’s face, “not yet, but oh, you will be.”

Gooseflesh broke out over every inch of Dean’s skin and he had to work hard to hold back the bone-deep shudder that desperately wanted out.

Just like that, with a few murmured words in the kitchen and a few more whispered ones while Sam looked on, Cas had neatly reclaimed the upper hand. Had Dean been less turned on, he might’ve been inclined to pout about it. It was so rare that he actually got one up on Cas that he liked to savor the experience, but it never seemed to last long enough.

Resolving to put some serious thought into how he would next bring Cas to his proverbial knees, Dean schooled his face to neutrality and settled his pawn where Cas’s had been a moment before, then nodded to Sam to take his turn. For a moment he felt a little uneasy at the keenness of the hazel eyes that had apparently been fixed on him and Cas during their little exchange, and he took a second to wonder exactly how acutely Sam was paying attention to the two of them this evening. He was, after all, not only a hunter but one of the best ones Dean had ever seen, and that wasn’t bias speaking. You didn’t get to be that good without being damn observant, and Sam knew Dean and Cas as well as he knew anyone.

In the next second, Sam’s gaze shifted back to the game board. He drew a card and crowed in delight when the 10 turned out to be exactly what he needed to get one of his pieces to his ‘home’ space, and Dean dismissed his worries. He was just being paranoid. What could Sam have possibly seen, if he didn’t know what was going on behind the scenes?

The game progressed at what felt like a snail’s pace and by the time another 25 minutes had passed, even Cas (who probably could’ve happily played Go Fish for hours without being bored) was starting to look impatient. Apparently, the board game could only keep him so enthralled when he
knew what was waiting for him underneath Dean’s flannel pants.

If there had been any way to deliberately throw the game or even to cheat, just to make it end sooner, Dean would’ve been all over it, but it really wasn’t possible. Grumbling to himself and silently cursing the makers of the game to a sterile and sexless eternity playing their own sadistically interminable creation, Dean tried his best to keep his fidgeting to a minimum, just in case Sam actually was paying closer attention than he thought.

What should by all rights have been the last two or three minutes of the game (both Sam and Cas had three of their pawns ‘home’ and the fourth closely approaching it, while both of Dean’s remaining two pawns were less than ten spaces from his ‘home’) stretched on for ten and then fifteen. Dean took a moment to wonder whether the universe was actually deliberately fucking with him before he glimpsed a quick flash of infuriated frustration on Cas’s face and decided that if the universe was deliberately fucking with anyone, it was probably him. Sam, who Dean thought for a second might have been looking at Cas at the same moment, blandly looked back down to the game and grabbed a card, leaving Dean to conclude that his paranoia was once again getting out ahead of him.

When Sam started pumping his fist in the air triumphantly, Dean was sure for half a second that it had to be a trap, because he’d just about concluded that the game actually had been cursed and they would be stuck playing it until they died of old age. Then Sam turned over his card for the rest of them to see, and sure enough, it was a five. Snagging his final pawn between massive fingers, Sam dropped it neatly into his home space and grinned at the two of them in satisfaction.

Dean’s natural competitiveness would ordinarily have driven him to grumble or accuse Sam of making a crossroads deal to win—Sam had once observed that if he’d actually made every crossroads deal Dean accused him of making in order to win things (most notably, games of Rock, Paper, Scissors), he would’ve singlehandedly stocked hell with souls. In this particular case, he was so goddamn relieved the game was over that he’d have happily thrown confetti and given Sam a cupcake in congratulations, if he’d had either to hand. Cas, who seemed to be of one mind with Dean, was congratulating Sam on his win with evident sincerity, although his face dissolved into something that closely resembled horror when Sam spoke.

“So, according to the rules, you two should keep playing to see who comes in second.” If Dean hadn’t known better, he’d have sworn there was a hint of amusement in Sam’s eyes, but it was gone as soon as it appeared, and he dismissed it, shaking his head.

“Nah, that always seemed pointless to me. Second place is just the first loser, after all.” That was a thing John Winchester had said more than once, but in this case it seemed appropriate, and Sam appeared to buy it, shrugging and nodding. Cas, of course, was totally on board with calling it a day on the game.

Dean guessed it would be kind of rude and incredibly obvious to shoot out of his chair, grab Cas by the hand, and bodily drag him from the room, but the temptation was strong. Glancing sidelong at the angel, Dean discovered that he appeared to be undergoing a similar struggle to figure out the fastest way out of here. Sam, in the meanwhile, reassured Dean by proving to be totally oblivious.

“Wanna play again? Or I guess we could pick a different board game. This one was safe, after all.”

“Nah, I think we’re about ready to call it a night,” Dean told Sam, unsure of exactly what time it was but confident that it was probably much too early to reasonably be bedtime. Before Sam could remark on this, Dean pushed ahead, ruthlessly throwing Sam’s recent near-catatonia in his face to forestall objections. “We’ve been getting up at the ass-crack of dawn the last few days, trying to figure out a way out of the bunker so we could ‘save’ you.”
Sam looked slightly shamefaced and held back whatever comments he might otherwise have made about Dean’s choice to go to bed early, instead offering in a comforting tone, “well, you can sleep in as late as you want tomorrow, anyway.”

“Amen,” Dean said, heaving himself upright as Cas stood so quickly he practically knocked his chair over. Honestly, the guy had no chill.

Sam started packing up the board game, sketching them a quick wave, and Dean waved back before heading for the hallway.

He wasn’t especially surprised—had, in fact, intentionally braced himself a second before—when, the moment they went around the corner and hit the hallway, a hot hand wrapped bruisingly around one bicep. The angel wasted no time, hustling Dean down the hallway so quickly that he had to work to keep his feet under him. It came as no shock when Cas hurried right past Dean’s closed door and headed directly for the stairs leading down to the lower levels. They made it down two flights of stairs and over one hallway before either of them spoke, and then it was just Dean, testing the waters with a typical smartass comment.

“Boiler room again, babe? And here I thought we were trying to keep our sex life from going stale.”

Without missing a beat, Cas used the hand on Dean’s arm to swing him around, taking two quick steps forward. Half a second after he had spoken, Dean found his back plastered against the cold concrete wall with nearly six feet of solid muscle pinning him there. He blinked twice at Cas before the angel’s growl came, his nose no more than an inch and a half from Dean’s.

“I had no idea you were beginning to become bored with our sex life, Dean. I am more than happy to exercise my creativity to derive new and interesting activities with which to keep you occupied.”

It wasn’t the words themselves that sent a shudder of mingled interest and apprehension down his spine. No, it was the tone in which they were spoken and the look in those blue eyes that transformed what could have been a simple offer of mixing things up into a clear threat. Dean discovered that he had to swallow a couple times, throat audibly clicking, before he could manage a response.

“No, that’s—no, we’re good. I’m good. Definitely not bored,” he assured the angel, his voice just a hair unsteady.

Cas smiled slowly, showing all of his teeth, and Dean was reminded of nothing so much as a shark swimming head-on toward its unsuspecting dinner. “Oh, no,” the angel told him, the hint of cruelty in his voice damn near gleeful, “now that you have brought this concern to my attention, I am entirely determined to ensure that it does not become a larger issue. I will give serious thought over the next several days as to how I can manage to keep your interest.”

He would, too. That one quick throwaway quip would spawn God only knew what new torments and, not for the first time, Dean found himself wishing he had kept his smart mouth shut. Cas seemed to sense this, because his smile shifted a little, fading from glee into a knowing taunt. He took a step forward which placed him flush against Dean, who found that he’d plastered his own hands, palms down, against the wall without even being restrained. Once again he reminded himself that stillness had never yet saved him, despite how powerfully his instincts told him to freeze under the angel’s predatory gaze.

Suddenly, with no warning, they were again in motion, that vice-like grip still clamped around his upper arm. Still trying to get his metaphorical feet under him, Dean actually struggled to keep his literal feet on the floor, stumbling and practically going to one knee. Cas huffed out an impatient
breath and before Dean quite knew what had happened, the angel (despite being a good two inches shorter and no heavier than Dean) had easily swept Dean off the floor and dumped him over one broad shoulder. Dean blinked stupidly at the back a scant few inches in front of his nose, trying to figure out what the hell had just happened. The shoulder digging into his midsection confirmed that Cas had actually slung Dean over his shoulder like a sack of potatoes or, more accurately, the spoils of war.

On another day, Dean might’ve struggled, fought to get back down. The danger oozing out of the angel’s every pore stayed him this time, keeping him hanging limply as Cas strode down the hallway and took a left into another hallway, totally unfazed by the weight of the full-grown man on his back.

It wasn’t the most comfortable position, and thankfully he was not required to hold it for long. It couldn’t have been more than 45 seconds later that Cas paused and Dean heard the sound of a doorknob turning. A second later he caught a sidelong glimpse of a door he recognized—the boiler room after all, his instincts had been right—before he heard the decisive click of it closing behind them, followed by the snick of a lock being thrown. Cas was taking no chances that they would be interrupted this time, which Dean took a moment to be grateful for.

Dean found himself upended yet again, only this time he was being pulled off the shoulder over which he had so readily been thrown. With equal speed and carelessness, he found himself dumped into a heap on the floor, and had to restrain himself from shaking his head to dispel the dumbfounded shock at the rapid-fire events since their departure from the library what couldn’t possibly have been more than five minutes ago.

Cas loomed over him from above. His voice was too calm, damn near polite, and he was all the more dangerous for it. “Will you be removing your clothing voluntarily, or will I have to make you?”

Dean goggled up at him for a couple seconds, still trying to get his bearings, and discovered immediately that the angel had entirely used up his limited store of patience on the board game.

“Too late,” Cas told him, no less politely, and then Dean found himself jerked to his feet by that same hand on his bicep. A second later the angel was ruthlessly wrestling Dean’s long-sleeved tee over his head. He was too startled to resist, and probably wouldn’t have anyway. It seemed even more unwise than usual to test the angel, given how long he’d had to wait to get his hands on Dean. As he methodically but rapidly stripped Dean, he spoke up again, his voice conversational.

“It really is a lovely blue, you know, and I appreciate your diligence in so carefully matching the shade to my eyes. I know how partial you are to them, and I find it charming that you thought to pay them homage with your panties.” Dean was clearly not expected to respond, and had no idea what he would’ve said if he was. Half a second later he was upended again, one powerful arm wrapping around his waist and bending him across it, literally lifting him off the ground so that the other hand could set about stripping the flannel pants from him. “These days, however, I find myself more partial to purple.”

The flannel pants hit the floor, but rather than setting Dean back on his feet, Cas took a step forward and braced one of his feet a foot or so off the floor, against some machinery whose use Dean couldn’t begin to fathom. The arm around his waist let the raised thigh in front of him take the bulk of his weight, leaving him bent double over Cas’s knee while the angel still stood upright, one foot planted high enough to provide him a surface on which to pin Dean.

Dean still hadn’t caught his breath and was now not certain that he ever would, particularly when the angel’s rock-hard hand dropped a flurry of ringing slaps upon Dean’s upturned backside. It was predictable, yes, but still left Dean gasping and biting back a startled whimper. The angel’s hand
paused, squeezing one of Dean’s cheeks appreciatively before he spoke again. “Color is a funny thing, is it not?” Wait, what? What the hell was he on about? “How they combine. How they mingle.” Was he seriously waxing poetic about color palettes? Now? Dean might actually punch him. “Combine blue and yellow and, as if by magic, green appears. Red and yellow? Orange. And,” Cas paused for a split second, as if to deliberately let Dean’s mind catch up. It did, in a rush, and Dean understood exactly why the tangent, and where Cas was going with it. His ass cheeks clenched involuntarily and Cas tapped them with a single finger, a clear wordless admonition to stop that. “Blue and red…make a lovely purple. How convenient, that you should buy such pretty blue panties, and provide me with this golden opportunity to see exactly how red your ass needs to be before they begin to take on a purple tint. It was really quite thoughtful of you.”

Just like that, Cas let Dean slide down off his knee, back on his own two feet which were still willing to hold him, albeit perhaps not for much longer.

The straight-backed chair from their last rendezvous still dominated the room, waiting innocently for them. Even the tie was still draped across its back, and Dean took a second to wonder whether the angel had left them both here deliberately, suspecting that he would have reason to want them again prior to the snow melting. Whether deliberate or serendipity, Cas wasted no time in stepping forward to the chair in question and turning to set himself deliberately into it. Then his eyes settled unerringly on Dean and he lifted one brow in clear if wordless question. Would Dean come under his own steam, or would Cas have to force him? The threat of reprisal, if Dean made Cas come to him, hardly needed to be said.

Deciding that, given how much he was clearly already in for it (the slight tingle in his butt from the quick preview Cas had given him was fairly motivating), he shouldn’t invite extra trouble where he already had plenty, Dean trod forward until he once again stood in that familiar spot, just to Cas’s right, staring down at the lap over which he would presently be upended.

Once he got there, Cas gave him the courtesy of a few seconds to get himself together, and Dean knew better than to keep him waiting longer than that. Gritting his teeth a little at the sharp spike of humiliation that squirmed in his belly at having to place himself in such a juvenile position, Dean bent forward until he could stretch himself across Cas’s knees. The angel shifted a little, adjusting his legs until Dean’s torso was bent across one knee, Dean’s legs stretched between Cas’s thighs. A moment later, the reason for this became clear, as Cas neatly pinned Dean’s thighs between his legs, effectively immobilizing him without wasting the use of a hand. Dean was again, for what had to be the tenth time in as many minutes, trying to catch his breath when the angel began to speak.

“You,” Cas told him, his hand petting the silk-covered curve of Dean’s ass, “have been a very naughty boy. Putting these panties on. Making sure I saw them, when I could not do anything about it. Teasing me. Taunting, even,” his hand slide downward, fingers grazing Dean’s sac through the soft silk, then sliding back up, “knowing it would make me absolutely crazy, knowing I would be beside myself, that it would be agony for me to restrain myself,” a single finger traced his ass crack, pausing at his anus and pressing against it lightly before moving on, “Agony, to refrain from throwing you to the floor, pressing you against the wall, bending you over the table, stripping off that flannel, and taking full advantage of your lovely gift. And they are a gift, Dean, aren’t they?”

As he spoke, his finger had reached the top of Dean’s crack and withdrawn, replaced by the flat of his palm, once again stroking Dean’s ass through the thin silk. The angel did not wait for a response to his question (which Dean had already answered in the kitchen, anyway) before going on. “Of course, they are. Silk panties, the precise color of my own eyes, trimmed in lace. They were intended as a gift for me, and instead, in a moment of juvenile pique, you turned them into a weapon.”
Well, shit. He was right about literally all of it. Yes, the panties had been intended as a gift for Cas, something to surprise him with when he was particularly sad or overwhelmed. And yes, Dean had indeed chosen to use them as payback while he was feeling resentful of Cas’s little handprint game. And now the angel actually had Dean feeling a little guilty, damn him, which was completely absurd, since Cas was still getting to enjoy the panties every bit as much as—hell, quite possibly more than—he would have otherwise. After all, he now had an excuse to punish Dean, and they both knew how much he relished those. As if he was hearing Dean’s thoughts (and, while that was not unheard of, Dean had no reason to think it was happening now), Cas latched onto a similar train of thought.

“Such a naughty thing to do, turning something so well-intended into something…malicious,” Cas’s tone of voice told Dean that he did not actually think there had been any true malice in Dean’s actions, and was merely employing a bit of hyperbole, “I ought to punish you for it. In fact, I could easily tell you that’s what this is. That your ass is upturned across my knee because you were naughty, and naughty boys get spankings…but that would be lying.”

Wait, what? Now Dean was thoroughly confused. He craned his neck, turning his head over his shoulder and opening his mouth to speak up, but the hand not rubbing his ass immediately settled on the top of his head and swiveled it back around, until it faced front once more. Dean, recognizing what was good for him, snapped his mouth shut and just listened as Cas went on. “I could tell you this was a punishment, and you would believe me. You would accept that. In truth, however? This is not a punishment. You were owed one already, for your little rebellion in the form of ‘junkless Ken doll’ and ‘coward’ accusations, and I have not forgotten it. You are owed another, now.”

Okay, Dean was definitely still missing something here. His ass was upturned over the angel’s knee, and all signs pointed enthusiastically toward ‘spanking.’ Cas had been known to make up the most bizarre infractions imaginable just to have an excuse to spank Dean’s ass raw, and now he admittedly had two actual, legitimate grievances he could point to—so what exactly was going on?

Cas was more than happy to answer Dean’s unspoken question.

“Yes, Dean, you are owed discipline, and make no mistake, you will receive it—but this is not that. This is simply because it pleases me.” The hand drew back and, before Dean had a chance to catch in a breath and brace himself, fell sharply once across the underside of each cheek. Then, immediately, it returned to its previous motions, petting the still pale globes beneath the thin covering. “This is because I love the sight of your ass upturned across my knee. Because I cannot resist the way you look with panties tangled around your thighs, your reddening cheeks trembling as they await my next blows. Because I am addicted to your whimpers, and the way you squirm under my hand and kick your legs as it begins to become too much. Because I crave the moment in which you start to press your ass back to welcome my hand as it falls. Because nothing gives me greater pleasure than watching my cock disappear between your bright red, steaming, exquisitely sensitive cheeks. This, Dean,” Cas told him, voice somehow both worshipful and utterly dominating, “is because I want it, but perhaps most of all, this is because you love it when I take what I want.”

Jesus tap-dancing Christ. Cas had opted to completely dispense with even the pretense of punishment and aim directly at the crux of what they did, and why—and it might’ve been the sexiest thing Dean had ever heard in his life. The recitation, the laying out in exquisite detail, the crystal clear picture Cas painted with his words as his hand rubbed circles over Dean’s panty-clad ass. Dean could very nearly have come right then and there—had, in fact, to take a few deep breaths to calm himself, particularly when the angel went on.

“Let’s see how long it takes to get that ass red enough that those panties start to look purple, shall we?”

Cas did not wait for a response. He needed no go-ahead from Dean. He was perfectly aware that
one of Dean’s favorite things was being pinned over his lap while the angel diligently, patiently, methodically rained smack after smack across every inch of his backside. Even had he not known, no doubt Cas could feel the rock hardness of Dean’s cock, throbbing and twitching against his thigh in homage to that impossibly sexy monologue and in anticipation of what was coming next.

Dean didn’t have long to wait. Having clearly laid out his intentions, Cas wasted no time in getting started. The hand that had so gently, so tenderly rubbed the flesh laid out before it pulled back. Dean drew in a hasty breath in a valiant but futile attempt to steel himself. All he succeeded in doing was noisily expelling the gasp when the first set of spanks rained down from above. Their normally sharp cracks were somewhat dulled by the paper-thin barrier of the panties between his ass and Cas’s rock hard palm. Dean was well aware that the panties would only be allowed to stay up for so long before, true to his word, Cas drew them down to tangle around Dean’s thighs, framing his reddening ass. For now, though, they stayed put, a mockery of protection against the swats that began to rain down, each one leaving a searing handprint, perfect—if temporary—reflections of the one branded permanently into Dean’s shoulder. Cas paused for a moment to rub circles, and though he began to speak in the quiet, when the rhythmic, steady smacks started up again, he lifted his voice to be heard over them.

“This is not a result of any wrongdoing or failing. This is not born of any disappointment or irritation you have caused me. There is no apology you can deliver, no assurance of penitence or lessons learned that you can provide to make me stop. There will be no moment in which I must finish because you have been sufficiently chastised.”

Dean was pretty sure he knew where this was going, and sort of thought if he was right, he might just shoot his load right there, spilling inside his pretty blue panties in the first few seconds of a spanking that could go on…well, really, that was Cas’s point, wasn’t it? When he continued speaking, Dean had to bite down hard on the inside of his cheek, a pain that did not titillate, in order to yank himself back off the precipice. He could’ve come right then, yes, but he didn’t want to. It was too soon.

“No, I will not stop when you have learned some arbitrary lesson, Dean. I will not stop when you are appropriately apologetic, or when your pleas have become acceptably regretful, or when I judge your tears are sincere. I will not stop when you beg me. I will not even stop when you beg me to fuck you. None of those things will move me to mercy. You might as well not even bother with any of them, although I know you will attempt them all. You will whimper, and you will plead, and you will beg, and you will apologize, and you will weep, and I will love all of it, but I will not stop. I will not stop until I quite simply cannot bear the thought of waiting another second to be inside you. I will not stop until I judge that you will whimper in an agony of throbbing, pained pleasure every time my hips collide with your ass, every time my cock surges into you.”

Dean knew he wasn’t supposed to, but he couldn’t stop himself, interrupted, spoke up, gasping in between the swats which he knew were only just the beginning. “If you don’t stop talking, I’m going to shoot my load on your lap before you’ve barely gotten started, man.”

Cas’s hand paused for a second, then fell with incredible rapidity and force at the apex of ass and thighs, alternating between sides for what had to be a good twenty smacks. Dean was gasping and releasing little grunts before the angel returned to his previous M.O., raining leisurely smacks of medium intensity across the meatiest parts of Dean’s ass. He knew better, but Dean couldn’t resist opening his mouth to let a cheeky observation leak out. His voice was shaky and breathless, but he managed his signature cocky teasing tone well, he thought.

“What was that about this not being a punishment?”
Cas, unperturbed by the question, chuckled, drawing his hand back and pausing ominously. Dean held his breath and realized, when Cas chuckled again, that his entire body was cringing in anticipation of what might come next. Gritting his teeth, Dean deliberately relaxed his body, and when Cas’s hand returned to his ass, it was to once again rub circles across its flesh.

“The overarching spanking is not, but that does not mean that I do not expect you to hold to certain standards of etiquette. Interrupting is, of course, rude, and you do know how I feel about rudeness,” he told Dean easily, then went on. “I do this because it pleases me. That does not mean you have no control over exactly how easy or hard it is.”

“I’m pretty sure that’s bullshit. Sir.” Dean added the honorific, in the hopes that it would make up for the fact that his words were rude. He probably needn’t have done so. Cas laughed so heartily that he actually paused even his rubbing while he shook with amusement at Dean’s words.

“You may be right, Dean,” Cas admitted, and this time, when he drew his hand back, it was to take up the spanking once again. The only thing he varied was the location of each spank. The force and rhythm were so perfectly uniform that a mere human could not possibly have maintained them. “While I might choose to…advance you some of what you already have coming, if you will, in payment for being particularly cheeky or rude, I have every intention of making your ass hotter and more tender than the finest filet mignon before I am finished with it. And nothing you say, or fail to say, will change that.”

Dean just barely heard his own low whimper at the angel’s words and felt his already tingling ass cheeks flex as he clenched them involuntarily. Cas was right—Dean was totally undone by the idea that the angel was doing this not because Dean had earned it from some misstep, but simply because it gave Cas pleasure to have him bare-assed and helpless, whimpering and squirming over his knee. Dean wanted this spanking because it was one of his turn-ons, yes, but even more than that, the idea that Cas wanted this and had every intention of ruthlessly taking it—well, that just destroyed Dean. And Cas knew it. He saw easily to the heart of Dean, as he always had.

Unsurprisingly, the angel was true to his word. The smacks fell relentlessly, their pace and force steady and merciless. Before too long, Dean found himself starting to squirm restlessly at the sting the angel’s palm was imparting. Cas was unmoved, aside from commenting with great relish about how pretty Dean’s ass looked as it wiggled in those panties.

Several minutes later—though whether it was two or ten, Dean could not have said—he found that small sounds were escaping him at the fall of each smack. He made a wordless sound of protest when the fingertips of each hand slid into the waistband of his panties. It came as no surprise when Cas ignored the sound of negation, and the slowness with which he drew the panties down over the curve of Dean’s ass was just cruel. Satisfaction just radiated from him as he leaned over Dean’s ass, bending so close to it that Dean could actually feel the hot breath against his overly warm cheeks. Cas’s nose nudged at his left cheek before his teeth again closed, lightly and then just for a second, agonizingly hard on the curve of his right. Dean let go a wordless cry at the harsh bite, ass trying futilely to cringe away from it. It was unnecessary, in any case, because the teeth were removed as quickly as they had come. Cas gave him no time to recover before he resumed the spanking, the sound of his hand falling both crisper and louder without the thin barrier of the panties to dull it.

The sting was more intense, too, and Dean was astonished, as he always was, to discover that even such a thin barrier served as protection. He never quite realized how much until that protection was gone, bare ass being roasted under the angel’s diligent hand. He didn’t know how much later, but he found himself writhing and realized that at some point he had begun to make reckless promises of good behavior. They drew no more than a pleased chuckle from Cas, who did not pause for a second in his assault.
It was not long until the promises devolved into generic pleas for mercy, and perhaps two minutes after that, Dean could feel real tears standing out in his eyes. His legs had started valiantly attempting to kick at some point, their movement hindered by Cas’s restraining leg, which he had no doubt placed there for this exact purpose.

It went on and on, far outstripping the last spanking the angel had delivered in this room, until Dean’s ass felt five times its usual size, the sting all-consuming. At some point, he tried to flail a hand back to cover his ass. It barely got halfway there before Cas’s free hand seized the wrist and pinned it easily to the small of his back, holding Dean even more immobile as the spanks fell only more rapidly. He was flinching and whimpering shamelessly at each fall of the angel’s palm, even his pleas dwindling into nothingness as it became clear that they had no impact, that they did not even begin to move Cas to mercy.

After what must have been years or maybe decades, Dean realized suddenly that the smacks were no longer falling. As he managed to pause his whimpers, Cas’s palm again came down, this time very softly—but no less agonizingly, against the impossibly tender flesh. His voice, when it rained down upon Dean, radiated pleasure and self-satisfaction. “You see, my beautiful boy? Did I not tell you? Did I not promise that you would apologize? That you would plead, and whimper, and kick, and beg, and squirm? Did I not promise that you would not move me to mercy?” He was silent for a moment, but he couldn’t possibly have been waiting for a response from Dean, had to know that he was well beyond speech. He must have, because he went on. “I am a man of my word, Dean.” Dean barely dared to hope it was over, and it was a good thing, because what meager hope he’d managed to amass was dashed in a few deliberately spoken words. “You’re hoping desperately that I am satisfied, I know, but I am not. Not quite yet. Almost, but not quite.”

And with that, the relentless hand lifted and again came down, painting every inch of Dean’s ass yet one more time before it dipped lower, to deliver a particularly harsh series of smacks to the incredibly tender, already swollen and reddened flesh of Dean’s inner thighs.

That did it. The tears that had been leaking steadily broke forth in a choked sob, and Cas made a low sound of dark enjoyment, as if that broken noise fed his very soul—or would have, if he’d had one. Still, he did not relent, his hand falling another five or ten times before it stilled. A second later, a line of agony traced down the center of one cheek, making Dean’s body convulse in a fruitless effort to throw off whatever was causing it. It took Dean a few breaths to realize that it had been a single fingernail, digging lightly into his flesh as if to test its tenderness. Cas must have been satisfied with the reaction he earned because Dean could feel him sit back against the chair with a sense of finality.

“I should refrain from punishing you more often,” Cas complimented himself with quiet enjoyment, “it is so freeing to be unbound by any need to draw the appropriate remorse from you. I can simply carry on until your ass is begging so desperately to be fucked that I cannot resist its siren’s song.”

That, Dean was quite sure, was not fair. His ass hadn’t been begging for anything other than a respite by this point, but he was well beyond argument, beyond anything but lying limp and shuddering over the angel’s knee. Cas did not appear to expect any more from him, thankfully, and even when he lifted Dean from his lap, he kept one arm anchored firmly around his waist as if he doubted Dean would be able to support himself. Dean couldn’t have said whether he would’ve been able to, and thankfully didn’t have to find out. A second later, the angel was half-dragging, half-carrying Dean over to where his clothing had been discarded carelessly on the floor. Seizing his long-sleeved shirt, Cas spread it on the floor with relative carelessness, then placed a hand on Dean’s neck and forced him to his hands and knees. Dean, still shuddering from the force of mostly silent sobs, still totally bound up in the painful beat of his heart in his ass, somehow managed to hold himself up.
He barely heard the rustling of clothing or the click of a bottle cap behind him, but he definitely took note when two slick fingers parted his swollen cheeks and drove unerringly into him to the hilt. A wordless cry escaped him and, without quite intending it, he tried to jerk forward and away from the pressure against his cheeks. The penetration itself registered only as a dim second. Cas, of course, did not let him loose, wrapping a strong arm around his waist and jerking him backward into the fingers. His voice was as relentless as the driving fingers, which pulled back only to press forward again.

“If you do not appreciate my generous attempt to prep you after so many days without my cock in your ass, I am more than happy to dispense with it.” Dean couldn’t find the words to tell him that no, he wasn’t ungrateful, it was just unbearable, and it didn’t seem to matter anyway, since the fingers remained, scissoring until they were impatiently joined by a third.

The burn of the penetration was noticeable, even against the screaming sting of his ass cheeks, another reminder of how long it had been. Dean tried his best to keep from struggling, managed to hold himself back until the three fingers had been scissoring and stretching him for a good minute or two. Then a particularly vicious twist hit upon an especially sensitive spot that must have received more than its fair share of swats, and Dean again threw himself forward. This time, Cas must not have been paying as close attention, because Dean actually managed to slip free. He didn’t get far, of course, only tumbling to his stomach, which ripped the fingers out of him and drew a wordless cry from him. He had no time to attempt a true escape before the angel was on him again, jerking him back up to his knees, this time keeping him there without the physical touch, relying entirely on his grace. One of these days Dean would call him on that—for some reason, it felt like cheating, while the superhuman strength Cas could just as easily use against him did not.

“Very well, Dean,” the angel told him with a tone of voice that sounded indulgent, damn him to Crowley’s most annoyingly bureaucratic hell, “if you insist, I am more than happy to move on to the main event.”

The unseen force pinned him in place only long enough for Cas to busy himself behind Dean, the soft sounds of rustling fabric and lube being slicked over flesh making it clear, if his words had not already done so, why he was too busy to hold Dean physically.

A second later, that force was gone, replaced by Cas’s hands clamping around his waist. Dean made a low keening sound in anticipation of pain, and he was not disappointed. Cas did not take his time, hips jerking forward to bury himself unerringly to the hilt. Dean could not have said whether the burn was more acute inside or out, from the stretch of that cock or the firm pressure of those hips on his soundly spanked ass. Either way, the sensation was all-encompassing, and the only thing that threatened to eclipse the pain was the shuddering pleasure that was its mate.

Dean’s cock had maybe never been harder, leaking precome copiously on his poor shirt, whose thin layers barely protected his knees as Cas drew back and started to fuck him in earnest. The angel did not take into account the spanking and have mercy, driving into him every bit as forcefully as if Dean’s ass had been a pristine lily white.

Honestly, Dean was astonished he’d lasted this long, and it didn’t especially surprise him when his cock was totally unable to restrain itself any longer. Cas’s cock had made contact with his exquisitely sensitive ass no more than eight or ten times before a wail tore itself from Dean and his cock was pulsing, spilling itself in spurts across both his stomach and his poor, abused shirt.

Cas was not far behind him, and that, too, did not surprise Dean. Indeed, he was grateful, because if the angel had gone on too long after Dean’s orgasm, the press of hips against steaming ass-cheeks would have likely lost the sharp bite of pleasure that offset the pain.
No, Dean was not surprised by the jerk of Cas’s cock, deep in his ass, nor the flood of wetness and warmth within.

What did surprise him was the moment in which his eyes fluttered open and lit upon another pair of eyes, a familiar hazel, peering intently at him from the shadows behind the hot water heater.

Cas had just allowed his softening cock to slide out of Dean, which was just as well, because Dean jumped so sharply he might have done real damage to Cas. His shout of surprise clued the angel in that something was distinctly off. Cas startled, too, stepping half around Dean to set a hand on his back before glancing at his face and then following his gaze.

Dean, who was literally swaying on all fours, limbs on the verge of giving out on him, felt quite certain that he must have passed out and be having the most bizarre dream ever. There was simply no way in hell that Sam’s eyes were actually watching him with clinical interest, tucked into the pool of darkness behind the massive, 300-gallon tank.

This happy fantasy was crushed in the next moment when Cas’s voice, numb with shock, broke the room’s sudden silence.

“How,” the angel demanded, “in the hell,” Dean registered shock—this was not a term that Cas used often or, come to think of it, ever, “did you get in here, past a locked door?”

Dean was a little surprised to hear his own voice, barely a croak, follow rapidly upon the heels of Cas’s. “More importantly, why are you here?”

Sam, whose face showed him to be completely unashamed—not to mention entirely unbothered by the incredibly kinky scene he had just borne secret witness to, stepped out of the shadows that had cradled him and smiled kindly at the pair of them.

“You guys,” he told them with generous patience, “I think we need to talk.”

Chapter End Notes

Chapter-specific tags: non-punishment consensual spanking, manhandling, D/s, and (God help us all, especially Sam, when Cas is through with him), entirely non-consensual exhibitionism (or would it be the voyeurism that's non-consensual? I never quite know which way that goes.)

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Group Therapy

Chapter Summary

In which Sam finally reveals what's behind his new voyeuristic tendencies, and it's not so bad...it's even worse.

A single, fairly minor chapter-specific warning can be found at the end of the chapter.

NOTE: This chapter comes late (I'm sorry about that) because yesterday I was busy obsessively writing a piece whose concept wouldn't leave me alone. It is NOT like anything I have written before. If you want to read something a hell of a lot darker than Snowbound, Half The Naked Distance is your jam. Read the tags and heed the warnings.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

 Silence spun out interminably in the aftermath of Sam’s declaration. Dean didn’t have much mental space to spare for the fact that Sam sounded for all the world as if he was somehow the one holding the moral high ground here. He managed only to register that his brother’s tone was weird as fuck before he had to return all of his focus to the monumental task of preventing his limbs from giving out on him entirely. It was bad enough to be crouched on all fours, come leaking out of his bright red, well-fucked ass as his brother gazed indulgently down upon him. Crumbling to his belly on the floor would destroy the few pathetic shards of dignity he was desperately clinging to.

In ordinary circumstances, by now Cas would have carefully gathered Dean into his arms and be murmuring an endless stream of praise and adoration. This happened so naturally and as such a matter of course that Dean had not truly realized how critical those moments were to the bone-deep satisfaction and sense of well-being he was generally left with following a really good scene. True, it could not have been more than a minute since Cas’s cock had slid out of his still-convulsing ass, but even those sparse seconds felt like a very long time when Dean was stark naked (but for the tangle of panties holding his thighs together) and shuddering on hands and knees, unbolstered by so much as the touch of a fingertip from Cas.

Speaking of the angel, he still stood barely a foot to Dean’s right, blue eyes enormous, face etched with at least a thousand unspoken questions (Dean was pretty sure they were the same thousand that would’ve been uppermost in his mind had he not been fighting so hard to maintain at least a façade of composure). Dean’s gaze swung from Cas to Sam, who continued to watch the two of them with the kind of professional, impersonal regret of someone who has been forced to deliver a telegram with bad news in it to perfect strangers. He appeared to be patiently awaiting their response to his announcement regarding the need for A Talk. For long moments none came, as Cas tried to figure out what the hell was going on and Dean tried to determine whether his best bet was to shamelessly pull his panties back up, hope that he had both the balance and the strength to actually stand up, and try to hunt down his flannel pants (he could see that his shirt was an entirely lost cause, dappled liberally with spots of precome and streaked with his own spunk), or just sort of stay where he was and hope that a particularly strong solar flare would choose this particular moment to make an appearance and incinerate him on the spot. Actually, Dean decided, he would also settle for Sam
being incinerated. Either way, he deferred to his grave doubts about the stability of his own legs and stayed put.

Thankfully, Cas seemed to be getting himself under control with somewhat greater speed than Dean was. The angel also had the advantage of still being almost completely dressed. He had removed neither his shirt nor his pants, although the latter had been unfastened and hung low around his hips, his softened cock bobbing absurdly overtop of them. Cas appeared to realize this in the moment after Dean did, because he reached down and made short work of tucking himself away and refastening his pants, leaving himself on much more even footing with Sam. There was something about being naked while someone else was fully clothed that ratcheted one’s sense of vulnerability up past a ten. This, Dean knew, was why Cas enjoyed doing it so much—stripping Dean bare and then spanking him or fucking him (or, more likely, both) while he remained fully clothed. It was a clear, outward representation of the power imbalance, and between he and Cas, it was sexy as hell.

Not so much with Sam. Cas and Cas, Jr. now both set to rights, the angel finally offered a verbal response to the kid, breaking the room’s silence for the first time in long moments.

“Yes,” he said with deliberate precision, “we certainly do. I was under the impression that we had already had a talk, but evidently another one is in order.” He opened his mouth again, clearly to go on, but he must have caught sight of a particularly alarming sway of Dean’s from the corner of his eye, because suddenly his full gaze, crystal blue and intent, was fixed upon Dean. A spare second later the angel was kneeling by his side, the hands that had so mercilessly ignited and maintained the inferno still burning in Dean’s ass cheeks now impossibly gentle when they grasped his shoulders. The hands gave him permission to let his arms release the burden of his weight (which they had barely been hanging onto in the first place) and guided him carefully upright. In the next instant, Cas’s hands had released Dean’s shoulders, but he didn’t have time to feel bereft before the angel’s arms were twining warmly around him. Cas drew Dean into his chest, then shifted until he was seated cross-legged on the floor and could gather Dean into his lap. The angel cradled him like a baby, carefully placing him just so, such that no pressure was placed on his miserably throbbing ass.

Dean took a moment to be endlessly, pathetically grateful that no matter what other fuckery was happening (unless it was literally life-threatening), in these moments his comfort and security were still and always the angel’s first priority. Cas appeared to completely ignore Sam, and Dean registered dimly out of the corner of his eye that his brother was not only still watching them, he was nodding in what appeared to be approval as he witnessed Cas minister to Dean. The angel’s attention remained intent upon him alone until both of them felt Dean’s breathing start to stabilize and his shuddering ease off just a little. Then, it seemed, Cas felt comfortable focusing at least some of his attention back on Sam.

Cas picked up again where he’d left off, as if he hadn’t suddenly stopped speaking in order to tend to a reeling Dean. “I am sure we all agree that this particular discussion cannot afford to wait much longer,” he told Sam grimly, and even Dean managed a heavy nod at this, because post-scene endorphin haze or not, he was damn sure he had no plans of ever following up another orgasm with the sight of his brother’s avid gaze. Sam appeared to also be in agreement, and Dean was pretty sure he even opened his mouth to respond, but Cas was too fast, silencing Sam as he went on. “However. It will have to wait at least a little while, because in this moment I have a sacred trust to fulfill. I do not expect you to understand,” he told Sam with such haughty dismissiveness that a less exhausted and malleable Dean might’ve suggested Sam apply ice to the burn. Sam was totally undaunted, which was starting to seem like an equally unnerving and unwelcome pattern.

“Oh, no, I totally get it,” he told Cas cheerfully. “Aftercare, sure. Very important, especially when you guys have just been scening so intensely.”
What the living fuck? Was this real life? Surely Dean had to be dreaming. There was no way Sam was tranquilly agreeing with Cas that the angel’s plan to focus on caring for Dean in the aftermath of a brutal spanking was a good call, and using the appropriate BDSM terms to do so. Cas must’ve felt similarly, because Dean could actually hear his narrowed eyes when he spoke. “…indeed. So you will understand when I tell you that Dean and I will require both time and privacy, and that we will come to you when we are both in a position to discuss your behavior.”

Dean had heard Cas use the phrase ‘discuss your behavior’ probably a hundred times before, but it had always been aimed at him, and it had always had strong sexual undertones to it. This situation was completely different, which made the fact that Cas had chosen to use the same words—and that his tone was similar—only more jarring. Sam must’ve had some sort of inkling of this, because he chuckled jovially and quipped, “Yup, you got it, as long as you don’t break out that belt.” Dean could feel the heat of the death glare Cas was leveling at Sam above his head, even though he couldn’t actually see Cas’s face.

“Sam,” Cas’s voice resembled nothing so much as a growl now. His patience, which must have already been wearing paper-thin, appeared to be on its very last legs. “Leave. Now.”

“Okie dokie,” Sam agreed, strolling past them and toward the door. Then he paused and turned back around. Before Cas could literally blow a fuse (and likely plunge the bunker into darkness while doing so), Sam reached into a small shoulder bag that Dean certainly hadn’t noticed before now, and withdrew a small bottle of orange juice, a straw, two candy bars, and a tube of aloe vera that looked suspiciously like the one that Cas kept in their bedside table for the purpose of soothing Dean’s striped or spanked ass post-scene.

Dean, whose utter astonishment left him feeling more alert than he had since Sam’s first appearance, goggled at his brother dumbly. Above his head, he could hear Cas’s mouth opening and closing, making soft sounds that Dean recognized could legitimately be called ‘spluttering.’ So that’s what that sounded like.

Crossing the space between the door and where Dean and Cas sat in a few long strides, Sam carefully handed off each of the objects to Cas. The angel took them, both because he was far too startled to resist and because he was too practical to do otherwise when he did legitimately need each of them. Sam then headed back for the door, flipping the lock (seriously, how in the living hell had he gotten in here through a locked door?) to let himself out. He took one step into the hallway, then paused and half-turned to speak to Cas.

“You know,” Sam told the angel, his tone gently admonishing, “you really ought to bring those kinds of supplies down here yourself when you’re planning on a scene. It makes much more sense to be able to start caring for Dean right away when you’re finished rather than having to coax or carry him down four hallways and up two flights of stairs first. It’s really pretty irresponsible not to be better prepared, Cas, and I know how seriously you take caring for Dean. We’ll cover more about that and some other steps you can take when we all sit down. Later!”

Then, without waiting for a response, Sam was gone, his steps so silent that he could’ve been a spirit, moving through the physical world without impacting it. Dean felt his own jaw working as he tried to come up with something, anything he could say that might begin to capture the total surrealness of what had just happened, up to and most especially including that little instructional monologue.

Cas seemed no less flabbergasted, because his voice was sort of weak and tinged with helpless irony when he inquired, “So…how do you feel about some orange juice, Dean?”

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Despite Dean’s best efforts, Cas flatly refused to talk about Sam while he coaxed the orange juice and both candy bars into Dean (“This time belongs to you and I, Dean, and it is sacred. I will not see Sam intrude upon it”). Dean refrained from pointing out that Sam had already pretty thoroughly intruded upon it, given that the bottle of orange juice had a brief note written in sharpie and scrawled across its label in Sam’s slanted writing (“Finish Me”), because his ass was so sensitive that he jumped when Cas’s sleeve inadvertently brushed against it, and Cas had more than once demonstrated that he was definitely not above delivering a couple of well-placed smacks if Dean got too mouthy in the immediate aftermath of a scene. Long after the orange juice and candy bars were gone, Cas remained seated on the floor cross-legged with Dean cradled closely against him. Dean was certainly enjoying the contact, his head tucked under Cas’s chin, smelling the angel’s unique sunshine-and-honey scent. Cas was comfortable, his arms were strong and gentle, and the way his fingernails lightly grazed Dean’s scalp was so wonderful that he could practically have fallen asleep right there. On the surface, it was the picture of a perfect aftercare scene.

It was just that the more that Dean settled back into his own skin and mind as the endorphin haze started to level off, the less he was able to resist thinking about Sam. He really did try to put it out of his mind and focus on the moment, the contact between himself and Cas, the feeling of being cherished and looked after—and it wasn’t like he hadn’t benefitted from the aftercare. He felt great—steady, calm, alert, and happy. Sure, his ass throbbed like a bitch, but it was a good throb, the pain that heralded the aftermath of a killer scene. Wriggling a little bit to untuck his head from beneath Cas’s chin, Dean drew back enough that they could look each other in the eye.

“Babe, seriously, I’m good. That was awesome, I feel great, but we have a situation to deal with.”

Cas narrowed his eyes, not in irritation but in intense focus. He stared at Dean so long and so hard that Dean sort of thought about doing a little dance to amuse him. The piercing gaze was intimately familiar, and although it always made him squirm relentlessly in the heat of a scene, Dean was able to withstand its intent searching easily now. Eventually whatever he saw must have satisfied him, because he nodded and released a deep sigh that he had clearly been restraining.

“I do not think there is much benefit to speculation, Dean, although I am sure we could talk in circles for hours. What it ultimately comes down to is that something is very wrong with Sam, and if he appears willing to tell us what it is, I do not believe we should delay in hearing his side of things.”

“His side?” Dean demanded, lips twitching, “Dude, if you’re thinking there’s any way he’s going to come up with something that will excuse his newfound voyeuristic streak—”

“Do not be absurd. I have no intention of inviting Sam to supervise our activities—” the choice of words inspired such a ridiculous mental picture of Sam hovering over them with a clipboard as they fucked, brow furrowed as he made notes, that Dean couldn’t prevent himself from erupting into snickers. Cas, ignoring them, went on “—however, I do not imagine we will have any success in stopping this new habit of his without better understanding what is driving it.”

“I mean,” said Dean doubtfully, “I kind of think we already know what’s driving it. It’s us. We broke him. We shot him right past acceptance and into obsession. We should write a book about the little-known sixth stage of grief and loss.”

Cas didn’t bother gracing this with a response, merely helped Dean to rise and spotted him until it became clear that his legs were more than steady enough to hold him, albeit pleasantly sore from being taut with tension and pinned down during the spanking. Rather than discarding them, Dean went ahead and pulled his panties back up, hissing out a breath as even the soft satin set the abused flesh ablaze. Cas totally failed to hide his smile of satisfaction, and Dean made a face at him, which caused the angel to feint as if he was going to give Dean’s ass a swat. Dean jumped about a foot,
which in turn made Cas grin with wicked mischief, and it was with somewhat bad grace that Dean accepted his help in swiping the sticky, drying come off his stomach with his already ruined long-sleeved tee. The angel then crossed the room to grab Dean’s discarded flannel pants, opening them up and letting Dean stabilize himself with hands on his shoulders as he stepped into them.

The two of them made their way upstairs and into the shower where Cas, in deference to Dean’s still steaming ass, turned the water to tepid. They both climbed under its stream so that Dean could wash off the crusting streaks of come on his belly and both of them could rinse away the dried sweat they had been bathed in.

Dean was sort of concerned that by the time they finished their shower they’d find Sam peering intently at them from inside the shower drain or something, but there was no sign of him. It was like he had a sixth sense for when they were getting it on and was magnetically drawn to it. He expressed this opinion to Cas, who looked completely appalled at the possibility.

By the time they were back in Dean’s room, Cas digging through Dean’s drawers to come up with his oldest, softest pair of sweatpants, Dean was trying to engage Cas in a discussion of all the things that might potentially have gone wrong with Sam (he still wasn’t crazy about the idea that they had done this with their relentless fucking and then ill-considered plan to return Sam to the land of the living).

“Possession?”

“The tattoo works, not to mention demons cannot enter the bunker.”

“Cursed object?”

“He would never be so reckless with the items in the archives as to touch something questionable without taking all precautions. Recall that he was the one who objected to the game in the first place on the grounds that we didn’t know exactly what we were getting into.”

“Vengeful spirit?”

“How? In what way and for what possible purpose would a vengeful spirit somehow be compelling Sam into interrupting our sexual activities?”

“You know, it’s not like you’re exactly coming up with a stream of ideas yourself,” Dean told him, a little grumpily.

“My suggestion remains as it has been—we must take advantage of Sam’s desire for a discussion to assess what is happening and convince him that it is unnecessary and inappropriate.”

“Okay, okay.” What it came down to was that Dean didn’t really wanna sit down for a heart-to-heart with his brother about his own sex life (and not just because he was pretty sure sitting down was going to be unpleasant). The whole thing was impossibly bizarre, but ultimately Cas was right, there was no way around this.

Donning a t-shirt, Dean nodded to Cas, who pushed open the door to Dean’s bedroom and headed back for the library. There they found Sam, back at work organizing. He’d made a fair amount of progress in the past 90 minutes, cataloging all the books and starting to reshelve them, but he paused immediately when he heard Cas and Dean round the doorway and step inside. He smiled at them cheerfully before fixing Dean with an assessing look that seemed nearly professional in its detachment. He was clearly looking to determine Dean’s mental and physical state, and it made Dean feel so uneasy that he practically stepped behind Cas to deflect the gaze.
“Dude, I’m fine,” he told Sam, “so quit looking at me like that.”

After another moment of study, Sam appeared to take him at his word and nodded, turning to Cas with a smile of welcome. “So, you guys got a minute to talk?”

“Yeah, we’re definitely interested in what you have to say,” Dean assured him dryly, biting back somewhat more colorful ways of indicating that they were most assuredly all ears.

“I think we should sit down,” Sam told them, motioning to the library table. “Dean, there’s a chair for you at the end there.”

Dean was about ready to tell Sam off for bossing him around, let alone trying to relegate him to a specific chair, when he spotted the squishy pillow settled on the seat in question and subsided. It was still creepy as hell, but he couldn’t say he would mind being able to rest his tender ass on something softer than a hard wooden surface. Cas’s grunt upon seeing the pillow was unreadable, but Dean had the distinct sense that he wasn’t pleased, and not because he was averse to having Dean seated on something soft.

Dean broke the awkward silence no less awkwardly. “Yeah, uh, thanks Sammy,” he said uneasily, heading to the chair in question and proceeding to very, very carefully lower himself into it. Sam, again, watched him like a hawk, until both Dean and Cas shot him glares of such potency that he chuckled and headed for the seat across the table from Dean. Cas settled into the seat at the head of the table, and both of them latched their gazes onto Sam expectantly.

Sam, who unsurprisingly seemed completely undaunted by the clear displeasure in both of their faces, did not need to pause to gather his thoughts. He dove right in, his speech animated (though not unusually so) and self-assured.

“So, I know both of you are feeling pretty confused and a little unnerved, and I totally respect that. I understand that this is a little weird for you, which is why I thought maybe if I did some initial observations before we sat down and talked about it, you might find this easier to accept.”

O…kay. That was more than a little strange. Dean found himself frowning at Sam while he tried to figure out exactly where this was going. Cas’s brows were knitted into a solid line, and he was staring at Sam as if he were a particularly perplexing puzzle. Neither of them spoke (because what the hell were they going to say) and Sam went on after a moment.

“Dean, I don’t know whether you’re aware of this, but after you had that bad sub drop, Cas was feeling a little insecure about your D/s tendencies as a couple, and whether he was doing you a disservice by engaging in it with you. He and I sat down to talk about it, and I think I was able to make him feel a little better.”

Cas’s brows were knit together even more tightly, if possible, and Dean didn’t even bother to pretend he hadn’t overheard the conversation, just nodded and motioned Sam to get on with it. Cas threw him a sharp glance at his nod, but didn’t interrupt to question Dean about his eavesdropping, and after a second, Sam went on.

“But I got to thinking after it. I had a lot of time to think in my blanket fort,” Dean really thought about saying ‘you don’t say’ in his most derisive voice, but decided that would probably be ill-advised and left well enough alone, “and I started to get a little concerned myself. Then, when I saw you in the bathroom, well.” He stopped, as if his meaning should be glaringly obvious, and Dean started to think, with a slight sinking feeling, that he might have a general sense of where this was going. He didn’t speak up and neither did Cas, thankfully. “Once I saw you guys at it in there, it became really evident to me that maybe Cas’s worries weren’t unfounded, and there really are some
areas of concern in that aspect of your relationship."

Dean finally spoke up, hoping that maybe he could nip this in the bud, but fairly certain that ship had long since sailed without him. "Whoa, Sam, I don’t know what you thought you were seeing, but I want to be very clear that Cas is not forcing me into anything I don’t want to do, and our relationship is perfectly healthy. It definitely doesn’t need your interference."

Sam smiled kindly at him, and Dean was pretty sure Sam might’ve actually patted him on the head if he hadn’t known Dean would chew his arm off if he tried. "Hey, it’s okay, you don’t have to say anything. You don’t have to defend your relationship. I’m not trying to break you two up or anything, I’m still on Team Destiel," Oh for fuck’s sake, Dean thought, not this shit again, "but I don’t think there’s any value to pretending like things are perfectly solid where they’re not."

Cas finally spoke up, and it was clear to Dean at least that he was employing considerable self-control in order to refrain from leaping across the table and wringing Sam’s neck. "Even if this were true, Sam," he said in the most patient voice he could muster, "and I assure you that it is not—you bore witness to nothing more than brief and regrettable moment of insecurity, and you were indeed quite helpful at the time—" Actually, Dean thought, he’s bore witness to a hell of a lot more than just that in the past couple weeks, "exactly what business would it be of yours, and what does that have to do with your new and distressing desire to observe our sexual encounters?"

That was a damn good question, as far as Dean was concerned. Sam seemed undaunted by the clear displeasure in Cas’s voice as he responded. "Under normal circumstances, I would have sent you guys along to a good sex therapist," he told them patiently, "and I have a list of great ones that you can pick from once the snow melts. In the meantime, though, I don’t think things can wait that long. Sometimes unorthodox situations call for unorthodox solutions, and you guys are lucky enough to be stuck down here with a fella who briefly thought about a career in sex therapy before he decided to stick with law school."

Sam beamed at them as if this was the happiest coincidence in the history of ever, and Dean had to restrain the strong urge to lean over and bash his own head against the table in front of him. Instead, when he fully caught up with Sam’s words, he demanded, "wait a goddamn minute, since when did sex therapy ever cross your radar at all?"

“It was during the two years when we weren’t really in contact,” Sam told him dismissively, waving a hand. “After I took the queer studies course, the only class that seemed interesting that fit into my schedule the next semester was called ‘Alternative Sexualities,’ and I actually found it really fascinating.” Dean’s eyes met Cas’s across the table and they both seemed to be having the same thought: "Are you fucking kidding me?" It was the Psych 101 syndrome that Dean had encountered from more than one college student he’d banged over the years. They took one damn class and they were convinced they were experts in— “then I also took Psych 101, and the combination of the two of them got me thinking that maybe I’d like to pursue that as a career—“ and there it was. Dean wasn’t sure whether he wanted to laugh or cry, and Cas looked like he was engaged in a similar debate across the table, “anyway, that’s not important. What is important is that, although obviously I’m not licensed or anything, I know enough about the basics that I can help you guys get a good start working on your issues while we wait for the snow to melt!” He beamed at them, absolutely delighted by his plan, and Dean opened his mouth and then, after a moment in which it flapped as pointlessly as a fish out of water, closed it again. Cas took a breath as though he was about to speak, then halted and huffed it out. Silence spun out for a few moments, and Sam seemed totally undaunted by it.

Finally, Dean opened his mouth and tried again.
“Sam,” he said weakly and as patiently as he could muster, “look, man, I don’t want you to think we’re not grateful for your concern, and that we don’t appreciate how much you care about us and want us to, uh, have a healthy sex life,” Sam seemed to know where this was going and was nodding with patient indulgence at Dean, who was pretty sure it didn’t matter what he said, the kid was hellbent and determined to follow through on his plan. Nevertheless, he had to try, “but I don’t know any clearer way to tell you that we don’t have a problem. Sure, it’s not perfect, but we communicate really well when there are issues, and on the whole I think I speak for both of us when I say we’re both more than happy with our relationship. All aspects of it.” He couldn’t fucking believe he had been put in a position in which it was imperative to actually assure Sam that that the kinky sex he and Cas were having was all safe, sane, consensual, and hot.

“Don’t worry, Dean,” Sam told him patiently, “I know how hard it is to acknowledge when something isn’t going so great, especially with the power dynamics in your sex life. You don’t have to say anything. It’s why I’ve been observing, and I’m going to continue to do so, to make sure I get a really good survey of how things are before I start making too many recommendations.”

Oh. Oh, that was great. Sam was going to continue to observe them. Awesome.

That particular announcement seemed to have stirred Cas from his dumbfounded silence, and he finally spoke up. Dean made a mental note to congratulate him later for not being totally useless.

“Sam. Dean has been kind enough to attempt to gently guide you away from this harebrained scheme you have devised, but as that clearly has not taken, allow me to pull no punches.” Oh, this was gonna be good. Dean hid a grin behind one of his hands and shifted a little, barely noticing the ache in his ass despite the pillow beneath it. “Dean’s and my sex life is excellent, and even if it were not, it would be none of your business. How he and I occupy ourselves is entirely our own concern, and you will absolutely not be ‘continuing to observe us.’ You will afford us the respect of privacy, just as we will do our best to afford you the respect of restricting our activities to places and times when you are unlikely to come upon us. This is not a request; this is a statement of fact.”

Sam smiled at Cas with that same kind patience, and Dean thought he could actually see Cas’s blood pressure rise at the condescending expression. “It’s okay, Cas, I expected that you were going to feel really defensive about this. I know how much of your sense of self is wrapped up in being a good Dom to Dean, and it’s okay to have strong feelings about the fact that there are some areas in which you’re struggling. There’s no shame in needing help.”

Cas’s face was turning red, and Dean thought he actually smelled a whiff of ozone in the air before the angel took in a long, slow breath and got himself back under control. He motioned helplessly to Dean, as if to say that he had already done his best and he was tapping out. Dean, who had no fucking clue how to salvage this situation, tried again one more time.

“Dude. Sammy. It really does mean a lot that you care so much, and I realize that a lot of this is our fault, since we—faked sex really badly while we were trying to snap you out of it, because Cas takes porn a little too seriously and has a hitherto unsuspected flair for the dramatic—weren’t as careful as we could’ve been about making sure you didn’t stumble across us. But we do not need a sex therapist, and even if for some reason we did, we wouldn’t be going to an amateur and we sure as hell wouldn’t be going to my brother for help.”

Sam smiled gently at him. “I know that this is going to be a little uncomfortable for you Dean, but don’t worry, I intend to stay very professional. Don’t think of me as your brother, think of me as the man who’s going to save your sex life!”

“That…does not help,” Dean told him weakly. “Is there anything at all I can say to talk you out of this?” He was pretty sure he knew the answer, and Sam did not disappoint him.
“Nope! I’ve done a lot of soul-searching and I’m sure this is the right thing to do. I knew you two were going to be resistant, and that’s okay. You’ll come around to the idea eventually,” he told Dean earnestly, “and we can start by talking about some things that are less likely to embarrass you, like how Cas can do a better job of making sure he’s prepared for your aftercare needs, Dean.”

Cas, whose attempt to get himself under control seemed to have been derailed when Sam styled himself the savior of their sex life and then blown up in a towering inferno by the kid’s criticism of his after-scene caretaking, was undergoing a remarkable change in colors. First he blanched pale, then his face slowly filled in pink before transitioning once more to red. From there he was starting to turn the corner toward purple, and when Dean smelled that whiff of ozone again and saw a few sparks shoot from one of the unused electrical sockets in the room, he decided the time had come to end this discussion before Cas went the kind of ballistic that would end up with them cooking chunks of thawing meat over the fireplace and huddling in blankets for warmth till the snow melted.

“Okay!” Dean said, too loudly, heaving himself from his chair and not totally failing to bite back a wince as the sharp movement reignited the flames in his ass. Sam smiled kindly at him.

“Careful, you don’t wanna move too fast so soon after you’ve just—“

“I get it!” Dean actually yelled to drown Sam out, since he appeared totally oblivious to the way in which he was currently courting total disaster, “thanks for the tip! Cas and I are going to go, uh, process this now.” He made it around the table and snagged Cas’s hand, deeply relieved when the angel allowed Dean to drag him out of his chair and toward the doorway. Dean was prepared to come around from behind Cas and attempt to body-slam him out into the hallway if Sam started saying something else that would set the angel off, but Sam seemed on board with this plan.

“Great idea! I’m gonna stay here and work on the library. I’m around if you guys have any more questions!”

“Yeah, sure, great, we’ll make sure to keep that in mind,” Dean hollered as he managed, with some effort, to haul a glowering Cas past the door and into the hall. He didn’t stop yanking until they hit his own doorway. Cas permitted Dean to bully him into the room and slam the door behind them, where he stood scowling in the direction of the library while Dean collapsed, panting, back against the door and then shot upright with a yelp as his ass contacted the hard wood.

There was a moment of silence before the angel very slowly turned blue eyes, snapping with fury, on Dean.

“I,” Cas told him conversationally, “am going to smite your brother. Twice.”

Chapter End Notes

NOTE: The only tag this chapter earns is "Secondhand Embarrassment," and it's a doozy. Both of my beta readers were mortified. I'm not even gonna lie and pretend like I ain't proud. I'm so damn proud of this horror-show. Sorrynotsorry, Cas and Dean, you kids brought this on yourselves with your lack of respect for boundaries. It's your circus, Sammy's just doubled the size of the rings.
Chapter Summary

In which Dean and Cas try to come up with a strategy to deal with Sam's plan, and Cas reveals some surprising tidbits.

Brief chapter-specific tags at the end of the chapter, as ever.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

For half a second, Dean actually considered giving Cas his blessing and sending him back out to smite Sam. Let’s face it, the kid had been nothing but an increasing pain in the ass since the moment the snow blanketed the bunker. Well, with the possible exception of his impressive dispatching of the hippogriff, despite his delight over “Buckbeak’s” appearance. And he wasn’t exactly useless with the hydra. And...okay, fine, Sam had his uses, and anyway, Dean wouldn’t ever actually let Cas smite him, but it was sort of nice to fantasize. Imagine how peaceful it would be! No need to be looking over their shoulders. Nobody requesting Cognac-Lacquered Quail (what even was that?) from an increasingly smelly blanket cave. Nobody needing him to play butler and grab things from the kitchen at all hours, and—hey. Hey, wait a second. Dean blinked as something occurred to him and tumbled out of his mouth in a total non-sequitur.

“Wait a goddamn minute, how the hell did he get the orange juice? Did he go back into the kitchen?”

Cas goggled at him, totally perplexed as to how Dean got from Cas’s threat to smite Sam to the little bottle of orange juice Sam so proudly provided them in the basement. Blinking a couple times, Cas shook off his confusion in order to respond, looking a little guilty.

“Er—no. When I provided Sam with snacks at some point during his self-induced confinement, I brought him several bottles of your orange juice.”

On the surface, this admission wouldn’t seem to be such a big deal. Unless, of course, you knew that those bottles of orange juice were damn well sacred. They were reserved for post-scene aftercare, and Cas was militant about Dean not touching them except in those circumstances (there had been this one time when Dean finished the last bottle and didn’t replace them, and Cas ended up completely beside himself post-scene due to the lack of juice provisions. Suffice it to say it had been ugly). In fact, Dean had actually gotten his ass blistered a few months ago when he snagged one of the bottles in the morning upon discovering that Sam had finished the regular carton of OJ. Cas had spotted the empty bottle in the trash can and interrogated Dean, who’d broken with embarrassing swiftness under the angel’s narrow gaze.

Anyway, the point was, if Dean wasn’t allowed anywhere near those bottles of orange juice except post-scene, Cas had no damn call to be passing them off to Sam, especially when they were all trapped in the bunker for who knew how long and couldn’t even replace the stores. Cas must have seen the outraged look dawn on Dean’s face and start gathering steam, because he was already opening his mouth with excuses before Dean had managed to work up a good enough huff to respond.
“I am sorry! He was refusing water, and we had run out of soymilk! You were asleep and I needed a rapid solution. Alcohol seemed ill-advised, considering his mental state, and we have two whole palettes of juice! There are still…” there was a moment of silence as Cas squinted at the ceiling, presumably doing the math. If Dean hadn’t been ready to do a little smiting of his own, it would’ve been adorable. “…thirty-seven bottles left! I did not anticipate that it would do any harm to allow Sam to have several.”

“What you didn’t anticipate,” Dean hissed at him, “was that a situation would arise in which you’d be forced to tell me what you did!”

“I was going to tell you!” Cas insisted, then saw the way Dean’s eyes narrowed into slits and sighed, shoulders slumping as he admitted, “No, I was not. You are correct, Dean. I owe you a most abject apology for my hypocrisy.”

“And?” Dean demanded, pretty sure that if he narrowed his eyes any further he’d just have to close them altogether.

“And for my lie of omission,” Cas told him with apparent sincerity, immediately spotting where Dean’s increased irritation stemmed from. After all, the last time Dean had gone over Cas’s knee prior to this evening, it had been as a result of Dean’s lie of omission regarding the Damiana.

“You owe me two freebies,” Dean told him with an edge in his voice that he would firmly insist was not sulky.

“I beg your pardon?” Cas inquired, his sheepishness now edged with a hint of warning. Dean, still completely provoked, steamrolled right past the warning.

“I said you owe me two freebies! I couldn’t sit for three days after the last time I drank one of those bottles outside of aftercare, and you nailed me last week for a lie of omission!”

“While the first is certainly true, you know perfectly well that your punishment last week had more to do with the risk you took in imbibing a relatively unknown substance without due consideration for the potential negative effects. The fact that you chose not to inform me of what you were doing was a side-issue, and only relevant because you did so especially because you knew I would object,” Cas pointed out, sounding as if he was attempting to maintain patience with Dean.

Had Dean been thinking clearly and strategically he would’ve recognized that continuing to hammer at Cas about this just now, when he was still on the verge of going nuclear due to Sam’s recent provocation, was ill-considered. As it was, he was so wrapped up in his own indignation that even his sense of self-preservation had abandoned ship to shake its (admittedly underdeveloped) fist in Cas’s general direction.

“And you weren’t going to tell me about the OJ because you knew I would object! This do-as-I-say-not-as-I-do crap is bullshit, and it’s not fair! You damn well owe me two freebies for handing out two punishments for shit you just went right ahead and did yourself!”

In the blink of an eye, a hand closed around his wrist and yanked. Dean found himself spun around and shoved forward, until he hit the door so hard it rattled on its hinges. The wrist Cas had seized was jerked up at the small of his back by one hand while the other snagged the waistband of his sweatpants and yanked. They slid to the floor and puddled around his feet, leaving Dean’s still smoldering ass revealed both to the air and to the sight of his irate Dom.

Only now did it occur to Dean that, while Cas had freely acknowledged wrongdoing and apologized, he had no intention of letting Dean tear into him endlessly for this particular misstep—or
at least, not in this particular moment. In this moment, Cas was still halfway to smiting Sam so hard they’d be picking little bits of him out of the light fixtures for weeks, and he did not exactly have an excess of patience to spare for Dean to throw what he would resolutely insist was not a temper tantrum. Sure enough, the hand that had dispatched with his sweatpants cracked with startling force three times against the meatiest part of his ass. Dean gasped, wrist straining involuntarily at Cas’s grasp, hips jerking forward in a futile bid to escape the reignited burn. Instead, of course, they just jarred against the door again, quite hard.

Dean was somewhat less than surprised when Cas’s lips were suddenly at his ear, the low growl threaded with the danger that he had somehow missed in the angel’s voice prior to now.

“Exactly what gives you the impression that fairness has any piece whatsoever in when, how often, and for what reason you end up across my knee? At what point have I offered the mistaken impression that I am concerned with keeping a careful accounting of the fairness of exactly what infractions you have been called to answer for?”

Cas paused, but Dean knew better than to even think about opening his mouth to answer. The angel wasn’t done, he was just taking a break to see whether Dean would dig himself even deeper. His sense of self-preservation, which had dropped its tiny fist and trudged guiltily back into place when Cas pounced on him, actually did its job and kept him quiet and very, very still. Sure enough, after a few beats, Cas went on with a smoothness that suggested he’d always known exactly what he was going to say.

“As it happens, Dean, your greedy imbibing of a bottle of your juice because you were too lazy to go to the store for a fresh carton is hardly comparable to your brother, who you quite agreed was gravely emotionally compromised, requiring liquid sustenance to prevent him from becoming dehydrated. I had believed that your concern for Sam would far outstrip your outraged sense of parity, but apparently I had too fine an opinion of you.”

Okay, that was just mean, which was not typical of their scenes. Dean drew a startled breath, before reminding himself that Cas was still really damn riled up by Sam and likely not selecting his words as carefully as he might ordinarily. Rather than sniping back, Dean (for once in his miserable life) acted strategically.

“Yellow,” he told Cas, who froze in mid-breath, apparently on the verge of unleashing another torrent of withering rhetoric, and eased his grip on Dean’s wrist. “That was just mean,” he told Cas plainly. He could feel Cas’s shoulders sag behind him, and the angel released his grasp on Dean’s wrist before turning him back around so that they faced each other.

“I am sorry, Dean. You are right, that was uncalled for. I should not have—I am still far too worked up over Sam’s…” Cas trailed off, shaking his head in an indication of his inability to put words to what exactly Sam was doing.

Speaking of the devil’s preferred vessel), a voice sounded from down the hall

“Oh, hey, did I hear a couple of smacks? Are you starting again? Be right there!”

Dean didn’t waste a single breath before shouting right back, pretty certain that if Sam managed somehow to burst through the wall like the Kool-Aid man, no amount of arguing would stop Cas from actually smiting him, “No, you misheard! I just knocked some stuff off the dresser! We’re still just…uh, processing!”

There was a moment of silence, in which Dean could practically hear Cas’s blood pressure crawling upward, before Sam called back, “Okay, cool, just making sure!”
The sound of footsteps retreating back down the hall toward the library followed, and Dean sagged
against the door before (for the second time in about five minutes) jerking upright with a yelp as his
now naked ass contacted the hard wood.

“Son of a bitch!” he grumped, as Cas, lips twitching slightly, pulled him away from the door.

“How a man who is so entirely oblivious to his own body is such an impressively skilled fighter, I
will never know,” Cas observed, but the streak of meanness that had colored his earlier words was
gone, replaced by amused affection. Dean would never tell him, but it was just possible that he had
deliberately orchestrated this last door-ass contact because he knew it would make Cas laugh and
defuse some of his rekindling rage at Sam.

Stepping away from the door, Dean reached down to snag his sweatpants, settling them back around
his hips before he took a couple steps forward, crowding into Cas’s space. The angel’s brows lifted
in pleased surprise when Dean’s lips brushed against his own. Rather than letting Dean step back as
he had intended, Cas’s arms snugged around his waist (carefully settling just north of where the
stinging reddened flesh ended) and drew him back in for a much more thorough kiss. Dean was
only too happy to settle his body against Cas’s, sliding his arms up the firm chest and around his
neck. Cas broke the kiss before Dean started to get too breathless (one of the hazards of kissing
someone who didn’t actually require oxygen) and they stood with foreheads pressed together. Dean
could feel some of the frustrated fury that had been leaking out of Cas’s very pores easing up and felt
his own equilibrium start to return with the contact. He let the silence spin out comfortably between
them for a time before finally, somewhat reluctantly, breaking it.

“You can’t smite Sam, babe.”

Cas’s lips twitched and when he opened his mouth his tone carried a deliberate hint of whininess,
“But—“

Dean, lips likewise twitching, broke in, “I know. Believe me, I know, but do you really want to try
to get bits of flesh out of an entire library full of priceless books?”

Cas appeared to be half-seriously considering this before he responded in an eminently reasonable
tone. “Not particularly, but without Sam, who is there to complain if we miss a few pieces?”

“Touché,” Dean acknowledged, grinning, “but eventually they’d start to smell, and then you’re stuck
digging through one book at a time, trying to find the one or two little bits of rotting Sam you missed,
and it’s a whole mess.”

“Perhaps I could just escort him into the shower room prior to the smiting? Then we could simply
hose things off!” Cas sounded so proud of this solution that Dean had to stifle a snort, despite
knowing that this conversation was (at least mostly) hypothetical.

“Yes, well, that solves one problem, but doesn’t address the fact that he’s my little brother and I
actually have a responsibility to keep him alive, no matter how much I might like to authorize a little
smiting from time to time.”

Cas sighed as if unbearably put upon before drawing back and releasing Dean’s waist. Dean took
the opportunity to head to his dresser, digging through until he found a sweatshirt, which he pulled
on over his t-shirt.

“Yes, well,” the angel grudgingly agreed, “I shall refrain from smiting him. Twice.”

Dean snorted. “Cas, you’re not sneaky. You can’t smite him once, either.”
“Curses,” Cas said, snapping his fingers, “foiled again!”

Dean blinked at him dumbly, then shook his head. “I will never understand how Metatron picked which pop culture to include in his crash-course and which to exclude.”

“Oh,” said Cas brightly, “I did not pick that up from Metatron. I enjoy Rocky and Bullwinkle. I find Snidely Whiplash amusing.”

Dean gaped at Cas, jaw hanging open for a few long seconds. After eight long years, the angel was still capable of startling the hell out of him. “You enjoy…”

“Rocky and Bullwinkle,” Cas confirmed happily.

“How the hell did it even end up on your radar?” Dean demanded, half-suspecting he already knew the answer.

“The last time we worked with Crowley, I inquired about why he insists upon referring to you and Sam as Squirrel and Moose. He appeared quite startled that nobody had yet introduced me to the show, and told me to watch it on Netflix.”

Dean’s brows furrowed. “It’s not on Netflix. Kevin checked ages ago. Said that hearing Crowley call us that was making him nostalgic—although, come to think of it, I have no idea how he even knew about the show in the first place. He was way too young for it.”

Cas shook his head, apparently oblivious to the effect these revelations were having on Dean. “It is now. Crowley called several days later to inquire how I liked the show, and when I informed him it wasn’t available on Netflix he became irate and told me he would ‘handle it.’”

Dean closed his eyes and pressed two fingers to one temple for a moment before responding. “And how, exactly, did he ‘handle it?’”

“No idea,” Cas told him innocently, “I thought it better not to ask. In any case, by the next evening, he called to let me know it was now available. I have been watching several episodes most nights while you are asleep,” his face fell, suddenly, “but I will be finished with it soon. There were only five seasons.”

“Okay, setting aside the fact that you’re jacking my laptop to watch the cartoon that spawned Crowley’s longest-running obnoxious nicknames and that you’re starting to make appropriate pop culture references without excessive hand-holding, since when do you and Crowley chit-chat on the phone?”

“He occasionally calls me to talk,” Cas told him, his face guileless, “I think he is sometimes lonely, surrounded only by people who are endlessly obsequious. And he told me the last time he called you to talk, you demanded to know what racket he was running and hung up on him.”

“I did,” Dean confirmed, “but more importantly, why didn’t you?”

Cas looked astonished. “That would be rude.”

Dean once again found himself with jaw hanging open as he tried to wrap his brain around yet another new revelation. “Rude? You…and he…it’s…Cas, he’s the king of hell!”

“I have been made aware of that, yes,” Cas confirmed dryly, and Dean registered yet again that he was finally really getting the hang of sarcasm, before wondering exactly how much more insufferable that would make the angel, “but we are not infrequently called to work with him, and I
see no reason that professional relationships cannot be friendly.”

“Okay, but that’s—I mean—there’s a difference between…oh, fuck it. The next time you have a heart-to-heart with Crowley, make him tell you exactly what he did to get Rocky and Bullwinkle on Netflix, and if it didn’t involve fucking with anybody’s soul irreparably, see if you can convince him to get all the Die Hard movies added.”

“I will make inquiries,” Cas agreed readily, still apparently bewildered by Dean’s amazement at these bizarre developments.

“I almost hesitate to ask,” Dean said, stretching out on the bed on his stomach and propping his chin in his hands to look up at the angel, who promptly settled down cross-legged beside him, “but is there anything else I should know? Other shows you’re addicted to? Any purgatory pen pals? Other demons you like to gossip with?”

Cas appeared to seriously consider this. Dean narrowly resisted rolling his eyes heavenward and succeeded mostly because he actually knew what was up there, and turning to it for help had never done him a damn bit of good before now. Finally, the angel went on. “I do not believe so. Except that I did watch some old Three Stooges videos on YouTube after Crowley implied that they bore commonalities with you, Sam, and myself.”

Dean had to take a deep breath, but managed to maintain a straight face with considerable effort, simply raising his brows at Cas to inquire, “and what did you think? Any similarities?”

“Not especially,” Cas told him, brows furrowing, “but I did conclude that perhaps Crowley was not making the reference in a complimentary fashion. The stooges seem to be quite inept.”

“I think that’s a pretty safe bet,” Dean assured him, rubbing one hand over his mouth to conceal how hard his lips were shaking with the effort not to laugh. “When did you figure out YouTube, anyway?”

“I followed several videos on icanhascheezburger.com to the site. As it turns out, it is dangerously easy to become lost in it for hours. You cannot imagine how many amusing videos of cats are available. I could show—“

Dean, recognizing where this was going and unwilling to spend the next four days trying to wrest his laptop back from a Cas who was happily up to his ears in videos of snoring kittens, cut in, “Hey, that’s okay, I’ve seen it. Don’t you think we should maybe talk about the situation with Sam and… you know…strategize?”

“Good idea,” Cas nodded, then scowled, clearly remembering Sam’s condescending attitude. “Are you entirely certain I cannot smite him?”

~*~

A couple hours later, they had gone in circles at least fifteen times and failed to come up with any argument that had half a chance of convincing Sam to lay off. In fact, Dean was pretty sure that, if escaping the bunker didn’t fix the kid (and he thought it just might, since Sam seemed to be rocking some sort of cabin-fever induced psychosis), he and Cas might have to actually go to one of the sex therapists Sam had picked out for them once or twice, if only to get a letter certifying that their sex life was healthy and didn’t require a dedicated amateur therapist stalking them.

Cas had reluctantly promised not to smite Sam without Dean’s express approval, which was as good as Dean figured he was likely to get. He thought about telling Sam how close he was to being
blasted into whatever the next size down from smithereens was in the hope that this would finally
make him back off, but decided that this would likely result in Sam deciding that his plan was even
more urgent if Cas was so “resistant” that he was having violent impulses.

Eventually, they came to the conclusion that their best bet was simply to try to restrict their sexual
activity to locations and times that Sam would be least likely to come upon them. Although they
briefly debated renewing the moratorium on sex, neither was willing to ring that bell again so soon
after the last one. As Cas put it, “Our sex life has become far too answerable to your brother as it is.
I will not allow him to destroy it entirely, even on a temporary basis.” Dean was firmly on the same
page, and they’d actually done some brainstorming about locations in the bunker Sam was unlikely
to think of.

“You know,” Dean said, “we could probably also do pretty well with some misdirection. Like
magicians use. They get you to look somewhere else so you don’t realize what’s happening right in
front of you.”

Cas, who was leaning against Dean’s headboard with his elbows on his knees, raised both hands and
scrubbed them through his already mussed dark hair in a gesture that he was immediately sure Cas
had picked up from Dean himself. “I despise being put in a position where I must consider
employing such tactics in order to have entirely consensual sexual relations with the man I love.”

Nothing in that statement was new information. It wasn’t even anything that Cas didn’t openly state
on a fairly regular basis, but something about hearing it like that made Dean crawl up the bed to plant
a brief kiss on Cas’s forehead before settling down against the angel. Cas wrapped his arms around
Dean, propping his chin atop Dean’s head. Dean wriggled around a little, getting comfortable before
responding, “I hear you. I do. But at this point we’re just gonna piss ourselves off if we keep
rehashing how ridiculous this is, so let’s keep focusing on solutions, okay?”

“How did you get so wise?” Cas inquired, nuzzling his nose against Dean’s ear and wringing from
him something that might’ve sounded a little like a squeak but definitely was not.

Dean squirmed his head away, swatting at Cas ineffectually before he responded with a laugh, “not
wise so much as experienced. I’ve spent nearly the past 40 years being pissed off at shit I can’t
control. If I didn’t learn a couple things along the way, I’d have gone around the bend a long-ass
time ago.”

Cas frowned slightly, “by that estimation, I should have learned many more things, given my much
more advanced age and the multitude of things I have encountered over the millennia that I cannot
control.”

“Well, sure,” Dean acknowledged, “but you only recently actually started chafing at the fact that you
couldn’t control them. For most of that time, you were a good little soldier.”

“As were you,” Cas countered, “to your father, yes?”

“Definitely,” Dean agreed, a little uneasily. He still wasn’t sure how he felt about that. “But I
wasn’t always happy about it. I did as I was told, yeah, but I found my own little ways to rebel here
and there. You didn’t even sneak off for a burger when you were supposed to be on patrol, right?”

Cas looked appalled. “Certainly not. Patrolling was not one of my primary jobs in the garrison, and
in any case, hamburgers were invented scarcely a century and a half ago, so that—“

“Too literal, Cas,” Dean interrupted, “the point I’m making is—“
“Ah, I see,” Cas broke in, nodding, “you are correct, the possibility of disobedience—of having doubts, even—did not truly crystallize for me until several years ago.”

“Well, there you go,” Dean said, patting him on the chest with one hand. Cas took the hand in his own, entangling their fingers, and Dean kissed the back of his hand lightly, “you haven’t learned as much about dealing with shit you can’t control that pisses you off because it didn’t occur to you to be pissed off that you couldn’t control it until recently.”

Cas nodded agreement and they subsided again, content to snuggle until Dean finally had to get up to pee.

All was quiet when he stepped out of his bedroom, and he actually managed to fool himself into believing he was going to have a nice, uneventful bathroom trip until he opened the stall door, took one step out, and bounced off a broad chest. Tamping down the suspicion that if he hadn’t actually latched the stall door he would’ve ended up with Sam hovering over his shoulder while he pissed, he took a step back and simply raised a single brow, not particularly trusting himself not to let loose on Sam if he opened his mouth.

“I’ve been doing some research,” Sam started, and Dean discovered that he was already grinding his teeth. Even under the best of circumstances, when those words crossed Sammny’s lips at any time other than when they were actively working on a case, it generally boded ill (well, not ill so much as annoyingly boring). Now, Dean didn’t even want to know what was coming next, but was pretty sure there was no way around finding out. Rather than speaking, he simply raised the other brow. Now both of them were hovering in mid-forehead as he stared at Sam.

“It turns out that aloe probably isn’t the best bet post-scene. I should probably be having this conversation with Cas, since it’s really his job to take care of you when—“ Okay, if anything was going to get Dean’s attention, it was the possibility of Sam hunting down Cas with his latest ‘research.’ Dean was pretty sure his best efforts to keep Sam unsmited would only go so far if the kid kept chasing down Cas with new ‘tips.’

“No, no, it’s fine, Sammy! We’ve got an equal relationship outside of scenes, you can totally talk to me instead. What about aloe now?”

Sam, who seemed absolutely delighted to actually get a real response, opened his mouth to go on, but Dean forestalled him. “Would you, uh, mind letting me wash my hands, there, Sammy? You’re kinda blocking traffic.”

Sam blinked down at himself, as if astonished to find that he actually had Dean cornered in a bathroom stall, and stepped back. Dean brushed past him to the sink to wash his hands, assuming that Sam would follow him to share whatever tidbits he’d picked up. He was not disappointed.

“So, it turns out that for inflammation and bruising, arnica might actually be better than aloe. You have to be careful about which arnica gels or creams you buy, though, because a lot of them have it only in homeopathic quantities, which is useless. There are some that have it in actual therapeutic doses, and I’ve printed off a list of those for Cas. You’ll have to make do with the aloe until we’re out of here and we can get to a pharmacy or vitamin store, unfortunately, but I guess if things get too bad Cas can always heal you,” he frowned, as if adding this to his mental register of post-scene possibilities.

“Yeah, if our play gets past a certain point he’ll usually heal me, but this time wasn’t—“ Dean cut himself off in mid-sentence, realizing (much to his own horror) that he was actually volunteering information on his sex life to Sam. Taking a couple suspicious sniffs of the air, he decided that no, Sam had probably not released some airborne drug to lower his defenses. That might actually have
been a bad thing, since it meant that Dean was weakening under Sam’s sustained assaults. He would not, not, not feed into this newest hare-brained scheme, for God’s sake.

“Wasn’t that bad, yeah, I hear you. When I saw you walking around just fine the day after I caught you guys with the belt, I figured he must have healed you,” Sam agreed. “Well, I’m sure that’ll still be an important tool, but it never hurts to have some new tools to add to your toolbox,” he told Dean cheerfully.

Dean, who realized that he still had his hands under the warm water despite the fact that the soap had long since washed away, turned off the tap and reached for a hand towel only to find Sam holding one out to him, smiling in that semi-maniacal way that was starting to seem like it might be the new normal. Dean took it somewhat unenthusiastically and dried his hands, before detouring to put it back on its normal hook.

“So, uh,” he said, starting to back toward the door as if he’d be more likely to make a clean escape if Sam only figured out at the last minute what he was about, “I’m…gonna go back to my room. Getting late, and all. Bedtime.”

“Sleep well, Dean!” Sam told him, following him out of the bathroom and into the hall.

“Yeah, you too, Sammy,” Dean replied, knowing it was absurd to feel uneasy about turning his back to his little brother. Steeling himself, he went ahead and turned, ignoring the creeping feeling along his spine telling him that Sam’s eyes were still firmly affixed on his back. He made it back to his room in what had to be record time, opening the door and closing it firmly behind him before turning the lock. Cas opened his mouth to speak and Dean raised a finger, halting him, then turned back to the door and placed his ear against it. He listened intently as one minute turned into two and two turned into three. Cas again took in a breath to speak and Dean waved frantically at him to keep his mouth shut. Getting the hint, the angel rose quietly and crossed the room on stockinged feet, frowning at Dean. Another thirty seconds tickled by before Dean heard the creak of a floorboard and then feet receding down the hallway toward Sam’s room. Letting go a long, slow breath, Dean turned his head into the door, then lifted it and dropped it against the wood once, finding the thud vaguely soothing.

“We,” he told Cas tiredly, “are in so much trouble.”

Chapter End Notes

Chapter-specific tags and warnings: Very brief, almost non-existent (at least by my usual standards) spanking and manhandling. Also safewording, because Cas had a dick moment. Don’t be a dick, Cas.

Come find me on tumblr! I need followers, you jerks!
Comparing Notes

Chapter Summary

In which Cas reveals a hitherto unsuspected skill and a conversation that's been a long time in coming occurs. Also, there are hot pockets, and Dean is disproportionately excited about them.

Chapter Notes

Heads' up that Wednesday's chapter may not be posted until Thursday this week, because I've got a lot going on the next couple days. I'll do my best, though!

Also, a quick note to tell you that if you're reading and you still haven't commented or given kudos (yes, this means YOU), I want to hear from you!

And finally, if you're reading and you love it and you're on tumblr, do me a favor and toss me a rec. (And come follow me, cause I'm there too!)

Slightly reluctantly, Dean nevertheless updated Cas on what had happened in the bathroom when Sam ambushed him. Cas had been predictably unamused by Sam's continued efforts to critique his aftercare rituals, and this time declared he was going to smite the kid three times. Dean eventually got him to grudgingly renew his pledge to refrain from any smiting, but he ended up having to improvise when he spotted the angel’s poorly concealed crossed fingers.

“Wait, since when is this a thing that you do? How do you even know about it? Metatron?”

“Oh no,” Cas informed him earnestly, “I learned this from Claire.”

“Of course you did,” Dean deadpanned. “I don’t suppose I want to know exactly when and how that happened?”

“When she insisted upon going off on her own—this was prior to Amelia’s death, if you recall?”

“Yep, I remember. Independent thing that she is.”

“Indeed. I made her vow to avoid criminal activity, as I was concerned about her safety.” Dean was pretty sure he knew where this was going, but he went ahead and motioned Cas to continue.

“Some weeks before Amelia was killed, I received a phone call informing me that my ‘daughter’ had been arrested for shoplifting, and if she was not picked up, she would be transported to a juvenile detention facility to await a court appearance. Obviously, I went to fetch her.”

“Obviously,” Dean agreed wryly, “but where were Sam and I for all this?”

“You were working a case and it seemed foolish to interrupt you for something I was perfectly capable of handling independently. Afterward, over ice cream, she requested that I not inform you
“Wait, she got arrested for shoplifting so you took her out for ice cream?”

“...yes?” Cas said, looking uncertain as to why this might have been a poor idea.

“You’re going to be an awesome parent,” Dean told him, lips twitching, before nodding for him to go on.

“At any rate, I reminded her of the vow she had made and she told me with apparent relish that the promise did not count because she had been crossing her fingers. Of course, I did not understand the relevance, but eventually she managed to convey the role of crossed fingers in negating vows.”

Dean could only imagine how that conversation had gone down, with Cas totally mystified as to what crossed fingers had to do with vows to refrain from theft, and Claire no doubt somewhat less than patient in explaining it. Cas seemed quite proud to be breaking out this reasonably new skill, if unperturbed that Dean had caught him at it. Dean firmly informed him that “the rules” said you had to keep your promise if you got caught crossing your fingers, and Cas, bless his credulous nature, took him at his word. At least, Dean was pretty sure he did. If he was wrong, they’d be mopping Sam shrapnel off the walls for days.

Dean was just about ready to let it drop when something occurred to him and he demanded Cas strip off his socks to prove he wasn’t crossing his toes. The angel was flabbergasted to discover that appendages other than fingers could be crossed to serve the same purpose, and Dean was left with the uneasy feeling that he might have just contributed to the creation of a monster.

In the end, he had Cas pinky swear as the antidote to his crossed fingers, a new skill which the angel was delighted to add to his arsenal, leaving Dean with the sneaking suspicion that he was going to be required to pinky swear to a lot of things in the near future.

Dean retired shortly thereafter, dozing off with his head pillowed comfortably on the angel’s chest. He slept hard and woke up late with his head resting on a real pillow and Cas nowhere to be found. Saying a silent prayer that Sam was still in one piece, Dean rolled over, grimacing as his still tender ass made contact with the bed. Tugging down his sweatpants, he headed for the mirror, where he discovered that his ass was still tinged lightly pink, but somehow had not a single bruise on it. He had no idea how the angel accomplished this, considering the level of sting he was able to impart with a palm that, by the time he was finished with Dean’s ass, felt about as solid and weighty as a two-by-four, but somehow he managed it every time.

Just as he was reaching to pull his sweats up so he could head for the bathroom and then confirm that Sam remained unsmited, he heard the click of his door opening. Half-afraid that Sam had somehow sensed that Dean had semi-disrobed and was coming to supervise the proceedings just in case he decided to jerk off or something, Dean whipped his head around and huffed out a relieved breath at discovering that it was Cas. His brows lifted when the scent of coffee struck him as he noticed the mug the angel was cradling.

“Wow, coffee service. What’d I do to deserve this?” He paused, lips twitching, to add, “Or, wait, what did you do that you’re trying to butter me up about?”

Cas rolled his eyes before settling them on Dean, at which point they sharpened noticeably. Dean, who had nearly forgotten that he was standing with his naked ass to the mirror, pants still only halfway pulled up his thighs, glanced down at himself and then snorted. The angel, who seemed to feel that the issue of the coffee was secondary to joining Dean in an inspection of his ass, predictably blazed right past Dean’s questions.
“Let me—“

“See, yeah, I know,” Dean finished, lips twisting wryly. Cas turned to put the coffee down on the bureau before Dean made a quelling noise, “hey, don’t put that down. You can look all you like, but only if you bring that with you.”

Grinning, Cas snagged the coffee and crossed the room to Dean, who reached for the mug. Cas held it out of his reach, sliding his other arm around Dean’s waist and dragging him in for a quick kiss that Dean was only too happy to return. After drawing back, Cas deposited the mug in Dean’s hand before setting both hands on his shoulders to spin him around. A light but firm hand on his mid-back pressed him to bend slightly forward, and Dean braced himself against the mirror with his free hand. His other grasped the mug greedily, and he virtually ignored the quiet sound of satisfaction the angel made in favor of burying his nose in the coffee cup and deeply inhaling the much-loved scent.

Groaning in pleasure, he took a carefully testing sip of the hot liquid, pleased to discover that it was at exactly his preferred temperature—just shy of hot enough to scald his tongue. Using the opportunity afforded by the mirror to watch Cas’s perusal of his ass (a proud tradition the day after trips across the angel’s knee), Dean hid a grin in his coffee cup at the intently pleased expression on his face. He was half-expecting it, so he narrowly managed to avoid snorting coffee into his sinus when one of the angel’s fingertips grazed his cheek, pressing lightly (but not too lightly) against one of the pinker areas. Dean could easily have kept silent, but went ahead and let Cas hear his indrawn breath. It just made him so happy, and who was Dean to deny him a moment of joy?

What he wasn’t expecting (and thank God he had just swallowed his latest mouthful of coffee) was that the fingertip would be immediately followed by the entire hand, grasping a solid handful of Dean’s left ass cheek and squeezing. This time, the soft sound that leaked from him was involuntary, and despite the way his back arched slightly in response to the grip on sensitive flesh, Dean admired how Cas’s eyes crinkled with pleasure as he gazed at his favored canvas. After a few moments he drew his hand back, pausing to lightly touch Dean’s back, silently granting him permission to rise, before Cas receded to settle himself on the edge of the bed.

Dean went ahead and stood upright, reaching down with his free hand to scoop his waistband up and finish pulling his pants back where they belonged before turning around. He cocked a hip against his dresser and took another swallow of coffee before addressing the angel. “Well, and don’t you look mighty pleased with yourself this morning?”

“I enjoy the opportunity to appreciate the aftereffects of my work,” Cas allowed, giving Dean a lazy smile that always made warmth coil in his lower belly. There was something so damn sexy about the angel’s proprietary enjoyment of Dean’s recently crisped ass—it simply never failed.

On another morning, Dean might’ve gone ahead and closed the distance between them, crawling onto the bed to straddle Cas’s lap. In fact, he was two steps across the room with the intent of doing just that before he paused, brows knitting as he remembered the elephant in the room (or, more accurately, the moose that was not currently in the room (unless maybe he was hiding under Dean’s bed)).

“Hey, where’s Sam?”

“You may relax, he is still in one piece and breathing. He is drinking his own cup of coffee in the library while doing additional ‘research,’ which he informs me he will share with us once he has gathered enough detail.”

“I don’t suppose you got a look at what he was actually doing?” Dean inquired, making a face in anticipation of that conversation.
“As a matter of fact, I did. He appeared to be browsing listings of apparatuses designed to be used for sexual activity.” Dean closed his eyes and took a long drink of his coffee. He was clearly going to need another few cups before he could deal with this crap in earnest.

“What…sort of apparatuses?”

“They appeared to be swings of some kind.”

“Oh, for God’s sa—how long is it ‘til spring again?” Dean demanded.

“As a matter of fact, we will be finding that out tomorrow,” Cas told him excitedly. Dean’s brows rose as he tried to figure out exactly what Cas was—oh. Oh.

“It’s February 1st, isn’t it?”

“It is!” Cas confirmed happily.

“Babe,” Dean told him patiently, “you know we talked about this last year. The groundhog doesn’t actually have any real power over whether spring comes or not. You know that, right?”

Cas rolled his eyes again, so ostentatiously that even Claire would’ve been impressed. “Well, obviously, Dean. The groundhog does not control spring’s arrival; he simply predicts it.”

Dean stared at the angel in silence for a few moments. Half the time he wasn’t entirely sure whether Cas was trolling him or not, because, seriously, an angel of the Lord had to know how seasons actually worked, right?

“Okay, but he doesn’t actually do that, either. It’s just a silly little tradition that—oh, hell with it, never mind,” he interrupted himself when he saw Cas’s face start to fall. It wasn’t worth making him sad, and if the discussion got too in-depth, he was pretty sure it would somehow end with Cas deciding they needed to keep a groundhog as a pet for a while to settle the dispute. Better to leave it be. “Anyway,” Dean went on, not above blatant attempts to change the subject before they got in too deep, “not that I’m not appreciative, but what’s with the coffee delivery?”

Cas, who had the attention span of a hummingbird half the time, was easily diverted. “I did not imagine that you had any desire to face Sam without the assistance of caffeine, and I thought that perhaps I owed you a ‘freebie,’ as you put it, for the orange juice debacle,” he admitted, his face regretful enough that Dean knew it was really an apology for his rare moment of meanness last night far more than for taking the orange juice.

Pushing off the dresser, Dean trod forward the few steps to where Cas sat on the edge of his bed, tipping the angel’s chin up with two fingers of his free hand. Cas smiled ruefully up at him and Dean leaned down, settling his lips against Cas’s for a long moment. Cas returned the kiss, sliding one hand around to warmly cup the back of Dean’s neck. But for the uncomfortable angle at which said neck was resting due to the height difference between a seated Cas and a standing Dean (and his cooling coffee), he would’ve been perfectly happy to let the kiss drag out indefinitely. As it was, he drew back after a moment to stand upright again, reaching down to card his fingertips lightly through Cas’s perpetually mussed hair.

“We’re okay, babe,” he assured the angel, once again speaking less about the orange juice than about Cas’s uncharacteristic attitude. “There’s been a lot going on, and I didn’t pick the best moment to throw a tantrum—regardless of how valid my point may have been.” Okay, so he might have been magnanimously letting go of Cas’s moment of nastiness, but that didn’t mean he couldn’t get in a dig or two about the original issue. “You’ve just lost all leverage to turn into a grouchy-pants if I
occasionally swipe a bottle of OJ outside of aftercare.”

Cas’s lips twitched in a manner that made it look suspiciously like he was restraining laughter. Dean was reminded powerfully of the way he knew he often looked when Cas had unwittingly said something ridiculous and adorable, and he was trying not to laugh at him. The reason behind it was revealed when the angel responded, voice tinged with amusement. “Yes, well, I will endeavor to restrain my, er, grouchy-pants if such a situation should at some point arise. I do, however, owe you an apology for my moment of petty nastiness yesterday. There is little excuse for it under any circumstances, and none whatsoever in any situation in which I am exercising control over you. You did the right thing in putting a stop to things, and I am very proud of you for how well you handled a difficult moment.”

Hearing that Cas was proud of him never failed to fill Dean with a squirmy kind of embarrassed pleasure, and he could feel the tips of his ears heating up as he ducked his head and smiled.

“It’s—we’re cool, babe. You had a moment. Happens to the best of us. It’s why we’ve got colors, and why you’ve practically shredded my ears lecturing me about using them if I’m the slightest bit uncomfortable, right?” The angel gave an affirmative laugh, then reached up and—mindful of his coffee cup—settled his hands around Dean’s hips, drawing him down until he knelt with one leg on either side of Cas and could settle into the angel’s lap.

Dean’s breath faltered as his sensitive ass made firm contact with Cas’s thighs, and he had to give the angel credit: Cas tried really damn hard to restrain the proprietary pleasure that briefly darkened his eyes. He didn’t entirely succeed, of course, but Dean appreciated the effort. Once he was settled onto Cas’s lap, he wasn’t actually too uncomfortable. Certainly, he was aware of his ass, but he figured by this evening the residual ache would’ve faded altogether. Considering how recently and severely he’d been spanked, his swift improvement made Dean wonder whether Cas had employed just the tiniest hint of angel healing mojo while Dean slept. It was unusual for Cas to partially heal him but not unheard of. Occasionally, when Cas wanted to be able to play again sooner than ordinary healing would permit but did not want to entirely spare Dean the aftereffects of the latest spanking, he would provide just a little bit of help to speed the healing process.

Come to think of it, if Cas had helped the healing along this time, it suggested he might well be planning something. The thought made his stomach squirm in the pleasurable, slightly anxious anticipation that was so familiar, and he took a moment to consider whether or not he wanted to ask Cas about the healing before deciding to leave it be.

As if the angel could read his mind, however, he leaned back a bit, propping his hands behind and to either side of him on the bed so that he could see Dean more fully. “Speaking of colors, there’s something I’d like to discuss with you.”

This looked like it was going to be interesting, and Dean definitely wanted to find out what it was about, but the combination of the coffee and an entire night asleep had Dean in increasingly urgent need of the facilities. Smiling regretfully, he wrinkled his nose at Cas before interjecting.

“I definitely wanna hear what you’ve got to say, but I think I need to go have a ‘yellow’ moment before we get started,” he was snickering before he even got the ‘yellow’ reference out because, yeah, okay, maybe he had the sense of humor of a 12-year-old boy. Cas looked a little perplexed for half a second, then seemed to connect the dots and snorted, shaking his head.

“Indeed. At last check, Sam was in the library with his coffee, but I cannot guarantee that he will still be there, so keep a weather eye on the horizon.” Dean blinked a couple times at the colloquialism, which he was pretty sure he’d never heard from Cas before, but shrugged agreeably.
“Good call. Eventually we’ll have to leave the room if only to feed him. And me, for that matter, but it can wait for the moment. Wanna get me more coffee while I pee and we can reconvene in here in five?”

Cas was amenable to this plan, so the two of them parted ways at the doorway, both venturing down the hall a little cautiously in deference to Sam’s recent unpredictability. Much to his relief, Dean managed to have an uneventful piss and even brush his teeth and wash his face without his brother popping up to recommend a particularly highly reviewed brand of butt plug or something.

There was no sign of Cas when he got back to his room, and by the time Dean had changed into a fresh pair of sweatpants (what? It wasn’t like they’d be going anywhere today) and gathered up his laundry, which he hadn’t bothered to do during Sam’s Eeyore phase, he was starting to worry that Sam had waylaid the angel. Five minutes later, when he’d just about decided he was going to have to stage a rescue mission and was psyching himself up to deal with his creeptastic brother, the door rattled on its hinges. Dean was familiar enough with the sound of a door being kicked to know what was going on, and it was with some trepidation that he pulled it open.

The sight—and scent—that met him instantly chased away any lingering concerns, and he stepped back to permit Cas entry only after stealing the plate that had been in one of his hands opposite a fresh cup of coffee in the other. “Oh my God, hot pockets? Where the fuck did you find those?”

“They had fallen behind a shelf in the walk-in freezer. I discovered them inadvertently when I went in there to escape Sam’s lecture regarding the suitability of candy bars versus granola bars in after-scene recovery.”

Dean was too focused on the pair of breakfast pockets steaming on the plate (his sense of smell reliably informed him that they were bacon, egg, and cheese—his favorite!) to spare much attention for the fact that Sam was clearly still at it. Actually salivating, he leaned over the plate to inhale the fragrant steam greedily. Yeah, he could cook like a mofo, but every now and then you just wanted a hot pocket. Add on the fact that this meant he could eat breakfast without having to face Sam’s latest research, and this was the best morning ever.

“I love you,” he said fervently, not quite sure whether he was talking more to the angel or the hot pockets. Cas appeared undisturbed by the fact that Dean’s general prohibition against the “L” word had been suspended over the romance of hot pockets.

A thought struck Dean just as he was lifting the first of them toward his mouth, and he paused, grimacing. “Wait, was there enough for Sam, or is he gonna be pounding down the door demanding food in five minutes?”

To be fair, even if there wasn’t enough for Sam, there was no way in hell he was sharing his hot pockets. Cas, lips twitching in apparent recognition of this fact, replied, “No, Sam requested that I fix him several packets of microwave oatmeal, and appears quite content with that as his breakfast.”

Dean nodded, then went ahead and took the first bite, groaning so filthy that Cas actually looked a little turned on as he shut the door behind him, locked it (Dean noted the pre-emptive strike against Sam’s intrusions with approval), and headed to the bedside table to set down Dean’s fresh cup of coffee. Dean followed him a little more slowly, too focused on his breakfast to care much about sitting down, even setting aside the fact that it was mildly uncomfortable to do so. He was just about to go in for his third bite when a thought occurred to him and he swiveled to face Cas, eyes huge.

“Wait, if Sam didn’t want any, does that mean…?” Cas, lips twitching, nodded.

“Indeed. There are still three more in the box.”
“Oh my God, this is the best morning ever,” Dean told him through a mouthful. Cas’s lips compressed into a line as he reached up to remove the small fleck of egg that Dean had inadvertently sprayed onto his cheek, before Dean stayed his hand with one of his own. Swallowing his current bite, Dean grinned at the angel. “No, no, I got it.” He was just leaning forward to lick it off Cas’s cheek when the angel’s hand splayed across his entire face, lightly pressing it back.

“If it’s all the same to you, Dean, I will handle this myself. Not that I do not appreciate the thought, but you will likely just end up smearing more of your hot pocket on my face, and it would be a shame to waste it. Perhaps more focus on eating and less on talking, except between bites?”

Dean was not in any wayfooled by this ostensible concern for his breakfast—Cas just didn’t want hot pocket drool all over him, but that was fair. Letting the angel handle the bit of egg and returning to his food, Dean let the admonition over food manners slide.

By the time he had worked his way methodically through the rest of the first and half of the second hot pocket, a glance over at Cas demonstrated that the angel was looking a little squirmy and appeared to be half-hard in the sweatpants he had apparently stolen from Dean at some point overnight. Yeah, now that Dean thought about it, he guessed his hot pocket noises actually had a lot in common with his sex noises. Giving Cas a saucy wink, he buried himself back in the remainder of the food. While ordinarily he might’ve gotten louder and more ostentatious with his noises just to be a dick and see how riled up he could get Cas, now he opted to tone them down some, just in case Sam had a bug planted somewhere in his room and came to investigate the sounds.

By the time he finished, Cas was seated cross-legged against the headboard, patiently waiting. When Dean turned to him, licking the last little bit of runny cheese off of his fingers, Cas handed over a paper towel from God only knew where, which Dean accepted with a nod, wiping both mouth and hands and sighing contentedly.

“That was amazing. You’re the best. Seriously.”

“My pleasure,” Cas told him, smiling slightly, “even if I am now left with performance anxiety due to the fact that the noises a hot pocket can wring from you appear to exceed those that I earn.”

“Bullshit,” Dean scoffed, grinning back at him, “you’re just noticing them more now because you’re not otherwise occupied.”

Cas considered for a moment before seeming to decide he’d accept this interpretation, settling back and watching Dean expectantly. Only now did Dean remember that there’d been something Cas wanted to discuss, apparently related to the color system? Snagging his fresh cup of coffee and taking a sip, he went ahead and settled himself carefully on the bed, in deference to his ass, shifting until he and Cas were facing each other before he spoke. “Okay, what’s on your mind, babe?”

“Before I even begin,” Cas said, looking both pensive and...concerned? Dean was immediately a little worried, and reached out to take one of Cas’s hands, twining their fingers together. Cas squeezed his hand, looking bolstered as he went on. “I am going to invoke the color ‘red,’ not because we are in mid-scene but because I want your honest and open thoughts, with no concern for respect or the etiquette I generally hold you to.”

Okay, that was new. Well, at least, the invoking of a safeword when they weren’t even in mid-scene was new, and Dean was intrigued. Raising his brows, he nodded, then decided that with Cas looking uneasy, that probably wasn’t sufficient. “Okay, I’m on board. Honest and open thoughts it is.”

Cas nodded, and when he spoke it was with an air of someone who had been not quite rehearsing it,
but thinking about it in some detail before coming around to actually bringing it up. “There are two things I wish to discuss with you. Firstly, I told you yesterday that you had a punishment coming—well, two, to be precise, but I am speaking particularly about the first one—for calling me a ‘junkless Ken doll’ and a coward.” Dean bit down hard on the inside of his cheek to refrain from snickering at how earnestly Cas spoke the accusations that Dean had thrown at him. “I have been thinking about this a great deal. Despite, or perhaps because of the fact that our play is just that—play—some things should remain sacred. Your thoughts, I believe, are one of those things. It crosses a dangerous line for me to hold you to account for things that occur solely in your own head. That is your territory. You should never be made to answer, not for actions or words, but for your own mind.”

Cas lapsed into silence, gazing at Dean expectantly, and after a second Dean realized he was waiting for a response. Dean, who was a little flattened by this, didn’t give in to his automatic urge to make a joke. It would’ve been disrespectful to the amount of thought that Cas had clearly given to the topic. Instead, squeezing the angel’s hand again, he took a minute to consider and decide how he really felt about it before he spoke.

“I’m not gonna lie and pretend like I didn’t have a knee-jerk ‘not fair’ reaction when you first told me I was in trouble,” Dean acknowledged, “but that doesn’t actually mean anything, since half the time it’s completely fair I still have that reaction. I think…you’re not necessarily wrong about thoughts being different. They are,” Cas opened his mouth to speak and Dean forestalled him with a raised hand, “no, listen, babe. They are different, but I think this is…sort of a unique situation? Yeah, the first time I called you a junkless Ken doll and a coward, I wasn’t necessarily intending you to hear it, but it’s not like I didn’t know that if I pray to you, you hear it. I’ll grant it wasn’t so much a prayer,” his lips twitched a little in amusement, “or if it was it was a douchey one, but it’s not really any different. I was thinking it at you, so of course you ended up hearing it.”

Cas was nodding, brow furrowed in deep concentration that was frankly adorable, and Dean took a moment simply to take him in before going on. “Even so, if it was just that one time, I think I’d agree with you that we should probably not cross the line into punishment for my thoughts. But.” He paused to take a deep breath, and Cas looked intrigued, apparently not expecting there to be a ‘but.’ “From the way you looked at me when I thought that stuff at you the first time, I knew perfectly well you heard me. So on some level, when I repeated it and threw it at you just as hard, it was intentional. I knew you were going to hear it and I wanted you to, and if I’m honest with us both, I was probably doing it that way not just because Sam wouldn’t hear me but because I also knew that if I ever said it to you out loud I’d pay for it, and I figured I’d get plausible deniability because it was a thought. I was deliberately provoking you in a way that I could use to claim innocence later, because, hey, can’t control your thoughts, right?”

Cas considered this for a moment, brows still knit together, before he spoke. “I appreciate you telling me the truth. It would’ve been easy to maintain your, as you say, plausible deniability. Nevertheless, I leave it to you whether that particular infraction remains on your permanent record, if you will.”

Dean quirked a half-grin at him, appreciating the reference and making a note to ask later, when they weren’t in the middle of a Deep Talk, where exactly Cas had gathered enough to make an accurate permanent record reference. As for the question of whether or not he was held to account, “If I’m gutsy enough to call an angel of the Lord a junkless Ken doll coward, I’m damn well gutsy enough to face the consequences for it,” he told Cas, grin widening.

Cas snorted a laugh. “That is exceedingly honorable of you,” the angel observed, lifting their twined hands to brush a kiss across the back of Dean’s, “but I do think this raises an important larger question as well—“
‘—about how we handle thoughts in general moving forward, yeah,’” Dean interrupted, nodding.

“Indeed. You know that I make it a point never to deliberately listen in on your thoughts, but when they are directed at me with sufficient intent, I am not able to block them out. Generally, I think, you are aware of where that line falls except perhaps in moments in which your emotions are running particularly hot?’” It was definitely a question, and Dean appreciated that they were having this conversation, were hashing out where to draw the line on including Dean’s thoughts in their scenes. It was good to lay these things out clearly ahead of time so there were general guidelines, even though Dean knew he could always safeword not just during a scene but before ever starting one, which meant that he’d never actually be punished for something he didn’t agree to (although there were a fair number of moments in which their relationship would’ve seemed to outsiders to skirt the edge of what Dean knew from research was called a ‘domestic discipline’ relationship, when push came to shove they really were true equals outside the proverbial bedroom).

Offering Cas a nod in response to the question, Dean clarified, “yeah, exactly. Like, if I’d been calm enough to think about it carefully before the first junkless-Ken-doll moment, I would’ve known you’d probably hear it. Actually, come to think of it, I wasn’t totally surprised when you did. I guess what I would say moving forward is, let’s assume that if you hear me thinking something obnoxious at you, it’s intentional, and if you go to hold me accountable and I don’t feel okay about it, or I feel like it’s something you weren’t supposed to hear, I’ll use the colors and we can talk it out.”

“I think that is an exceedingly sensible method of dealing with a potentially complicated issue, but I want you to give me your word that you will not hesitate for a second to use the colors or your safeword if you ever truly feel, even for a moment, that you are being made to feel as if your own mind is no longer a safe place. That is not an acceptable state of affairs to me.”

The clear depth of Cas’s feeling about this warmed Dean internally. Whether in or out of scenes, Cas’s highest priority remained ensuring that Dean felt safe and fully comfortable with their activities and relationship. Sometimes Dean was a little overwhelmed by the intensity with which Castiel focused on and tended to his well-being. It was damn near humbling, is what it was.

Leaning over to set his coffee (which he’d pretty much forgotten about in the intensity of the discussion anyway) down on the bedside table, Dean reached out to twine his now free hand in Cas’s other hand. Now holding one of Cas’s hand in each of his, Dean reassured him. “I promise, Cas.” The angel’s slightly narrowed gaze prompted Dean to go on. “You know in order for us to do this, I’m not the only one who has to be trusting. You have to trust me, too. You have to trust me to speak up if something’s going down that I’m really not okay with. Look, I know there have been times when I wasn’t so great about it, but we’ve been past that for a while now. I need you to trust me, babe. It only works if it goes both ways.”

Cas smiled just a little sheepishly as he nodded. “You are correct, of course. I should have greater faith in your ability to advocate for yourself as necessary. You demonstrated it just last night,” the angel acknowledged, referring to Dean’s use of ‘yellow’ to pause things when his words became a little too harsh.

“Exactly,” Dean affirmed before, remembering something, he went on, “Now, you said you had two things you wanted to talk to me about. Was that them? The specific thought issue and the general one? Or is there something else?”

“There is something else,” Cas confirmed, “and it follows to some degree from the first. You have stated that you will accept your punishment for your ill-advised use of thoughts as weapons, and let us not forget,” the angel’s lips twisted wryly, “your decision to tease me with my weakness last
night, co-opting what was no doubt intended to be a special surprise into a—“

“—special surprise?” Dean asked, his own lips twitching violently.

“Well, yes, but—“

“I know, I know, I just couldn’t resist. Go on, I’m listening.”

“To be frank, Dean, I have been pushing you quite hard since we became trapped in the bunker. After much thought, it has occurred to me that this has been a way for me to exercise control, when I find that I have had freedom that I am used to taken from me.” Well, he knew Cas would get there eventually. Dean, of course, had come to this conclusion well over a week ago. Since this didn’t come as a surprise to him, Dean nodded for Cas to go on. “That is, perhaps, not entirely fair to you. I have been harder on you, demanding more from you, and more often, than I think I have probably ever before now.”

After slight consideration, Dean nodded again, agreeing with half, but he had to speak up about the other half. “Yeah, you’ve definitely been a little more intense, and I think you’re right about why, but I don’t know that it’s particularly unfair to me.”

“What has been unfair is that there was no discussion prior to this. I did not ask your thoughts about intensifying our play, I merely did so, and you have risen to every challenge beautifully.” Dean realized only when he felt his cheeks heat up that he was actually blushing in response to the praise. He ducked his head a little, embarrassed, and was not entirely surprised when Cas disentangled one set of their hands to tip his chin back up. “I do not tell you enough how very proud you make me, Dean.”

Welp, that did it. He was pretty sure he could actually melt into a liquid and sink through the bed in pleased embarrassment at this point, his entire face flaming as he fought not to squirm. Rather than looking away, though, out of respect for what it meant to him to hear that from Cas, he met the angel’s eyes and smiled. “Well, I don’t ever tell you how proud you make me. And you do.”

Cas blinked a couple times, startled, and then tilted his head to one side, as if absorbing this new information. After a moment, his face lit up in a smile of such breathtaking beauty that Dean was struck briefly dumb. A second later, after moving with the rapid grace that enabled him to be such an effective killer, Dean was straddling the angel’s lap, hands cupping his face as he brought his lips down to Cas’s. They kissed for a long moment, lazily, with no true intent behind it, before Dean drew back. “How did I get so lucky, huh?”

Cas’s blue eyes were bright with fondness and pleasure as he shook his head. “I keep telling you that I am the lucky one. One of these days you will believe me. As an angel of the Lord, I am the authority on such things.”

Dean snorted in surprised amusement, settling down as comfortably as possible, considering his still slightly tender ass, on Cas’s lap. “The authority, eh?”

“Indeed. I am the authority on many things—which I will be more than pleased to tell you about once we have finished this conversation, which you have been rather effectively distracting me from.”

“That’s my bad,” Dean acknowledged with an irrepressible grin which said quite clearly that he was not remotely remorseful.

“At any rate, what I have been working toward with these seemingly unrelated points is that I would
like to try something new, with your approval.” Generally, when Cas had new ideas, it ended rather pleasurably for Dean. He was intrigued, and let the lift of his brows encourage the angel to go on, which he did. “You have two things yet to account for. Keeping in mind that I was the one who dragged things to a rather higher level, and that I would now like to give you the license to set which level we either remain on or drop back down to, I am choosing to leave it to you what your punishment will be. The decision is entirely in your hands.” Dean opened his mouth to respond, and Cas set a finger against his lips, shushing him. Dean opened his mouth just enough to lightly bite down on the finger, drawing a chuckle from the angel as he went on. “I do not want you to answer now. I would request that you take some time to think about it. To consider what you are truly comfortable with. Not what you believe I want you to be comfortable with, but what you are comfortable with. Can you do that for me?”

If he hadn’t already been on board—and he was—those last two words would’ve done it. How could he resist when Cas said that? There was very damn little that Dean wouldn’t do for him, and this sure as hell wasn’t one of those few things.

“It’s a deal, babe.”

“Excellent. With that settled, shall we finally brave the library and Sam?”

“…perdition?”

“Dean, much as I love you, you cannot safeword your way out of having to deal with your brother.”
Chapter Summary

In which Dean makes a decision about his punishment (and in the process finally reveals a long-hidden secret to Cas), and Sam is unsurprisingly still creepy. Sadly, there's no food.

Chapter specific notes and warnings (there are only references to things, no actual kinky things happening) at the end of the chapter, plus a very brief and kind of obnoxious author's note.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

“Are you sure?” Dean demanded in a tone of voice that was just a little whinier than intended, climbing off Cas’s lap and getting to his feet regardless. The angel clambered off the bed too, as Dean stretched out his back and snagged his AC/DC t-shirt from the pile of laundry after giving it a sniff and ascertaining that it was still in wearable shape. Cas snorted a little at this, and Dean made a mental note to do laundry later before going on, “my safeword’s supposed to be for me to use when whatever’s happening needs to stop immediately and completely. Sam definitely needs to stop immediately and completely. Hey, maybe with this new kick of his, if I safeword with him he really will stop? Since he’s so intent on the BDSM etiquette and all.”

While he realized that he sounded distinctly desperate (he could remember his voice sounding about the same when he discovered that he was the Michael sword), frankly, if any situation was appropriate for desperation, it was this one: trapped in a compound for just shy of two weeks and counting with an increasingly restless angel, no beer, no bacon, and the most meddlesome brother in recorded history.

“I am entirely sure,” Cas told him with a hint of regret that told Dean he wouldn’t have minded doing some safewording with Sam either, “although now that I think about it, perhaps we should have saved our conversation for a time when Sam could observe it. He could scarcely think our communication was lacking after witnessing that.”

Dean grimaced at the missed opportunity, but after a moment of consideration shook his head. “No, even if that were true, and at this point I honestly don’t think anything would convince him his amateur services aren’t needed, that conversation was still one that belongs only to us. We did it right.”

Cas smiled at him slightly, lifting a hand to cup his cheek for a moment. Dean tilted his head into the hand, then turned just enough to brush a light kiss across the angel’s palm. “You are, of course, quite right,” Cas agreed mellowly, “although I suppose we could recreate the conversation for Sam just in case it might have an impact?”

“No, that’s okay,” Dean told him a little too hastily. After discovering the angel’s unanticipated flair for the dramatic, he didn’t want to risk the possibility that Cas would get a little too into things and end up reenacting a scene from the most recent soap opera he’d seen, leaving Sam with the impression that things were even more fucked up than he already thought they were.
Cas frowned at him slightly, as if divining what he was thinking, but let it slide when Dean twined their fingers together and nodded toward the door with a sigh. Together, they headed into the hallway to face their small country of a would-be sex therapist.

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The next 24 hours passed in relative peace, most likely because Dean and Cas were meticulous about the amount of physical contact they engaged in when Sam was within a 50-foot radius. They also made no moves toward sexual activity of any kind—in part because, as Cas said “With rare exceptions, I quite prefer for you to be entirely unscathed when we begin. It is not nearly as much fun to take apart someone who I have already left in pieces,” but mostly because it gave them a reprieve from Sam. Dean privately told Cas that he was also hoping a little bit of a break might lull Sam into complacency, such that when they did start up again, they might manage to escape his ever-present looming presence.

So far, that gambit didn’t seem to be working. Sam was popping out of another bathroom stall when Dean finished taking a crap (and for God’s sake, was nothing sacred?), and he was lingering too-casually in the kitchen doorway while Dean fixed him a sandwich with their dwindling supply of sliced turkey and lettuce (they were all out of tomatoes and onions). Footsteps paused outside Dean’s bedroom door for unnervingly long periods of time before moving onward down the hall. A perfectly innocent trip back down to the boiler room to grab Dean’s forgotten (and now quite stiffly-dried) long-sleeved t-shirt was punctuated by Sam’s appearance from the same spot behind the hot water heater, and damned if either he or Cas could figure out how the hell the kid was making it to the boiler room before them. When Cas popped into the laundry room where Dean was folding his clean clothes to ask a mundane question, Dean spotted hazel eyes peeking out from the gap between two dryers and practically had a heart attack. Sam was inescapable, ever-present, around every corner, behind every door. He was the alpha and the goddamn omega, and Dean was pretty sure that if this carried on, before too long he and Cas would be jumping at their own shadows.

By late the next afternoon, two things had happened. The first was that Dean’s ass was fully back to normal, which Cas had confirmed with another visual and tactile inspection when Dean woke up that morning. When he demanded to know whether the angel had sped the healing process up some with his angel mojo, Cas just smiled mysteriously, which was as good as an admission of guilt as far as Dean was concerned, but he let it slide, because he had been thinking about Cas’s request. He’d been thinking damn hard, and had made it a point to give himself some solo time to really percolate on it.

That was the second thing that had happened: Dean had come to a decision about his ‘punishment.’ He was a little nervous about it—butterflies were flapping away in his stomach and throat—but he’d turned it over and over in his head, poking at it from every angle to explore how he felt about it. In the end, he decided that yes, this was what he wanted. He wasn’t sure how Cas was going to feel about it, or if the angel would even agree, but he was ready to find out.

Dean was finishing up the dishes he’d been washing by hand, despite the dishwasher, because Sam still wouldn’t enter ‘the hive.’ He actually seemed deeply buried in some research he was doing online about some newly discovered ancient Incan ruins. He seemed to think the ruins might provide new details into a supernatural creature they’d encountered a couple months back that closely resembled a thought-to-be-extinct monster referenced in Incan legends. Why he thought these particular ruins were likely to have the information he wanted, Dean couldn’t have said—not because Sam hadn’t told him, but because he’d been tuning the kid out.

After setting the final dish in the dish drainer, he vacated the kitchen and headed into the library, where Sam was intently reading something on his laptop while making meticulous notes. He found
Cas where he’d expected to, tucked into a small reading nook in a corner of the cavernous room. The angel was happily buried in a book he’d found in some obscure extinct language, which he claimed was about bees. Dean refrained from asking for further details, since getting him started on bees had about the same result as getting Sam started on whatever research he was into at any given time: Dean ending up with glazed eyes and possibly drooling after an hours-long lecture that he had tuned out of several minutes in.

Dean stepped into view of Cas, cocking one hip against a corner of the nook and gazing down at the angel within. A rush of affection warmed Dean at the sight of him, legs curled up to one side, brow furrowed in concentration as he read. After a second, Cas seemed to notice he was being observed and looked up at him with a smile. Dean raised his brows meaningfully and tipped his head in the direction of the hallway, silent indication that he wanted Cas to come with him. The mirror raising of brows Cas responded with told Dean that he knew what was going unsaid for the moment: Dean had made a decision about the challenge Cas had given him a day and a half ago, and wanted to talk it out. Cas tucked a small scrap of paper (on which he appeared to have doodled a small cartoon bee, which practically made Dean explode with the cute) into the book to mark his place. He set the book down on the cushion as he rose out of the nook, which resembled nothing so much as a window seat without the window. Dean twined his fingers into Cas’s, motioning the angel to a back exit from the library where they could leave without actually having to cross Sam’s line of vision. The odds were excellent that he would still end up hovering over them in five minutes, but at least they could give privacy a shot.

Cas, who was of one mind with Dean about avoiding Sam’s interference in any way humanly (or angelically) possible, kept quiet and trod silently behind Dean. They were a hallway and a half away from the library, coming around to Dean’s room the long way, before he spoke.

“You have come to a decision, then?”

“Yup, and before you say anything, yes, I thought about it hard, and yes, I’m sure. And—“ Dean paused, trying to put together the right words to express what he wanted to say.

“And?” Cas said, sounding curious and perhaps just a hair concerned.

“And you’re going to have to trust me,” Dean confessed, glancing over his shoulder at Cas, who now definitely looked disquieted.

“That does not necessarily inspire confidence, Dean,” Cas told him, brows knit as he scanned Dean from tip to toe, looking for any indications that worried him.

“You’ll understand in a minute, but let’s get back to my room where we can at least pretend we’ve got privacy before we really get into it.”

Cas nodded his acceptance of this, and the two of them traversed the remaining two hallways in silence, hand in hand.

Once they had closed and locked the door of Dean’s room behind them, Cas turned to him expectantly, brows raised in both interest and probably more concern than he intended.

“C’mon, let’s sit,” Dean told him, tugging him to the bed and settling down on it cross-legged. Cas joined him, and Dean kept their fingers entangled, hoping the touch would ground Cas and prevent what Dean half-suspected would be a mild freak-out when he heard what Dean was thinking. “So, right off the bat, I’m gonna tell you that this is going to surprise you, and you’re going to have an immediate reaction that I think will probably be negative. What I’d ask you is not to immediately veto, and not to assume that I’m doing this just because I think it’s what you want. Can you do that
for me?” Dean deliberately chose to use exactly the same words that Cas had used when he requested that Dean take time to really consider what he was comfortable with, and not just what he thought Cas wanted him to be comfortable with. He hoped that this subtle callback would help the angel to put his requests in context, to realize that he really did need to have faith in Dean, even if the response he got wasn’t even in the ballpark of what he was expecting.

“Very well,” Cas told him after a moment’s pause in which he searched Dean’s face intently, “I give you my word that I will do neither of those things. I will hear you out, and I will attempt to do so without prejudice.”

“Okay, good,” Dean said, then took another deep breath. “My decision is the belt.”

Cas’s brow lifted slightly, an indication that he was already a bit surprised. Dean suspected that Cas had been expecting for him to de-escalate things back to their pre-blizzard level, in which a particularly intense hand-spanking with orgasm denial was the sort of thing that would’ve been expected for such infractions. Considering that, he was about to blow the angel entirely out of the water. True to his word, despite his surprise, Cas did not make any negative indications, merely nodded before speaking with impressive neutrality in his tone. “Very well. I presume you have decided on a number?”

“I have,” Dean told him, taking still a third deep breath. It turned out that this—telling Cas what he’d decided on—was even harder than he’d anticipated it might be. On a logical level, he didn’t think for a second Cas would be repulsed by what he’d opted for, or would decide that Dean was actually just sick in the head, but Dean’s own traitorously negative self-image and the feelings it invoked were as illogical as ever. Holding in the breath he’d taken for a bolstering moment as Cas nearly leaned forward in the suspense Dean had unintentionally stoked (and damnit, that didn’t exactly make this revelation easier), he opened his mouth and let a single word fall between them, small but as heavy as a lead weight. “Fifty.”

Cas drew in a strangled gasp, his eyes widening until Dean, for the first time, understood what the English language meant when it referred to someone’s eyes being as wide as saucers. Dean, who suddenly felt a whole lot lighter after getting it off his chest, squeezed Cas’s hand in concrete, tactile reassurance while the angel tried to get his proverbial feet back under him.

Dean had to give him credit, although he opened his mouth as if to immediately naysay, he almost instantly closed it again as he remembered his promise. As expected, once Cas’s eyes somewhat recovered from the shock (although they remained wide and his face was actually a little blanched), they began to scan Dean intently, searching him from head to foot and then back again, as if trying to divine the motivation behind this wholly unprecedented declaration.

And it was unprecedented. The twenty strokes of the belt Cas had delivered a week ago had been the most Dean had ever taken in one sitting by a good five strokes. Prior to this, the belt had come out maybe a total of ten or twelve times over the course of several years, and it wasn’t because they played infrequently, it was because their play had generally been more…well, playful.

Despite what Cas would no doubt assume, Dean hadn’t come to this conclusion because he thought what Cas really wanted was permission to throw them headfirst into the kind of heavy play they’d never gotten anywhere near so far. If he was totally honest with himself (and occasionally, he was) he’d been wanting to try some more intense impact play for a while now, but hadn’t really known how to broach the topic with Cas. It was one of the reasons he had made the decision he had when Cas gave him a choice between ten and fifteen (and then, after adding on the additional five strokes, fifteen and twenty) strokes. He’d wanted to test himself, see how he handled a few more than he’d had before.
And how he’d handled it was that he’d come untouched, without so much as a single finger on him, from nothing more than the bite of the belt jarring against the plug Cas had inserted. That, and the incredible headspace he’d found himself in when Cas fucked him afterward had told Dean all he needed to know about his ability and desire to keep experimenting with not only increased impact play but higher levels of pain.

And now, as if reading his mind (despite the fact that Dean knew Cas had done no such thing), the angel had handed Dean the ability to request the specific punishment that he felt he could handle and deserved, neatly gift-wrapped. It was an opportunity too serendipitous to pass up, a way for Dean to tell Cas that he wanted to try upping the ante even further without having to find a way to set up the conversation.

He’d known perfectly well, though, that Cas’s instinctive response to the request would be a resounding ‘no.’ In fact, Dean was pretty sure that Cas was going to veto the number he’d laid out. Dean had deliberately shot a little high, suspecting that no matter what number he cited, as long as it was more than they’d ever tried before, Cas was going to want to cut it back. He figured that if he told Cas he wanted forty, the angel could probably be talked into compromising on thirty. If by some miracle he actually agreed to forty, and it was too much, Dean was fully prepared to use his safewords to stop the proceedings. He had done a lot of soul-searching on that topic, too, because if ever there was a time for him to be quite sure he was comfortable using his safeword or the colors, it was when they were going to be pushing the limits of anything they’d done before. He was confident that if he ended up feeling like he couldn’t handle what they were trying, he was willing to speak up. Now he just needed Cas to believe him when he said so.

Speaking of the angel, his face had undergone perhaps a dozen miniscule shifts in expression, so subtle that anyone but Dean likely would not have been able to spot them. He’d started at shock and immediately transitioned to negation. That would likely have been where it ended if Dean hadn’t made him promise to sit on his initial reaction and really think about it. As it was, the negation had been immediately followed by a flash of what Dean easily recognized as unwilling desire. That told him all he needed to know. He’d been pretty damn sure Cas, for his own sake, would be on board with upping the ante. The intent, almost fierce pleasure in Cas’s face and voice during the last strapping he’d delivered had largely convinced Dean that he wasn’t the only one who was seriously interested in trying some more intense stuff. And, as if the unwilling desire hadn’t been enough for Dean, what followed that was a split second of unrestrained, sheer greed.

Cas didn’t just want this. He wanted it badly.

Dean realized almost immediately upon registering that fact that Cas must have been working extremely hard, likely for a long time now, to conceal his desires from Dean. This was almost certainly because Cas believed that if Dean knew what he truly wanted, Dean would bend over backward to give it to him, even if it was far more than Dean truly wanted.

The remainder of the things that had flickered on Cas’s face were unsurprising and, in comparison to that half-second of avarice, largely uninteresting to Dean. There was the expected self-recrimination, reluctance, curiosity (as he tried to figure out Dean’s motivation), hope—honestly, there were enough emotions to fully stock the entire cast of an hour-long soap opera for at least a full show. By the time his face settled back into what even appeared to Dean (who surely knew him best) as impassivity, he sort of wanted to give the guy a standing ovation. Recognizing that discretion was the better part not only of valor but of getting your boyfriend to beat your ass raw, he managed to restrain himself with no little effort.

See, here was the thing (and Dean had been thinking about it a lot): Cas was an angel of the Lord. A real, true, honest-to-God (yeah pun pretty much intended) fucking angel of the motherfucking Lord.
And, as he had told Dean during only their second meeting, what that meant was that he was a soldier. A warrior (although it was probably worth noting that while Dean was way off on the whole Michael Landon thing, he wasn’t so wrong about Cas being a guardian as well).

It wasn’t exactly the biggest surprise, if you really thought about it, that an angel might not be the world’s most vanilla, gentle lover. They (or at least Cas, Dean couldn’t have spoken to what other angels might be like in the sack) needed more than soft touches and sweet words—just as Dean did. Honestly, if anyone was able to understand, it was another warrior—another soldier.

Like Dean.

But there was more to it than just that, Dean was pretty sure. After a hell of a lot of consideration (honestly, if Sam had half a clue just how deeply Dean had thought about and analyzed all of this, he would’ve been beside himself with glee, no doubt just dying to have a nice, in-depth discussion about the psychological underpinnings of his brother’s sex life), Dean had come to the conclusion that the way he and Cas fit together made perfect sense.

Cas—an angel. Created as a blunt instrument, intended to obey, to always be under the control of another. Of his superiors, of the garrison commander, of God Himself. Was it any wonder that when left to his own devices what he desperately needed was to be the one in control?

And then Dean—well, since Dean’s earliest memories, his shoulders had been heavy with the weight of responsibility. The first and last responsibility had always been to Sammy, but there had been so much more, too. He was responsible for keeping the family together, for being the go-between who somehow managed a father and brother who could barely be in the same room. He was always responsible for the hunt. For the civilians. So was it any wonder that, when left to his own devices, what he needed most was for someone else to take the weight from his shoulders? For someone else to, for once, take responsibility for him?

To be fair, he still struggled with it sometimes. Every now and then some version of ‘what would Dad say if he could see you now’ floated through his head when he was laid out, desperate, whimpering in pain and need at Castiel’s mercy. Mostly, though, he was at peace with it these days. Maybe that was why. Why he was finally ready to explore…more. And somehow he needed to make the angel in question understand that Dean wasn’t doing it for Cas, he was doing it for himself.

In truth, Dean wasn’t done talking yet. He had more to say before Cas had his say, but the long pause was deliberate. He wanted to give Cas a chance to sort through his knee-jerk reaction and whatever came next before expecting the angel to be fully present for the rest of what he had to say. Now that Cas’s face had settled back into neutrality, Dean was pretty sure this was the time.

“Thank you,” he said, lifting Cas’s hand to his mouth to brush another kiss across its back, “for not jumping right to ‘you’re out of your mind, Dean Winchester, not in a million years,’ even though I know that’s what you were thinking.”

Cas gave him a wan smile, and Dean could almost feel the angel wondering whether the fact that he hadn’t done so was because Dean had asked it of him, or was ultimately selfish because Cas himself wanted it. Dean reached out with his free hand and lightly flicked the center of Cas’s forehead, causing him to startle and cross his eyes inward at the unfamiliar gesture.

“Stop that. Stop second-guessing yourself and listen,” he told Cas, “I’m not doing this for the reasons you think I’m doing this. It’s not about you—or not mostly about you, anyway. It’s about I’ve been wanting to try some more intense stuff for…kind of a long time now, actually, and I didn’t know how to say it. On some level I think I was worried it would be too much for you. That you
would be…I don’t know, disgusted? Put off? Overwhelmed? Worried that you might say yes, despite not really wanting it, because you always want more than anything to give me what I need. But now I’m thinking maybe you’ve been in the same boat, wanting to try pushing us a little further, a little harder, and worried that I would go along with it for your benefit and not for mine.”

Cas tipped his head to one side as he listened, his eyes searching Dean’s face avidly, as if trying to determine whether he was being entirely truthful. Dean huffed out a low breath in frustration and spoke up again, before Cas could interject.

“Okay, you get one freebie, just this once, because I can tell by looking at you that you don’t totally believe me. But the next time we have this conversation, or one like it, you’re gonna remember this, and you’re gonna have to trust me. Are we clear?”

The look Cas directed at him was one of such puzzlement that Dean actually rolled his eyes before elaborating.

“Read my mind.”

Cas blinked at him, jaw dropping open half an inch in shock. Dean sort of thought about starting to keep a tally of how many times he shocked the angel today, but instead chose to go on.

“No, I’m serious. Just this once. All-access pass, to be revoked in about sixty seconds, or however long it takes you to see that I mean what I’m telling you.”

Finally, perhaps five or ten long minutes after Dean had first spoken, Cas gave a verbal response.

“Dean. Are you certain? This is—I will believe you, if you tell me—“

“No, you won’t,” Dean told him patiently. “Not really. Not completely. And that’s okay, because the reason you don’t believe me is because you want so badly to protect me. It’s because you so desperately need to be sure that I’m not throwing myself under the bus to give you what you want. If you don’t trust me, at least it’s that you don’t trust me to hold my own well-being above yours. You don’t trust me to be selfish, and I guess that’s not the worst thing in the world. So go ahead, take a peek—but do it with the understanding that next time, you have to believe me the first time I say it.”

For perhaps the tenth time in as many minutes, Cas searched Dean’s face with an intentness that would’ve made him uncomfortable, had it been anyone else doing it. Then he took a deep breath and closed his eyes. Dean closed his, too. He didn’t really know what to do in preparation for having his mind read, so instead he just sort of…relaxed it. He let himself think about their sex life, about their scenes. He let himself think about some of his darker fantasies, some of his more intense desires. He let himself think about how long he’d been wanting this, how long he’d been wanting to tell Cas about it. He let himself remember all the reasons he’d held back. And he let himself remember, through the haze of his own pleasure and yearning, what it was like the last time Cas took the belt to him.

He knew the moment when Cas really grasped it all. His hand bore down on Dean’s, squeezing suddenly and with such force it was nearly painful. At the same moment, he heard the angel’s softly indrawn breath, and recognized within it surprised gratification.

A moment later, Dean’s eyes blinked open to meet the intense blue stare of the angel.

“Oh,” said Cas, very quietly. “Oh.”

“That,” Dean told him, “is what I’ve been trying to tell you.”
There was a moment of silence, in which Cas looked at Dean as if he had never truly seen him before. It might have been uncomfortable, might have made Dean nervous, if the adoration that always lay just below the surface when Cas looked at him had not been so clearly in attendance. The adoration had been joined by more, though. There were many things to sort through in the eyes resting steadily upon him, but what Dean registered most was (amusingly enough) an almost child-like wonder.

The look on the angel’s face convinced Dean in a way that nothing else likely could have that he had made the right decision, opening up his mind to Cas’s perusal just this once. Anything else would not have done it. He would have continued to second-guess himself, no matter how much he wanted to believe what Dean told him. Now? Now he could not doubt that Dean was telling him the truth—he had seen to the heart of it, to what Dean really wanted, and—

“Very well,” Cas said, interrupting Dean’s thoughts, his voice deepening with authority. Dean glanced down at his arm and was unsurprised to see that he’d actually broken out in goosebumps, sheerly from the sound of that commanding tone. “But not forty, Dean. Not yet. It’s too much, too soon.”

“Deal,” Dean told him instantly. It was about what he’d expected. He was just starting to release the breath it felt like he’d been holding for the last twenty minutes when it happened. Cas’s hand shot out toward Dean and, before he really had the chance to register that he was expecting the hand to tangle harshly in his hair or seize his upper arm in an iron grasp, it had closed, impossibly gently but no less inexorably, around his face. Cas held his face steady in his grasp, blue eyes glittering with the kind of intense promise/threat that Dean knew better than to disregard. When he spoke, his voice was extremely quiet, and all the more dangerous for it.

“And Dean? If you ever, and I do mean ever again propose something more intense or harsher than what you are certain you can handle because you think I will barter you down, I will never lay anything more than the gentlest of hands on you ever again. Do not test me.”

Holy shit. Maybe Dean hadn’t totally thought through the whole ‘read my mind’ gig. It hadn’t occurred to him that it would lay open his entire gambit to the angel, in addition to his desires.

It wasn’t that he didn’t know where Cas was coming from. If by some strange miracle he’d actually agreed to the forty that Dean had proposed, Dean would’ve had a hell of a time dialing it back. Moving forward, if they were going to be trying more intense things, and if Cas was going to be trusting him, Dean would need to be honest about what he thought he could handle. The breath that Dean had intended upon releasing was still caught in his lungs, and he took a moment to force himself to let it out, slowly and steadily, before responding.

“Understood. Although, in fairness to me, I wouldn’t have been averse to trying for—”
“You would have been willing to try it. That does not mean you would not have had some grave concerns about it that you would likely not have shared with me. Now is an ill-timed moment for you to elide the truth, when you just permitted me unfettered access to your thoughts.”

“…okay, that’s fair. Thirty, then?”

“Thirty. Now?”

“I…think that’s up to you. I got the say-so over what the punishment would be. I think the rest, rightfully, goes back into your court.”

“An excellent point.” Cas lapsed into silence, releasing Dean’s face and settling his hand back into his own lap. Dean tried his best not to squirm, and failed fairly miserably. Now that everything was decided, he thought waiting might actually be more torturous than the actual fall of the belt—but they both needed a nudge to move them back into their respective roles, and Dean had given it.

He knew Cas was not yet done speaking, and he waited in breathless silence for what felt like hours until the angel finally went on, the barest hint of a smile on his face.

“It is now—“ Cas tipped Dean’s hand that he was holding so that he could see the face of his watch before continuing “—4:53 PM. You are to go fix dinner for Sam. Do not, as they say, ‘phone it in.’ Fix him a respectable meal. You will also feed yourself, but you will eat something light. You will drink at least two large glasses of water. At 7:00, and not a moment later, you will strip, put on your robe, and meet me at the entrance to the garage. If you deviate from these instructions in any way, your punishment will be postponed an additional 24 hours, and you will have all the more time to think about it. Do you understand me?”

“I—uh. Yeah, I do.”

“Excuse me?”

“Yes, Sir.”

“Good boy.”

Chapter End Notes

Chapter-specific warnings: In-depth BDSM negotiations, especially related to intense corporal punishment (strapping with a belt, specifically). Also (consensual) mind-reading, if that’s squicky for anyone.

NOTE: Look out, unsurprisingly, for one hell of a scene coming up next chapter. For now, dear readers, you and Dean will just have to wait together.
In which Dean isn't sorry enough, until he is. Nuff said.

Chapter-specific warnings and tags at the end, as ever.

Cas sent him off to the kitchen with a brief, rough kiss, a single firm smack to his sweatpant-covered ass, and a darkly promising smile.

Unsurprisingly, this meant that Dean had to take a few minutes in a quiet hallway to talk his dick down before he could actually head the rest of the way to the library. By the time he made it there, his cock was under control and he was forcing himself to breathe slowly and evenly, although his heartbeat still felt a little elevated.

He found Sam still seated at the long table, bent studiously over his laptop. Rather than heading directly to the kitchen to make dinner, Dean paused for a moment behind him. He felt confident that this didn’t actually count as deviating from Cas’s instructions, because it was in the quest to complete his tasks, and honestly, he didn’t think he had enough brainpower left to design a meal if his life depended on it.

“You’re really interested in these ruins, huh?” he interrupted Sam, knowing that the only way to get him to emerge from his research long enough to have a real conversation was to start off by mentioning said research. As expected, Sam poked his head up, blinking owlishly but apparently unperturbed by the interruption.

“Yeah, I’ve been reading some of the accounts written by the archaeologists who made the discovery. Obviously, they don’t actually know what they’re looking at, but I’m pretty sure they’ve stumbled on a trove of ancient supernatural lore! It’ll be months before they really catalogue what they’ve found and have it available online, though, which is really frustrating. I’m stuck trying to sift through little scraps of pictures and information they’ve posted as examples, and seeing what I can fit together from that, so—“

“That’s awesome, Sammy,” Dean said, as sincerely as possible, “and I bet we can swing some way to get you out there at some point, give you some fake credentials so they’ll give you access to the stuff that’s not open to the public yet.”

“That would be amazing,” Sam said, with a hint of yearning, “if you think you could spare me for a few weeks at some point—“

“Oh, I’m sure we’ll somehow manage without you,” Dean told him gravely, “though I’m not saying it’ll be easy. But before I let you get back to it, I’m about to make dinner and I thought I’d see if anything in particular sounded good to you.”

“We’re all out of salad stuff, huh?” Sam said sadly
“Afraid so,” Dean told him with zero regret.

“Do we have any fish in the freezer? Something mild maybe?”

“I think I’ve got some whitefish or tilapia somewhere back there that I could sauté. And we do,” he added reluctantly, “still have a decent selection of frozen veggies. I could cook up some green beans with it and maybe some roasted potatoes?”

“That sounds amazing, man, thanks a million.”

“Yup, not a problem. I’m on it.” Dean made it nearly to the door that would lead him to the kitchen before he paused, irresistibly drawn to ask the question that had been niggling at him for a few days now. “Hey, Sammy?”

“Hmmm?” Sam was already half-buried back into his research, but with it enough to toss half a glance at Dean with one raised brow.

“What was with the elaborate meal requests while you were holed up in your blanket fortress of solitude?”

“Oh, that?” Sam’s eyes flashed with mischief as he grinned, “I was just fucking with you.”

“…” Dean goggled at him for a few moments. It wasn’t that this came as a total shock, it was just the total shamelessness with which Sam owned up to it. Eventually getting his feet under him, Dean finally spluttered out a response. “You’re goddamn lucky I don’t feed you peanut butter on stale bread every day ‘til the snow melts, bitch.”

“Yeah, yeah, jerk. What can I say? I was pissed at you. But that was before I realized that all of that was really just a cry for help,” Sam said, expression melting into a sympathetic one.

Yup. That was Dean’s cue to beat a hasty retreat. He mumbled something unintelligible and zipped off to the kitchen, managing at least to turn his back before he gave into the irresistible urge to roll his eyes about five times in a row.

Somehow, Dean got through the next hour. More than once he had opportunity to be grateful to Cas for assigning him actual tasks that required attention in the two hours before he was due in the garage. Of course, it was no accident that the specific tasks he’d been assigned only demanded so much of his attention.

Dean was a skilled enough cook that it really only required about half his focus for the most part. That left the other half of his mind free to wander, to remember the discussion with Cas, and to anticipate what was coming all-too-soon.

His thoughts did not especially surprise him on a logical level. As he defrosted the fish in a bowl of cool water, he went from anticipation to nervousness to doubt about whether or not he had really thought this through carefully. By the time he was done preheating the oven and the potatoes were cut up and brushed with olive oil, rosemary, and salt, he was remembering that he’d been thinking this through so carefully that it was over a year in coming. Ten minutes later, when the fish was finished defrosting, he started trying to decide whether maybe he’d taken one too many hits in battle over the years and had lost it altogether, to be actually asking to have a strap laid across his ass thirty times. Two minutes after that, as he brushed the green beans with an olive oil, vinegar, and spices mixture, he was once again completely certain this was what he wanted and that he could handle it, totally confident in Cas’s ability to drag him to the brink of what he could handle and march him along that edge, never pushing him over it.
And so it went.

By the time 6:00 rolled around, heaping portions of everything were steaming on a plate for Sam, with rather smaller portions of only the fish and some green beans on his own plate. He’d consumed one large glass of water while he cooked and had another filled and ready to go. Before worrying about his own meal, he carried Sam’s plate out to him along with a glass of water—which was pretty much the only thing left to drink apart from their dwindling stores of hard liquor and Dean’s remaining 37 bottles of orange juice.

Sam was enthusiastically grateful for the food and effusive in his praise of it, which went some way to easing Dean’s currently ever-present ire with him. Rather than eating in the library and opening himself up to Sam’s commentary on the lightness of his meal choices, Dean chose to eat in the kitchen, standing up. About 80% of the way through his food, he almost choked on a bite as it occurred to him that this might be the first of many meals taken standing up, depending upon Cas’s decision about whether or not to heal him immediately.

Around that time, his stomach started roiling with a whole new level of anxiety. He stared down at his food for about thirty seconds before deciding that he’d eaten enough to satisfy Cas, and there was no way he was gonna be able to finish the rest of it without risking all of it coming back up. Washing the rest down the garbage disposal (which he had never been more grateful for than during the last two weeks, when they couldn’t actually dispose of garbage anywhere but within the bunker), he set to washing the dishes left over from cooking, forcing himself to take small sips of the remaining water glass as he went.

He finished the dishes around 25 after, and checked in with Sam who, to nobody’s surprise, was eagerly awaiting seconds. After delivering those to him and wiping down all the kitchen counters and appliances (twice), it was just shy of 6:40. Grimacing a little, he forced down the remaining quarter glass of water then, just for good measure, washed that as well.

Sam was done when Dean checked back in the library, and he took the kid’s plate and washed that, too, because as long as he was killing time, he might as well do a really thorough job of it.

At that point, there was nothing left to do but head to his room and get ready. His watch informed him that it was 6:46 PM, and he figured he’d done as good a job as possible of passing the interminable two hours.

Except, of course, that the time wasn’t truly up yet. By the time another seven minutes had passed, Dean was developing a whole new sense of what ‘interminable’ really looked like. He was quite certain those scant minutes had taken at least as long as the preceding nearly two hours had, and was harboring a sneaking suspicion that the seven minutes still remaining would take twice that long.

By now, he had stripped off his clothes, folded them neatly, then decided they weren’t neat enough and refolded them. Twice. He managed to stall until 6:56, and, estimating that it was a three-minute walk to the garage, cinched his robe a little tighter around his waist and set off through the silent halls.

There was, thankfully, no sign of Sam, and it occurred to Dean for the first time since he left Cas at the door to his room that he hadn’t actually seen the angel once since then. He could only surmise that Cas must have been getting things ready and preparing himself mentally—which Dean now tried to do as well, a little last-minute.

The problem was, he couldn’t settle. He was too restless, his hands twisting together uneasily (he suddenly realized for the first time what it actually meant when someone talked about ‘wringing their hands’) as his bare feet trod soundlessly down the cold marble of the hallway.
Recognizing that he was halfway to panicking, Dean again harkened back to Lisa’s teachings from so many years ago and took in deep breaths, inhaling through his nose for the count of five, then exhaling through his mouth for the count of five. It actually worked a little bit—at least he was able to settle down enough to stop wringing his damn hands.

By this time, he was so deep inside his own head that he was a little startled when he suddenly found himself standing in front of the door that would carry him into the garage. He tipped his arm to glance at his wrist just as his watch flickered from 6:59 to 7:00, and at that exact second (seriously, did angels have a natural internal clock or something?) the door before him slid silently open.

Castiel stood with the kind of stillness that always reinforced his lack of humanity to Dean, silhouetted in the doorway. This hallway, like most in the bunker, was dimly lit. Cas had apparently switched all of the lights in the cavernous garage on, because he now stood motionless, backlit and imposing, his eyes unfathomable pools of shadow.

The shudder that raced through Dean went bone-deep, and he found his head bowing before the angel in an involuntary gesture of submission.

As if this had been some sort of secret signal, Cas broke his stillness. Dean was (or at least told himself he was) prepared for anything, but rather than the multitude of harsh, demanding, or punitive things the angel might have said or done, Cas simply extended a single hand, palm up.

The gesture was not lost on Dean. He had chosen this punishment and now, in the moment, he would be required to choose it again. What happened from the moment he took the offered hand would be out of his control (unless of course he opted to invoke his safeword). Now, however, Cas was giving him one last chance to change his mind.

Taking in a deep and shuddering breath, Dean reached out. His hand crossed the chasm that felt like miles but was likely no more than twelve inches. He settled his hand down atop Cas’s, and the angel’s fingers wrapped around his own (Dean registered dimly that his own fingers must have been freezing, if the warmth he felt from Cas’s hand was any indication).

The moment their hands joined, the crushing weight that been pressing on Dean’s chest lifted, and he was able to take a swift and easy breath. Something about the miniscule tilt of Cas’s head said that he understood perfectly what had just happened, although his face was still swathed in shadows. They stood like that, for several long seconds, Cas’s fingers strong and warm and reassuring around Dean’s.

The silence spun out and for a moment Dean wondered whether Cas was waiting for something, was waiting for him to speak, to say something. He didn’t know what he would say. Nothing seemed adequate. No words felt like they could begin to touch the gravity of this moment. A moment later, however, it became clear that Cas had not been expecting anything further of Dean. He had fulfilled his obligations by feeding Sam and himself and getting himself here, on time, clad only in his robe. Now his job was simply to put himself, both literally and figuratively, into Castiel’s hands.

The angel lifted Dean’s hand slowly, holding it as if he were a Lord and Dean a Lady. At any other time, it might’ve struck Dean as a little ridiculous, but somehow, right now, it felt entirely natural and perfectly right, when Cas brushed his lips against the back of Dean’s hand. Dean found himself again holding his breath, but this time it wasn’t with that edge of near-hysteria that had hovered over him just moments before. He was spellbound, caught in this one perfect moment with the man—the angel—he loved. He was placing spellbound, caught in this one perfect moment with the man—the angel—he loved. He was placing himself not only in Castiel’s hands but in his care, under his proverbial (and perhaps literal) wing. He was placing his trust, which he recognized just in this moment as a perfect and precious thing, entirely in Cas. Trusting the angel to take him apart and then lovingly, painstakingly, patiently, piece him back together again.
Just like that, Dean was ready.

As if Cas sensed this, he let their joined hands fall once more and turned, drawing Dean with him into the cavernous space beyond.

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Dean was momentarily dazzled by the brightness of the lights within, blinking several times in rapid succession. The large space was quite warm, suggesting to Dean that part of the reason Cas had wanted several hours to go by was so that he could turn up the temperature in here a few degrees. Two hours was more than long enough to ensure that the heat permeated the entirety of the room, so that Dean would not be chilled while they scened.

The reason for this was twofold, Dean knew. First, it was a simple indication of Cas’s concern for Dean’s well-being. And, perhaps even more importantly, Cas intended that Dean’s entire attention should be on the sensations he was deliberately causing. He had no intention of allowing Dean to be distracted by extraneous stimuli like the room’s temperature. In the meantime, as Dean’s thoughts again got away from him, Cas had released his hand with a gentle squeeze, then placed a single hand on his shoulder and turned him slightly toward the row of cars. When his voice came, it was hushed but somehow still resonated with authority, filling the room with its low gravel.

“On the hood of the Impala, you will find four objects. Select two of them.”

The Impala was tucked into one of the furthest bays, safe from the blizzard (much to Dean’s relief—he wouldn’t have been able to tolerate the idea of Baby buried in untold feet of snow for weeks), which also meant that Dean hadn’t noticed until now that certain additions had been made to her.

The O-ringed ends of what looked like a thick, woven nylon strap rested on either side of the car’s hood. A set of cuffs, a small carabiner attached to a D-ring on each, rested casually atop the car. They were there intentionally, Dean knew, for him to see and anticipate. He was intended to recognize that, as they were on the roof of the car rather than its hood, he did not have a choice about them. They were a promise, not a question.

The distance between the ends of the nylon strap looked just about perfectly aligned with Dean’s arm span, and he intensely doubted that this was a happy coincidence. Cas had meticulously set this up such that Dean’s arms would be stretched out to either side of him and bound there, holding him immobile against the bite of another strap, that one made of leather. He took a moment to be grateful that Cas had opted for the nylon rather than chains. Although something about the clink of chains was a turn-on to Dean, it absolutely wasn’t worth the risk of scratching his Baby’s finish, and Cas damn well knew him enough to be aware of this.

And then there were the objects in question. They were laid out on a towel on the hood, the room’s bright lights winking off of several pieces of metal.

He couldn’t even have said when he started moving, but suddenly Dean found himself standing a spare eighteen inches in front of Baby, gazing down at the four small objects. For maybe the twentieth time today (and he suspected there were likely to be another several hundred such moments before his head hit the pillow tonight), Dean found himself drawing in a strangled breath.

On the far left glittered a very simple (but, as Dean knew from experience, quite effective) set of metal nipple clamps. Beside them, resting with apparent innocence on its flared base, was a butt plug, slightly larger than the one Cas had made use of the last time he strapped Dean. To its immediate right was the smallest and simplest of the objects, a plain cock ring (not that, like the nipple clamps, its plainness was likely to make it any less devastating). Finally, on the far right sat a
padded blindfold which (Dean knew, again from experience) would entirely block out all shreds of light.

Well, Jesus Christ, if it wasn’t his own personal Sophie’s Choice.

Some of the objects inspired questions: if he didn’t go with the cock ring would he still be expected to restrain himself from coming? Pretty sure he already knew what Cas was going to say, Dean nevertheless took a deep breath and broke the silence.

“Can I ask you a—”

“No. Choose, now, or I’ll assume you want all of them.”

He practically hit the ceiling when Cas’s interruption rang out barely a foot behind him and to his right. The angel had crossed the room in perfect silence to stand just behind Dean, who was pretty sure his heart might just have actually exploded.

It was probably safe to say he was a little on edge.

The voice had rung out with razor-sharp precision, cracking against Dean with nearly the devastating effect of the strap itself. A reminder that, whether Dean was bound and writhing under the bite of the belt or simply standing and staring down at the hood of his car, the scene had started and Cas was firmly in charge.

He knew better than to think Cas was bluffing. Rather than risking the angel becoming impatient (Dean wasn’t at all sure he would’ve been able to handle the combined effect of all of the objects in addition to the strap), he reached out and let instinct decide for him, discarding thought altogether. He didn’t honestly know what his decision was going to be until two of his fingers tapped once on the towel just in front of the butt plug, then shifted six inches to the right to tap once more in front of the blindfold.

Dean didn’t have time to second guess himself, and was grateful for it. Cas immediately stepped past him, quickly enough that the trench coat billowed around him, snagging both objects Dean had selected and carelessly sweeping the towel with the remaining two objects still on it off the hood. Dean watched as the nipple clamps clattered to the floor with a soft tinkling sound, the cock ring rolling off under the nearest car. Dean took a second to hope that Cas would get it later, before Sam or some visitor to the bunker accidentally stumbled across it.

He didn’t have longer than that single second because the angel had turned back to him, blue eyes settling on him with a steadiness that belied their intensity.

“Take off your robe. Hang it up.”

Just as he was opening his mouth to ask where he was supposed to hang it up, he spotted the hanger, dangling from a large screw that stuck inexplicably out of one of the garage’s broad support beams. As his hands reached for the robe’s belt, it suddenly occurred to Dean to wonder whether Cas had actually found and screwed the thing in by hand specifically for this purpose. He didn’t remember seeing it before, but that didn’t necessarily mean anything—he could easily have simply not noticed it before now. In typically ill-advised fashion, his mouth was actually open and he had half a breath indrawn to demand an answer of Cas when the implacable voice sounded again from behind him.

“I would think very carefully before you choose to open that pretty mouth, Dean, or you might find yourself gagged as well.”

His cock, which had been almost achingly hard pretty much since he first saw Cas silhouetted in the
garage’s doorway, twitched traitorously in response to the threat, and Dean snapped his mouth shut again. On a logical level he was perfectly well aware that Cas had no intention of actually gagging him—Dean’s ability to give Cas verbal indication of his status was too important when they were pushing the boundaries like this. And yet, despite this knowledge, Dean’s physical and psychological reactions to the angel’s ominous declaration were no less instinctive and intense.

Fighting to catch his breath yet again, Dean untied his robe and slowly shrugged it off. He never felt quite as naked as when he stood in all his glory before the fully clothed Cas, and the gooseflesh that stippled his flesh as he padded forward to place the robe on the provided hanger had nothing to do with the temperature of the room.

He had just about gotten the robe situated when the quiet rustle of clothing behind him drew his attention. Craning his neck, Dean spotted Cas, who was currently shrugging off his beloved trenchcoat.

The angel’s eyes were resting, unnervingly unblinking, on Dean, who felt a little bit as though he’d just been caught in the act of misbehaving, despite the fact that Cas had never indicated that Dean shouldn’t look at him. Nevertheless, with some effort, Dean tore his eyes away from Cas’s and turned back to face front, where he unnecessarily straightened the robe on its hanger.

The sounds behind him might have been indecipherable if he hadn’t seen Cas do exactly this countless times in the lead-up to a scene. His mind effortlessly translated the noises into actions, and in his mind’s eye, he saw the angel carelessly tossing his trenchcoat on what was probably another protruding screw, then shrugging off his suitcoat, which likely ended up atop the trench coat. Then came the quieter, nearly inaudible sounds that Dean recognized as Cas meticulously rolling up each sleeve until it rested perfectly at his elbow.

He scarcely realized that he had been standing motionless apart from his fingers twisting and untwisting in the front of his now hanging robe for what had to have been a full minute as Cas settled his own clothing to his liking. It didn’t register until the angel’s voice again broke the room’s silence, the softness of his tone belying the danger in the words.

“You know exactly where I want you, Dean. Do not make me force you. I promise you I would enjoy doing so great deal more than you would.”

Dean believed him. Catching a startled breath into lungs that he had barely realized were practically on fire from oxygen deprivation, Dean pivoted back toward the Impala’s hood. Swallowing several times in quick succession and hearing the click in his overly dry throat, Dean padded the several steps to stand just before what he guessed was the precise center of the car’s front.

That was where he froze. He knew what was expected of him, but somehow he couldn’t force himself into that final movement that would drape him across the hood.

For what felt like the hundredth time since he entered the garage, Dean startled precipitously when a hand snaked around him, holding an open water bottle. He hadn’t even heard Cas take the cap off, but he accepted the offered bottle gratefully, taking a long drink. The water soothed his dry throat and the silent gesture soothed his soul. It came as no surprise that Cas took pains to ensure he was well taken care of, even (especially?) just before beating him raw, but there was nevertheless something reassuring about it, when the angel’s hard-as-nails, dominant persona was so firmly in place and so perfectly controlled.

After his first drink, he took a shorter second sip, then pressed the bottle back into the still-extended hand. This time he did hear the soft sound of the cap being screwed back on, before several seconds elapsed in silence as Cas waited for him to drape himself over the hood.
And Dean tried.

He really did.

He just couldn’t do it. He couldn’t make himself bend over.

But it was okay. Dean knew it was okay.

Cas would help him. Cas wouldn’t leave him hanging.

Cas would help him. Dean knew he would.

He did.

The hand that wrapped around the back of Dean’s neck wasn’t harsh or admonishing. Quite the contrary, it settled there with incredible gentleness, and when it squeezed, there was nothing punitive in the gesture. Instead, it was reassurance. It was a reminder that Dean had been right; Cas had him.

The hand pressed Dean forward, strongly but steadily, not slamming him down onto the hood so much as guiding him there. Suddenly, as if by magic, the cool, polished metal of the Impala was beneath his chest.

It seemed that this guiding hand was as much help as he would get, however, because a moment later that steady voice broke over him, not harshly, but inescapably.

“Arms out to your sides. Now, Dean.”

Dean obeyed. He extended his arms on either side of him, resting them, palms down, against the hood, and feeling his resolve strengthen as he did so.

It might’ve seemed foolish to anyone who didn’t understand Dean well (maybe even to some who did), but the fact that this was happening on the Impala actually made it easier. This car—she was one of the most important things in his life. Beyond Cas, beyond Sammy, what else was left that meant more to him? What else was left that he truly loved?

Baby—she was more than just a car. She was stability. She was steadiness. She was a constant for him, and he for her. Dean had been there at the beginning—the moment when John Winchester made the impulsive decision to go for it and buy her—and he had been there at what should’ve been her end, the moment when a semi smashed into her and nearly took the lives of all three Winchester men.

But he hadn’t let her go. Couldn’t let her go.

He hadn’t let her down, his Baby, and she had repaid the favor by never letting him down. If there was one thing that Chuck (that little shit) had really gotten right (and, yeah, Dean had read the damn books, even the unpublished ones, what of it?), it was this: Baby was home. She always had been. She always would be.

With her holding him up, he could do this.

Dean took a moment to be grateful to Cas, who had somehow known, as he always knew, that the best way to bolster Dean and give him the courage to get through this was to give him the support not only of the angel who loved him, but of the car that had sheltered and carried him for his entire life.
Now, palms pressed against her hood, her metal slowly warming under the press of his skin, Dean felt like he could breathe again. Shallowly, shakily, but steadily for all that.

For the first time since he entered the room, Dean began to feel oddly calm. Began to feel the beginnings of that elusive headspace—not the one he was chasing, the one where everything ceased to exist and he simply floated—this was a different one. If that headspace was a sprawling auditorium, this one was the green room or maybe the wings beyond the stage. It was the space in which he waited. The space in which he could wait, without freaking out, without backing down, without going in desperate circles in his own head.

When Cas’s warm hand encircled Dean’s left wrist, he didn’t even startle.

The leather of the cuff was cool around his skin, but warmed much faster than the hood of the car. By the time it was fastened snugly (but not uncomfortably) around his wrist, the leather was already the same temperature as his flesh.

The soft *snick* of the carabiner attaching the cuff to the O-ring reverberated through Dean, and as the angel treaded quietly around to his other side, Dean tested the first of his bonds. The metal of the carabiner clinked against the D-ring on one side and the O-ring on the other. All three held as firmly as Dean had known they would. His arm was held out to his side, fully extended, giving him less than an inch of play.

By the time he’d finished determining this, the other leather cuff was around his opposite wrist and Cas was tightening it to the same snugness. Seconds later, the same soft *snick* sounded again, and Dean found himself laid out, exposed and vulnerable, against the hood of his own car.

If he’d ever been harder in his life, he couldn’t remember it.

A soft breath huffed from him when Cas bent over him, his lips settling at Dean’s ear.

“I am going to walk away now. I will not leave the garage. I am not leaving you. I will be right back.”

As the sound of the angel’s quiet tread receded, Dean turned his head and stared across the expanse of smooth, black paint at Cas’s receding back. Within seconds, he was out of Dean’s sight, and he didn’t attempt to crane his neck to see further. Instead, as Cas had intended, he simply waited, legs settling at about shoulder-width apart, the cold concrete grounding as it pressed against the soles of his feet.

It took him a few moments to make sense of the sounds he was hearing from across the room. When he put together what was likely happening, he huffed out a low laugh, unable to restrain himself. Unless he was much mistaken, Cas had just literally chained the door to the garage shut, effectively ensuring that Sam could not sneak in to ‘observe’ while their attention was otherwise engaged.

Seriously, seriously good call. He made a mental note to give the angel a high five (Cas was inexplicably delighted by high fives, bless him) for that particular thought later, then turned his attention away from his meddlesome brother and the endeavor to keep him out, and back to what was happening. What was about to happen.

He heard the quiet steps of his approach before Cas stepped into his line of sight. The angel’s expression was perfectly calm, quiet confidence radiating from him. His back was straight, shoulders thrown back, blue eyes steady and self-assured. Honestly, he had never looked more in control.

Or sexier.
Dean felt his cock leak a drop of precome and said a silent apology to Baby—not that this was the first time her hood was likely to be smeared with various fluids, and she’d always come through just fine before now.

A few steps later, the angel had disappeared once more behind Dean, who closed his eyes for a moment, in order to lock in his mind the image of Cas, in perfect control, sleeves rolled up, blue eyes intent, as he strode toward Dean.

Had Dean thought about it, he might have realized what was coming next. As it was, when the sound of a cap clicking broke the silence, he was momentarily befuddled. It was followed almost immediately by an all-too-familiar slick sound, and that was when he put two and two together and realized what was happening.

Sure enough, a second or two later, a well-lubricated finger probed perfunctorily between his cheeks before sliding home. It remained only a moment before it was withdrawn. When it returned, it had been joined by another.

Cas took his time stretching Dean for the plug, apparently enjoying the process as much as the end result. It seemed the angel approved of that one of Dean’s choices, at any rate. In the meanwhile, Dean was trying to keep his breathing steady as the pair of long, elegant fingers twisted and scissored within him.

He didn’t have much success.

It felt like both hours and mere seconds later when the fingers withdrew and returned no more, replaced by the nudge of equally slick silicone.

Cas teased his rim with the plug, pressing it in perhaps an inch and then withdrawing it again, repeating the gesture several times, waiting until Dean was holding his breath in anticipation before he drove it forward to the hilt, ruthlessly pressing it past the resistance of Dean’s tight inner muscles.

The burn was a lot milder than it would’ve been without the prep but far from absent, and Dean let out a quiet sound that walked the razor’s edge between wanton need and wordless negation.

The low chuckle that slid from Cas and broke over Dean carried within it the darkness he knew the angel had been tightly controlling, meticulously concealing from him, likely since the very beginning. And it wasn’t meant for Dean. Not really. That sound wasn’t performance, it was an uncontrollable expression of nearly cruel pleasure at the sight laid out before Cas. And despite, or perhaps because, it wasn’t meant for Dean, it hit him all the more powerfully.

It was a threat.

It was a promise.

It was a guarantee.

Dean knew in that moment that what was coming would be like nothing he’d experienced before now. Not really. He’d given Cas permission to give his darker needs an outlet—had practically begged him to do so—and the angel would take him at his word.

A moment later, Dean felt the soft brush of suit pants against his bare ass as Cas leaned over him. Dean spotted the blindfold in his hand a moment before the low voice rang out, a few inches above him.

“Lift your head.”
He did, and the soft padding settled over his eyes. The angel adjusted it slightly, ensuring that it was snug but not unpleasantly so.

“Can you see anything at all?”

Dean opened his eyes and discovered that he was still swathed in perfect blackness. Not a single speck of brightness penetrated the dark. Releasing the breath he hadn’t known he was holding, Dean shook his head. The voice rang out above him again, just as Cas shifted forward sharply, snuggling his hips against Dean’s ass. Dean could feel the outline of his cock, impossibly hard through his pants.

“Out loud, Dean.”

He couldn’t even bring himself to be embarrassed by the low whine that leaked out of him when Cas rolled his hips once, jarring the plug seated within Dean against his prostate.

The low chuckle came again, if anything still darker.

“Not to downplay how greatly I enjoy those needy little sounds, but what I am awaiting is a verbal response. And I will not ask again. Can you see anything at all?”

Dean’s voice was a little higher, a little softer than usual when it rang out. It was vulnerable.

“No, Sir.”

Cas’s hips drew back, then, but a single hand settled on the small of Dean’s back and slid upward in praise and silent reassurance.

“Good boy.”

There was something about not being able to see that heightened everything else. Suddenly the softest sound in the large space seemed to echo with ear-splitting volume. He became aware that he could smell hints of gasoline and motor oil, of the wax that he used to keep Baby’s finish in perfect shape. He could feel the way the slight ridge at the center of the Impala’s hood pressed into his belly and chest as if it was a mile high and not a fraction of an inch. Everything was more intense, and Dean wondered briefly whether maybe the blindfold had been a bad call.

The angel’s steps again receded, but only several feet away. The sound that came next was nearly inaudible, but Dean still managed to recognize it as leather sliding against concrete.

Cas had just picked up the belt.

Every muscle in Dean’s body locked up, impossibly tightly, for a split second. Cas must have seen it, because a second later the hand was back, resting against his back and rubbing slow circles.

“What is your color?”

Dean didn’t even have to hesitate. Didn’t have to think about it for an instant. The only thing more prominent than his terror was his need.

“Green, Sir.”

“Very well.” There was a moment of silence but Dean recognized it for what it was—a pause, before Cas went on. “You do not need to count. You do not need to thank me. Your only job is to lie there and take what I give you.”
Holy fucking shit.

Maybe he should’ve gone with the cock ring, because he damn near came right then and there.

The first contact the leather made with his skin was practically a mockery, it was so gentle. Its length slid across the line of his back, and when it did not recede, it took Dean a moment to realize that Cas had draped it across his flesh and left it there.

The silent threat in the gesture was so effective that a full-body shudder wracked Dean before he could clamp down on it.

A second later, soft fabric lightly grazed Dean’s left thigh. Cas’s suit pants, it had to be. This suspicion was borne out when a hand settled against the lower curve of his ass cheek, pressing down lightly. The voice above him was quietly appreciative, as if he was gazing down upon a work of art and not Dean’s worn, scar-marr body.

“Let’s warm you up, shall we?”

No response was expected, and none was forthcoming. When the hand drew back and started to fall with relative lightness against his ass, he found it hard to focus on the sensations. He was too wrapped up in the inexorable, inescapable feel of the leather strap draped across the center of his back, a visceral reminder of what was coming.

Before too long, however, as his ass warmed up under Cas’s ministrations, Dean’s attention was forced to divide itself evenly between the two sensations.

It was a mercy, the warm-up. It would make things easier, make the first bite of the strap less jarring than it would be on untouched flesh. Dean did his best to give himself over to it, breathing as evenly as he was able, planting his feet a little more firmly against the ground and arching his ass into the palm’s repeated strikes.

They fell seemingly at random, peppering his ass and thighs, even warming up his inner thighs, leaving Dean to wonder helplessly whether Cas planned on taking the belt to that sensitive flesh, or was simply taking the time to really enjoy the warm-up.

Every tenth spank or so, Cas deliberately let his hand crack firmly against the base of the plug, fucking it into Dean and jarring it against his prostate. Before too long, his hips were shifting restlessly, rubbing his cock against Baby’s smooth finish. Cas put a stop to this with a firm hand on his far hip and a single, admonishing word.

“No.”

After that, he did his best to keep himself still, but it wasn’t easy.

The spanking went on for perhaps five minutes before Cas was satisfied, and when the hand drew back and fell no more, Dean was tingling lightly, his flesh radiating warmth from the base of his spine down to mid-thigh.

The voice was even quieter when it came next, soft-edged with reverence.

“So beautiful. Your ass and thighs pink and warm and perfect, your back arched to present yourself to me. Utter perfection.”

Dean realized only after it escaped that the low needy sound that responded to these words had come from him. Cas chuckled again, and when the voice returned, it was louder, commanding and stern.
“Tell me why you are being punished.”

Dean hadn’t realized he was expecting this question until the answer fell from his lips so readily, so easily.

“I called you a coward and a junkless Ken doll. Twice. I wore the panties I’d bought as a gift out of spite, to tease you, because I was angry.”

“And are you sorry?”

“Yes, Sir.”

“No, you aren’t. But, oh, Dean, you will be.”

With that ominous pronouncement, the leather was suddenly gone from his back, the brush of the fingers that had scooped it up there and gone so fast it felt almost as though it had levitated off of him.

It would’ve been only too easy to prick his ears up and try desperately to hear what was happening behind him, but Dean fought the impulse. Instead, he forced himself to remain still, to continue breathing, to leave his ass where it was, pressed outward in invitation.

When the whistle of leather cut through the air, Dean didn’t have a chance to tense his muscles before the sharp crack sounded. It was followed a second later by the burning stripe of pain across the lower curve of his ass, forcing his breath from his lungs.

Every time, he thought he remembered what the belt felt like, thought he remembered its intensity.

Every time, he was wrong.

As ever, Cas gave him a moment to process the first stroke, to really feel it.

He couldn’t have said how long passed, perhaps sixty seconds, but the moment he took in his first breath that came with something resembling ease, the second stroke fell.

This time Dean registered that the sound actually echoed off the walls of the garage.

The muscles of his ass tightened, clenching as if to negate the pain, but this just squeezed them more tightly around the plug firmly seated within, brushing it against his prostate and drawing a whimper from him. Either Cas had chosen the size of the plug very carefully, or that was one hell of a coincidence.

His cock leaked another drop of precome against the hood of the car, and Dean took a moment to reflect that this was going to happen another twenty-eight times.

Each stroke landed perfectly beside the one before it, and by the time Cas hit number eight, he’d painted a single, burning stripe across every inch of Dean’s ass. Which meant the next—

The ninth stroke fell exactly where he’d known it was going to, across the seam of ass and thighs.

For the first time, Dean made a noise that was more than just a sharp exhalation, a low cry. The stroke rocked him forward against the hood of the car, and he allowed it take on more of his weight, giving himself license to sag across it for a moment.

His small sound, the way the strength briefly went out of his limbs—these things inspired no mercy in Cas.
The tenth stroke cracked with no less force against his upper thighs, and Dean wheezed out something like a whimper, one of his knees bending, his leg coming up as if to negate the stroke or protect against the next one.

Cas’s free hand cracked hard against the sole of Dean’s foot, the wordless message crystal clear, and Dean dropped his now smarting foot back to the floor.

By the time Cas reached stroke 14, Dean could feel each stripe that had hit his thighs like an individual white-hot poker.

Dean was actually pretty impressed with how well he was doing, how well he was handling it. And he didn’t for a second think that Cas was going easy on him—the burn radiating from the base of his spine to mid-thigh laughed at the very idea.

It wasn’t until the fifteenth stripe landed, directly atop the first one, that he really registered he was only halfway done, and there was no more untouched flesh for Cas to target.

Dean couldn’t have begun to categorize the sound that this stroke drew out of him. It was too strangled to be a cry, too guttural to be a whimper.

The muscles of his back and ass were locked up tight, the plug be damned, and he waited in agony for long seconds for the next stroke to fall when he realized it wasn’t happening.

Only when his muscles started to unwind themselves did the hand settle lightly on his back. Cas’s voice was quiet, firm but not unkind.

“What is your color, Dean?”

His voice was unsteady, a little breathless, but clearly audible, with an underlying firmness that he felt proud of.

“Green, Sir.”

Cas’s hand swept across his back lightly in wordless acknowledgment and praise, and then was gone.

Dean turned his head, setting his forehead against the Impala’s hood and exhaling a long breath, trying to center himself.

The end of the breath was ripped from his lungs when the sixteenth stroke fell, directly beside the fifteenth, perfectly atop the second.

He didn’t realize that tears had been standing in his eyes until he felt one leak out and soak into the soft padding of the blindfold. It scarcely seemed worthy of notice, his attention too wrapped up in the fall of the belt, which Cas seemed to be wielding with no less force now that he was revisiting areas he’d already attended to.

He lost himself for a few moments, then, and it was his own mewling cry that brought him back. He realized with a spike of panic that he didn’t know what stroke they were on anymore, had lost count somewhere along the way. More of his ass was screaming with the renewed burn of a second stroke, and he couldn’t sort out how many stripes he had missed in his haze.

The belt fell again, driving all thought from his brain for a few agonizing seconds. He didn’t realize his nose was running until he heard himself sniffle, didn’t realize his hands were curled into fists until his fingernails bit into his own palms in anticipation of the next strike.
It didn’t come.

Instead, the voice rang out again, quietly, steadily, a hand settling on Dean’s shoulder and squeezing once, grounding him.

“Your color, Dean?”

A few more seconds went by this time before he was able to put together what Cas was asking him, and what he was looking for. His voice cracked halfway through the words, but he managed to get them out, and was proud of it.

“Gr—green, Sir.”

“And why are you being punished?”

Wait, what?

“T—wh—“ Dean didn’t even realize he’d spoken until he heard the abortive noises from his mouth.

“Tell me why you’re being punished or this stops right now. If you cannot provide me a coherent answer, I will not deliver the last ten strokes.”

Ten. Ten strokes. That meant the last stroke had been twenty.

Okay. Twenty.

Ten more.

He could do this.

“I—called you a coward. Junkless Ken doll. Teased you with the panties—out of spite.”

It occurred to him as he managed to choke out the words that Cas had been giving him an out, even without using his safeword. If he was done, if he couldn’t take any more and was too ashamed to say so, he could simply have kept silent.

But Dean was no coward.

If he was done, if he needed to put an end to things, he would do so actively, not by passive inaction.

And he wasn’t done.

“And are you sorry?” The angel’s voice again broke over him, and it somehow managed to be both reassuring and mocking at the same time. How was that even possible?

“Yes, Sir.”

“You know, Dean, I believe you are. But not sorry enough. Not yet.”

*Jesus Christ.*

The twenty-first stroke fell mercilessly just beside the twentieth and, coincidentally (or perhaps not, Dean couldn’t have said), directly atop the plug, jarring it hard against Dean’s prostate. His cock dribbled against the Impala and he cried out, tears squirting from his eyes and soaking into the blindfold. His hips squirmed without permission, trying in vain to escape the sting that was now as much a part of him as the flesh itself.
Cas did not give him time to catch his breath or recover any hint of his composure before he laid down the next stripe, low on Dean’s ass. If he hadn’t bitten down on his own lower lip, Dean was pretty sure the sound that escaped him would’ve been a wail. As it was, he tasted blood, and a second later Cas’s fingers were on his face, gently pressing his mouth open, freeing the lip he’d bitten open from his teeth.

“Ah ah ah,” came the soft admonition, “none of that, now. You don’t get to hurt yourself. That’s my job.”

And just like that, the fingers were gone, and the twenty-third stroke fell on the underside of Dean’s ass.

He whimpered desperately, fingernails actually scraping against Baby’s paint job (thankfully not strong enough to do any damage), and when the next stroke fell he once again lost himself for a moment.

This time, he was unaware he’d lost time until he heard Cas’s voice again, something in the tone telling him that it wasn’t the first time he’d spoken.

“Dean. Your color. Now.”

He hadn’t quite realized he was sobbing until he heard his words, shaking and twisted with tears. Hell, he hadn’t known what color he was going to say until it escaped him and he realized it was true, he wasn’t lying.

“Gree—green, S—Sir.”

“And why are you being punished?”

Really? This again?

Dean whimpered, a plea for Cas not to make him dredge up words. A hand settled on his lower back and the voice dripped down upon him once more.

“Tell me why you are being punished, Dean. Now.”

There was no mercy in the voice, nothing gentle about it. There was no promise of quarter, no reminder that if he failed to answer, Cas would stop. There was simply the demand.

That was when he realized that, maybe for the first time, Cas believed. He believed Dean could handle this. He believed Dean could finish it.

Just like that, Dean did too, and he found he had regained the power of speech.

“Called you na—names. In my head. Teased. With the panties.”

“What names did you call me?”

Oh, that was just mean.

Dean understood, though, that this was still Cas checking on him, ensuring that Dean was still with him, was still in control of himself enough to be able to give or withhold consent. It took him a moment to find the words, to pull them out of his addled mind. He groped for them, searching, and eventually landed upon them. Cas waited, silently, patiently, for Dean to speak, and eventually he managed it.
“I—junkless Ken do—’ he wasn’t expecting it, when the belt slashed across the very tops of his
thighs, interrupting his words. He jerked hard against the hood, lifting his head and dropping it
again. The sob that escaped him sounded a little wet, and as if from a long distance he realized his
nose was running on the Impala. Well, it wasn’t like she seemed to mind.

The voice above him was just as merciless when it came.

“I did not tell you to stop. Continue. What else did you call me?”

This time he knew what would happen as soon as he gave up the word, but he did it anyway.

“Coward.”

The high sound that the lash of the belt tore out of him wasn’t a scream, not quite, but it was close.
He pressed his forehead hard into the warmed metal, gasping.

“And are you sorry?” Cas’s voice sounded genuinely curious, which was almost more obnoxious.

“Y—y—y—yes. Sir.” It took him four tries, but by God, he got it out.

“I believe you are. And nearly sorry enough, but Dean?” He knew instantly that Cas was actually
expecting a response this time, the merciless bastard.

“Ye—yeh?” It wasn’t exactly a word, but it transmitted his meaning anyway.

“Not quite.”

And the belt fell again. It took him a moment, after he had a second to recover from the white hot
stripe against his thighs, but eventually he was able to put together that that had been number twenty-
eight.

Two more.

He could do this, he could do this, he could do this.

_Crack._

He heard it before he felt it, and maybe that was a mercy, because he had half a second to prepare
himself. The noises that were escaping him were incoherent and unending, the steady whimpering
of a wounded animal, and still the angel was unmoved. The voice fell upon him one final time, a
prelude to the last stroke.

“Are you sorry, Dean?”

“Ye—ye—yes, Sir.” He would never know how he got the words out, especially when he knew
what was coming after them.

He wasn’t wrong. Immediately, the belt cracked against him, laying a third stripe across the base of
the plug, jarring it hard into Dean’s prostate. As if by command, Dean’s cock pulsed. He felt it jerk
as it painted his belly and the hood of the car (poor Baby, he would give her a really good waxing
job tomorrow, if he could still move). For a second it occurred to him that last time, he’d also come
untouched at the final stroke of the belt.

There was something to why that happened, a reason that it had to be the final stroke, no matter what
number that stroke was, but Dean couldn’t quite put his finger on it. One of these days he’d do some
soul-searching and figure it out.
When he had anything resembling brain power.

Now? Now he was just with it enough to register Cas’s voice as it settled over him like a blanket, the sternness underlain by pride and love.

“Yes. You are. Just sorry enough.”

How he managed it, Dean didn’t have half a clue, but he’d be damned if he didn’t somehow hunt down just a few more words, garbled with snot and tears, but decipherable nevertheless.

“Th—thank…Sir. Punishing me.”

Okay, so maybe he forgot a few words, but Cas got the gist of it.

He heard the soft clink as the belt’s buckle hit the floor, and then Cas’s forehead was pressed against the back of Dean’s neck, oblivious to the sweat beading there. The angel leaned over him from one side, careful not to come in contact with the abused area. This was good, because the pain in his ass and thighs felt like a living thing, a squirming, all-consuming, simultaneously unbearable and wonderful presence that threatened to swallow him whole.

The voice that vibrated against his back was impossibly gentle.

“My good boy.”

That was when Dean realized that he didn’t have to speak anymore, that nothing more would be expected of him, that it was okay to let go.

Dean let the waves crest over him, and was lost.
Punch-Drunk Love

Chapter Summary

In which goddammit, Sam. Just...goddammit.

But hey, chocolate!

Chapter Notes

Sorry, gang. Time to climb back out of your bunks and get really, really annoyed with me.

NOTE: You guys. OMFG. YOU GUYS. I forgot to add this when I first posted the chapter, which there is no excuse for, but here it is. Featherfluff (who can also be found on tumblr) has made SOMETHING BEAUTIFUL AND AMAZING. She has drawn a GORGEOUS shot of Dean and Cas, post-spanking, that I am madly in love with. I'm going to embed it in the appropriate chapter, but all of you who are long past that chapter NEED to see this too. You can find this gorgeousness right here.

Show the woman some love, would you?!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Under ordinary circumstances, Dean likely would not have come back to himself for quite some time. Not until Cas got him somewhere more comfortable and insisted upon coaxing food and drink of some kind into him before letting him drift off into true sleep, rather than simply the dreamlike headspace he inhabited in the perfect moments after the scene concluded.

These were not ordinary circumstances.

Dean became aware of this reasonably rapidly, when what drew him back from the blissed out abyss was the sound of raised voices. Still, he drifted in and out for long moments, catching a word here, a phrase there.

“—absolutely unacceptable!”

“—don’t know why this is surprising—“

“—not surprised, appalled—“

“—be tending to Dean?”

The voices were familiar, and normally he was pretty sure they meant safety. Good things.

“—attempting to before the interruption—“

“—need to focus on what’s important—“
But something about them seemed off. They were urgent, rapid, overlapping. Clipped.

“—OUT! NOW!”

“—as soon as—“

They were rising and falling, loud and then quieter, cresting and falling upon him like waves pounding against the beach.

“—not kidding—“

“—unchain him or I—“

There was something about voices that rose and fell like that. It meant something.

“—none of your—“

“—clearly is, or—“

Angry. That was it. He was hearing anger.

“—and how did you even—“

“—reveal my secrets—“

“—verge of smiting—“

Wait, he was pretty sure that last word was a problem. That it meant something bad was going to happen. He needed to—what?

“—be melodramatic—“

 Needed to do something.

“—swear to my Father—“

Maybe say something. But first—

Suddenly there was a glaringly bright light in his eyes. He cringed away from it, trying to figure out how to make it go away.

“—think he’s coming around.”

Wait, maybe the problem was that his eyes were open. Cracked. A little. Something sticky wouldn’t let them open wider. Maybe that was a good thing.

“Dean?”

The raised voices were bad enough. Bright light was just altogether too much.

“Dean?”

He finally managed to figure out how to squeeze them back shut. Much better.

“Dean, can you hear me?”

Yes. Go away. Too loud.
“—obviously did something wrong if he’s—“

“—interrupting critical aftercare—“

“—not the one arguing—“

“…too loud…” Wait, that voice was different. Still familiar but not one of the raised ones. Much, much softer. And it sounded different than usual. Too quiet. Raspy. Shaky.

“Dean??”

“Dean!”

No, back to the first two voices now.

“…too loud…”

Hey, there was the third one! Still so much quieter. And…wait, was that his voice? That was his voice! He had a voice. He could speak.

“—heard him!”

“—haven’t raised my—“

No sooner did he realize this than he started to become aware of other things, a little bit at a time.

“—would just leave!”

“—until I see—“

The bright light was back, pounding at him through what he was now sure were his own slitted eyelids. They wouldn’t open further because—because his eyelashes were sticking together. Were gummed with…something.

“—lack of faith disturbing—“

“—Darth fucking Vader?”

Tears? That seemed right. Drying tears. But why had he been crying? Everything had been so wonderful before the voices. The voices that were still at it.

“Eyes…can’t. Stuck.” Hey, it was his voice again! He hadn’t actually made a conscious decision to speak, he was pretty sure.

Suddenly there was the sound of something familiar, a sort of…soft clacking, coming closer. Footsteps? Footsteps! Yes!

A moment later, one of the voices sounded again, much closer, and very, very gentle.

“Close your eyes so—“

He missed part of it, he was pretty sure, but caught enough to close his eyes again. A second later, something very soft and damp was gently rubbed across his eyelids.

The instant he became aware of that—a physical sensation—he started to become aware of about a thousand other ones.
And most of them weren’t great.

The first one wasn’t so bad. There was something hard pressed against his front—but really, it was he that was pressed against it. Lying on—or no, draped over it. His torso was pressed against it but he wasn’t quite lying down. It was hard, yes, but somehow still meant safety.

“—try to open your—“

“—here, use this—“

“—out of here!”

“—fine, but only because—“

One of his hands was limply resting just beside his head, and that was okay, but the other one was stretched out to one side, and he was pretty sure—yeah, he confirmed with a quick pull. He couldn’t move it. Why couldn’t he move it?

He forgot about that almost immediately, because there was something gummy and warm, but not pleasantly so, squishing against his lower belly, between it and his soft cock.

“—eyes now, baby, please—“

No sooner had he become aware of that than it was gone again, because he suddenly hit the motherlode of all physical sensations.

A choked whimper broke out, unnervingly close, and he realized after a second that it had come from him, but he couldn’t be bothered to care, because oh dear God he was on fire.

Well. Part of him, anyway. Bizarrely, it seemed to be confined to a stretch of flesh from the base of his spine—well, the top of his ass, really—to mid-thigh.

And that was when everything clicked into place.

He knew exactly who he was, and exactly where he was, and he knew exactly what must have happened.

“—fucking Sam.” Hey, there was his voice again, and it was choked with pain, but no less pissed off for all that.

“He’s gone now, Dean. Or will be as soon as he gets the chains unwrapped from the door, which he had better accomplish in the next five seconds or any promises I have made not to smite him will be, so help me, null and void.”

Yeah, come to mention it, there was a rapid, erratic clinking sound, near enough to be easily audible but far enough that he was pretty sure it was some distance away.

Which made sense, because they were in the garage. And he was on the Impala. And his ass was on fire because Cas had taken a belt to it thirty times, and it had been amazing right up until—

He didn’t realize he was going to speak again until his voice leaked out.

“…go ahead and smite him.”

“Dearly as I wish to take you up on that offer, you do not truly mean it, and would be extremely cross with me if I did so while you are compromised.”
“Pretty sure…mean it.”

From far away came Sam’s voice, a grumble.

“—ungrateful—“

“NOW, SAM!” And there was Cas’s voice, suddenly booming so loud from just above Dean that it pressed painfully against his ears. He flinched and whimpered again, the roar somehow bringing him even more firmly back into his own body, making him more acutely aware of the pain and restraint and squishy drying come. Cas’s voice rang out again, even closer, but infinitely quieter, layered with regret and apology.

“—so sorry, Dean, I’m so—here, one moment, let me free you.”

Suddenly the arm that had been stretched out perpendicular to his body slithered loosely down to his side, and he was pretty sure that meant he could move again. But first he should probably open his eyes.

He did so slowly, a little reluctantly.

This time, they opened easily, the gummed tears wiped away by a gentle hand that had to have been Cas, because there was no way in hell he’d have let Sam near enough to touch Dean right now.

The light was still too bright, and he squinted, cringing away from it, suddenly recalling that up until what he presumed had been fairly recently, a blindfold had kept him in total blackness. His eyes must have adjusted to it, and that was why—

“Dean, I am going to step away for just a moment. I want you to count your breaths. Before you get to fifteen, I will be back.” Cas’s voice was gentle but still stern, and it did not even occur to Dean that he could disobey. Where he might otherwise have panicked at the soft clacking sound of Cas’s footsteps receding, now he was too focused on counting the first breath.

One.

Sam had somehow broken in, or had even been here all along, and Cas had discovered him—

Two.

—or maybe Sam had voluntarily revealed himself, that actually seemed even more likely, and—

Three.

—Cas had only managed to get the blindfold off and get one arm unfastened while Dean was lost in that magical headspace before he spotted Sam—

Four.

—and they must have argued, and argued badly. That was what had woken Dean, dragged him back from the beautiful abyss—

Five.

—which now left him bent over the Impala, weak as a newborn kitten, his own come starting to get unpleasantly sticky on his stomach—

Six.
—and pretty sure he was going to plot his brother’s death as soon as he actually had the use of his legs again, or—

Seven.

—hell, even the full use of his own brain, which still felt impossibly fuzzy. Come to think of it, his mouth was really dry, and—

Eight.

—his tongue felt six times its normal size, and his heart was beating what he was pretty sure was too fast—

Nine.

—but at least his breathing was nice and even, steady and careful, because Cas had told him to count it, and he had to be a good boy for Cas—

Ten.

—who had left him here for no more than the count of fifteen breaths, and—

Suddenly the room was a great deal darker. Not dark, but the blinding light that had been beating down on him was gone, leaving a much softer, dimmer light behind. That was better.

Eleven.

Anyway, left him here for no more than the count of—wait. Left him? That couldn’t be right.

Twelve.

Cas wouldn’t leave him like this, would he? That didn’t even make sense. That was—

Thirteen.

“Dean.”

The voice was low, right above him, and immediately followed by the warm, firm pressure of a hand against his lower back.

No. Not a hand. Cas’s hand.

Cas hadn’t left him. Not really. He had just receded for a few seconds, and—

Oh. Oh! The light! Cas had dimmed the lights! That was…that was good.

Really good.

“Dean, can you hear me?”

Oh, yeah. He should answer. Cas sounded worried.

“Roger, good buddy.” That was appropriate, right? It meant he’d heard Cas. Dean was pretty sure that’s what it meant.

“No, Dean, it is me. Cas. I do not know any Roger.” Well, shit. Now he sounded even more worried.
“No, I—yeah. Cas. I…I know.” One of these days he’d explain what the whole “Roger that” thing meant, but it seemed like a whole lot of effort just now, and he was so very tired. Maybe he could just drift back off? That beautiful headspace didn’t seem to have a whole lot of interest in returning, but sleep. Sleep might be in reach, even with the myriad of really very uncomfortable physical things going on.

Dean let his eyes start to slide shut again, grasping toward the darkness that was only too willing to swallow him up, but—

“No, Dean, open your eyes. Look at me.” The commanding tone would brook no disobedience.

Dean opened his eyes, and found himself nose-to-nose with Cas, who must also be leaning over the Impala to bring his face close to Dean’s. He jerked slightly in surprise and groaned at what that did to his sore shoulders and burning ass.

“I know that you are hurting, and that you are tired, and that you are disoriented. I know that you were pulled back out of your head too rapidly and too harshly. I know that you would like to let go again. I know these things. But I need you to stay with me just a little while longer. Can you do that, my love?”

There was such sincerity in that voice. Such compassion in those eyes. It wasn’t a command, it was a heartfelt request, and Dean couldn’t imagine a world in which he wouldn’t do as that voice asked, if it did so in that tone.

He drew in a slow breath, briefly noting that he’d lost count of them as soon as Cas was back with him, and found his voice again.

“Yeah. I can—yeah. With you.”

“My good boy. My perfect, perfect boy. You were amazing. You are amazing. I have never been prouder of you.”

“I—really?”

Cas had just sounded so angry, only a few moments ago, and even if on some fuzzy logical level Dean knew it hadn’t been with him, it was hard to reconcile that with this gentle tone that heaped praise upon him. Hard to reconcile it with the sincerity and adoration in those beautiful, beloved blue eyes.

“Really. Absolutely. So very proud. I know you are hurting. I’m going to heal you in a moment, and then—”

“No!” The intense vehemence of his own voice surprised both of them. Dean found himself blinking a few times, startled, before he took a breath and went on, a little slower. His voice sounded a little slurred, as if he’d been out for a night of heavy drinking, but it didn’t seem important. “No—Cas, please. Don’t take it.”

“Oh, Dean.” There were a thousand things in that voice. Some of them seemed…bad. Regret and hesitance and worry and concern. But there were other things, too, better things. Awe, and pride. “I really should—given what just occurred…”

“No.” Really, there were about 100,000 reasons that the answer was no, but he couldn’t actually find words for any of them right now, and that made him start to feel a little panicky. His breathing, which had been so nice and even, was starting to speed up, and he could feel his heart speed with it, and his eyes, which had been so clear, were suddenly hazy with what he was pretty sure were tears.
Cas’s hand started to rub slow circles on Dean’s back, and he wondered briefly if he should pull away, because as good as that hand felt, it had the power to take away what Dean knew he absolutely must be allowed to keep, allowed to process, allowed to work through his feelings about.

“Calm down, baby. I...if you are entirely certain that you do not wish it, I will do as you like.”

Okay. Okay. He could breathe again, and was able to blink away the haze of tears. Okay.

“Thank you.” Dean’s voice was a broken whisper, and a second after it rang out, Cas’s forehead was pressed hard against his. It was only there for an instant before it was replaced by the angel’s lips, deceptively soft, considering how chapped they always looked. He pressed kiss after kiss against Dean’s forehead, his cheek, the top of his head, raining them down upon him for long moments before they paused, to allow the voice to ring out again.

“Very well. I will...not heal you. However—I know I generally get you cleaned up by hand, and that it is an important part of our ritual. For the sake of speed and ease, and not causing you more pain than is absolutely necessary, I would like it if you would allow me to do so with my grace. Do you consent to this?”

Dean had to take a second to work through it. That was a lot of words, and he still felt so...fuzzy. Hazy. Slow.

Yes, Cas usually cleaned him up by hand, reverentially, softly, using baby wipes, or, more often, holding him up under the gentle, warm stream of a shower to rinse off the sweat and tears and come and anything else on him.

In the early days, Cas had just used his mojo to clean Dean up, and something about it had felt so impersonal, so...clinical, that Dean had eventually found the words to ask that Cas do it by hand. The angel had taken to it readily, and this was the first time since that he had even broached the topic of using his grace to do so.

After a minute, Dean was able to gather at least some of the reasons the mojo might be preferable. He poked at his own mind, a little distantly, a little curiously, trying to figure out if he was okay with it. He hadn’t had the same immediate negative reaction he’d had to the idea of being healed, after all.

Yeah. Yeah, he was pretty sure he was okay with that. It made sense, and the sooner he was cleaned up the sooner he could be wrapped in Cas’s arms and giving back in to the darkness that wanted him so badly.

His own voice was still a little slurry, but nevertheless firm enough.

“...okay.”

A hand settled very gently atop his head, and a burst of warmth went through him. Not as hot as it felt when Cas healed him, but similar in its own way.

Suddenly the tacky pool of come that had been drying unpleasantly between him and the Impala was gone. He hadn’t even realized that he was covered in a fine, cold sweat until it, too, was gone. And so was the thick wetness he hadn’t even registered under his cheek that must’ve been—what, snot? Ew.

He was as clean and warm and dry as if he had taken the most thorough shower ever, blow-dried his hair, and then carefully and diligently towel-dried himself.

Maybe there was something to be said for this mojo stuff.
A second later the hand was gone again. He hadn’t realized how comforting the contact was until suddenly Cas was no longer touching him.

With some effort, he forced his eyes open a little wider, made himself tune in a little more to the world around him.

The angel was just a few steps away, leaning into the open back door of the Impala.

That seemed sort of strange, but it was also reassuring to see how close he still was. Dean relaxed a little, settling a little more comfortably against the hood of the Impala.

Well. Sort of. Comfort was relative. There was this ridge in the center of the hood that was kind of digging into his stomach and chest a little now, and it really was awfully hard. He wished it were a little softer. A little more like his bed, maybe.

Hey, he had a bed. That was awesome. Maybe Cas would even take him there.

While he processed this, the angel finished his rummaging and re-emerged, stepping toward Dean with several things in hand.

He heard a clicking sound and focused on the hands in front of him in time to see them twisting the cap of a small bottle of orange juice.

Something about that was worrisome. Those bottles were important. They were…what was the word? Sacred. They were sacred. He should…he should say something.

“Better not,” he advised, “Get in trouble. Those are…scared.”

“I’m—what?”


“I do not…oh! No, Dean, I promise it is okay. You will not get in trouble. You may have as much juice as you would like. You may have every single one of the remaining thirty-seven bottles, if that is what you desire.”

“Wow.” He was pretty sure that was a really big deal. But the bottles of juice were definitely supposed to be restricted to certain—oh, hey. Hey, they were for times like now, weren’t they? That was great. Juice sounded great.

His eyelids had drifted back to half-mast, and he forced them to blink open again as something came toward him. Suddenly the bottle of juice was hovering a few inches in front of his face, a straw sticking out of it. But it was at the wrong angle. He couldn’t get to the straw.

“Dean,” Cas’s gentle voice was back, very nearby, and one of his hands was resting on the center of Dean’s back, “can you lift your head for me? I need you to drink some of this before I bring you back to your bedroom.”

Bedroom. That was where his bed was.

Okay, he could get on board with this plan. This sounded like a good plan.

He just had to lift his head.

It took a moment to sort out nerve signals and figure out how to get his brain to send the right message to his body, but after a few seconds, his head actually lifted an inch or two off the hood.
Huh. Maybe not such a good idea after all. It felt about three times its normal size, and for a second he was a little woozy. He put it back down.

“Almost there,” Cas encouraged him softly, rubbing Dean’s back in soothing circles. “I know you can do this for me.”

He—okay. He could…yeah, he could do that. For Cas.

His head lifted again, further this time. It was a little wobbly on his neck, sort of like a bobblehead, which actually struck him as kind of funny for no apparent reason, and he giggled weakly.

Suddenly the straw which had been a few inches in front of him was right there, nudging lightly at his lips. After a second or two, he was able to convince them to wrap around it.

He drew on it lightly and actually, literally moaned as something sweet and wet and deliciously cool flooded his mouth. He hadn’t fully been aware of exactly how unpleasantly dry it was, and he had scarcely noticed the burning rawness in his throat until suddenly it was soothed by the liquid.

He paused for a second, the straw still sort of in his mouth, because he had to make Cas understand that this was the best thing ever.

“…God, this’s ‘mazing.”

“I am glad,” came the quiet voice, still soothing, but slightly tinged with what he was pretty sure was amusement. That was okay. He liked it when Cas sounded like that. And he really liked what his face looked like when—

His eyes shifted to settle on that face and sure enough, a soft smile was settled on it, the corners of those blue, blue eyes crinkled up. Those eyes were so warm, he felt as if he could just tumble into them and remain there happily forever.

“Do you think you can drink a little more for me?”

Hell, he could drink more for himself. This stuff was awesome.

He wrapped his lips around the straw once again and took a more enthusiastic pull. Maybe a little too enthusiastic. A little dribbled out of one corner of his mouth. That struck him as even funnier than being a bobblehead, and when he laughed again, even more orange juice leaked out. Whoops.

It wasn’t nearly as funny once he realized he was wasting his juice, and he immediately sobered, wrapping his lips more firmly around the juice and taking a slightly more hesitant sip.

There. That was better.

His head was really very heavy, and after a few more sips he wanted to rest it back down, but Cas’s voice continued to flow over him, trading off praise and encouragement, and little by little Dean sipped his way to the bottom of the bottle.

Cas’s praise of him was effusive. It seemed a little disproportionate to having finished a small bottle of juice, but then, it actually had been kind of a lot of effort, so he didn’t object.

His cheek, as if of its own volition, settled back down against the Impala, and it felt amazing to let his neck have a break. Cas did not object, even lifted the hand off his back to begin lightly massaging the back of his neck, and that was a whole new level of great.
A moment later, a familiar, even sweeter smell hit his nostrils, and something soft and a little melty rubbed against his lips. He opened them reflexively and a small square of something incredible settled onto his tongue.

*Chocolate.* That was it. It was chocolate.

His moan was even more decadent than the one the juice had inspired, and as soon as the chocolate had melted away to nothing on his tongue, it was replaced by another small square, and another.

He was pretty sure Cas was still talking, was dimly aware of that gravelly cadence stroking him as soothingly as the hand that still rested warmly on his neck. The words themselves didn’t seem especially important, as long as that voice kept serenading him.

Dean couldn’t have said how many little squares of chocolate melted on his tongue, but he found that as they did, his brain was starting to sharpen. Things seemed a little less hazy, his vision a little clearer.

He wasn’t honestly sure how he felt about that. The haze had been sort of nice, a buffer between himself and the full awareness of his aches and pains, not to mention the knowledge of what had fucked his world (and his blissful abyss) all up.

He *really* didn’t want to think about that right now, and made the executive decision not to do so. Instead he resolutely shoved it back into a dim corner of his brain, to be addressed later, when everything wasn’t quite so complicated.

A moment later, the hand that had been at his neck shifted a little, and suddenly Cas’s face was *right there* in front of his nose again. He blinked, a little surprised but not displeased. It was a good face. He liked that face.

He should tell Cas so.

“Good face,” he said approvingly, and Cas blinked, looking a little puzzled. It was the face that normally came with that small, endearing head tilt, but the Impala was blocking the head tilt. It seemed rude of her.

The angel chose not to address the compliment directly, which was okay. Dean didn’t mind.

“Dean, I want to get you back to your room now. I am afraid it is likely going to be painful. I cannot fix that, if you will not allow me to heal you—”

“No!”

“I *promise* I will not do so without your permission,” Cas told him solemnly, and there was such sincerity in his eyes that Dean again relaxed, only now processing the rest of what Cas had said.

Back to his room. That was good. He wanted that.

Painful, though. That wasn’t as good. Things were already hurting. He could feel the steady beat of his heart throbbing in his ass and thighs in a way that hurt, yes, but he was pretty sure he might also sort of enjoy, if he could just get settled and let himself go back to drifting.

Eventually, slowly, he came to the conclusion that this was okay.

Cas gave him the time to process, not rushing him, and eventually Dean found himself nodding a little. As soon as he did, Cas spoke again.
“I am going to help you stand, but only for a second or two. I need you to decide whether you would like to wear your robe or not. Putting it on will hurt, but I cannot guarantee that we will not run across Sam in the hallway on the way back to your room.”

Dean considered this for a moment. Did he want to wear his robe? It sounded like a lot of effort, and he was pretty sure Cas was right, it would hurt, too.

After a moment, Dean managed to get his wits about him enough to shift the arm that was hanging down loosely over a little, brushing his fingertips against the back of one thigh.

Holy shit. That was…that was intense.

Yeah, no robe. Definitely no robe. Sam was the only reason he might wear a robe, and—

“Fuck ‘im,” he concluded aloud. There was something that sounded suspiciously like a snort from about three inches in front of him, and he focused back on Cas’s face to find his lips twitching violently.

“I could not possibly agree with you more,” Cas said gravely. “Very well, let’s get you up.”

Dean grimaced a little and Cas clucked sympathetically. Dean almost giggled because, again, strangest mother hen ever.

Cas shifted and then his face was suddenly gone, but a second later both of his hands closed firmly around Dean’s upper arms from behind him, one arm stretched strongly across his back. The hands pulled gently but strongly, and slowly Dean started to lift from the hood. After a minute, he realized he could help, and set his muscles to the task of getting upright.

It…wasn’t fun. Cas had been right, it didn’t feel good, but it was manageable.

Right up until he got what he was pretty sure was almost fully upright, and then found his muscles too weak and shaky to hold him fully. The hands on his arms, and the arm across his back didn’t let him truly fall, but he did sag back against the strong chest behind him. It was warm and firm and wonderful, but that also meant Dean’s entire back—along with his ass and thighs—were in direct contact with that body.

And ow. Um. OW.

“Ow,” he complained weakly, and Cas murmured soothing nonsense. A moment later one of the hands shifted. For a second, his weight was pressing even more fully against the body at his back, and he hissed out a pained breath. Almost immediately, though, Cas’s body shifted, muscles tightening, almost crouching, and the hand that had abandoned his arm was suddenly wrapping strongly behind his knees, and he found himself swept up like a baby into impossibly strong and very gentle arms.

Dean sagged gratefully against the chest that Cas drew him into, his head settling down perfectly into the crook of Cas’s neck. The angel’s head tipped, his cheek pressing against the top of Dean’s head, and suddenly the intense pain the pressure against his ass had caused seemed not to matter anymore. He made a soft, wordless sound of utter contentment, and could hear the smile in Cas’s voice as the murmur continued.

Now that the physical sensations weren’t quite so pressing, he was able to process the words a little more fully, and he liked them. They were good words. Praise and affection and adoration, spoken with such naked sincerity that even someone who maybe didn’t like themselves a whole lot (if, you know, someone like that were around) could scarcely doubt the truth of them.
Then he was rocking slightly in the arms, and when he blinked his eyes open a little wider (again they had slid halfway shut without him really giving them permission), he realized they were moving, smoothly but remarkably swiftly.

They were out of the garage and into the dim hallways before Dean knew it. He didn’t bother to try to follow their progress, although he did sort of try to keep an eye out for any particularly tall figures that might be lurking in the shadows.

Despite Cas’s concern, there was no sign of Sam, and almost before Dean knew it, one of Cas’s hands was shifting slightly so that he could turn the doorknob to Dean’s room and let them into it.

Cas carried him directly across the room and then, with great care, as if he were carrying something impossibly fragile and priceless, shifted Dean back onto his feet and guided him carefully onto the bed on his stomach.

Oh. Oh, that was just…that was great. It was so soft, compared to the Impala. Much better. He sank into the memory foam and groaned at the decadence of it. It was even better than the juice. Even better than the chocolate. Surely nothing could be better than this.

Nope. He was wrong.

A moment later, the bed shifted slightly as a weight settled on it from the other side, and then Cas’s warm, strong, naked body (wait, when had that happened?) was pressed against Dean’s side.

Strong arms wrapped around him and shifted him, a little bit at a time, until he was draped across the angel’s delightfully warm body.

His room seemed warmer than usual, too, and he took a moment to wonder muzzily whether Cas had turned up the temperature in here as well while Dean had been cooking, suspecting that Dean wouldn’t be able to handle covers.

That was maybe the most coherent, linear thought Dean had had since the moment he started to come back to himself to the sound of raised voices, and he was sort of proud of himself.

He registered that Cas’s cheek had again settled against the top of his head just before it turned, and he felt lips brushing his head, then his forehead.

“Do you want to sleep now?” Cas asked quietly.

“I…maybe?” He wasn’t totally sure. He should think about this. He should take a minute to…to consider. To…decide.

To…

“Sleep, baby.”

Okay.

Chapter End Notes

Well, crew, I think we're within about 5 chapters of our story coming to a close! I can't give you a clearer estimate than that, because I often seem to end up with more words
than I planned on (anybody seen "Amadeus?" Too many notes. I have too many notes, in the literary sense), and thus I end up having to split story arcs into more chapters than originally intended. Clearly, I'm still learning how to plan a story. The good news is, I know exactly where we're heading, and I can't wait for the rest of you to find out.

But before we say goodbye to our snowbound friends, there's still some shenanigans to be had. See y'all on Wednesday for the next update!
Greenery

Chapter Summary

In which Dean is ready for round two and is damn well going to get it, no matter how many reservations Cas might have.

Chapter Notes

Thanks and love go out to Dangerousnotbroken for stepping in as a substitute beta reader and sparing my regular betas additional harassment. You're a wonder, and I'm obsessed with everything you write.

Please find chapter-specific tags and warnings (with no small amount of snark) at the end of the chapter, as ever, plus an author's note.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

This time, Dean was able to come back to himself slowly, and awareness returned a tiny bit at a time.

The first thing he became aware of was an all-encompassing sense of well-being. Really, it was more complicated than that. There was so much else going on within him. He was warm, he was safe (in more ways than one), he knew he was loved, and so many other things he didn’t really have words for and felt no sense of urgency in finding any. It all added up to feeling right.

His consciousness was entirely restricted to this delightful, welcome sense for he-couldn’t-have-said-how-long. Only slowly did he start to become aware of other things, physical things.

Half of his body was pillowed on wonderful softness, and the other half was propped against something a good deal less plush but somehow even more comfortable and welcome. Firm and warm, whatever it was his head was resting on rose and fell with slow, rhythmic regularity. It was incredibly soothing, and he found himself burrowing a little closer.

Almost immediately, the arms he had not yet registered were wrapped around him tightened just a little, and he felt his hair flatten against his head with gentle pressure from above.

He knew that feeling. It was familiar, and it was good.

He still felt no urgency about putting words to it, and when at last a single word (kisses) drifted across his mind, he simply watched it until it was gone.

Shifting again, just slightly, he butted his head lightly up against the pressure and was rewarded by a huff of warm air that ruffled his hair.

That, too, felt good, and after a moment Dean became aware that a low humming sound, one that spoke of perfect contentment, was thrumming through his chest. It took him a few more seconds to realize that this was because he was the one humming.
It was only now that he started to become aware of more potentially troublesome physical sensations, and somehow he did not actually find them problematic, although he recognized that they could’ve been categorized as such.

His shoulders and upper back were sore, but not unpleasantly so. He sat with the feeling for a moment and decided he was okay with it.

His calves were likewise sore, as if they had been bunched tight for a long time, but that didn’t bother him either.

The next thing that registered was by far the most intense, and he sort of had a sense that maybe he had half-consciously opted to save this for last, so that he could spend some real time processing it without being distracted by other sensations he had not yet catalogued.

From the very top of his ass down to what felt like four or five inches above his knees was…what?

For starters, it was warm. Warmer than the rest of his skin (which was certainly not cool) by far, warm enough that he was certain if he hovered his fingers a few millimeters away from it, he would be able to feel the heat coming off of his flesh.

There was more to it than that, though. Much more. A soreness that seemed to radiate almost bone-deep. At first it felt like all of it was uniformly painful, but after a time he became aware that that was not so. It was more nuanced than that. Some areas were a little more tender than others, and once again a single word floated lazily across his mind.

Overlapping.

He wasn’t quite sure what that indicated, but again, his uncertainty didn’t bother him any, and he let it slide away in favor of processing the sensations on a more primal level.

On the most basic physical level, it didn’t feel good. It was pain, after all, and pain was supposed to be the body’s signal that something was wrong.

Of course, he was pretty sure that his brain had long had those signals a little mixed up in certain circumstances, which probably explained why something that should’ve been unpleasant filled him with satisfaction that went even deeper than the soreness.

He sat with it for a long time, letting his consciousness (such as it was) narrow until it was entirely focused on that hot area. Almost immediately, as he fully opened himself up to it, he became aware that there was even more nuance to it than he’d previously thought.

It wasn’t just sore, it was throbbing gently with the steady beat of his heart, some areas more intensely than others. There was a stretched feeling to his skin which suggested to him that the flesh was swollen, which didn’t seem especially strange, given how it felt.

The knowledge of what had caused these sensations he was now exploring so thoroughly came upon him slowly rather than in a rush, and it did nothing to dampen his sense of well-being. If anything, it was enhanced by the gradual realization that what had caused it had been something he’d wanted, something he’d requested.

He couldn’t have said how long he had been drifting in and out for, but something about his internal clock suggested that it had been at least an hour, perhaps longer.

At any rate, he had not consciously made the decision to move when he found his head slowly turning and his lips pressing down against the wonderfully warm, sculpted chest he was resting
And it was a chest, he now knew.

That was the point at which things started to coalesce more quickly.

Conscious awareness of who he was came first. It was followed immediately by the realization of who the body he was draped across and the arms that were cradling him closely belonged to. The knowledge settled over him, as comfortable and welcome as a blanket still warm from the dryer.

Confirmation came in the form of the voice, rumbling softly from the chest he was cradled against. The low, familiar gravel only enhanced his sense of well-being.

“Hello, Dean.”

“Mmmm.” Under the circumstances, he thought that was actually a pretty damn coherent response. Cas certainly didn’t object. The silence rang out for another few moments while his brain really settled to the task of reassembling itself into some semblance of order. Finally, Dean expanded upon his previous commentary. “Mmm…how long?”

“Have you been asleep?” Cas responded readily, “nearly four hours solidly, and perhaps another hour in which I think you were coming around slowly.”

“Mnppph,” Dean agreed mildly, “what time?” Constructing full sentences didn’t strike him as a big priority at the moment, as long as he was communicating his meaning. Since Cas went ahead and answered this question as promptly and easily as the previous one, he figured he must have been doing pretty well.

“It is slightly after 2AM.” Cas paused momentarily to let Dean process this, which he was grateful for. Damn, it was the middle of the night. He wasn’t sure he’d ever slept this long after a scene, but then, he had the distinct sense that Sam’s untimely interruption of his subspace might have had something to do with that. Something about getting yanked out of it rudely rather than emerging organically had left him a whole other level of loopy and drained.

Dean registered a second ahead of time that Cas was about to go on, when the chest beneath him rose with the angel’s quick inhalation prior to speaking.

“How are you feeling?”

“Mnmnmnm,” Dean told him contentedly, before deciding he really ought to at least dredge up some words to expand on that, considering all that Cas had done for (not to mention to) him in the last eight hours or so. “Kinda awesome, now that you mention it.”

That same soft pressure from above rested briefly against Dean’s hair, but this time he was aware enough to connect the dots and recognize that Cas was brushing a kiss atop his head. Dean could hear the smile in Cas’s voice when the angel spoke. “I am very glad to hear that, although I imagine you might somewhat revise your answer the first time you move. Speaking of which, are you desperate for the bathroom?”

Well, shit. Now that he mentioned it… “I wasn’t,” Dean grumbled, “until you made me think about it. Now I am.”

“I am very sorry,” Cas told him with such exaggerated gravity that Dean knew perfectly well the angel was only barely resisting laughing at him.
“Liar,” Dean told him without rancor.

“No, I am quite sincere,” Cas assured him, “I am simply also attempting not to laugh at you.”

“You’re not as charming as you think you are,” Dean grumbled, turning his head and attempting to burrow into Cas’s chest. Maybe if he just ignored it, the increasingly pressing urge to pee would go away?

“Your bladder is unlikely to be beaten into submission by failing to attend to it,” Cas blazed past Dean’s accusation and instead chose to respond to his unspoken thoughts, as he so often did. The fact that he did it without actually utilizing his mind-reading skills was really just adding insult to injury.

“How do you know? You don’t pee,” Dean told him, a little waspishly.

“You are correct, but as you may recall, there was a time in which I did, however brief it may have been. Furthermore, having been around for some millennia, I can assure you that there has yet to be a documented case of the human bladder emptying itself by wishing.”

“I don’t like you.”

“Yes, you do,” Cas told him with mellow good humor. Dean didn’t bother to naysay him, since they both knew it was true. Instead he directed his energy into wordless grumbling.

Ordinarily, he would simply have rolled over to get off of the bed, but he had enough sense left to recognize what a colossal mistake that would be in his present condition. Instead, he started off by planting one hand on the bed on each side of Cas and doing what amounted to a push-up, until he was hovering over the angel. It renewed the ache in his shoulders and upper back, but was a hell of a lot more manageable than settling his body weight squarely on his ass would’ve likely been. Cas took this entirely in stride, merely raising his brows at the man who was suddenly hovering above him. Dean stuck his tongue out at the angel, who chuckled again before sitting up and grasping Dean’s shoulders, helping him to rise to his knees.

That was a good compromise, and allowed Dean to shuffle his way to the edge of the bed on his knees before climbing to his feet.

Cas hadn’t entirely been wrong. The amount of movement required definitely reignited the burn in his ass and thighs, and by the time he was on his feet he discovered that he was pressing his lips together to refrain from at least groaning.

It took him a second to realize why he wasn’t going ahead and just letting the groan out, and it finally coalesced when the angel’s voice rang out from behind him on the bed. His keen eyes had clearly seen in Dean’s body language what he had been careful not to vent vocally.

“Dean, if you would just allow me to heal you, I—“

“Goddammit, Cas, I said no!”

For the second time that evening, Dean surprised both of them with his vehemence as he rounded on Cas so fast the angel actually recoiled a little.

There was a moment of silence as they both processed this, and then Cas spoke again, a little slower and with exaggerated calm, as if trying to soothe a wounded and skittish animal.

“I promised you I would not heal you without your permission, and I intend to keep that promise.
You do not need to defend yourself against me, Dean.”

Dean stepped on his instinctive reaction to be irrationally annoyed at the tone and sighed slightly, reminding himself that the angel was right—he wasn’t the enemy (at the moment, the enemy was Sam, but that was a whole other story).

“I know. I’m sorry, Cas. I just…trust me on this, okay? If I need you to heal me, I’ll let you know, but for the moment, I really need you to let me work through it without hovering like an anxious mother hen. We can’t do this if you’re going to be so wracked with guilt that you can’t bear to look at the aftermath, you know,” Dean told him, proud of himself for actually managing to put words to his feelings, even while he still felt half-drugged with sleep and the aftermath of the endorphin rush.

Half a second later, the angel was off the bed and nose-to-nose with him, blue eyes which had lately been so gentle and cautious now dark with something else altogether. Before Dean quite knew it, one of Cas’s hands grasped his waist, holding him steady for the other hand, which settled very lightly but inexorably around the curve of one ass cheek. Dean’s little gasp of pain was actually audible.

Rather than backing off at this evidence that he had hurt Dean, Cas’s stony face shifted, the corners of his lips tugging upward infinitesimally in a smile whose subtlety made it no less feral. His fingertips pressed a little harder into the stripes painted across Dean’s ass, and the voice that poured over him was laced with satisfaction tinged with just a hint of sadism.

“Oh, Dean,” Cas told him, shaking his head slightly, as if disappointed in Dean’s obtuseness, “if you honestly believe that anything even resembling guilt has crossed my mind for a heartbeat when I look at those gorgeous stripes painted across my favorite canvas, you are sorely mistaken.” He paused for a moment, and then his lips twitched in a way that indicated mischief. “If,” he added, “you will pardon the pun.”

Sorely. Sorely mistaken. For fuck’s sake, first the wing pun and now this. If Dean hadn’t been so totally wrapped up in the throbbing awoken by the five fingers digging into his strapped ass (not to mention the unbelievably sexy and self-satisfied dominance his admonition seemed to have awoken in the angel), he would’ve had a lot to say about that pun. As it was, that seemed like a conversation for another day. Instead, Dean took a moment to try to catch his breath (at which endeavor he had seriously questionable results) and construct a response (he was slightly more successful at this. At least, he came up with something to say, anyway).


There was a reasonable chance that at least one of those references hadn’t made a lot of sense to Cas, but the angel didn’t bother seeking clarification. Instead, he simply released his hand from Dean’s ass, dropped the other from his waist, and stepped back, jerking his head toward the door.

“Go to the bathroom. I will fetch you something to eat.”

He knew better than to argue, given the persona he’d inadvertently pushed Cas back into, and anyway, he really did need the bathroom with increasing urgency. He sketched a nod and headed for the hallway. His robe wasn’t on its usual hook, presumably still hanging abandoned in the garage, and after a few seconds in which he dithered, Dean decided his previous attitude regarding the likelihood of running into Sam while naked still stood: Fuck ‘im. He’d seen more than enough, at this point Dean couldn’t be bothered to care enough to put himself through the pain of covering up for Sam’s benefit.

Cas, who seemed to know what Dean was thinking, huffed out a nearly inaudible breath that Dean
nevertheless easily translated as laughter when Dean unlocked the door and stepped into the hallway, naked as a jaybird.

He made it halfway to the bathroom before he registered that he wasn’t just naked, he was also half-hard, thanks to Cas’s judicious application of renewed pain, not to mention his words and looming dominance. Dammit. It was one thing to run into Sam while naked with a tanned ass. It was another to run into Sam while naked with a tanned ass and semi-aroused.

Luckily, the thought of running into Sam at all thoroughly destroyed any lingering arousal, and Dean proceeded the rest of the way to the bathroom unimpeded, anyway.

There was no sign of Sam while he peed (and he figured it was a miracle he’d made it this long, considering that Cas had made him drink so much water before the scene and he’d put away a bottle of juice afterward), nor when he washed his hands and padded back down the hallway to his bedroom. He slipped in through the door Cas had left slightly ajar and took the opportunity to head for his mirror to see the damage.

It was…impressive. His ass was still quite red, and layered with stripes of such incredible precision that they could practically have been left by someone using a ruler to chart their positions. True, there were narrow areas in which parallel stripes overlapped with one another by half a centimeter or so, but all the evidence suggested that had likely been intentional on Cas’s part. Those were clearly the areas that Dean had noticed hurting more when he was starting to come back to himself.

He’d just reached back to press a single fingertip against one of the stripes (the spot blanched white and then immediately filled in brilliant red, much as a severe sunburn would), the pressure drawing a quiet hiss of breath from him, when the door opened fully and the angel stepped in (he, unlike Dean, had pulled on a pair of sweatpants before leaving the room), pausing to shut and firmly lock it behind him. Cas was still taking no chances on Sam interrupting them, even if the likelihood that he was sound asleep at this hour was quite high.

Dean had no objection to this vigilance, considering the serious possibility that Cas would actually kill Sam if he appeared yet again, not to mention the fact that Dean was pretty sure he himself was reaching the point at which he couldn’t be counted on to stop the angel in such an eventuality. He turned to smile at Cas, then grimaced a little when he realized he had stacked two peanut butter sandwiches on a plate. The angel sighed at the look on his face.

“I know, and I wish I had anything better to offer you. The stores are getting exceedingly low, particularly of readily accessible food that requires no true culinary skill to produce. I thought you would not appreciate me attempting something more complicated, given our previous…incidents.”

“You know,” Dean told him, hiding a grin, “there was a time in which you’d thoroughly comfort and then slaughter a pig in order to get ham with which to make me a sandwich. Now all I get is peanut butter? Clearly the spark has gone out.”

Cas snorted, striding forward to hand Dean the plate.

“If I had known that slaughtering livestock was your idea of true romance, I would have ensured that we had several cows or at least a chicken or two snowed in with us. As it stands, until I have freedom of angelic movement once more, you will have to make do with peanut butter, as we are out of ham,” the angel told him, typically deadpan.

“Well, you did kill the pollo maligno, so you’re actually doing pretty well on the slaughtering livestock front, considering how long we’ve been trapped in here,” Dean consoled him.
Cas grinned before producing another bottle of orange juice from the pocket of his sweatpants and offering it to Dean. Dean nodded toward the bedside table, and Cas set it down there while Dean picked up one of the sandwiches off his plate and took a massive bite. Yeah, it was just peanut butter, but at this point even that tasted delicious. He chewed and swallowed before speaking again.

“Damn, two whole bottles? You sure you’re not feeling guilty?” He teased Cas, who raised a brow, as if inquiring whether he really wanted to reopen this avenue of inquiry. “Just kidding,” Dean added hastily, at least wanting to finish his food before provoking the angel into further displays.

Cas’s lip twitched, giving Dean the distinct sense that he’d simply been seeing exactly how fast he could get Dean to backpeddle.

Tossing the angel a slightly sour look, he polished off his first sandwich in a third giant bite before setting the plate on the bedside table and snatching the bottle of orange juice. Cas, meanwhile, settled onto the bed and, just as Dean took his first swig of juice, inquired slyly, “what, you don’t want to have a seat while you finish your meal?”

By the time Dean was done sneezing out the orange juice he had snorted into his sinuses, Cas was laid out on the bed laughing openly, and Dean was considering the relative merits of dumping the remainder of the bottle over Cas’s head.

“Yes, message received, you’re definitely not feeling guilty,” Dean told him dryly, setting the bottle back down with slightly more force than necessary, “and thanks, but if it’s all the same to you, I think I’ll stand.”

“As you like,” Cas told him between snickers. Dean ignored him in favor of the second sandwich, which he finished no more slowly than the first. Then, checking to make sure Cas didn’t appear to be holding any particularly witty quips in reserve for the moment when Dean next went to work on his juice, he grabbed the bottle and took another swig.

He surprised himself again by demolishing the juice in three long swallows. He tossed the empty bottle across the room and into his garbage can, reflecting that apparently his blood sugar had still been in need of some bolstering, despite the juice and chocolate in the scene’s immediate aftermath.

“Thanks, that actually hit the spot,” Dean told Cas, who had finally sobered up and now sat cross-legged on the bed, watching him with an intentness that would’ve been unnerving if Dean didn’t know that it was just his way.

Cas nodded, giving him a small smile which rapidly morphed into shock at Dean’s next words.

“I see,” Cas said, blue eyes nearly as heavy as a physical touch against Dean’s skin, “it is like that, is it?”
“It’s definitely like that,” Dean confirmed, flashing a grin, “and I never start anything I don’t intend to finish.”

Cas came up to his knees and shuffled forward on them to the edge of the bed, somehow managing to look graceful even when moving in a way that should’ve been awkward.

“Dean,” he said, more quietly, without any hint of threat or dominance, “are you entirely certain you have thought this through carefully? We have already put your body through a great deal this evening. Think for a moment, then tell me your color.”

“Cas,” Dean told him frankly, “I will always love that your first concern is making sure I’m safe and in one piece, but I am so green I’m practically a fuckin’ forest. Now take off your goddamn pants.”

Cas gave a tiny shrug which Dean recognized as an ‘if you say so, I’m sure as hell not going to object to getting a piece of that ass,’ and was off the bed and freed of his sweatpants in about the time it took Dean to blink.

“Is that angel mojo, or was Jimmy Novak a ninja in his spare time,” Dean inquired with idle mischief. The angel, who had been looking down as he removed his pants, recentered his gaze directly onto Dean’s face, his facial expression resembling nothing so much as pictures of wolves on the hunt Dean had once seen.

Dean froze solid.

The angel’s lips pulled upward into a slow smile before he spoke, his voice casually conversational and all the more dangerous for it, “Dean,” he said, then paused to wait for a response.

“Uh. Yeah?”

“Shut up.”

Dean thought for a split second about saying something snide in response, but the look on the angel’s face convinced him rapidly that he’d already done just about enough instigating. There was a moment of silence that Dean thought at first was Cas waiting to see whether he was gonna fuck up and speak. Then, after he focused more closely on the angel’s face, he realized that it wasn’t that. Cas’s mind was hard at work, rapidly planning an extension to the scene that he hadn’t intended to continue. Dean was always impressed by the speed with which the angel could adapt, and now was no different.

He stepped forward into Dean’s space, crowding him back against his bedside table, then neatly reaching around him to snag something off of it. A second later, he was back upright, the small bottle of lube that must have made it back from the garage earlier in his hand. He didn’t back off immediately, though, simply remained standing nearly nose to nose with Dean.

Dean stood his ground, meeting the angel’s eyes head on. He wasn’t sure where this need to challenge had come from, but he’d promised himself when he instigated the more intense scene with Cas that he would trust his instincts in its aftermath, and that’s what he was doing. Cas reached up with his free hand, cupping Dean’s cheek tenderly half a second before the hand snaked up into his hair and tangled there tightly.

“You, my beautiful boy, have quite the mouth on you for someone whose ass is still radiating heat from my strap,”

“Thank you for noticing,” Dean told him with unconcealed pride. Cas’s eyes flashed dangerously.
“I thought,” he said with mock confusion, “that I had instructed you to shut up, but surely I must be mistaken, if you are continuing to run that pretty mouth. I guess we will just have to put it to better use, won’t we?”

“You mean hearing my dulcet tones isn’t—“ that was as far as Dean got before the hand that was not in his hair landed on his shoulder and shoved. Dean dropped to his knees hard and fast.

Angel mojo was definitely responsible for the fact that somehow, in the split second before his knees hit the very hard floor, there was suddenly a pillow where there hadn’t been one before. He couldn’t bring himself to say something snide about it, since he could’ve easily cracked his kneecaps landing that hard without the aid of the pillow. Instead, he simply raised his face upward and quirked an ironic brow at Cas.

The angel laughed quietly, and the hand that had been on his shoulder abandoned it in favor of sliding up his neck and onto his jawline. He didn’t even bother to order Dean to open his mouth, he simply pressed his thumb and forefinger down on either side of Dean’s jaw and applied pressure in that perfect spot Dean had never been able to replicate.

Dean’s mouth opened without his permission, and half a second later Cas’s cock was pressing past his lips.

He didn’t object (and not just because verbal argument was now beyond him), merely wrapped his lips around the head of the cock breaching his mouth and sucked once, powerfully.

The angel above him inhaled sharply but didn’t stop his movements, feeding his cock into Dean one slow inch at a time without stopping. Dean focused on relaxing his throat and before he knew it, his nose was nestled in the curl of black hair at Cas’s groin, catching a whiff of sunshine, honey, and clean sweat. The angel made a soft sound of satisfaction, but made no effort to draw back, simply left himself fully buried in Dean’s mouth and throat until Dean’s eyes were watering so badly that they overflowed.

Cas hummed again in enjoyment before speaking. “The only thing prettier than your mouth wrapped around my cock is your mouth wrapped around my cock with tears streaking your cheeks.”

Had Dean been able to speak, he would’ve objected that they weren’t truly tears, they were involuntary, reflexive watering because of the whole fighting-his-gag-reflex thing. As it was, he didn’t suppose the distinction made much of a difference at this point in the proceedings anyway. He settled for mimicking Cas’s low humming sound, causing his throat to vibrate around the angel’s cock. That drew a strangled gasp from above him. If Dean could’ve smiled, he would have.

Cas drew back then, very slowly, until the very tip of him was all that rested on Dean’s tongue. Dean took the opportunity to actually put some of his skills to work, swirling his tongue around the head before jabbing it into the slit. Cas grunted once, then pressed forward a lot faster than last time, burying himself just as deeply but far more quickly.

“Lovely as your gifts in this department are, Dean,” Cas told him, “there is no need to show off. Your job, much like earlier this evening, is to kneel there and take what I give you.”

Dean shuddered, unable to stop himself. Cas damn well knew what hearing that did to him. The dark laughter that rang out above Dean’s head said that perfectly well. In the meanwhile, Cas had taken up a steady rhythm, burying himself to the hilt in Dean’s throat before drawing back and doing so again. Dean kept his mouth open, focused on keeping his gag reflex in check, and...well, took what Cas gave him.
Before too long saliva was leaking out of the corners of his mouth, but he was a lot more focused on
the taste of precome on his tongue.

He could feel it when Cas started to get close, and suddenly had the sense that the angel, rather than
simply punishing him for being mouthy, might have been deliberately avoiding the hot zone (both
literally and figuratively speaking) of Dean’s striped ass by taking his pleasure to completion in
Dean’s mouth. Dean had just started to feel annoyed about this when the angel drew his cock fully
out of Dean’s mouth and it returned no more. The angel was breathing a good deal harder than
Dean (who had needed to focus on keeping his breath even and steady through his nose so he didn’t
choke), and his blue eyes looked several shades darker when he gazed down at Dean from aloft.

“On your feet,” he said finally, and Dean rose to stand just as Cas settled himself on the edge of the
bed, planting his feet firmly on the floor.

That position looked familiar. It took Dean half a second to put it together, because he wasn’t
expecting it right now, but when he realized what it reminded him of he actually got concerned for a
second. Cas couldn’t possibly be planning to—

“If your ass isn’t bent across my knee in the next five seconds, it will be heading back to the garage
to fetch the belt,” Cas told him with cool self-possession. Uh, maybe he could be planning to.

Dean took a fortifying breath and, knowing better than to call what might or might not have been a
bluff, wasted no time in draping himself over the angel’s lap. Jesus Christ, if Cas was planning on
giving him a spanking now…

The angel’s hand did indeed come to rest on Dean’s ass, but it settled there with incredible gentleness
rather than delivering a smack. It still smarted—the pressure was not exactly fun—but Dean could
handle it. He waited, body tense, for that hand to draw back and return a great deal less gently, but
the hit never came. Instead, after a full thirty seconds of agonized tension, Cas spoke again,
sounding a little amused.

“You are going to reach back now and spread your cheeks for me. And don’t half-ass it.”

Oh my fucking God, Dean thought, it’s another goddamn pun. Where is this coming from?

He knew better than to ask—or to delay obeying the order. Gritting his teeth in anticipation of pain,
Dean reached both hands behind him (which draped him all the more helplessly across Cas’s knees)
and settled one hand on each cheek.

It didn’t feel awesome, and he had to breathe deeply for a second, but it was manageable. After a
moment, he was able to go ahead and dig his fingers in hard enough to pull his cheeks apart, clearly
displaying the little knot of muscle to the angel’s greedy gaze.

Cas made a soft sound of enjoyment.

“I wish you could see what you look like, bent over my knee, ass still bright red and stinging,
holding yourself open for me. You are a work of art, Dean.” Somehow, mockery and reverence
mingled easily in the words, Cas both worshipping him and taunting him in one fell swoop.

In the meanwhile, Dean was finding that, rather than getting easier the longer he held pressure on his
cheeks, the pain was increasing. He forced himself to breathe evenly, reminding himself that they
were clearly working toward what he had wanted—for Cas to fuck him. The angel was simply
providing Dean with a little preview of what that kind of pressure on his ass would feel like, likely to
ensure that Dean still wanted to follow through (and, no doubt, because he truly was enjoying the
sight Dean presented).

A second later, the soft click of a cap sounded, immediately followed by the familiar slick sound.

Despite expecting it, Dean still found himself gasping sharply when the wet finger drove into him to the hilt.

He was actually still a little slick from hours earlier with the butt plug, but there was really no such thing as too much lube, and the angel’s finger breached him easily. It withdrew, and when it returned it was joined by another. Those two only pumped in and out three or four times before they were joined by a third digit. Dean was breathing hard, eyes squeezed shut as he focused intently on keeping his hands where they were, holding his cheeks apart.

“Lovely,” Cas complimented softly, “I think you’re nearly ready to ride me,” he added, and Dean was unable to help the groan that leaked out as the angel’s three fingers deliberately jabbed against his prostate. Cas was going to have Dean ride him. That was…that was sexy as hell, despite how badly it was likely to hurt. It would also, Dean realized, give him the ultimate control for how much pressure really ended up against his ass, and how hard. Cas was still looking out for him, ensuring that it wouldn’t be too much.

Dean felt a rush of warmth for the angel that was rapidly subsumed in a rush of heat, as the fingers rubbed against his prostate once more. His cock was rock hard, sliding against Cas’s thigh as he rocked with the thrusting digits, and he was pretty sure if Cas hit his prostate another time or two, he was going to spill himself all over the angel’s lap before Cas even had a chance to get his cock into Dean.

As if hearing his thoughts, a second later the fingers withdrew, and Cas tapped one of Dean’s hands lightly, wordless permission to release his own cheeks.

He did so with a huff of breath, cringing as the blood rushed back in where his fingers had been pressing down, infusing his ass with a newfound throb.

And yet, when the angel asked the question, there could be no doubt what the answer was.

“What is your color, my red-cheeked love?”

He nearly told the angel to keep working on his poetry as it left a little to be desired, but his underdeveloped sense of self-preservation kicked in at the last moment and had him restraining his response to what had been asked of him.

“Still green, I promise.”

“Good boy. Tell me if that changes,” Cas told him with evident sincerity. “Now stand up.”

Dean stood, watching as Cas snagged the bottle of lube from beside him and slicked his cock up. Then he settled his palms against the bed and backed up, ensuring that Dean could climb astride him without teetering on the edge of the mattress. Once he was settled firmly near the center of the bed, legs stretched out before him, Cas nodded at Dean, who again set his knees on the bed and walked forward on them, straddling Cas’s legs. The angel settled his hands around Dean’s waist when he got close enough, but made no move to jerk Dean down onto his cock. Instead, he nodded at Dean again before speaking.

“Put my cock where it belongs.”

Jesus Christ, that was hot as hell. Dean had to draw in a slow breath to keep from shooting his load.
right there and embarrassing himself completely. Instead, he reached back, carefully grasping the base of Cas’s cock and maneuvering it until the blunt head was nestled between his cheeks, nudging at the ring of muscle that Cas’s fingers had so recently opened up for it.

The angel’s eyes were intent upon his face, reading every tiny shift in expression, every gasp and huff of exhaled breath, ensuring that Dean was still in shape to go on, regardless of what he might be saying. Dean was too focused on starting to sink slowly down onto that cock to chastise Cas for not simply taking him at his word.

The burn was less than it might have otherwise been, thanks to the angel’s prep, but certainly not absent, and Dean breathed his way through it, letting gravity do the lion’s share of the work.

It took him a minute to realize the groan came from him rather than Cas, when the angel’s cock was finally seated fully inside him. Dean’s ass settled onto his thighs and the groan was replaced by a tiny whimper. He pressed his forehead against Cas’s, breathing hard, and the angel tightened his hands strongly around Dean’s waist and eased, just slightly, the pressure on his ass.

“You are amazing,” Cas whispered to him, “absolutely amazing,” and Dean felt himself flush with pride at the praise.

Cas made no move to start fucking him or to use the hands on his waist to guide him. Instead, he simply waited, and a moment later Dean gathered himself together enough to begin moving. He lifted himself up, feeling the cock start to slide out of him, exhaling in pleasure at the friction before he sank back down once more.

He set a steady rhythm, unhurried but not slowly, either, closing his eyes and letting his head fall back to focus fully on the sensations. The pleasant fullness mingled with the exquisitely painful pressure against his ass and thighs when Cas was fully seated inside of him, and the flood of renewed blood into his strapped flesh added to the wet slide against his inner walls each time he rose off of the angel’s lap. He couldn’t decide which was more intense, which he liked better, and thankfully he didn’t need to pick—he could have both.

It went on, as Dean fucked himself on Cas’s cock for what felt to him like hours. He felt himself chasing an orgasm that seemed just out of reach with something that felt increasingly like desperation, and at some point he realized that his face was streaked with tears he had no memory of shedding, tears that had leaked out through his closed eyes.

It went on indefinitely. He knew what he needed but couldn’t bring himself to make it happen, knowing how badly it would hurt. Finally he lifted his head again, opening his eyes to seek out and lock with Cas’s. The angel’s eyes were gentle, adoring, but they sharpened instantly at Dean’s soft, half-broken words.

“Help me, Cas.”

He didn’t need to specify. Cas understood what he was asking. No sooner had the words escaped than the hands around his waist tightened, fingers pressing with bruising force into his flesh. A second later, the angel’s hips snapped up at the same moment that his hands jerked Dean down, his cock burying itself in Dean’s ass with a force that Dean hadn’t been able to bring himself to use. Dean groaned loudly, throwing his head back again and abandoning himself to the sensations as Cas went to work.

The angel fucked him hard, his thighs colliding forcefully with Dean’s impossibly tender ass, earning a steady stream of cries and moans that Dean could not have begun to control if his life depended on it. It couldn’t have been more than a minute or two later that Cas’s dick deliberately rubbed hard
against Dean’s prostate on the way in and Dean felt himself clench hard around the intruding length. His cock spasmed, streaking both of their bellies, and bare seconds later the angel’s cock jerked hard inside him and emptied itself in a hot flood. Dean wrapped his arms around Cas, clinging as the angel fucked him through the last of both of their orgasms.

Just before the moment at which the pressure against his ass would have become utterly unbearable, Dean found himself lifted easily, Cas’s cock sliding out of him with a filthy sound that caused Dean’s softening dick to twitch with an attempt at renewed interest. Through his haze, Dean silently told it to slow its roll.

In the meantime, Cas settled him onto his side on the bed, a hand on his shoulder stabilizing him as the angel shifted, opening the drawer to the bedside table and pulling out a container of baby wipes. A moment later, a soft and coolly damp cloth was gently but efficiently cleaning off Dean’s stomach and cock.

Dean didn’t even begin to try to help, focusing on not wailing at the pressure on the edge of his ass and thigh that were pressed against the bed. Cas seemed to recognize the effort it was taking Dean to keep it together, and wasted no time in rolling him to his belly as soon as he was wiped clean.

Seconds later, another baby wipe very gently cleaned between his cheeks. Cas was careful not to disturb the screaming flesh any more than necessary, but Dean still wasn’t able to restrain the tiny whimpers the contact jerked from him. After a moment even that contact was gone. One hand settled on the top of his head and rested there as soft sounds rang out just to his left. It took a moment before Dean realized that Cas was cleaning himself up now, wiping down his own stomach and dick.

Dean hadn’t even begun to catch his breath, aware that tears were still leaking ceaselessly out of him, his chest still heaving in audible gasps. He wasn’t sure he had realized, as he fucked himself on Cas’s cock, exactly how intense the sensations really were. It felt as though he was only beginning to fully process it now that it was over, leaving him a little shell-shocked and a lot overwhelmed. He butted his head up into Cas’s hand, seeking increased contact, and Cas appeared to understand what he was after.

Seconds later, the angel had stretched out beside him on the bed, his hands seizing Dean’s upper arms and easily dragging him over until his entire body rested atop the angel’s, naked bodies flush against one another. Dean wrapped his arms around Cas’s neck, not really registering that he had started to sob until he felt himself shaking.

Cas’s arms twined strongly around him, cradling him close. The angel allowed Dean to bury his face in his throat, Cas’s fingers cupping the back of his neck, then sliding through his hair.

Dean came apart in a way he didn’t think he truly had in the aftermath of the strapping—perhaps because he’d slid so easily into subspace, perhaps because of Sam’s interruption, or perhaps because he’d been so focused on making sure Cas knew he could handle it. Maybe later he’d be able to piece together why the emotional fallout came now, but at the moment he was too deeply buried in it to analyze it.

What he did register was that it wasn’t the bad kind of weeping. He was falling to pieces, yes, but in a way that felt...well, good wasn’t the right word. Cathartic, maybe. Safe.

Cas’s arms were warm and strong around him, the angel’s chest flush against Dean’s. The gravelly voice rumbled unceasingly, vibrating against his head in a litany of praise and comfort, words of adoration flowing openly. Dean only half-heard the words, but knew they would come back to him later, bolstering him in moments when he started to doubt himself.
He couldn’t have said how long he wept for, but eventually he became aware that his breaths were coming more easily and his shaking had eased some. A few moments more passed before he was able to lift his face from the crook of Cas’s neck. Almost immediately, another baby wipe appeared in the angel’s hand (no, it literally appeared. Dean saw it happen.) and he was gently wiping down Dean’s face, cleaning it of tears and snot and sweat.

Cas totally ignored his own neck, streaked with the same substances, and while Dean was touched by this evidence of the angel’s intent focus upon him, he went ahead and stole the wet wipe to clean Cas up, too.

Tears were still leaking out of him, but in the slow, residual way they did shortly before they stopped altogether. He pressed his forehead into Cas’s, and the angel shifted just slightly to brush his lips against Dean’s. Seeing that Dean was calm enough at last, Cas murmured two words, a quiet question spoken with neither judgment nor pressure.

“Too much?”

Dean shook his head, keeping his forehead firm against Cas’s as he did.

“Just enough. Perfect. I promise. Greener than St. Patrick’s Day.” His voice was a hot mess, shaky and thick with the tears he had shed, but the naked sincerity in it was clear to both of them.

“You will never cease to amaze me, Dean,” Cas told him softly, “and you were so beautiful. So utterly perfect. Always so good for me. So good to me. I do not deser—“

“Don’t you dare,” Dean interrupted quietly, “tell me that you don’t deserve me. Don’t even think it. It’s me that doesn’t—“

“Don’t you dare,” Cas interrupted, and they both laughed quietly.

“Okay,” Dean told him finally, grinning, his voice still a little unsteady, “we both deserve each other. Not sure if that makes us the luckiest or the sorriest sons of bitches ever.”

“Perhaps both,” Cas responded, grinning back.

Half a second later, they both jerked in surprise, heads turning as the closet door creaked open.

“On that note,” Sam told them cheerfully, “I’ll be taking my leave.” Clad in a pair of flannel pants and a t-shirt, hair messy enough to suggest that at some point tonight he must’ve been in bed asleep, Sam nevertheless looked fully alert. He headed directly for the door, turning the lock and swinging it open.

Dean and Cas goggled silently at each other, then turned to stare at the door as Sam sketched them a salute. Dean suddenly remembered that same door, hanging slightly ajar as he returned from the bathroom, something he had attributed to Cas at the time. He should’ve known better.

Dean tried to figure out something to say, some words that would be adequate to express how completely not okay this was. He could find none. Above him, Cas was no more successful, his jaw opening and closing as he tried to wrap his mouth around words that simply would not come.

“G’night, you two,” Sam told them brightly, then swung the door shut behind him with a soft click.

God fucking dammit.
Chapter-specific tags/warnings: physical aftermath of severe (consensual) corporal punishment with belt, blow job, face-fucking, anal sex, rough sex, pain play, D/s, a hint of manhandling. As always, everything is meticulously and enthusiastically consensual and enjoyed by all parties.

Except for (as always) nonconsensual exhibitionism, because Sam is an interfering dickhead. Stop that, Sam. Have you no sense of self-preservation?! (Spoiler alert: No. The answer is no.)

AUTHOR'S NOTE: this chapter comes very, very late. Late enough that in my local time, it's actually after midnight and it's not being delivered on Wednesday as promised. I'm giving myself a pass, since I still haven't gone to sleep. It's late for a couple reasons. One is that I spent a large portion of yesterday reading the absolutely spectacular work of today's substitute beta, Dangerousnotbroken. If you haven't read her stuff, you need to hustle your ass over there and hit it up immediately, starting with the current WIP, "I Can Make You Scared." If Dom!Cas is your jam (and why are you HERE if it isn't), you're going to absolutely love it. I sure do.

The other reason it's late is because, against all reason, this chapter again decided to be rather dramatically longer than most chapters. You're welcome again, you jerks.

Also, after doing some detailed plotting of the remainder of the story line, I may have spoken too soon about that whole less-than-five-chapters thing. We're probably looking at somewhere between 5 and 10 remaining chapters.

I still plan to have a chapter for you on Friday, and if that changes, I'll let you know in the comments of this chapter, as ever. I didn't give you an update this time because I've been steadily working on this chapter for the last 6 hours or so, and I figured you'd rather have it finished sooner!

Finally, come find me on tumblr. I'm still very new and I need followers! I'm nice! (I'm totally stealing that permanently, reluctant. Sorrynotsorry!)
Curiosity Killed the Cas

Chapter Summary

In which Cas is a giant nerd (but an adorable one) and reveals an unlikely friendship, and Dean outsmarts himself.

(Chapter-specific tags and warnings (such as they are) can be found at the end of the chapter, along with an author's note.)

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The next time Dean returned to the land of the living, he didn’t have the luxury of swimming back to awareness languidly.

Nope, instead he somehow managed to roll directly out of bed and onto the floor.

Adding injury to insult, he landed squarely on his ass.

And that was how, at seven o’clock on a cold February morning, Dean Winchester woke the entire bunker (okay, fine, just Sam, since he was the only other resident of the bunker who slept) with a wordless roar loud enough that the walls might have actually shaken a little bit.

He shot to his feet before his brain had actually managed to string anything more than “MOTHERFUCKING OW” (coincidentally enough, that was also exactly the verbal ejaculation that followed the roar) together.

Ten seconds later, while still producing every profanity he’d ever heard and some that were original creations at the top of his voice, he whirled in astonishment at the sound of something heavy colliding at top speed with the door, rebounding, and tumbling to the floor.

Startled into at least temporary silence, Dean crossed the room in four quick, painful strides and had jerked the door open before it occurred to him that he might end up with his dick waving in Sam’s face, if he’d been what bounced off of the door.

Thankfully (at least for both Dean’s dick and the tiny smattering of pride he had somehow managed to retain despite what his brother had seen over the past several weeks), what he found upon jerking the door open was a very disgruntled angel in a heap on the floor of the hallway, eyes slightly crossed and one hand clutching his forehead.

“The fuck, Cas?” So maybe it wasn’t the most eloquent or sympathetic he’d ever been, but in what universe did an angel of the Lord bounce off of closed doors like one of the three stooges?

“Dean! Are you alr—are you well? What happened?” Cas demanded, eyes uncrossing long enough to scan Dean from the top of his head down to the floor.

“No, I’m not fucking alright! I rolled out of bed and landed on my ass on the floor, and then my boyfriend decided to turn himself into an angelic battering ram for no goddamn reason I can figure!”
No, seriously, when he woke up abruptly, he woke up grumpy.

Cas, seeing that he really was okay (despite his protestations to the contrary), huffed out a breath, still rubbing his forehead.

“I did not,” he told Dean with as much dignity as someone clutching their head in a heap on the floor with slightly crossed eyes can muster, “decide to turn myself into a battering ram. I warded the door before leaving so that it could only be opened from within until the warding was undone, in order to ensure that you were able to sleep without Sam’s interruption. When I heard your shriek, I came running and entirely forgot the warding.”

“I didn’t shriek,” Dean insisted, blowing entirely past the rest of the angel’s explanation in favor of defending his masculinity. “I bellowed. And you’d’ve done the same goddamn thing if you landed on an ass this painful out of a dead sleep.”

He had the presence of mind to reach down a hand to Cas, who accepted the help. He was halfway to his feet when Sam came sprinting down the hallway brandishing his revolver, still clad in the same flannel pants, t-shirt, and socks from last night, hair going in at least seventeen distinct directions, and eyes heavy with sleep.

He seemed to figure out a moment too late that there was no true emergency and attempted to put the brakes on. The problem with this, of course, was that there aren’t actually any brakes on socks against a marble floor.

Dean saw with perfect prescience what was going to happen about three seconds before it did, and still had no chance of stopping it.

Sure enough, Sammy slid at considerable speed right into Cas, who went flying at least three feet further down the hallway. Sam rebounded a couple feet in the direction he had come, the revolver pinwheeling happily into the air, and both angel and Sasquatch landed on their asses, leaving Dean standing stark naked between them. He reached out a hand and neatly caught the gun before it could hit the floor and go off, no doubt blowing either he or Sam away.

“Oh,” he said with a level of venom that even Bela would’ve been impressed by, “it’s going to be one of those days.”

There was a moment in which the only sound was Cas and Sam’s dueling groans. Dean imagined that if he squinted hard enough, he might actually be able to see the cartoon birdies circling each of their heads. Rather than double-checking on the well-being of the only two people alive he would admit to loving, Dean glanced down at the gun that had landed directly in his hand.

“There was a moment in which the only sound was Cas and Sam’s dueling groans. Dean imagined that if he squinted hard enough, he might actually be able to see the cartoon birdies circling each of their heads. Rather than double-checking on the well-being of the only two people alive he would admit to loving, Dean glanced down at the gun that had landed directly in his hand.

“Also,” he informed the two of them, only slightly less grumpily, “I’m still Batman.”

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After briefly abandoning concussed angel and impact-stunned brother so he could pull on a pair of sweatpants (which caused Dean to renew his litany of impressively creative oaths as soon as they scraped across his ass), he limped back over to the door to double-check that whatever damage Sam and Cas had wrought on each other (and Cas had managed to inflict on himself with his attempt to physically mind-meld with the door) was benign.

“Has anyone ever told you that you’re both drama queens,” he inquired, torn between amusement and impatience at the sight that greeted him. Cas was still seated with both legs stretched out in front of him, hand rubbing his forehead as he shifted a scowl back and forth between Sam and the door, as
though he wasn’t quite sure which one to blame more for his smarting forehead. Sam was oblivious to Cas’s glare because he had flopped theatrically onto his back, feet resting on the floor and knees bent, still groaning occasionally. “Get the fuck up. Both of you. If I can have what feels like sandpaper scraping against my ass in order to spare your delicate total lack of sensibilities, Sammy, you can get your whiny ass off the ground and go shower before your hair develops a mind of its own, crawls off your head, and starts plotting to take over the world. And you!” he added, turning to face the angel, who was already directing a slightly disgruntled gaze in his direction, “you’re a goddamn angel of the Lord. Are you telling me you’re laid low by a door and a moose?”

So maybe he wasn’t the single most skilled pep-talk giver in the history of pep-talk giving, but it seemed to work well enough. Still grumbling a little, Sam lifted a hand to his hair (presumably to prevent it from fulfilling Dean’s dire prophecy and fucking right off his head), staggered to his feet and galumphed off down the hallway toward the showers, but not before flipping Dean the bird. Dean returned the gesture and added a few others on, but Sam didn’t see them, already halfway down the hall. When he was sure that there would be no further collisions, Dean reached a hand down to finish what he’d started before and helped Cas to his feet. The angel dusted himself off and finally removed his hand from his forehead. There was indeed a bright red area with a livid bruise blooming beneath the skin, and Dean found himself wincing in sympathy.

“Jesus Christ, dude, how fast were you going when you hit the door?”

“I estimate that I was travelling approximately 60 kilometers per hour,” Cas grimaced, “and Sam’s head hit the same spot when we collided.”

“Kilometers per hour? Kilometers? Dude, you know this is America, right,” Dean asked before, unable to resist, he added, “this is ‘MURICA!”

Cas stared blankly at him, clearly not understanding the reference, and chose to respond as though Dean hadn’t just shaken a fist in his face for no reason he could divine.

“Yes, I am aware of our geographical location. Are you aware that almost the entire rest of the world uses the metric system?”

“Yeah, but they’re obviously wrong,” Dean told him stubbornly. He and Sam had argued about this dozens of times, with the kid insisting that the metric system made infinitely more sense and the US should work toward shifting over to it. Dean, who was maybe a little more of a traditionalist than he liked to admit, resolutely disagreed, although he didn’t actually have any solid rebuttals to Sam’s points.

“The United States’ continued resistance to the metric system is not merely irrational, it has proved disastrous in the past,” Cas informed him seriously. Dean lifted a skeptical brow, opening his mouth to express his doubts about this, but before he could say something derisive, Cas went on, “for instance, the Mars Climate Orbiter debacle.”

Cas looked slightly smug, as though Dean could not help but agree. It took him a moment to notice that Dean was staring at him blankly, and when he huffed out a breath in nerdy frustration, it reminded Dean so powerfully of Sammy’s frequent tried-beyond-all-patience face when Dean was totally mystified by whatever geeky thing he was talking about that he had to bite the inside of his cheek to keep from grinning. Cas, who seemed completely oblivious to Dean’s struggle not to start snickering at him, blithely went on.

“Honestly, Dean, for someone who enjoys stargazing so much, you know remarkably little about actual space exploration,” the angel said disapprovingly.
“Sometimes you can just appreciate something for its beauty without needing to parse it into its nerdiest common denominator,” Dean shot back, and Cas shook his head sadly.

“Learning the science behind something, or the way things work, should never decrease their beauty. The most beautiful thing about the universe is the intricacy of it. Knowledge has a beauty all its own, and—“

“Oh for the love of your Dad, are you going to subject me to a lecture I think I’ve heard verbatim from Sam about 8000 times or are you gonna tell me about the Mars thingie?”

“The Mars Climate Orbiter,” Cas lectured, adopting his nerdy professor demeanor, “was launched in 1998. It was not a lander, and was intended to survey and send back information regarding the Martian climate, weather patterns, and such—“

“What does that have to do with the metric system?” Dean demanded, pretty sure that if he really let Cas get going, it could be hours before he came around to a point, and it was way the hell too early in the morning for all that.

“If you will restrain yourself,” Cas told him censoriously, “I will tell you. The orbiter arrived at Mars successfully, but almost immediately upon going into orbital insertion—stop laughing!”

“Orbital insertion? For real? They couldn’t come up with anything a little less obviously sexual to call it?”

“Not everyone,” Cas said with as much dignity as he could muster, “has as filthy a mind as you do, Dean.”

“Bullshit. Anyone who says they can hear the word insertion without going there is lying.”

“At any rate,” Cas said loudly, clearly intending to cut this particular argument off at the pass, “almost immediately upon arriving at Mars, the orbiter lost communication with the earth. NASA’s computer system incorrectly calculated in pounds-seconds rather than the standard newtons-seconds, and the orbiter hit the atmosphere at far too steep an angle.”

Dean stared at him for a couple seconds, processing, before he managed a reply.

“Wait, you’re telling me that we literally spent billions of dollars on a spacecraft that almost immediately crashed into the damn planet because we fucked up the units?”

“Not quite. The orbiter likely disintegrated in the atmosphere long before it would have actually crashed into the planet.”

“The point stands,” Dean insisted, totally astonished at the level of incompetence required for something like that to happen, “but I still say it had more to do with someone sleeping on the job than the metric system being inherently better or something.”

“That is merely an example, and far from the only time the US’s use of the imperial system has caused problems. It is practically impossible for Americans to function abroad much of the time, as they often have only a vague idea of how to convert metric units to imperial units off the cuff.”

Dean didn’t have a response to this, which was another point Sammy had frequently made by trying to demand that Dean make rapid conversions in his head (something Dean had zero interest and limited skill in doing). Before he could come up with a rejoinder or at least some kind of deflection, though, Cas had gone on.
“Thankfully, there have been many more Mars spacecraft since that time, which have been wildly more successful. I believe that the incident in question convinced NASA to pay significantly more attention to units moving forward. Why, the Curiosity Rover landed on the planet in August of 2012 and is still there and fully functional now. It has provided invaluable information about the terrain of the Gale Crater, and has sought evidence of whether microscopic organic life may ever have existed on that portion of the planet, not to mention the possibility of making the planet habitable for human life.”

“That’s fascinating, Cas,” Dean told him with as much patience as he could muster, “but it really is a little early in the morning for—“

“Of course,” Cas went on, face falling (he appeared completely oblivious to Dean’s interruption), “It has been there alone for many years now. The Opportunity Rover also remains active on the planet, but it is far too great a distance from Curiosity for the two to visit. Despite Curiosity doing its job beautifully and outlasting its initial mission length, it was never equipped with the ability to return to Earth. It is stranded there, and will continue to explore until it is irreparably damaged or gets stuck and is unable to extract itself, at which point it will likely be buried by Martian dust eventually. It does its best to keep its spirits up, however. On its first birthday in August of 2013, it sang Happy Birthday to itself,” he told Dean with such naked affection that Dean had to hide a smile.

“That’s actually kind of adorable,” Dean admitted, and Cas smiled at him sadly.

“I try to visit it whenever I have the opportunity,” the angel said earnestly, “and in fact I was due about a week ago. It must be wondering whether I have abandoned it,” his eyes widened in distress at the idea, “it is very lonely out there all by itself. So is Opportunity, but it does not enjoy visitors as much. It misses its twin, the Spirit, which ceased to function in 2010.”

Dean took a second to wonder whether Cas was just personifying the hell out of hunks of metal, or if he was actually communicating with the things in some way. He didn’t bother to ask how the fuck the angel was managing to keep the rover’s systems from transmitting to Earth evidence of its celestial visitor.

“I’m sure Curiosity will understand the delay,” Dean said soothingly, “and as soon as we’re out of here you can go explain about snow. You can even bring pictures to show it if you want.”

Cas appeared somewhat consoled by this idea, and after a moment of thinking about it, even started looking a little excited. “It has likely never seen snow,” he informed Dean, “or at least some parts of it have not. Various pieces were built in different locations, so—“

“So, it’ll be great that you can introduce it,” Dean interrupted what was sure to be another overexcited monologue, deciding it was well past time to redirect the conversation, “but let’s get back to you making a beeline for me when I yelled. You said 60 kilometers per hour? What’s that, like 35 miles per hour or something?”

“Slightly over 37,” Cas corrected, a little pedantically.

“Only 37 miles per hour,” Dean deadpanned, secretly impressed that the angel had been going faster than the average speed limit in Lebanon in order to get to him when he shouted in a totally masculine and not at all shrieky way, “you’re gonna make me think getting to me wasn’t a priority or something.”

Cas had actually opened his mouth to defend himself when he spotted the look on Dean’s face and his lips twisted wryly.
“I would have gone faster, but I have trouble braking around corners if I exceed that speed.”

“Damn, Cas, even the Impala can corner better than you, and her ass is about 40 times the size of yours.”

“I intensely doubt that she could make her way around the corners in the bunker at greater than—oh,” Cas broke off, recognizing that he was being teased.

“You’re getting better at this,” Dean told him approvingly, stepping back to permit the angel to enter his room.

“It is a work in progress,” Cas responded gravely, nodding acknowledgement of the compliment.

“Why don’t you heal yourself,” Dean suggested, “that bruise looks pretty brutal.”

“I would prefer to save my energy until—“

“You’re not healing my ass, dude, so let it go. Heal yourself,” the words escaped Dean before he had actually made a conscious decision to speak them. For half a second he considered immediately reversing course, given the fact that his sweatpants couldn’t decide whether they wanted to feel more like the sandpaper he had already compared them to or a nice, solid chainmail made of razor blades against the ass in question. Almost instantly, he discarded this notion, opting to trust the instincts which had caused him to naysay Cas’s as yet unspoken desire to assist his ass in the healing process.

Looking vaguely disgruntled, Cas nevertheless shut his eyes for a moment, and when he opened them the rapidly blooming bruise had faded into nothingness. The slight sigh he released let Dean know that his forehead really had been remarkably painful. Honestly, he wasn’t surprised. That bruise had been brutal enough to make Dean wonder whether Cas could’ve actually caused himself a brain bleed or some shit. Bouncing off a solid surface at 37 mph was no fucking joke, and he knew from more than one collision of his own that Sam’s head was as hard as your average boulder.

The angel dusted himself off and sat down on the edge of the bed, planting his feet solidly on the floor in the same way he had the previous night. Dean, instantly divining what he was up to, backed up a step, already shaking his head.

“Oh, no, you—“

“You have already vetoed healing you, which means I cannot be held responsible for the results if you force my hand,” Cas observed flatly, “so I would recommend not testing me. You are going across my knee one way or the other. If you choose to make it voluntary, it will merely be for an inspection and the application of your aloe gel. If I have to put you there, we can start the morning with a spanking, regardless of the shape your backside is already in. Now get your pants off and your ass over here. I am not telling you again.”

Dean did not for half a second really believe that Cas would actually spank him with his ass in the shape he knew it must be, but the threat was compelling regardless. His cock, whose morning wood had been solidly destroyed by the pain and shock of his brutal awakening, started to perk up, incorrigible bastard that it was. Giving it a firm silent message to get its shit together, Dean grimaced and slid his thumbs into his waistband, very carefully sliding it down over his hips.

He couldn’t totally avoid the scrape of the fabric against his ass, and hissed out an involuntary breath, letting the pants fall to the floor. Taking a step toward the angel, he chose to maintain some scrap of dignity by grumbling.

“Has anyone ever told you that you’re one bossy son of a bitch?”
“You inform me of this fact with relative regularity,” Cas informed him coolly, “and it is probably wisest not to refer to my Father as a bitch when your bare ass is about to be easily accessible to my palm.”

Dean chose to restrict further grumbles to relatively wordless grouchy grunts as he padded forward the rest of the way, automatically going to the angel’s right side. He’d been well-trained to stick with that side, even when the purpose of the trip across Cas’s knee wasn’t actually a spanking.

He was starting to suspect, based on last night and now today, that the angel simply deeply enjoyed the sight of Dean’s strapped ass across his lap, since it would’ve been just as easy for Cas to prep him or to apply aloe gel with Dean stretched out on his stomach on the bed. Before he had a chance to decide how he felt about this, one of the angel’s hands had seized his wrist and was tugging smoothly. Rather than fighting him on it and potentially earning at least a single solid smack or two, Dean went along with him, carefully draping himself across Cas’s knees.

Cas shifted back a little bit on the bed so that Dean’s feet rested on its surface rather than falling to the floor. This served the dual purpose of allowing Dean to fold his arms and rest his head on them, which he took a moment to appreciate. It was way too early to have his ass in the air and his head a few inches above the ground, blood pooling in his skull.

Before he got too far past these thoughts, he heard the angel’s low exhalation of breath above him. If he hadn’t known better, he might’ve thought the sound indicated surprise. As it was, he recognized appreciation where he heard it. He was expecting the fingertip that lightly traced one of the more sensitive stripes, and had braced himself against it, but he still found himself inhaling audibly through his nose at the contact. Cas huffed out another soft sound of approval.

“So sensitive,” he mused, and Dean took a moment to reflect that the perfectly controlled, gravelly voice causing his cock to plump up with its ready dominance was coming from the same throat that had just lectured him excitedly about the metric system and Mars rovers. There really was no pigeonholing Cas.

Dean only had the time to think about this for so long, because a moment later the fingertip shifted just a little and the angel’s fingernail scraped incredibly lightly against the spot where two of the stripes that had landed atop one another had just slightly overlapped with the two beside them. He tried his best to resist, but finally, a little breathlessly, he had to inquire.

“Is it bruised?”

“There are several lines of bruising where the edges of stripes overlapped. The rest is tender and still quite pink, but unbruised, although that may change after your tumble off the bed. I imagine you will still be feeling it for at least five days, if you continue to resist being—“

“Let it go with the healing, dude,” Dean told him, annoyed, “I told you I’d let you know if—“

A hand fell against the lower curve of his right cheek in what would barely have qualified as a love-tap on any other day, but now wrenched a whimper from Dean as his entire ass cringed away from the spank.

“Tone,” Cas said admonishingly, “I have already informed you more than once that I will do nothing without your permission, I am merely answering your question more thoroughly.”

Still wincing, Dean hastily responded. “Yeah, that’s my bad, sorry.”

“Not at all,” Cas graciously accepted.
“Can I get up now?”

“On balance,” Cas said thoughtfully, “I think not. I have not yet looked my fill, nor have I applied the aloe gel. I really ought to have done so last night, but you clearly needed rest more than anything else.”

Dean didn’t bother to argue or try to stand, recognizing what was good for him and having no particular desire to earn another tap. Before he could respond, though, the angel continued.

“Do you think you could put into words why you are so resistant to the idea of being healed? Again, I will not do so without your consent, but I would like to understand. You do not have to tell me, of course. This is not an order, merely a request. Your motives are your own.”

“No, it’s okay,” Dean told him, craning his neck around to make eye contact for a minute, “I can try to tell you, as far as I know. A lot of it is just going on instinct.” His neck wasn’t crazy about the angle, and after a moment he swiveled it back around, resting his chin on his folded arms as he tried to find the right words. “I just…I think pretty much every time you’ve ever strapped me, you’ve healed me within about twelve hours. I know it comes from a place of love, but I sort of feel like I end up missing out on half the experience. The aftermath is part of it. Healing slow is part of it. Regaining the ability to sit comfortably one day at a time is part of it. And especially now, since we’re kind of…taking things to the next level, I feel like I really need to understand all of it, at least this once. Does that make sense?”

Cas was quiet for a moment, but Dean wasn’t bothered by it. He could practically hear the wheels turning as the angel processed this. Eventually he responded. “Yes, it does. It makes a great deal of sense. Thank you for helping me to understand where you are coming from.”

“No problem. Now, I—yowch!”

That was not a sound Dean could ever remember making in the past, but then, he’d never had what felt like ice-cold aloe gel suddenly squirted onto his ass about twelve hours after being strapped 30 times.

“You were saying,” Cas probed, a slight smile in his voice as his palm very, very lightly started to spread the gel evenly across both cheeks. Dean was panting, his fingers grasping small handfuls of the blanket and twisting as he fought the urge to writhe. It wasn’t exactly painful, but the coolness and the pressure, however light, were incredibly intense.

By the time Cas’s palm lifted after covering every inch of his strapped flesh in the gel, Dean found himself canting his ass up, cock hard and actually dribbling. Okay, so maybe he actually liked the intensity, and Cas’s fingers were already slick with aloe gel. It would be so easy for him to slip them in between Dean’s cheeks and—

“Ah ah ah,” Cas said, mild amusement coloring his tone, “I think not. In fact, I do believe your desire to heal naturally provides a golden opportunity.”

Dean’s heart sank. He had a sneaking suspicion that he saw where Cas was going with this, and he already didn’t like it.

“What…opportunity?” He asked, very careful to keep his tone as neutral as possible. There was a brief pause in which Dean wondered whether he’d been a little more sarcastic than he could get away with and was about to earn another smack.

“Well,” Cas said thoughtfully, “it really would not be prudent to continue to irritate already damaged
flesh, and there is essentially no way for me to penetrate you—“

“Do you have to make it sound all clinical?”

“—that will not aggravate your injuries. Moreover, Sam will clearly not be dissuaded. I think that another sexual hiatus will serve the purpose of allowing you to heal naturally while also lulling your brother into easing his vigilant monitoring somewhat. Perhaps when you have healed up some, we will be able to actually achieve some privacy.”

“But—“

“No, I am quite decided,” Cas told him firmly, “you may get up now.”

Dean stayed where he was, lower lip poking out in what he would insist wasn’t a pout.

“You’re not being fair,” he whined, “it’s like you’re punishing me for not letting you heal me!”

“Quite the contrary,” Cas actually sounded a little surprised, “I simply think that there is indeed value to you having time to process the events of last night without further complicating them with additional scenes in the interim. And as you well know, we do not seem to be able to have what you call ‘vanilla’ sex, despite our best efforts.”

Dean couldn’t even begin to argue the point. Back at the beginning of the relationship, he had gotten it in his mind that in order to have a healthy sexual relationship, they needed to have totally vanilla, garden-variety, completely devoid of power-play sex some of the time.

Both of them had ended up pretty much bored out of their wits, and the idea had been rapidly discarded when Cas pointed out that a healthy sexual relationship looked like whatever they both enthusiastically consented to and enjoyed, whether or not it was kinky.

It wasn’t to say that their sex was never gentle or that they never made love. Sometimes it was, and often they did. There was just always an element of power exchange to it. Whether Cas was pinning his wrists above his head, or controlling when he was allowed to come, or simply painting a vivid verbal picture of much kinkier things he would do to Dean later, truly vanilla sex was pretty much entirely beyond them.

“But, I—“

“Say ‘but’ one more time, and I will—“

“What? You’ll what?” Dean asked breathlessly, more than ready to sacrifice himself on the altar of getting a whack or two if he could manage to provoke Cas into putting those slick fingers where he wanted them most.

“Add at least an additional day onto our self-imposed celibacy, even after you are fully healed,” the angel said coolly, “and that, unlike your healing time, will be a punishment.”

Well, fuck. That wasn’t at all what he’d been going for.

Dean realized with a sinking feeling that he was almost certainly shit out of luck. Well, at least once he got up, he could send Cas to start the coffee-maker and rub one out real—

“Oh, and Dean?”

“…yeah?”
“You are not to masturbate in the interim, either.”

*God fucking dammit!*
“I try to visit it whenever I have the opportunity,” the angel said earnestly.

Chapter End Notes

Chapter-specific tags/warnings: A single mild spank (what? I'm being thorough here), somewhat late additional aftercare, and discussion of enforced celibacy. Also Cas mooning over a Mars rover, because he's just that kind of adorable.

ART NOTE: The gorgeous drawing of Cas visiting Curiosity was done by the marvelous sketchydean. Eternal delight and gratitude to them for this painful cuteness! Now go find them on tumblr, because everything they do is spectacular.

AUTHOR'S NOTE:

Forgive me for the chapter title, y'all. I can't resist an opportunity for a good pun.

This chapter was supposed to include more actual action than this, but then phaelsafe got this idea about Cas making an argument for the metric system using the Mars Climate Orbiter failure (that really happened, y'all. WTG, NASA), and, well...you saw the rest.

Stay tuned for Dean's efforts to convince Cas that, no, really, he can process things while still having lots of kinky sex, coming to you on Monday.

As always, comments and kudos are my lifeblood (comments especially). If you've been lurking out there reading and not saying anything, now's your chance to speak up and tell me what you think. C'mon. How can you say no to the woman who conceptualized Cas going to visit lonely Mars Rovers? For those of you who already comment regularly--you're what makes this rewarding for me. I live for your feedback, squees, fist-shaking, giggles, I'll-be-in-my-bunks, and general commentary. Keep it up!

Feel free to come find me on tumblr, too! I'm nice.
Self-Destruction

Chapter Summary

In which Cas knows exactly what Dean needs, as always, and Dean would never make it as a femme fatale.

Chapter Notes

This chapter comes two days late, as I'm sure all of you noticed. I'm sorry it's not on time, but I actually felt well enough to manage some real socializing this weekend, so you'll have to cut me a break on it. This was also one of the more challenging ones for me to write—I'm not entirely sure why. In any event, I hope you enjoy it, and look for the next one Friday or (at the latest) Saturday!

Despite Dean’s best efforts (not to mention increasing desperation), Cas kept his word over the next several days.

Recognizing the angel’s determined stubbornness when he saw it, Dean didn’t bother trying to convince him to change his mind during the first day. Instead, he focused on limping as stoically as possible around the bunker, occupying himself as best he could with various mundane tasks that had needed doing regardless.

First, he cataloged the dwindling food stores. They were getting perilously low on pretty much all of their perishables. They’d been out of milk—both regular and soy—for days now, and no well-stashed stores of bacon had made themselves known, despite a search so thorough it could accurately be called a ransacking through the walk-in freezer. There weren’t even any more hidden stores of hot pockets, although Dean did grumpily avail himself of two of the remaining ones in the box Cas had found a couple days previously. Fresh fruits and veggies were all long gone, although they did have a reasonably decent supply of frozen ones remaining. Even if vegetables weren’t Dean’s favorite, he was relieved by this, since it probably made it less likely that Sam would go even further around the bend and slaughter him and Cas.

They’d gone through the last of the bread the previous day (and it had been pretty damn stale by that point anyway), although Dean discovered to his approval that he did have enough raw materials that he could probably bake enough bread to keep them stocked for another couple weeks if absolutely necessary. Of course, there wasn’t a whole lot to actually put on the bread. They were totally out of lunchmeats, and Dean was down to his last pack of frozen chicken breasts and final pound of frozen ground beef. They had peanut butter in spades, not to mention a reasonably full jar of grape jelly, but the idea of subsisting entirely on Brussels sprouts and PB&J was incredibly depressing.

If worse came to worst, the bunker had an incredible store of military-grade MREs that contained balanced nutrition and more than ample calories. If it came to that, Dean owed Sammly some serious credit, since Sam was the one who had discovered the bunker’s ancient stores of early (and long-expired) MREs and decided that it would be prudent to replace them. With the supply they had and
the calorie count of each meal, they could probably survive for over a year down here (Sam no doubt knew exactly how long), but it would be a hell of a lot less enjoyable than Dean’s home-cooked meals were.

Possibly the one highlight of his kitchen cataloging mission was the discovery that an unopened box of girl scout cookies had somehow managed to be forgotten in the back of a cupboard. Dean dimly remembered stashing them there himself, smug at the idea that Sam wouldn’t be able to find and eat them. Apparently, Sam wasn’t the only one he’d outsmarted with his clever hiding spot. Dean gave himself a pass on forgetting about the box, since it had led to the happy occasion of now discovering it.

Two hot pockets and an entire sleeve of thin mints went a long way to easing his grouchiness over Cas’s declaration of celibacy (not to mention the ban on jerking off), but by the time he finished going through their food stores and eating breakfast, it was still shy of 9AM and a full day stretched out in front of him, depressingly devoid of either plans or ideas for how to occupy himself.

So he did a load of laundry small enough that it probably didn’t need doing, and even refrained from braining Sam with the bottle of detergent when he spotted the kid lurking in his favorite gap between washing machines. He was not, however, able to restrain himself from doing some impressive snarking.

“You can suspend your reconnaissance, MI5. Your interference has made us take a vow of celibacy, so you’ll just have to vent your voyeurism by watching porn on your laptop like normal people do.”

Sam eased his way out between the machines, idly resting an elbow atop the nearest one and quirking an eyebrow at Dean.

“Sounds like maybe you’re not totally happy about that decision,” he observed shrewdly, and Dean cursed himself for letting some (most?) of his frustration leak out in his voice. The last thing he needed was Sam deciding he and Cas needed to sit down for a couple’s therapy session to work out their differences.

“Not thrilled that my brother has forced me into the equivalent of a monastery because he’s actively delusional? Whatever would give you that idea?”

Okay, so maybe he wasn’t doing the world’s best job at de-escalating the situation, but come on now.

“I make you do nothing, Dean,” Sam said easily, apparently unperturbed by Dean’s venom.

“Not exactly, maybe, but you sure as hell forced our hands. If it’s either have my little brother creeping on my sex life with my boyfriend, or just stop having sex, neither choice is exactly ideal, you know?”

“The sooner you two are ready to acknowledge that you have a problem and sit down to talk it through and work on it, the sooner we can all be done with this. I know this has been a challenging time for you, Dean,” Sam told him with such clear earnestness that Dean seriously thought about kicking him in the shin repeatedly, “and recognizing and admitting to difficulties in your most important relationships is hard for everyone, even people who don’t struggle with talking about their feelings.”

“I talk about my feelings just fine,” Dean defended, twitching a little at Sam’s skeptically raised eyebrow, “or at least a lot better than I used to. Just because you’re not generally there for the conversations don’t mean they’re not happening. The more important point here, which you seem to
keep losing sight of, is that even if there were the kind of problems between Cas and I that you seem
to think there are—and you’re wrong, by the way—it still wouldn’t be any of your goddamn
business, Sam!”

“I totally agree with you,” Sam said with a smile as Dean startled and turned back to his brother from
where he had been loading the dryer with unnecessary aggression, “and that’s why I’ve got that list
of sex therapists all ready to go as soon as we can leave the bunker. But desperate times call for
desperate measures, so we’ll just have to make do in the meanti—“

“I’m walking away now.”

“You can’t solve problems by ignoring them, Dean.”

“Walking. Away. Don’t follow me. I have to walk past the armory to get back to my room, and the
idea of shooting you in the face is a little too tempting right now.”

Miracle of miracles, Sam actually listened and refrained from following him. Dean retreated to the
bunker’s firing range, where he plugged about 20 holes neatly in the heart and head of a faceless
human-shape cutout that he had hastily drawn shaggy hair onto. It didn’t particularly make him feel
better.

By lunchtime, Dean had finished up just about every chore he could think of, and by the time the
yeast he’d used for his first attempt at bread dough failed to ferment for some reason, leaving him
with no choice but to throw the whole thing out and start over, he was in even more of a towering
temper.

Netflix refused to load for some reason when Dean finally gave up on making himself useful (and
grumpily avoiding the celibacy-enforcing angel) and decided to queue up one of his favorites that he
could maybe fall asleep to, and that was just about it for Dean. What underdeveloped patience he
was in possession of finally deserted him altogether, and he stripped off the sweatpants that still felt
rather unpleasant against his blistered ass before flopping down on the bed (on his stomach, of
course). It took a while, but eventually sleep was persuaded to take him away.

Just to really add insult to injury, he dreamed about sex with Cas, in about fifty different ways and
positions.

Sam interrupted them every fucking time.

~*~

The rest of the day wasn’t a whole lot better. Sometime after a grumpy dinner of PB&J (on the loaf
of bread that he had at least moderately successfully baked), Dean’s temper entirely got the best of
him, venting itself in a totally uncalled for tirade directed at Cas when the angel asked a completely
inoffensive question about one of Dean’s band t-shirts.

By the time he was done, Cas was looking a little shell-shocked, jaw hanging open about an inch as
he stared at Dean in utter bewilderment. The angel’s total failure to get mad right back and give
Dean an excuse to really do some yelling only pissed him off more. He ended up stomping off to go
”get some air,” despite the fact that there wasn’t actually any air to be had, what with being trapped
in the bunker and all.

Ordinarily, he’d have headed to the garage to hang out with the Impala or do a little unnecessary
tinkering under the hood, but he was pretty sure his ass and thighs—which were actually feeling
worse than this morning—would’ve objected strenuously to being bent over the Impala for the
second time in two days, even if this was for an entirely different purpose. Instead, feeling like the grumpiest version of Quasimodo imaginable, he limped his way down to the gym and whaled on one of the punching bags until he was sweating profusely and the parts of his body that had been in decent shape were now as sore as the rest of it.

He managed to drag himself back upstairs and took a shower. He couldn’t keep the water as hot as he normally would’ve because the swath of strapped flesh wasn’t a huge fan of heat just yet (he knew from experience that by tomorrow, heat would actually start making it feel much better. Now, he was still in that first 24 hours when ice would’ve been ideal, but there was no way he was going to further sacrifice his dignity by icing his ass, especially when he’d refused all offers of healing). A tepid shower didn’t do a whole lot to improve his mood, but at least by the time he was done he smelled decent, and he managed to refrain from running into Sam.

When Dean got back to his room, a towel wrapped around his waist and another, still wet from his hair, slung over his shoulder, he discovered that his robe, freshly laundered and still warm from the dryer, was hanging neatly on the wall. He had to work hard to suppress an instinctive pulse of affection for the angel he was sure was responsible for this, and made it a point to scowl even more obnoxiously while pulling on the robe, which actually felt even softer than usual, and smelled like Cas had maybe used an entire box of fabric softener sheets on it. The sneaking suspicion that the angel had been working as hard as possible to ensure that Dean’s favorite robe would be soft enough not to hurt his bruised and swollen ass made it even harder to stay mad at him (especially since Dean was now pretty sure he’d been mad over literally nothing).

By the time Dean discovered the little note folded on the bedside table, resting atop a full bottle of orange juice, he was working really hard not to feel bad about how he’d treated the angel. The little cartoon bee smiling and waving at him from the front of the note didn’t make him feel less like an asshole, and he was torn between being pissed at himself and being pissed at Cas for making him feel guilty as he unfolded the paper. The familiar precise script waited for him with a very simple message: “Drink your juice, put on your robe, and come to my room.”

Yeah, Cas had his own room. Of course, it was practically never utilized, since he spent most of his time with Dean in his room and didn’t actually sleep, but both Sam and Dean had felt it was important for Cas to have space that belonged especially to him. Cas needed to know on a level that words would never express that the bunker was his home as much as it was theirs, and the room had seemed a good way to do that.

Dean sort of thought about ignoring the instructions, leaving the bottle of juice where it was in wordless ‘fuck you,’ and skulking off into an unused bedroom where he would be more difficult to find. In the end, though, the marginally more rational part of him won out over the knee-jerk pissy part, and he drank the juice.

But by God, he did so grudgingly.

It did not escape Dean that Cas was being very free with the bottles of juice, and when he thought about it for longer than a few seconds, he was able to easily connect the dots and realize what this particular bottle meant.

Cas thought he was dropping.

As soon as the thought occurred, Dean felt like a Class A jackass—and an obtuse one, to boot. If he’d had a modicum of the insight he’d earlier tried to convince Sam that he was in possession of, he would’ve realized hours ago what this kind of apparently baseless pissiness right after a really intense scene meant. As it was, instead he’d been a dick to Sam (even if he had been more than amply provoked) and sniped needlessly at Cas. Hell, he’d even been sulky enough that he’d actually
bruised his toes kicking a wall for no apparent reason (because what he’d really needed was another, brand new reason to limp).

By the time he’d finished the juice and tossed the empty bottle in the trash, he was pretty sure he had an inkling of what had caused the drop. The last time he’d dropped (which was, granted, a whole different kind of drop—a much scarier, more abrupt, earth-shattering kind) it had been kicked off by the baseless thought that Cas didn’t want to be near him, didn’t want to touch him. This time around, Cas had openly stated that he wasn’t going to touch Dean until he was healed. And, despite the fact that Dean got what was behind this, on a more primal level what he’d heard wasn’t ‘I want you to have time to process without another scene getting in the way.’ What he’d heard was ‘I find you repellent.’

Fine, maybe he did still have the occasional issue with seeing the world through a filter of self-loathing. Especially when he was vulnerable, and he could admit that he was rarely more vulnerable than in the 24 hours or so following a scene—especially one of such intensity. Add in the fact that Sam had fucked what would normally have been sacred aftercare time all up, and maybe it wasn’t a big surprise that Dean had been stomping around the bunker all day like a six-year-old having a tantrum.

Torn between feeling bad about being a jerk and irritation with Cas for not having the foresight to recognize the potential pitfalls in declaring a moratorium on touching Dean right after a scene, he eventually quit stalling (he hadn’t really needed to fold his sweatpants neatly or, for that matter, rearrange the top of his bedside table), put on the damn robe, and trekked back into the hallway to head for Cas’s room.

It wasn’t a long walk—Cas’s room was much closer to his than Sam’s was, for obvious reasons—but Dean shuffled his way there unreasonably slowly. He wasn’t especially looking forward to either apologizing or confessing where his grouchiness was coming from, and he could recognize, however grudgingly, that he needed to do both.

He couldn’t have said exactly what possessed him to knock on the door rather than simply entering. Maybe because this was Cas’s space, and it seemed important to respect that, even if (or maybe especially because) it was so rarely used. A moment after the tap, he heard a low murmur from the other side of the door in a language he didn’t understand—Enochian, maybe?—and then the door swung open.

Dean blinked a couple times in surprise, so startled by what he saw that he allowed Cas to take his hand and pull him, unresisting, into the room. The door clicked shut behind him quietly, leaving Dean to appreciate the full picture.

“Holy wow, Cas.”

The room was bathed in the warm glow of candlelight, which was being provided by what had to be at least fifty candles. They were scattered around the room, resting on bureaus and side tables, clustered on each bedside table, even gathered in small knots on the floor in corners that didn’t have a surface for them to rest on.

Soft, very mellow instrumental music—the kind he was pretty sure he’d heard in the spa owned by the pishtaco—was coming from somewhere. He probably could’ve figured out where with a more thorough visual sweep of the room, but Dean was way more interested in focusing on the angel—shirtless and sporting a pair of flannel pajama pants—who was still gripping his hand, smiling faintly at Dean’s less-than-eloquent observation.

“IT seemed to me,” Cas told him gently, “that perhaps you were in need of a little CTL.”
“TLC,” Dean corrected absently.

“Yes, that,” Cas agreed, unperturbed by the error or the correction. “Take off your robe and lie down on the bed, please.”

“I thought we weren’t having sex until I was healed,” Dean couldn’t quite restrain the snarkiness that leaked into his tone, but Cas chose to let it go unremarked upon, forging ahead.

“We are not,” he confirmed, “but that does not mean I cannot tend to you in other ways. Please, Dean. I know you are not feeling at your best, but trust me.”

Well, hell. How was he supposed to say no to a request as earnest as that? He noted, too, that Cas was letting the decision be entirely his own, whether he was going to go along with this or not. The angel was giving him space to reject what had clearly been a fair amount of time and effort in putting together, trusting that Dean wouldn’t be able to bring himself to do that to him.

He was right, too. Dean’s hands went to the robe’s tie, unfastening it and allowing it to fall open. Once he’d provided that wordless consent, Cas stepped forward, gently sliding the robe down his shoulders and hanging it on a hook on the back of the door. Dean turned to head for the bed, but was stopped by a gentle hand wrapping around his bicep. He started to turn toward the angel, a snappish retort about Cas needing to make up his mind on his tongue, but he was forestalled when Cas simply drew Dean inward, wrapping strong arms around him.

It wasn’t like they didn’t hug with relative regularity. Quite the contrary, they were very tactile with each other as a rule. Kisses, hugs, other small gestures of affection—these were not a rarity between them, and it was only as the angel pulled Dean into his arms that he realized there had been no direct physical contact between them since Dean climbed off Cas’s lap this morning. Dean had instead avoided him for much of the day, preferring solitary sulking.

He was a little startled to discover that his eyes were prickling just before he felt himself relax into the embrace, his arms slipping around Cas and his head dropping into the crook of the angel’s neck. Cas seemed content simply to hold him for long moments, letting Dean decide when it was enough.

Finally, Dean cleared his throat and lifted his head, saying (just a little more petulantly than he’d intended), “You’re doing a lousy job of not touching me.”

“I never said I wasn’t going to touch you, Dean,” came Cas’s words, disproportionately gentle, “I can touch you non-sexually. I revel in touching you, whether sexual or not. Being close to you is not merely a means to an end to me. Feeling my skin against yours, the warm weight of you in my arms—it is its own reward.”

How did he always know just what to say? Dean blinked a couple times rapidly and cleared his throat again, settling for grunting because he didn’t actually know what kind of response he could possibly give that would be adequate.

The angel finally unwound his arms from around Dean and somehow, bolstered by those words, Dean didn’t feel as bereft as he might’ve expected. Cas guided him to the bed with a hand at the small of his back, urging him gently to lay on his front. Dean went along with it, starting to feel the knot of tension that had been heavy in the pit of his stomach all day finally loosen its grip just a hair.

He settled into the mattress, turning his head to one side and letting his gaze go a little hazy. What looked like dozens of little flames blurred pleasantly into a single warm, all-encompassing glow, and a moment later the mattress shifted with the addition of Cas’s weight.

“I am sorry I did not intercede sooner,” the angel told him quietly, “I should have recognized what
was happening sooner and stepped in. I thought to give you some room to get over your annoyance with me, but it was a poorly considered plan.” There was a moment of silence, but it was a comfortable one. Cas wasn’t looking for a verbal response, and Dean didn’t really have one to give. He couldn’t honestly say that he forgave the angel, because he didn’t quite—but he wasn’t going to reject the apology, either. Finally, Cas spoke again, his words even softer and layered with affection. “Relax now, baby. I’ve got you.”

The angel’s hands settled against his shoulders a few seconds later, coated in some sort of warm, sweet-smelling lotion. His strong fingers started to knead muscles that had been strung tight with tension all day long, and without making a conscious decision to do so, Dean found himself melting with effortless gratitude into the touch.

~*~

The massage went on for what had to be at least an hour and might have been twice that. Cas took his time, rubbing down shoulders and arms, working the knots patiently out of Dean’s neck and back before turning his calves (which had still been sore and tight from the previous night) into what felt like two puddles of warm, relaxed goo.

He was meticulously careful to avoid the swath of flesh from the top of his ass down to mid-thigh until, once he had finished the massage (and with Dean’s permission), he gently worked another round of aloe gel into that area.

By the time Cas finally leaned down to brush his lips across the top of Dean’s head, he was so close to sleep that the most he could manage was a low hum of utter contentment.

“I love you,” Cas told him quietly, “I love everything about you, and every inch of you. You are everything I could ever want. You are perfect, exactly as you are, and you are enough.”

Dean must’ve drifted off with those words in his ears, because the next time some level of awareness returned, the bright glow was gone, replaced by only two or three remaining flames, flickering dimly. His body was draped warmly against Cas, the angel’s arms twined around him, holding him close. Dean managed to rouse himself just enough to mumble the words against Cas’s chest, although it could easily have been hours since Cas had spoken.

“Love you, too.”

The angel’s arms tightened just slightly around him, and Dean dropped back off, the drop entirely banished in favor of a sense of well-being that went bone deep.

~*~

Dean woke up the next morning in much better spirits. Part of this was due to Cas’s nurturing touch and soul-soothing words from the previous evening, but it certainly wasn’t hurt by the fact that he realized almost instantly that the healing from his strapping was going to go a lot faster than he’d anticipated. Cas, who had held Dean wrapped in his embrace throughout the night (which didn’t hurt Dean’s mood either), emphatically denied having any piece of this. Instead, he pointed out that while the strapping was a good deal more painful than a hand spanking, the actual damage wrought to Dean’s flesh wasn’t particularly severe. Indeed, other than a few very narrow lines of bruising where stripes overlapped, Cas had been meticulously careful to avoid doing any real harm. Cas also pointed out, likely accurately, that the tightness Dean had been holding in his muscles last night probably had made the residual pain in his ass and thighs feel a lot worse than it otherwise would have. The massage, which left Dean still feeling more like a liquid than a solid even eight or nine hours later, had no doubt eased a good deal of the muscle tension contributing to his pain level.
Dean was so delighted by the progress he’d made overnight that he put in a solid attempt at giving Cas a morning blowjob in celebration. He figured this was a good way to ease them back into having sex. After all, who could resist a blowjob?

Apparently, Cas could.

Dean didn’t get any further than a hand on Cas’s cock before his hand clamped down over Dean’s, and he found himself nose-to-nose with an extremely stern-looking angel.

“What?” Dean inquired with practiced innocence, “you don’t even sleep and you still had morning wood. Plus, my ass barely hurts at all. I’m healed up, and you clearly could use some assistance with your—”

“Dean,” Cas interrupted, his tone patient but still sort of ominous, “look at your hands and tell me what is wrong with this picture.”

It took a few seconds of blinking from one hand to the other before he put it together and realized that his right hand was the one gripping the angel’s cock.

Oh, shit.

“Oh, shit.”

“Indeed,” Cas confirmed. Dean was pretty sure the corners of the angel’s lips were twitching almost imperceptibly, clear evidence that he was just barely managing not to chuckle. A little bolstered by this, Dean opted for some cocky charm.

“Well, I can’t say as this wasn’t maybe a little bit careless on my part, but I think we’re just going to have to chalk it up to my total inability to control myself in your presence. I mean, can you blame me? Have you seen you?”

“Flattering as that is,” Cas told him, in a voice which made it perfectly clear that he was in no way swayed by flattery, “you were given very clear instructions. Perhaps we will have to extend our planned celibacy by—”

“Oh, come on!” Okay, the angel’s lips were definitely twitching now. “Are you trying to kill me? You’re trying to kill me. That’s what’s happening. It’s death by blue balls. First it was ‘Sam is depressed’ and then it was ‘your ass needs time to heal’ and now it’s ‘your-right-hand-touched-my-cock.’ What’s next, ‘the moon is in the wrong phase?’”

That did it. Cas lost it, breaking into hearty laughter and scrubbing a hand over his face. Dean felt kind of proud of himself—it wasn’t easy to make Cas entirely lose control when he was trying to maintain that solemn mask he was so good at.

“Very well,” Cas finally told him after getting himself under some semblance of control, “lest we risk your sanity, we will not extend our celibacy further. I will simply have to come up with some alternate method of correction for violating your right-hand ban.”

“That’s fine,” Dean told him easily, “but, you know, as long as it’s already there…”

“You will remove your hand now,” Cas told him, lips twitching again, “or I will reconsider the celiba—very good.”

At least some of the time, Dean knew what was good for him. He’d taken his hand back before Cas could even finish the threat.
“You know, if you’d give it a temporary pass, I bet it could redeem itself,” he told the angel gravely. Cas appeared to consider this.

“I will take it under advisement. In the meantime, shall we apply more aloe gel to encourage the healing process to proceed apace?”

“I don’t even need it! I’m good, really. More than healed enough for—“

“Sit up.”

“Wait, what?”

“Sit up,” Cas repeated patiently.

“Fine, but I—ow!”

“Exactly. Now lay back down, I will apply the aloe. And do not look so bereft. Another two days or so and I’m sure you will be good as new.”

“You’re a cruel, cruel angel, and—“

“Yes, yes, and also a sadist, and mean, and devoid of mercy. Did I forget anything?”

“Nope, you covered it pretty well.”

“Excellent. Are you hungry?”

“Starving. Can I have a bottle of juice?”

“You are pushing your luck.”

“That’s why you love me.”

“Fine. One bottle.”

“And that’s why I love you.”

“Had I but known that small bottles of orange juice were all it took, I’d have seduced you long before I did,” Cas lamented.

“I did forget something. You’re a smartass.”

~*~

By the time he’d finished feeding himself and Sam breakfast (a giant stack of cinnamon toast, since they weren’t lacking for butter, sugar, or cinnamon), Dean had just about decided that he wasn’t taking Cas’s insistence on continued celibacy lying down. Or, at least, he was hoping to end up lying down, or bent over, or—anyway, he wasn’t going to go down without a fight. Or, come to think of it, he wouldn’t mind going down, but—fuck it. The point was, he was strapping in for battle.

The problem was, Dean had never actually needed to really…seduce anyone before. His admittedly rather distracting face and natural charm had pretty much taken care of that for him. Concerted efforts at actual seduction? Well, sure, maybe a time or two when there was a woman who was especially coy, but as far as how to seduce a resistant Cas? He didn’t have a goddamn clue how to go about it.
He started with the obvious, the trump card, what had never failed him in the past.

He went for the panties.

There was one more unused set in the bottom of his underwear drawer, and Dean went ahead and availed himself of them, letting the hem of his sweatpants rest just underneath a thin swath of the light purple silk and scalloped lace trim.

Problem was, Sam-the-creepily-observant spotted them first.

“You know, Dean, I’m not actually sure lavender is your color. Or is that more of a lilac? I can’t see enough to tell, you—“

“I am not showing you my fucking underwear, Sam.”

“You actually are, though, you’re just not showing me much of it.”

“I am not having this argument with you, dude.”

“Anyway, I think with your skin tone you’re probably better off going with jewel tones. A nice sapphire or emerald or r—“

“If you say ‘Ruby,’ so help me God, I’m gonna punch you.”

“It’s a color, Dean.”

“Do you really wanna test me? Because at this point I’m not totally sure that I’m above letting you starve.”

“Oh, that’s okay, I can always eat the MREs if—“

“I’m leaving.”

“If you don’t really like jewel tones, you could probably do okay with maybe a nice yellow or even a navy blue. I just don’t think that pastels are your—“

Naturally, this was when Cas strolled back into the library.

“What are you two talking about?”

“Oh, I was just telling Dean that I don’t think lavender is—“

“Sam was just proving that no matter how heterosexual he is, he’ll still always be way gayer than me.”

“You know that’s just buying into a whole host of stereotypes about the queer community that—“

“I do not understand. What spawned this argument?”

“Well, see, Dean’s wearing these—“

“Nothing. I’m leaving.”

~*~

So the panties were a bust.
The lap dance didn’t go much better.

First Cas was totally mystified by what Dean was attempting to do, then Dean got one of his legs tangled up with Cas’s and ended up toppling out of his lap and landing on his ass—which, incidentally, was not quite as healed as he thought—and yelping loud enough that Sam came running to investigate.

Half an hour after that, eyes glazed over from Sam’s lecture on how much skill was actually required to strip, Dean went ahead and gave up on the lap dance idea.

The strip-tease was maybe the biggest failure yet.

He wasn’t quite sure how he managed to get his sweatpants twisted badly enough that he fell over and hit his head on the dresser, but when he woke up ten minutes later with a black eye and Cas and Sam’s worried faces leaning over him, he decided maybe Sam was actually right about the level of skill required to strip.

He went to bed that night more than a little grouchy, after nearly shouting himself hoarse to convince Sam that he was *not* going to take a pole-dancing class, for fuck’s sake. And not only because, given recent events, he was sort of worried he might actually manage to bash his own brains out inadvertently on the pole.

*Operation Seduction: Day Two* was also an unqualified disaster.

Singing your lover a sexy song when you couldn’t carry a tune in a bucket turned out to produce a debate between said lover and your brother about whether you were coming down with laryngitis.

Dean was totally sure that the porn debacle wasn’t actually his fault, though. Who knew that a gay BDSM site would have pop-ups that included donkey fetish videos? The screen had been pointing toward Cas when he’d pushed play, anyway.

Dean had spent at least two hours trying to calm down the angel, who was totally beside himself at the thought of what the poor donkey must have gone through.

Dean finally had to lie and tell him that the donkey was animatronic. He had just about managed to convince Cas when Sam happened along and blew Dean’s dissembling out of the water. The rest of the afternoon was taken up by Sam and Cas’s heated brainstorming about ways to end the exploitation of animals in bestiality porn.

Neither of them noticed when Dean stomped back off to the gym, where he availed himself of the punching bag with impressive enthusiasm.

By this point, Dean was just about out of ideas and completely out of patience, and he actually grabbed *himself* an MRE and ate a solitary dinner in his room before showering and going to bed early.

He wasn’t sure whether to be thrilled or just really, really fucking annoyed when he woke up with Cas’s mouth on his cock.
The Kansas Chainsaw Massacre

Chapter Summary

In which Cas decides to reward Dean for his patience (such as it was), Dean discovers a whole new side to himself, and Sam...well, Sam takes things to a new and disturbing level.

Chapter-specific tags and warnings (plus an author's note) can be found at the conclusion of the chapter

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Long before Dean had the brainpower to decide how he actually felt about rousing with his cock buried to the root in Cas’s decidedly skilled mouth, he had to manage the complete shock of the unexpected awakening. He’d barely shot halfway to a sitting position (and his thoughts hadn’t managed to get much further than holyshitwhatthefuck) before a hand landed hard on his chest and promptly flattened him onto his back once more.

Dean’s gaze followed the shape of the long fingers splayed across his chest down to a bare wrist, then slid up a muscular forearm, skipped across a beautifully defined bicep and shoulder, briefly skated over the graceful arch of a neck, and finally landed on a familiar face. An expression that should’ve by all rights been unreadable due to the engorged cock splitting open those full lips nevertheless somehow managed to clearly convey sly satisfaction. Oh, yeah. Cas was greatly enjoying the response to his wake-up call.

By the time Dean managed to remember what language he spoke and get his still sleepily flailing brain to land on actual words, the hand that wasn’t planted on his chest had vanished between his legs and a single slick finger (Jesus fuck, Cas must have done some preparing before he actually executed this devious plan) was nudging its way between his cheeks. His voice cracked before he managed to get out a single word and he had to clear his throat and try again.

“Ho—holy mother of wake up calls, dude, have you ever heard of an alarm clock?”

Dean’s dick slid out of Cas’s mouth with a filthy popping sound which caused the appendage in question to twitch with interest. Apparently, regardless of how much Dean was torn over his need to continue sulking about his failed attempts at seduction over the past few days, his cock had no such compunctions. Mr. Happy always had been depressingly short-sighted.

“In point of fact,” Cas said, as Dean’s eyes slid down to those full lips, slightly swollen and reddened from his efforts, “I came into your room to complete some additional warding in the hopes of keeping Sam out on a more permanent basis, but when I saw you roll onto your back without awakening or even twitching in pain…well. It seemed a sign that not only were you healed enough for us to return to our recreational activities, but this was an ideal time to celebrate that fact. Of course, I suppose if you object, I can—“ Cas made as if to rise off the bed, but his face bore a distinct lack of surprise when Dean’s hand shot out and tangled in his perpetually messy hair, starting to urge him back down. He hastily forestalled the angel before he could go on.
“Nope, no objections, just a little startled. Hey, you know me, I like a good surprise every now and then.”

“True enough,” Cas observed mildly, a hint of wicked mischief in his eyes, “but I suppose it really was inconsiderate to assault you as you slept. I should allow you to return to your slumber, and—“

“Cas,” Dean interrupted, lips twitching as he tried to decide whether he was on the verge of cracking up or murdering the angel, “I swear to your Dad, if you even think about climbing off this bed and leaving me hanging, the smiting you want to give Sam will look like you sneezed on him compared to what I will do to you.”

He eased his grip on Cas’s hair as the angel’s head dropped between his shoulders and they shook with silent laughter. Coincidentally, the shift in position left that sexy hair brushing lightly along the throbbing length of Dean’s cock. He jumped, inhaling sharply, and Cas seemed to realize what he’d inadvertently done, because when he lifted his head again, he did so very slowly. That wicked grin was back in full force as the blue eyes rose to lock with Dean’s.

“Actually,” Cas said casually, “I rather thought that in deference to your, er, unsuccessful efforts at persuasion over the last several days—“

“You mean how I goddamn near killed myself about six times while trying to convince you to fuck me?”

“…I was not going to put it quite that way, but…”

“Might as well not sugarcoat it. We were both there. Fuck, we were all there. Because it’s not enough for my boyfriend to witness my humiliation, my brother needs to be in on the action, too.”

Okay, so maybe now that the enforced celibacy had clearly expired, Dean could kind of see the humor in his pitiful failures over the past couple days. A little.

“While I will readily agree that Sam’s presence was unwelcome—which, incidentally, is hardly a new state of affairs these days—you and I both know perfectly well that humiliation is not something that you are always averse to.”

“Cas,” Dean said patiently, “there’s kind of a huge difference between you sending me to stand in the corner wearing a butt plug with my pants around my ankles after a spanking or calling me a slut while I suck your cock, and me nearly bashing my brains out on the dresser while trying to be sexy. One of these things is not like the other.”

“I suppose you have a point,” the angel allowed, “and if you really want to discuss this in depth I am more than happy to do so, but I feel very strongly that you will be extremely angry with yourself later if you continue to derail the point I was endeavoring to make.” Cas punctuated these words with a long, slow lick to the underside of Dean’s cock from base to tip.

Okay, Dean was intrigued. His cock, which was every bit as interested in the proceedings as it had been while buried in the angel’s mouth, twitched again at the sultry promise in Cas’s tone.

“Don’t keep me in suspense,” he urged a little breathlessly, hand tightening again in the angel’s hair.

Cas reached up and tapped the top of Dean’s hand, clear instruction to release him. Dean thought about ignoring the directive and just hauling those cocksucking lips back to the task for which they had clearly been designed. In the end, though, his curiosity was piqued enough that he allowed his fingers to slide through the surprisingly silky strands.

Cas lifted his head, rising to his knees (which were planted between Dean’s sprawled legs), and
Dean saw for the first time that the angel was as naked as he was. Hey, hadn’t he gone to sleep wearing sweatpants? If Cas had mojoed them out of existence, he was gonna be pissed. That had been his favorite pair.

He didn’t have long to muse about this, and any thoughts of inquiring fled his mind precipitously a second later. If his brain hadn’t been entirely short-circuited by the unexpected wake-up, what happened next finished the job.

Cas knelt up fully and then shifted, somehow succeeding in nudging each of Dean’s legs until they were pressed close against his knees. How he managed this reasonably awkward feat while continuing to look like sex on two legs, Dean would never know, and couldn’t honestly be called upon to care, because holyshitwhatthefuck, Cas was shifting to straddle Dean’s thighs before walking forward on his knees.

Dean realized instantly what this looked like and actually held his breath while he tried to figure out whether he was reading the situation right.

He was.

The angel settled himself over Dean’s hips, then reached back, grasping the base of Dean’s cock and carefully guiding it, just so. It nestled between Cas’s cheeks, only too eager to get with the (certainly not unheard of but decidedly rare) program. Half a second later, the angel shifted slightly, and then Dean’s cock was very slowly enveloped in unbelievably tight, wet heat. Holy fuck, Cas had to have been planning this since before he woke Dean up, because damned if he wasn’t prepped. His ass was slick with lube and just stretched enough to render the entry manageable without undue effort.

It took him a moment to register that Cas was speaking, and another couple seconds to process the words.

“You have been such a good boy,” he rumbled, and Dean didn’t have half a clue how he was maintaining his composure so well while adjusting to the cock that he had just buried inside himself, “that it seems to me you have earned yourself a little reward.”

Dean gawped at him, mouth hanging open, breath jarring in and out rapidly. He was pretty sure he must look half-demented or heavily tranquilized, and thought he might even be drooling.

He couldn’t be bothered to care.

“I know,” Cas went on, “how challenging this has been for you. Trapped in here for weeks alongside your increasingly disturbed brother, dealing with—“

“Cas,” Dean interrupted, finally managing to get his voice back, although it came out strangled and rasping, “are we gonna do therapy or am I gonna fuck you?”

“I thought perhaps we could do both,” the angel told him, eyes bright with amusement.

“Fuck that,” Dean told him succinctly, his hands coming up to grasp Cas’s hips tightly, “I can barely remember my own name, let alone whatever existential angst I’m holding onto. Move, damn you.”

It was a rule. A firm, long-established one. When Dean topped, Cas got to set the pace, at least initially. Eventually, if he was lucky, Cas would give him permission to take the lead on force and speed, but if Dean tried to do so without the go-ahead—well, suffice it to say he wasn’t willing to risk losing this golden opportunity.

“Ah ah ah,” Cas told him, lips curving in a way that was astonishingly predatory for a guy with a
dick buried in his ass, “ask nicely for what you want.”

Under different conditions, Dean might’ve been embarrassed by how fast he broke. Now? Well, he challenged anyone not to follow pretty much any instruction given to them under the current circumstances (except that his dick better be the only one ever in the current circumstances because, hello, monogamous).

“Please move before one of my heads explodes?”

Cas looked thoughtful. Just as Dean was starting to seriously reconsider his whole smiting plan, the angel shrugged slightly. “Not your best work, perhaps, but under the circumstances I think it will have to do.”

“Oh, thank G—“

“If you reference my Father while you are inside me, I cannot be held responsible for my actions.”

“…you? Thank you?”

“Better.”

Whatever Dean was planning on saying next was lost entirely on a groan as Cas very slowly rose just enough that Dean’s dick slid almost but not quite entirely out of him. Cas hovered there for a moment, lips quirked just slightly at whatever face Dean was making, then equally slowly started to sink back down. Dean’s fingers tightened on Cas’s hips but he was meticulously careful not to actually exert any up or down force. He could hang on for dear life, he just couldn’t direct traffic, as it were.

As Dean once again found himself surrounded by that tight, slick heat, Cas leaned forward, setting his palms against Dean’s bare chest so that blue eyes could lock with green. Dean’s lips dropped open a little further as Cas took up a rhythm that was just quick enough to take his breath away and just slow enough that it threatened to draw this out indefinitely. Swallowing hard, he searched the angel’s eyes, looking for any sign of mercy, any sign at all that he wasn’t planning to use this as just another avenue of delicious torture.

Dean was not especially surprised when there was no quarter in that gaze.

Ten minutes later, Dean was dimly conscious that he was almost certainly leaving handprints of his own on the angel’s hips, clutching hard enough that they would bruise darkly, and he made a note to ask Cas not to heal himself. Granted, Dean not infrequently left scratches or bite-marks on Cas’s shoulders or back in moments when he was so overcome by passion that he couldn’t control himself, but this was different. He wanted to see the stamp of his own hands on Cas, a mark of ownership as sure as the bruises the angel so often stained Dean’s skin with.

Yeah, maybe he wasn’t exactly the most dominant guy around, but even Dean had his moments, and the idea of fitting his hands to the shape of the bruises he’d left in a day or two was impossibly attractive.

These were the sort of places his mind wandered in the agonizing, unending minutes while Cas rose and fell, demonstrating that uncanny ability to know without being told exactly what was just a hair’s breadth shy of enough.

He couldn’t say exactly when it had started, but Dean slowly became aware that both he and Cas were no longer nearly as quiet as when they had started out. A constant series of groans and wordless pleas were leaking from Dean’s lips, and Cas’s breath was coming in quick, audible pants
that were periodically interspersed with deep grunts, his cock impossibly hard and leaking as it stood at attention between their stomachs.

Eventually, as the tone of Dean’s whines reached fever pitch, the angel leaned a little further forward, his chest perhaps four or five inches above Dean’s, neck extended so they were nose-to-nose. His eyes, a little hazy with pleasure, nevertheless glittered with predatory amusement.

“Use your words, Dean.”

Use his words. Use his fucking words! The implication that he actually had enough of a grasp of language to find words would’ve been laughable if he wasn’t so desperate. There were a few long moments in which he both wondered how the hell Cas managed to be so in control of himself despite the dick in his ass, and tried to get a handle on actually speaking.

He didn’t figure he’d ever get a satisfactory answer on that question, but after a time, he did manage to grope his way to a word or two. He flung them at Cas and hoped desperately that they were appropriate ones.

“Ple—please, Cas. More. Let me—please!” Oh, hey, that was actually pretty good. With the current state of his brain, he figured what escaped his mouth could just as easily have ended up being something along the lines of ‘Teapot! Kindling!’

Cas tilted his head just slightly to one side, much as he did when he was feeling quizzical—but there was nothing inquiring about his gaze now. Instead, his eyes had the power to hold Dean as motionless as a damn tractor beam, tearing the breath from his lungs as he waited in an agony of anticipation for the angel to pronounce sentence.

The silence continued to spin out, Cas taunting him even further by slowing the roll of his hips until he settled down, fully seated on Dean’s cock, and moved no more. Dean whimpered in protest and plea, hands tightening and loosening involuntarily around Cas’s hips. It was with gargantuan effort that he managed to keep his own ass flush with the bed, resisting the need to drive his hips upward, to dig his hands in painfully and hold the angel steady for the assault that Dean desperately wanted to unleash.

Finally, as Dean actually bit into his lower lip to stifle the verbal torrent he wanted to release upon Cas, two words dropped from the angel’s lips and shattered against Dean’s ears.

“You may.”

Dean didn’t need an engraved invitation.

His hands bit down, fingers tightening on Cas’s hips and jerking him up a split second before Dean snapped his own hips upward with such force that the sound of flesh cracking on flesh reverberated throughout the room. Cas’s lips parted and he groaned deeply.

The sound of the angel losing control like that—it did something to Dean, something he didn’t quite have words for, but was powerless to resist. Was this what Cas felt like in the moments when he looked at Dean like he was going to eat him for lunch? Dean imagined it must’ve been something like that, because he was pretty sure he had never felt the need to devour, to take, to possess as deeply as he did right now.

His hips set a brutal pace, driving his cock into the angel with little (okay, fine, no) regard for the fact that he almost never bottomed. He might’ve been hurting Cas, and honestly, it wasn’t even that Dean didn’t care. It was that the idea was attractive. The angel’s head fell back, his hands coming
up to clutch at Dean’s shoulders convulsively as a steady stream of grunts and groans leaked out of him.

Dean drank them in greedily, desperate to produce more, louder. His hips somehow found a faster pace, a harder rhythm, and the groans sounded a little more like whimpers now. He reveled in it, determined that just this once, just this time and perhaps never again, he would be the one to bring Cas to heel.

“Time I’m done with you, you’re gonna limp for a week,” he promised in a growl that he scarcely recognized. Miracle of miracles, Cas couldn’t seem to find his voice, with which he could no doubt have easily retaken control in just a few words. “Gonna make you feel me for days, angel.”

One hand released the angel’s hip—and Dean was pleased to see that there was indeed a perfect imprint of his fingers, already starting to bloom purple under the skin—and dropped to fist Cas’s cock, starting to jack it every bit as hard and fast as Dean was driving into him.

Later, when they were fitting the new door onto his room’s hinges, Dean would reflect that it wasn’t that he hadn’t heard the noise, he had just been way too wrapped up in current events to spare any brain power for figuring out what the hell was causing it.

Cas must’ve done a good job with the warding, because Sam admitted later that once he heard the clear sex noises, he’d tried everything else he could think of to get the door open without success. It really shouldn’t have surprised either of them that when he couldn’t open the thing, rather than giving up like a normal human being, he’d decided to go through it.

Seriously, though, there had to have been better ways than a chainsaw. Dean was pretty goddamn sure of that. Long after the fact, Sam even admitted that drilling a couple holes and using a jigsaw would’ve been a lot more precise but at the time, he’d been in kind of a hurry.

It wasn’t until he had pulled the remaining splinters out of Cas’s back, long after Sam fled the scene, that Cas told Dean the final warding he’d intended to place on the door would’ve made it indestructible. He’d just gotten distracted by Dean’s naked body and clear recovery before he could finish what he was doing.

In a twist that probably shouldn’t have been surprising, they would later discover that while they were busy cleaning themselves up, Sam had retreated to the storage rooms and, so help them, burned the remaining stores of ingredients that could finish the wards.

For the moment, though, the familiar growl of a small engine revving didn’t penetrate Dean’s awareness. He was way the hell too close, and if the wounded animal noises the angel was making were any indication, Cas wasn’t far behind.

Two, three, four more sharp jerks of his hips before they stuttered and Dean roared out his climax, cock pulsing deep inside the angel. Cas followed him a few seconds later, shooting his load all over his own stomach and chest. Cas’s eyes shot wide just as the final spurt dribbled out of him, and he made a high-pitched sound that was distinctly different than any he’d made so far.

Dean knew instantly that something was wrong. He sat up, Cas’s ass still convulsing around him, and when his hand slid up from the angel’s hip, there were a few long seconds of total bewilderment as his fingers encountered a hard protrusion that was definitely a new addition to Cas’s back.

It extended perhaps two or three inches out of Cas’s flesh, a little brittle and sharp-edged. Without quite grasping exactly what was happening or what he was doing in the immediate post-orgasmic haze (but somehow certain the protrusion was not supposed to be there), Dean wrapped his fingers
around it and pulled.

The splinter, if it could even be called that—really, it was more like a shard—slid out of the angel’s back with a grisly squelching sound, and Dean registered that next to the noise Cas produced at that, he had definitely not actually been making wounded animal noises before.

“Oh, Jesus fuck, Cas, are you okay? Are you—“ he still hadn’t really put it all together, but what he did know was that something hot and wet was slicking his fingers, dribbling out of the fucking hole the protrusion (Dean glanced down to where it had fallen when he pulled it out of the angel. It sat, deceptively unassuming, a four-inch-long scrap of wood which came to a startlingly sharp point that was dipped in blood) had left in his boyfriend.

Holy fucking shit, Cas had been impaled.

Dean registered that he was babbling only when words finally failed him—and that happened when he stuck his head around Cas’s back and was instantly met by the sight of Sam’s round-eyed face, staring in at them through the window he’d just manually created in Dean’s formerly solid door.

What. The. Fuck.

“What the LIVING FUCK, SAM. You just STABBED CAS.” Despite knowing that Cas couldn’t be killed with anything less than an angel blade, Dean found himself hard-pressed not to panic at the blood sluggishly leaking over his hand where it continued to press against the—again, he could not emphasize this strongly enough—fucking hole in his boyfriend’s back.

“Well, it was really more of an impaling than a stabbing and I promise it was an accident. I’m, uh, just gonna…go now? I’m…really, really sorry, Cas.”

Maybe later, Dean would take a moment to recognize that this was the first time Sam had actually sincerely apologized to either of them since he started this crusade of his, and all it had taken was what would’ve likely been a fatal wound on anyone who wasn’t virtually immortal. For now, all he knew was that his brother was one lucky motherfucker that the bleeding angel was still plastered against Dean (and that his softened cock was still somehow buried in him), because otherwise that shard of wood would’ve been protruding from between Sam’s fucking eyes by now.

As it stood, Sam’s head wasted no time in vanishing out of the hole in Dean’s door, because apparently the theme of today was holes where they really didn’t belong. Dean was frozen for another couple seconds before he finally shook himself into action. Groping desperately to one side, his hand landed on a pillow. He grabbed the end of the pillowcase and shook hard, managing to dislodge the pillow from the case and send it sailing across the room. He bunched up the pillowcase in his fist, then, and pressed it hard against the wound in Cas’s back. Cas, who was still slumped against Dean’s chest, finally seemed to come back to himself. He made a groaning, pained noise that made Dean’s very soul curdle in distress. If there was one thing in this life he couldn’t stand, it was the people he loved in pain, especially when he couldn’t fix it. And he couldn’t fix this, but—

“Cas, baby, listen. Are you with me? You need to heal yourself. It know it hurts, but—“

“I am not sure that I can,” the angel gritted out, and Dean’s heart skipped a beat and then another two for good measure. He was about to start panicking when Cas went on, “until the other…projectiles are removed.”

Wait, what? There were more? Dean gritted his teeth before speaking, as calmly as he could muster. “Okay, that’s okay. Listen, sweetheart, I’ve gotta lift you off of me, and it’s probably going to hurt, but I need to get a look at your back.”
He registered dimly that these words were strongly reminiscent of ones that Cas had said to him after more than one scene, and took a moment to wish that this was one of those moments. Hell, on a normal day he would’ve been the one riding Cas, and he would’ve taken the brunt of Sam’s ill-advised attempt at remodeling. A spike of guilt shot through him (despite the fact that on a logical level he was perfectly well aware that he was a hell of a lot more mortal than Cas) at the thought. Grimacing as he had to release the rapidly soaking pillowcase, Dean moved his hands to brace beneath Cas’s armpits and, without waiting for the go-ahead, carefully lifted the angel upright. The movement earned a badly-stifled groan that drove into Dean nearly as painfully as the splinter’s entry must have. He barely registered the sensation of his cock sliding out of Cas as he quickly shifted out from under him, adjusting his grip so that he could settle the angel down on his front on the bed.

The damage wasn’t as bad as he’d feared, but it was bad enough.

There were three other pretty impressively sized splinters (though none anywhere near as big as the one Dean had already removed) and about a dozen somewhat smaller ones. Without a moment’s hesitation, Dean set one hand on Cas’s shoulder to hold him steady and, keeping his voice as firm as he could make it, gave him an order.

“Do not move. I’m gonna get them out.”

Cas made a low noise of acknowledgment and tightened one hand in the bedclothes as Dean went to work.

It didn’t take long, but it clearly wasn’t a pleasant process for Cas. Once the final splinter was out, Dean leaned back, settling one hand—somewhat smeared in Cas’s blood—against the angel’s head. “I’m done, babe. Can you heal yourself now?”

There was a moment of silence and for a second Dean’s heart was in his throat. What if somehow Cas couldn’t? What if something about the warding he’d placed on the door made the wood some kind of special angel-killing weaponry? What if—

He didn’t have time to fall too far into panic-mode before the wounds riddling the angel’s back were fading, fading, and gone.

That was when Dean’s legs decided they’d done just about enough work in the wake of an intense orgasm and an even more intense scare, and entirely gave out on him. He sat down hard on the floor, then yelped, rising a few inches and reaching underneath himself to pull out of his left ass cheek a sizeable splinter, lately removed from Cas’s back, that Dean had just somehow managed to fucking recycle.

Cas’s head jerked up at the sound of pain from Dean. He took in the splinter still gripped between Dean’s fingers, both of its ends now tipped in blood, and examined it with a look on his face that would’ve seemed almost casual if it hadn’t been so dangerous.

“Sam has graduated from an annoyance to an actual threat, Dean. I am—“

“—going to let me handle this,” Dean told him grimly, “because I’m way more experienced in torture than you are.”

Chapter End Notes
Chapter-specific tags/warnings: Blowjob, switching, topping from the bottom, coitus-fucking-interruptus SAM YOU ASSHOLE.

NOTE:

So a whole bunch of you had been prodding at me insistently about whether or not our boys were ever gonna switch. Consider your prayers answered.

You're welcome.

As far as the rest of it goes...I ain't even sorry, y'all. I HOWLED my way through writing this shit-show. A whole lot of stuff that really wasn't this at all was supposed to happen this chapter, and I didn't get around to any of it because THIS HAPPENED INSTEAD.

You're welcome again.

Seriously, I'm failing so hard at wrapping this up. WE'RE SUPPOSED TO BE IN THE LAST COUPLE CHAPTERS. Ultimately, I think I'm just having too much fun playing around in my sandbox to climb out of it.

You're still welcome.

Please avail yourselves of the comments to tell me how much you hate me--or feel free to come find me on tumblr and do it there instead!
Captive Audience

Chapter Summary

In which bondage has more than one use, Cas would make a terrible handyman, and Dean makes him an offer he can't refuse.

Chapter Notes

Chapter-specific warnings and tags (precautionary; there is no smut in this chapter) can be found at the conclusion of the chapter, along with a brief safety note and a not-so-brief author's note with some information a few of you have been asking about.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Honestly, at this point, had it been anyone but his little brother, Dean would’ve been dead serious about the torture. Granted, he generally didn’t like to even think about his time under Alastair’s tutelage, let alone make use of his hell-acquired skills, but everyone had a breaking point. It turned out Dean’s rested somewhere between having his orgasm interrupted for the hundredth-or-so time and having his boyfriend impaled by flying door shrapnel.

So, yeah, he actually might, for a few satisfying seconds, have considered going to work on Sam. Let’s face it, no jury of his peers would convict him once they had the whole story, and he had decades of experience in hiding bodies anyway.

But it was Sammy. His Sammy. His baby brother, who he’d been responsible for since before Dean even knew how to read. Their relationship had somehow managed to survive demon blood addictions, breaking the first seal and the last respectively, trying to say yes to Michael and actually saying yes to Lucifer respectively, the cage, soullessness (including Sam’s deliberate failure to prevent vampirism), insanity, purgatory, hitting a goddamn dog, trying to close the gates of hell, angel possession, the Mark of Cain, attempted murder, losing almost every soul they’d ever cared about, and 12,000 or so other things (about half of which they’d both probably forgotten about by now). Some untimely interruptions—even if they included inadvertent, potentially fatal wounds—weren’t going to finally be the dynamite that blew them apart permanently.

So actual torture was off the table.

That did not, however, mean that Dean was taking this lying down, or that he was above playing dirty.

Once he and Cas had cleaned themselves, swept up the splinters littering Dean’s room (not before a few unfortunate incidents with bare feet, infuriatingly enough) and definitively determined that the door was a total loss, Dean gave Cas very clear instructions for removing and replacing the door with one from an unused bedroom. This was less because he thought the angel would be successful (in fact, he was reasonably sure Cas would fail, possibly hilariously) and more a result of the fact that he wanted to deal with Sam himself. Cas surely recognized Dean’s motivation, but accepted it stoically enough. He seemed to be aware that at this point he might actually do something irreversible, and
despite his fury, he knew quite well that the one thing Dean would not be able to forgive him was killing Sam.

Not since he had stalked the dim halls of the bunker, black-eyed and wielding a hammer with murder on his mind, had Dean searched for Sam with half as much dark purpose. The hunt took a while, because he wasn’t in any of the most likely places. There was no sign of him in the library and his room was deserted, the dark laptop screen and rumpled-but-cold bedsheets suggesting that he likely hadn’t been in here for some time. Dean checked his watch and registered that it was shortly after 8 in the morning. Goddamn, if things carried on like this, he was going to end up a morning person before they were out of here. Granted, this new tendency of his and Cas’s to engage in sunrise sex went a long way to making that possibility more attractive.

He didn’t bother to give the kitchen more than a perfunctory once-over, since it’d been weeks since Sam had dared to step foot inside it. There was no sign of him in the garage, the gym, the firing range, or the bathrooms. Dean was about ready to start going through the whole damn place room by room when he caught a distinctive and very unexpected whiff of something familiar.

Something was burning.

Half a second after he realized that, Dean’s heart clawed its way up into his throat. Jesus Christ, if the bunker burned—they were trapped inside. They would roast like pigs on a spit, and there was likely nothing that would save them unless the heat managed to melt the snow enough to get them out of here before smoke inhalation did he and Sam in. Sam. Jesus Christ, what if he’d accidentally started the fire and it had gotten out of control? It could be too late already.

The convulsion of horror and negation in Dean’s chest at the thought went a long way to defusing his boiling rage at his brother, even though he was almost immediately able to look at the situation more logically and tamp down his fears.

The smell—it was burning, yes, but it wasn’t that. It wasn’t burning wood or burning flesh (and come to think of it, the bunker was largely made of stone and marble—not things that burned readily).

Dean knew what a house fire smelled like. He had known for most of his life, and that smell—it stuck with you, especially when it was underlain with a hint of cooked meat that was your fucking mother.

So Sam was likely alive, and as soon as he recognized what the fire didn’t smell like, he was able to put together what it did.

Not wood or flesh or any one of a hundred other things Dean had smelled go up in smoke. No, this was burning herbs.

It was too strong, too pungent to be just a little bit, too. Too thick and complex to be the amounts required for a warding or a summoning. And that meant…

No. No way. Sam could not possibly have done what Dean thought he had done—except that at this point, was there honestly anything he could say with authority that Sam wouldn’t do? If you’d asked him three weeks ago, he would’ve laughed outright at the notion that Sam might style himself an amateur sex therapist, let alone Dean’s amateur sex therapist.

With a sinking feeling, Dean’s disbelief rapidly morphed into grim certainty. Both jaw and fists clenching and unclenching rhythmically, Dean followed his nose.
It led him exactly where he had known it would, down one flight of stairs and two hallways over, to the storage room in which spell ingredients lived. Sure enough, in the middle of the stone floor, far from anything that could ignite and start a fire more dangerous, a pile of what smelled like at least seven or eight distinct herbs was merrily crackling away.

Sam stood over it, the firelight dancing along the determined, self-satisfied lines of his face. Dean stepped past the threshold and spoke, the game plan he’d been half-consciously working on since the moment he stepped out of his room in search of his brother suddenly materializing, fully formed.

“You didn’t tell me we were having a bonfire,” he said easily as he stepped toward Sam. The kid whirled rapidly, apparently with it enough to sense that he’d likely pissed off his fellow shut-ins with the whole attempted manslaughter bit.

“Just taking care of a little unfinished business,” Sam said with impressive neutrality.

“Lemme guess,” Dean posited, his voice still impressively casual—even friendly, “those are the spell ingredients required to create wards like the ones Cas put on my door, and pretty much any others you could think of. Yeah?”

There was a brief silence in which Sam measured Dean’s tone and expression, and for a moment Dean thought he would surely recognize the danger. Apparently his sense of propriety and boundaries weren’t the only things that were distinctly off-kilter, however, because after a moment Sam’s shoulders seemed to relax a little bit.

“Yeah,” he admitted, turning back to the fire, “it seemed like the best way to avoid a repeat of what just happened.”

In a sane world, the best way to avoid a repeat of what just happened was for Sam to get his shit together and stay away from chainsaws for the rest of his life, but Dean knew better than to suggest that avenue at this point.

“Probably a better choice than the chainsaw,” Dean agreed, kind of wishing Cas was here to see what a good job he was doing at hanging onto the mellow demeanor.

There was another moment of silence before Sam turned back to Dean and spoke again, something that sure sounded like true remorse edging his tone. “I’m sure you’re angry with me. I totally understand if you are. What happened to Cas was a terrible accident, and I’m going to make it up to him somehow. I never intended for anyone to get hurt.”

“I know that, Sam,” Dean told him with perfect sincerity. Of course he knew Sam hadn’t actually wanted Cas to get impaled. He just hadn’t been thinking clearly enough to recognize the potential risks of his impulsive actions. Dean clapped a hand on his brother’s shoulder in reassurance before he went on, “you’re just trying to help.”

Exactly,” Sam said, relief coloring his face and tone, “I just want for you guys to—“

“Have the best relationship we can, including our sex life. I know, Sammy.”

The look of relief and something that looked suspiciously like longing on Sam’s face tugged at Dean’s heartstrings just a bit. Despite everything, Sam had to be feeling a little lonely, considering how much effort Dean and Cas had both been going to in order to avoid him. He was trapped in here as surely as they were, and (despite all evidence to the contrary) this couldn’t have been fun for him either.

Nevertheless, unanticipated twinge of empathy or not, Dean was undeterred from his plan. This had
to stop, one way or the other, and once the snow had melted there would be more than enough time for post-mortems and relationship rebuilding. They were brothers, after all. They’d always come back to each other.

So it was without a single ounce of guilt that he used the hand still on Sam’s shoulder to pivot the kid toward him. He saw awareness dawn in Sam’s face half a second too late for him to do anything about it, and when his fist collided at full-strength with the side of his brother’s skull, Sam’s head snapped back on his shoulders.

Dean didn’t waste the stunned instant that inevitably followed a solid blow to the head. Nope, he just repeated the assault again, and then once more.

Third time was the charm. Sam’s eyes rolled back in his head and he went down like a ton of bricks, Dean’s hand around his bicep the only thing that broke his fall a little.

“Sorry, Sammy,” Dean told the unconscious form at his feet (although in fact he was not particularly sorry), “but you’ve said it yourself—you want us to have the best relationship and sex life we can. So I’m saving it before you implode us altogether.”

He could’ve called Cas to help him out, but it was far from the first time he’d maneuvered his brother’s limp body a reasonable distance. It took some time, yeah, and Sam would probably have some bruises (especially from being dragged down a flight of stairs) to add to the ones already starting to stain the side of his face, but Dean managed it. He only had to punch Sam one more time when the kid’s eyes started to flutter open, and inside of fifteen minutes or so, they’d arrived at their destination.

A few more moments of arranging, a quick trip to a storage room down the hall and the small bathroom one hall away, and everything was situated.

Sam was chained to the back wall of the dungeon, both wrists bound in thick cuffs. He had a pretty decent amount of play—he could move maybe five feet from the wall before he would be brought up short, and he had more than enough room to lay down flat. That was how Dean settled him, on his back on a thick layer of folded blankets. Beside those, he piled an assortment of MREs, making sure to even leave a few vegetarian ones. Next to that was a set of four or five canteens he’d filled with water from the bathroom. Completing the picture was (and, yeah, this was maybe the most barbaric part of the thing, but he damn sure knew better than to think he could release Sam safely, even for bathroom trips) a simple bucket, its purpose reasonably obvious, all things considered.

Dean took a couple steps back, surveying the layout, and nodded in satisfaction. Sam should have everything he needed for survival down here, at the very least for a couple days.

And it wasn’t like Dean was going to abandon him. He had every intention of checking on Sam. Eventually.

He just…needed a break.

Because, again, if he lost control of his carefully leashed temper at this point, there was probably no stopping it. And no jury of his peers would convict him.

The final step was simple. He’d already removed Sam’s overshirt and patted down his chest and back before chaining his wrists, leaving only the simple ribbed henley covering his top half. Now, in businesslike fashion, he stripped off Sam’s jeans, boots, and even his socks (although those he replaced, after ensuring they weren’t hiding anything that might serve to pick a lock), leaving him in his boxers. Dean wasn’t taking any goddamn chances here, and he sure as hell wasn’t going to
underestimate his little brother. Sam was a brilliant man and a damn fine hunter, which meant he was adept at getting himself out of seemingly hopeless situations.

But not this one. Not this time. This time, the kid could sit and stew for a few days, and maybe once he got the message—that Dean was absolutely done indulging this little delusion of his—they could even release him under close supervision.

The only potential hiccup in the plan was that he had no intention of leaving Sam with what was probably a pretty nasty concussion, if the deep bruising blooming beneath his skin was any indication. And in order to fix that, he needed Cas.

Convincing the angel to heal Sam when he clearly wanted nothing more than to reduce the kid to atoms was going to require some fast talking and possibly a concession or two, but Dean was pretty sure he could make it happen.

Before abandoning Sam to his makeshift cell, Dean double and then triple checked everything. One last businesslike but thorough pat-down of Sam to make sure he didn’t have any new hiding spots for lock picks or weaponry, one last once-over of the supplies to make sure Sam couldn’t MacGyver them into a mode of escape, one last check of Sammy’s cuffs—they were snug enough to hold him, but not so tight they’d cut off circulation or cause damage unless the kid struggled or pulled at them excessively—and every last goddamn link of the long chain. It wouldn’t do to miss a weak link and have Sam easily muscle his way out.

Dean’s preflight checks, such as they were, revealed no problem although (cursing himself for his sentimentality), he did trek back to the storage room to grab one more blanket which he draped over Sam’s limp body. On his way out, he even ticked the temperature up a couple degrees. He had no intention of giving Sam back his jeans, and Dean didn’t want him to be cold. After all, this wasn’t a punishment.

Oh, fine, maybe it was a little bit, but mostly it was just the only damn solution Dean could think of at this point. And even if one of the purposes it served was payback for Sam’s crimes, there was a difference between punishment and torture. Dean had good reason to know, having been the receiver on both ends of that spectrum and pretty much everywhere in between.

One of those things he was pretty damn comfortable delivering to his impossibly interfering brother. The other (despite his brief weak moment of longing while Cas’s blood still dripped from his hands) he was not—would never.

Sighing a little as he gazed down at Sam, Dean shook his head ruefully. “I’d tell you I’m sorry, Sammy, but you can’t hear me and I’d be lying anyway. A couple days to cool your heels is just what the doctor ordered.”

Shoving his hands into the pockets of the sweatpants he’d donned after climbing out of the shower with Cas, Dean headed back to the storage room to double check that the fire hadn’t spread (it was still crackling away merrily in the middle of the room, putting nothing else at risk, thankfully).

Then he headed upstairs, setting his jaw firmly.

Sammy had better appreciate him (even though, if Dean had his way, Sam would never hear about this) because Dean was about to take one for the team.

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It wasn’t that he was totally disinterested in the idea. There were actually things about it that
distinctly piqued his interest. It was just that the thought of actually doing it made him feel ridiculous, and that was without even actually starting. Add in the recent discovery of Cas’s flair for the dramatic, and Dean could think of about 50 ways this could go horribly, hilariously, depressingly wrong.

But Cas wanted it. And he’d been so adorably shy when he suggested it, not at all that perfectly controlled Dom. Dean had felt like a dickhead putting him off.

He hadn’t exactly said ‘never,’ he’d just said ‘not now.’ But Cas, ever respectful, hadn’t pressed the point, willing (if not content) to let Dean come to him when he was ready. Except there was a decent chance Dean never would have. Not because he was frightened of or disgusted by the idea, because he already felt stupid thinking about it. He was no actor. He was a fucking hunter. And what Cas wanted him to be…well, shit, he hadn’t even been good at that when he’d been doing it for real. Then again, he guessed being lousy at it this time around was sort of the point.

His thoughts carried him back to his room, and Dean discovered to his surprise that the ruined door was propped neatly against the hallway wall, a new, complete door resting perfectly in its place. Stepping forward to open the door and congratulate Cas on a job well done, Dean blinked a couple times as the door started to open. Something wasn’t—oh shit.

He managed to get out of the way just in time, as the top of the incredibly solid slab of wood started to tip toward him, picking up speed as it went. He landed on his ass, sure, but at least he didn’t land on his ass underneath a door.

Okay. So that was more like what he’d expected when he’d set Cas to the task. The perfectly placed door had seemed too good to be true. And speaking of the angel, a few seconds later, a dark, mussed head poked tentatively around the frame.

“I suspected I had forgotten a step,” Cas said sheepishly. “Are you—”

“Still in one piece,” Dean assured him, taking the offered hand and getting to his feet, “and it’s okay. You had the basic idea right, you just forgot to set the hinge pins back in place.”

“Ah,” said Cas thoughtfully. “Well, that explains it. I did not think I was supposed to have any extra parts when I had finished.” He reached into the pocket of the trenchcoat (for some reason he had donned his uniform again post-shower) and produced the pins in question. Dean narrowly managed to refrain from snorting in amusement, simply taking the extended hardware and directing Cas to lift the door and set it back in place. It was the work of maybe two minutes to replace the pins where they belonged and ensure that the door sat evenly in the frame. Both of them took a moment to admire their work before Cas turned back to Dean, a question on his face. Dean knew already that the angel was going to ask where Sam was and what state Dean had left him in. Cas knew perfectly well that not enough time had elapsed for anything resembling real torture (and honestly, he knew Dean enough to not actually expect that he’d meant to follow through on his heat-of-the-moment threat).

Recognizing that this was his golden opportunity, Dean hastily spoke up before Cas could, clearing his throat a little uneasily.

“So I’ve got Sam locked down in the dungeon with some MREs and water. That should hold him for a few days, maybe give him a chance to get his head on straight again.”

“Oh,” said Cas, frowning in thought before he nodded his approval, “that seems wise. I don’t suppose,” he added hopefully, “that you had to hurt him to get him there?”
Well, shit. The angel sounded like that thought was a balm to his soul, and Dean understood why. The kid had, in fact, impaled Cas with about 16 different splinters of wood, and vengeance was sort of hard-wired into angels. Considering the picture of God laid out by the Old Testament, they’d come by it honestly. But this might make Dean’s job a little more challenging.

“Well, I did, actually,” Dean told him uneasily, raising a hand to forestall Cas’s small smile, “and I kind of wanted to talk to you about that.”

Cas’s face was already starting to close off as he almost immediately grasped what Dean was aiming at, and he inquired sharply, “is whatever pain or wound you inflicted likely to be fatal?”

“No, I don’t think so,” Dean had to admit, “but it looks like he’s got a pretty nasty concussion, so I guess he could be rocking a brain bleed or something like that. I can’t exactly see into his head.”

“You could if we broke it open,” Cas said with biting precision, and Dean narrowly resisted the urge to drop his head into his hands and groan. Yup, looked like he was going to have to break out the big guns. He really, really hoped Cas wanted what he was going to offer as much as he thought the angel did.

Okay, I know how mad you are at him,” Dean said hastily, “and you have every right to be. Seriously. I’m not arguing. I’m pretty fucking pissed at him, too. But I’ve got enough experience to know that, outside of relationships like ours, physical pain is a lousy way to inflict a lesson.”

“Oh,” Cas told him, practically airily, “I did not expect that a pounding headache would be likely to actually alter Sam’s behavior, I was enjoying the idea on its own merits.”

“Cas, that’s actually pretty disturbing,” Dean told him, at least half-serious, “this is Sam we’re talking about. Yeah, he’s way out of line and completely out of control, but it’s not like he’s drinking demon blood or leaving us in purgatory or someth—” Shit. The look on Cas’s face told Dean that bringing up some of Sam’s past sins was not actually helping his case. “What I mean to say is, all three of us have done worse than this before now, you know?” Cas appeared unimpressed by the argument, and Dean gave it up as a bad job. Even an angel’s patience wasn’t infinite, and Cas appeared to have reached the end of his.

Dean took a moment to be incredibly annoyed that he’d been placed in the dubious position of defending his pain-in-the-ass of a brother despite the fact that if left to his own devices, he wouldn’t have minded punching Sam a few extra times for good measure, concussion or no. It wasn’t the first time he’d taken one for the team in the name of Sam’s health or safety, though, and probably wouldn’t be the last.

Alright, look,” Dean spoke up again, aiming for logical rather than whiny, “I get how you feel. I really do. But I’m not comfortable leaving Sam beat to hell, and I’m not actually in a position to fix it, so—no, let me finish,” he said, lifting a hand to forestall what was clearly going to be an interruption, “so I want to make you an offer you can’t refuse. A proposition, if you will.”

Cas’s mouth, which had been open in a prelude to protest, snapped shut, his eyes sharpening on Dean. Silence spun out between them for a few long moments, Dean managing with some effort not to fidget under the narrow gaze. Eventually, Cas spoke, voice a little wary but not closed off. “I am listening.”

“You know that…thing you really wanted to do? The one I kept telling you ‘maybe later’ about?”

Cas’s frown only lasted half a second, and Dean could see the exact moment in which the angel put together what Dean was talking about, and then rapidly jumped to what Dean was offering. His
eyes widened a little, mouth forming a small ‘o.’ That was pretty damn encouraging.

“Yeah, you’re reading me loud and clear. I’ll do it. We can do it. Tonight, if you want. Hell, earlier, but you might need to give me some rebound time first, after what we just did.”

“Just to ensure that we are on the same page,” Cas said, “you are telling me that if I heal Sam’s concussion for you—because as you know perfectly well, if I do so it will certainly not be for Sam—you will consent to—“

“Yep. I’m on board, you kinky bastard.”

The angel’s lip twitched a bit before he sobered, eyes settling weightily on Dean. “Dean, much as I appreciate the idea, I do not want you to offer up something you have no interest in doing because you feel you have no other option. I would never ask you to sell yourself.”

“It’s not that, Cas, and if I was really grossed out by the idea I wouldn’t have offered. Just like I told you before—it’s not that I don’t find it…interesting, I just feel stupid even thinking about it.”

“Yes, you have made that clear,” Cas acknowledged, his eyes shrewd and probing as they assessed Dean’s sincerity, “but you are willing to put that aside? Freely?”

“I am. Hell, maybe it’ll even be fun. But I do require a little quid pro quo, Dr. Lecter.”

Castiel’s lips curved upward slightly. “It puts the lotion on its skin or else it gets the hose again?”

“Very good!” Dean congratulated him, “and kind of apropos considering that we’ve got Sam in the dungeon. But I have no intention of giving him any lotion for any purpose.”

Cas shuddered in distaste at the thought, then appeared to shake it off and returned to the topic at hand. “Very well, you have yourself a bargain. I will heal Sam’s injuries, and later we will avail ourselves of our newfound privacy to try something new.”

“I’m not,” Dean told him warningly, “putting on a goddamn plaid skirt, though.”

“I do not want you to be a schoolgirl, Dean. I simply—“

“Have been nursing this naughty student/stern teacher fantasy for a hot minute, I know,” Dean sighed.

Cas’s grin was such a bizarre combination of child-like glee and smoky, sensual promise that Dean’s brain twitched a little in the attempt to parse it. “Indeed. And it could be worse. I could have asked you to be the babysitter.”

“You’d make a terrible pizza man, dude. Better to stick with the stern teacher. That you definitely have the vibe to pull off. But I can’t guarantee I’m not gonna be really bad at it.”

“You underestimate yourself, Dean,” Cas told him soothingly. “Now, shall we get Sam out of the way? I am sure you must be hungry.”

Dean set off toward the dungeon, twining his fingers with Cas’s. “Starving, now that you mention it, and I’ve gotta bake a couple new loaves of bread at some point, too. We’re down to the last slice or two.”

“I had no intention of, as you say, ‘jumping’ you the moment Sam is restored to full health, Dean. You are free to complete whatever tasks you need to. I will need some time to prepare, at any rate.”
“…I don’t even wanna know what that entails, dude. C’mon, Dr. Sexy, let’s go deal with our patient.”

“Now that,” Cas said consideringly, “is another interesting possibility. I believe there are even cowboy boots in the back of your—“

“One roleplay at a time, if you don’t mind,” Dean told him, lips twitching at Cas’s enthusiasm. Apparently the angel had been keeping a lid on this for Dean’s benefit, but it seemed like he was pretty damn excited about the possibilities Dean’s newfound willingness to try out roleplay would create. “Consider this a test case.”

“Test case? Test? …that was a pun, yes?”

“…maybe. I mean. Student/teacher—I sort of had to go for it.”

“Now I know how you felt,” Cas said, pressing two fingers to his temple, “when I referenced ‘winging it.’”

“Serves you right,” Dean agreed, snickering. He ushered Cas a different way than usual, deliberately giving the storeroom in which the herbs were burning a wide berth. He wasn’t sure even an agreement to roleplay could convince Cas to heal Sam if he realized the kid had actually plotted to ruin any chances of further warding while Cas was still bleeding from multiple impalement wounds.

Cas didn’t comment on the roundabout route they took, apparently lost in his own head. Dean figured he was hard at work planning out the later scene, and when he took a quick peek backward, the expression of concentration Cas was sporting reinforced the impression.

It wasn’t until they were maybe 20 feet from the door of the storeroom that harbored the secret dungeon that Dean felt the first pricklings of intuition. He paused for half a second, frowning. Something was wrong. Fuck, what if Sam really had a brain bleed? What if he’d had a seizure or a stroke while Dean had been bargaining kinky roleplays with Cas? Jesus, he’d never forgive himself.

Dean’s hand had slipped from Cas’s as he sped through the last few steps to the room, barreling in the door and around the shelves that were pulled open just a couple feet.

He skidded to a halt almost immediately, lips parting in horror as he stared numbly at the sight before him.

Everything was exactly as he’d left it. MREs neatly stacked up, canteens laid out in a precise row, Sam’s discarded jeans and overshirt in a far corner of the room, the sturdy links of the chains connected solidly to the cuffs. Everything was just where it was supposed to be—with one glaring exception.

Sam was gone.

Chapter End Notes

Chapter-specific tags/notes: Discussion of sexual roleplay scenarios, specifically teacher/student. Some potential concerns about coercion due to Dean using it as a
bargaining chip, but as he hopefully makes it clear to Cas, he really is on board and is absolutely not being cornered into doing something he doesn't want. There will be nothing that could even remotely be read as dubcon in this fic--unless you count Sam's voyeurism, and that's a whole other can of hilarious and appalling worms.

SAFETY NOTE: Y'all, I hope this doesn’t need to be said, but do not ever, ever, EVER leave any kind of fire at all unattended. No matter how safe you think it is. No matter how sure you are that there’s no way it can possibly spread to anything else. I don’t care if it’s a single piece of paper in the middle of a football field sized slab of concrete. I don’t care if it’s one lone candle inside a bathtub. I don’t care if it’s in a glass-fronted fireplace. DON’T DO IT. Dean was a fuckwit about this, particularly considering his history with fire. Don’t be like Dean.

AUTHOR’S NOTE:

I thought this might be a good time to talk about where we're at, where we're going, and my plans moving forward. If you're not interested, feel free to skip this, but if you're wondering about the future of this fic, the 'verse it lives in, and future writing endeavors, read on.

So as it turns out, this unanticipated little story arc has extended my needed chapters by at least two or three (including this one), and the final three or four planned chapters are going to be pushed back yet again. I swear to God they're gonna happen eventually, and you're gonna love them (or possibly want to kill me, I'm completely cool with either option). It's just gonna be a little while longer before they do. Since the consensus among y'all seems to be that I should continue wallowing around in my sandbox of filthy smut, absurd situations, and hilarious mishaps for as long as I want, I won't apologize for my ridiculous misestimation of five more chapters exactly five chapters ago. As you can easily tell, we ain't done yet. I DO think we're within about ten chapters of wrapping it up, but I hesitate to even say that since it just keeps getting away from me.

Also, since some of you have expressed distress about our upcoming ending, let me reassure you. The conclusion of Snowbound will not be the end of the Let It Snow 'verse. I've already got at least four or five timestamps planned out (some from before the events of Snowbound, some that took place during their lock-In but didn't make it into this behemoth, and at least one or two from after the fact) and I'm completely open to writing more once I'm done with those. For all I know, and if the muse strikes, I might even add another longfic to the 'verse at some point. As anyone who's ever spent any time in the midwest can attest, winter in Kansas ain't a short thing, and snowstorms have been known to happen in March and even April.

Setting aside this 'verse, I'm also at least 80% of the way through the planning process for my next longfic, which is going to be my first venture into an AU. I really hope at least some of this incredible group of readers will consider coming along with me to see where my writing takes us next. Feel free to subscribe, not just to Snowbound but to me as an author so you get a heads' up when I start posting that one (or any other little things that strike my fancy. I've got one or two prompts I still need to get to once this fic finally decides to release its iron grip on my throat).

Finally, I want to tell you again what an incredible joy it is to have all of you along for the ride. Your comments and kudos give me life. I love interacting with you, I love hearing your thoughts, I love that you're having as much fun with this as I am. I am
finding writing incredibly rewarding on its own merits, but y'all take it to a whole other level. Please keep commenting--every time I get an email telling me I've got a new comment, it makes my day.

Can't wait to hear what you have to say about this chapter, and I'll see you guys on Wednesday with the next one!

If you're on tumblr, please come find me there. I'm pretty new and I need followers! I'm nice and, I like to think, reasonably amusing. I'm also always accepting prompts and love to hear from my readers via asks or PMs.
Two Thumbs Up

Chapter Summary

In which hunting for Sam makes a pretty shitty scavenger hunt, but what Dean and Cas find at the end of the search is a whole lot more disturbing than anything they could've anticipated. Also, manhandling, because that's just how Cas rolls.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

“He’s gone,” Dean said unnecessarily, as soon as he got his jaw to stop flapping pointlessly, “I…how is he gone?” He hadn’t actually been asking the question of Cas, it was more a demand of the universe at large, because what the actual fuck, he’d been gone for like twenty minutes at the most. “He shouldn’t even have woken up yet,” he added numbly, “with that concussion. How the hell did he—oh God, do you think he’s been kidnapped? I left him alone and vulnerable. He couldn’t have defended himself, it’s—“

“By whom, Dean?” The voice rang out, a little too patiently, from behind him. He whirled to take in Cas, whose face was a stony mask clearly intended to conceal whatever was actually going on behind his unreadable eyes, “Exactly who or what do you suppose could have gotten into the impenetrably warded bunker that even an angel of the Lord cannot currently get out of and kidnapped your brother?”

Dean didn’t actually have an answer to that, and instead settled for stabbing a finger back at the cuffs in emphasis. Cas looked incredibly unimpressed. “Yes, I am aware that Sam is no longer here. Concussions can be funny things, you know. It is not impossible that he woke up and had the wherewithal to figure out what you missed and—“

Oh, hell no. Now it was on. “I didn’t miss anything,” Dean insisted, “I searched him from head to toe, I took off his goddamn pants and overshir, I didn’t leave him anything pointy or metal or sharp that he could’ve used to pick a lock, and the fucking cuffs are still fastened.”

Cas stepped forward to look over the corner of the dungeon that had been intended as Sam’s nest, leaning down to examine the cuffs more closely. Dean could almost see the furrow of his brows from behind as the angel reached out a finger and swiped it across the edge of one of the cuffs. When he lifted his fingertip to display it to Dean, a smear of blood marred it.

That was when the thought started to put itself together in Dean’s head. It was so patently ridiculous that he barely let himself entertain it, but what were the other possibilities, really? Rather than actually opening his mouth and saying it, he opted to focus on their next, most obvious step.

“We have to find him,” he told Cas grimly. The angel nodded once, reaching down to wipe his bloody finger off on one of the abandoned blankets. “Split up or stay together?” Dean questioned, seeing benefits to either one.

“While ordinarily I would suggest we split up to cover more ground, I think that given Sam’s current unpredictability it would not be wise for us to venture out without back-up. If he has indeed managed to free himself,” if? Really? He wasn’t still locked up, but Dean figured it was probably
better not to ask Cas what other possibilities there were, “he may be seeking revenge for what he will no doubt perceive as a betrayal. I think we must assume that he may be a threat and plan accordingly.”

“Together, then,” Dean agreed, although the idea was still prodding at the corners of his brain, and if he was right, Sam was definitely not a threat at the moment. If he was right, it was even more imperative that they find the little shit. He didn’t share his suspicions with Cas, because the larger part of his brain continued to tell him that the thought was too absurd to be possible.

And yet. And yet. Was anything too absurd for Sam at this point in the proceedings?

They set to work on the same floor, figuring that however he’d managed it, it had to have taken Sam some time to get out and he couldn’t have gotten too far. Despite a reasonably thorough search, there was no sign of him, and they paused at the stairs as they tried to decide whether to venture further down into the bowels of the bunker or head back up.

They decided to go up, and no sooner had they reached the next floor than Cas frowned, nose twitching.

“Do you smell——“ Shit. Shitshitshit. It would figure that Cas’s nose got with the program now. “—burning?” Dean’s silence stretched out just a moment too long for him to have plausible deniability, and before he knew it Cas’s eyes had sharpened on him. “Ah. I see. You had better show me the damage, then.”

Despite the reasonably casual tone the angel’s voice took, Dean wasn’t foolish enough to think that was anything other than a politely phrased order. He thought for a moment about pointing out that they still needed to find Sam, but was pretty sure that arguing with Cas right now would be ill-advised. Beyond that, the smell of burning seemed stronger to Dean, somehow. Fresher than it had been when he’d checked on the shrinking flames after chaining Sam up, and that caused brand new suspicions to blossom in his chest.

Dean nearly told Cas that they might be able to kill two birds with one stone before deciding that it was probably a bad idea to give the angel, who had just been opining about breaking Sam’s head open, any ideas about murder. Instead, he silently led the way toward the storage room.

They were still at least fifteen yards away when the sounds of rustling, awkward movement, and low cursing hit their ears, and Dean knew at least one of his suspicions had been borne out. Sam had returned to the room upon escaping, maybe even added more to the fire. Their steps sped up, taking no pains to be quiet as they hurried toward the room. A glance over his shoulder told Dean that Cas was starting to put together the cause of the fire, and that he was Not Pleased.

They came around the door to the storage room with Cas hot on Dean’s heels. It took a second or two for Dean to make sense of the scene before him, but since he’d already been nursing suspicions about exactly this, he managed to put it together a couple seconds before Cas did.

“Jesus Christ, Sam,” Dean said weakly, “you have got to be kidding me.”

Sam lifted his eyes toward Dean but not his head. After a second, the kid spat the roll of bandages out of his mouth carelessly, letting them drop to the floor.

Considering that he lacked the use of both hands, Dean was kind of impressed that he’d managed to get a start on it anyway, however messily. The bandage that had been in Sam’s mouth and now hung down to the floor was wrapped haphazardly a couple times around the base of one of Sam’s horribly misshapen hands. The bruise on the side of his face was growing only more livid, the flesh
starting to swell, and come to think of it, he looked just a little unsteady on his feet. Christ, the kid was a fucking machine. Had it not been so appalling, it would’ve been funny the way he had clearly been blundering around like a T-rex, his arms just as useless.

“Oh good,” Sam said, relief warring with the pain that thickened his voice, “you’re here. Wanna help me out with bandaging the—oh, hey, Cas. I’m really sorry about the splinters.”

At first, Dean thought that Cas’s silence was born of fury, but when he took a glance over his shoulder, he discovered the angel gazing at Sam with the same mingling of horror and sort of halfway-impressed disbelief that Dean imagined was on his own face.

“Sam,” Cas said quietly, “we can discuss that later. I would just like to be certain that I understand. Do you mean to tell me that somehow, in the twenty minutes between when Dean left you in the dungeon and when we returned to heal you, you dislocated both of your own thumbs to escape, came up here, burned warding spell ingredients, and are now attempting to bandage your own mutilated hands yourself?”

“Sort of,” Sam said, face etched into a near-permanent grimace of pain. Dean didn’t have half a clue how he was managing to carry on a clear conversation. His hands had to be absolute agony. “I actually burned most of the spell ingredients before the dungeon part. The rest is right, though.”

“Jesus, man,” Dean told him, uncertain whether he was more appalled or impressed, “you are fucking hardcore.”

“I’d never leave you alone when you need help, Dean, no matter how pissed at me you are,” Sam said with a sincerity that actually made Dean feel small and shriveled inside. Yeah, Sam was completely around the bend about his and Cas’s sex life, but the kid had actually done incredibly painful damage to himself while concussed, after Dean was the one who locked him down, solely in order to break out so that he could carry on his save-Dean-and-Cas’s-sex-life mission. In some incredibly fucked up, totally surreal way, it was one of the most selfless things Dean had ever heard. “Hey, so, could one of you maybe help me with the bandages? Or with getting my thumbs back in? I would’ve done it myself, but without either hand—“

“Stop, Sam. Just…shhh. Let me look at them.” Dean finally got himself back together enough to step forward, reaching out to very gently take one of Sam’s arms between his hands. The base of Sam’s thumbs and wrists were torn all to hell from the pull through the unyielding metal cuffs. The dislocated thumbs had started to swell, making the wrongness of the shape of his hands even more grotesque. Dean felt a shudder of revulsion go through him, and that was when what Sam had said penetrated even further. The kid hadn’t even thought to ask whether Cas would heal him. He knew perfectly well how mad they were, and he was still hell-bent on ‘helping’ them. Christ, this was fucked up.

Dean didn’t even consider actually trying to put those thumbs back into joint himself. With the hot, hard swelling that had already developed, he wasn’t even sure whether it would’ve been possible, and he was not willing to put Sam through the kind of pain it would’ve required. Grimacing, he glanced over his shoulder toward the angel still hovering in the doorway.

“Cas—” Dean said, turning toward him and carefully lifting Sam’s arm to show him more clearly. There was a plea in that one abortive word, but he wasn’t sure what else he might’ve said. Cas made further speech unnecessary as he raised a hand to forestall Dean, striding forward so that he, too, could lean over Sam’s brutalized hands. Sam’s jaw was clenched in a grimace and Dean realized that he was still swaying ever-so-slightly. Whether it was pain or the concussion, Dean didn’t have any idea.
“Of course,” Cas said, and reached up a hand toward Sam’s head. The kid looked like he wasn’t sure whether to flinch away from it or not, but in the end he stayed still. Cas’s hand settled on the top of Sam’s head with a gentleness disproportionate to how livid they all knew he was with Sam, and a moment later Sam made a harsh sound in his throat. Dean had glanced down at Sam’s hands at the last second, and was able to watch as they rapidly knit themselves back together, joints sliding back into place, swelling fading, skin growing anew over the raw flesh that it had been scraped off of by the cuffs.

The kid released a shuddering breath and looked up to meet Cas’s eyes. “Hey, thanks, man. You didn’t have to—"

“Of course, I did,” Cas said, his face unreadable. “You are family, Sam. Regardless of—never mind that. What were you thinking? You did incredible damage to yourself.”

“Well,” Sam said, rolling his shoulders and lifting a newly whole hand to carefully probe at the side of his face—which was likewise back to normal, “Dean didn’t leave me too many options. First, I smashed the bucket and tried to use some of the splinters to pick the locks. Actually, you gave me the idea,” he told Cas earnestly. “You know…splinters of wood and all.”

Cas’s face twitched once, twice, and Dean immediately reached out to clamp a hand down on the angel’s shoulder to forestall whatever he might do to Sam at that particular announcement. Cas took in a very slow, steady breath and released it again, giving Dean a slight nod to indicate that he had himself back under control. Dean released his shoulder and turned his attention back to Sam, who went on once he had their attention back, apparently as oblivious as ever to the risks of his most recent declaration.

“But the splinters kept breaking. They weren’t sturdy enough. It wouldn’t work. The cuffs were just loose enough that I knew I could slip them if I could get my thumbs out of the way, and it’s not like this was the first time we’ve dislocated something to get ourselves out of tight spots,” This was true enough, but those had always been life-threatening situations. This was just…Dean didn’t have words, and Sam went on. “Once I was out, I kicked the wreckage of the bucket under the blankets so you guys wouldn’t accidentally step on them and do yourselves any damage,” oh, for fuck’s sake, he had actually gone to that trouble while in incredible pain to ensure that neither Dean nor Cas got a fucking splinter? Well, fuck Dean sideways with a cactus. Twice. In the ear.

“Sam, you have to know how out of control you are,” Dean told him weakly. “This is—okay, I shouldn’t have locked you up. That was…that was a mistake on my part, clearly,” Sam waved this off with one of his newly whole hands, as if that couldn’t possibly matter less.

“No, I get it,” he said earnestly, “I hurt Cas. Of course you were upset,” Dean raised a hand to halt him, and Sam watched him expectantly.

“But…to actually dislocate your own thumbs? With a bad concussion? You—“ he cut himself off. It was no use. He could tell from looking at Sam’s open face that he wasn’t gonna get anywhere with this. “You know what? Forget it. How about we just make sure the fire’s safely out and get you some breakfast. You hungry?”

Sam looked thoughtful, then nodded, “Yeah, I think I actually am. I didn’t realize earlier. I was kind of nauseous before Cas healed me, but now I think I could eat.”

“Okay, how about you go take a shower and clean yourself up. You’re…kind of bloody. Cas can clean up in here and I’ll make some breakfast.”

Dean could feel Cas nodding silently behind him, and cast a quick glance at the angel. A split-
second moment of wordless communication and they were agreed. Whatever the hell this was, they needed to handle Sam carefully before he killed himself trying to help them. And they really needed to talk about this.

“Good call,” Sam told him, heading for the door. He paused in the doorway, glancing back at the two of them, “and thanks again, Cas. For the healing. I’m really sorry about impaling you.”

“You are welcome, Sam. Go clean up.”

Sam nodded and vanished through the doorway, leaving Dean and Cas staring at each other in shell-shocked disbelief for a few long moments.

~*~

Rather than try to get into a conversation they couldn’t possibly finish quite yet, Dean left Cas to clean up the charred remnants of what seemed like half their spell ingredients while he headed upstairs to try to cobble together something that resembled breakfast.

The discovery that he’d somehow missed a frozen package of sausage underneath the bags of frozen corn, peas, and lima beans (seriously, who ate that shit?) actually perked Dean up a little, and he got the whole package cooking while he first threw together what would end up being another three loaves of bread, then sliced what was left of the current loaf and turned it into cinnamon toast.

Sam, dressed in a fresh pair of jeans, henley, and flannel shirt, wet hair slicked back off his face, was seated in the library with his laptop, and smiled warmly at Dean when he came in with two plates.

“Oh my God, is that sausage? Where the hell did you find that?”

“It was underneath your veggies in the freezer, believe it or not. This was the last of it, though, and I’ll probably end up using the last of the chicken to make dinner. We’re getting dangerously close to just MREs at this point, though. Gonna have to sit down and plan out how we make sure we’re better prepared for something like this in the future.”

“For sure,” Sam agreed, mouth already stuffed with sausage, “Dean, this is awesome.”

“Yeah, I was pretty stoked to find it,” Dean agreed, then sat down across the table from Sam, digging into his own food. Every minute or so he found his gaze straying back up to his brother, who was happily chowing down while gazing at his laptop. When Sam glanced up and found Dean looking at him, he completely misinterpreted the cause of the gaze and smiled, answering the question Dean had in no way been asking.

“Sorry, man. One of the archaeologists on Isla Del Sol posted a whole bunch of new pictures of some of their discoveries at the Incan ruins. I’ve been trying to start a little database to keep track of their findings. Hopefully if I can make it down there, I can do a much more thorough accounting. I want to add all of it to the bunker’s digital archives. There’s some incredibly rich lore that we’re missing. People assumed most of it was lost. I mean, I’m sure at least half of the creatures that are referenced are extinct by now, but I bet some of them are still around.”

Dean nodded along, reasonably unenthusiastically. “Sounds good, man. I know you’re really into this.”

Sam must’ve heard something in Dean’s voice because he glanced up at him again, a little more sharply. Then his face softened as he changed the subject. “Hey, don’t worry about cleaning up the dungeon. I’ll take care of setting it back to rights. I know you were just trying to help.”
“That seems to be the theme of the day,” Dean muttered, more to himself than to Sam. “Everybody’s just trying to help.” Except, of course, it really hadn’t been Sam he was just trying to help with the whole dungeon bit, and it was largely immaterial at this point since, given recent events, there was no way in hell he was going to try to chain Sam up to anything again and potentially risk him chewing off his own leg or something.

Sam hummed agreeably and went back to his breakfast. They ate in what Sam probably thought was companionable silence until Cas reappeared, a smudge of ash across the bridge of his nose. Dean grinned a little at this and beckoned the angel toward him. Cas came over willingly enough, and Dean tugged him downward by his tie so that he could wipe the smear off his face before dropping a quick kiss on him. “Thanks for cleaning up. Everything back in order?”

“With the exception of the fact that we now have a sizeable shopping list of herbs to replace once the snow melts, in addition to stores of food and alcohol, yes, everything is cleaned up.”

“Thanks for taking care of it, Cas. I could’ve done it myself,” Sam said as he popped the last bite of sausage into his mouth.

“It was…no trouble, Sam,” Cas said, and Dean recognized the same careful tone of voice he’d been using to talk to Sam in Cas’s words. Both of them had no idea what to do with a Sam that would mutilate himself to get out of his cuffs, but appeared to bear them no hint of ill will for locking him down with a bucket to shit in.

As soon as he’d finished his breakfast, Dean grabbed both his plate and Sam’s and nodded toward the kitchen. “So…I’m gonna go clean up.”

Sam nodded his thanks absently, making a quick note on a pad of paper next to him as he went back to examining his laptop screen, and Cas followed Dean into the kitchen.

The two of them receded into the furthest corner of the kitchen, pressing their heads together as they instantly dove into a discussion in heated whispers.

“He’s lost it. Like really completely lost it,” Dean hissed, and Cas nodded slowly.

“It seems that he may be more of a threat to himself than to either of us,” the angel observed, clearly torn between concern and exasperation.

“I can tell you one thing, I’m never chaining him up again. Who knows what the fuck he’ll resort to to get out? He might blow his own leg off. With actual dynamite.”

“I do not believe we can assume that anything is beyond him at this point. Does it disturb you that he does not seem at all upset about the attempt to confine him in the dungeon?”

“Yeah, it’s definitely on the list of things that disturb me, but that list is getting pretty long at this point.”

“Indeed. I…do you have any idea about what our next move should be?” Cas asked hopefully.

Dean shrugged helplessly, shaking his head, “I’ve got literally nothing. We could stop having sex again, I guess,” he added, pretty sure he knew what the response to that was going to be.

The pointed look that Cas leveled on him made it quite clear what he thought of that suggestion. Yeah, that was sort of what Dean had figured his response would be, particularly in light of the fact that Dean had finally agreed to something the angel had been wanting for months.
“Why, you impossibly kinky bastard,” Dean told him (not for the first time), grinning. “If I’d known you were this eager, I wouldn’t have held out on you quite so long. So how do we do it without Sam in a front-row seat eating popcorn?”

“I believe we are out of popcorn,” Cas told him seriously, “and I will give some thought as to our next move if you will do the same.”

“Oh, believe me, it’s pretty much the only thing I’m thinking about. Jesus Christ. His fucking thumbs.”

“At any rate,” Cas told him, still grimacing a little at the memory of Sam’s misshapen hands, “we could not start now even if we did not need to consider how to manage Sam. You need to bake bread and I have…preparations to make.”

There it was. That familiar swirling in Dean’s lower gut. The slightly anxious but not-unpleasant anticipation that preceded a scene, especially one in which they were doing something new. Dean didn’t realize he was squirming a little until he saw the almost imperceptible quirk of Cas’s lips.

“You do that on purpose, don’t you?” Dean accused, narrowing his eyes at the angel.

“Do what?” Cas inquired with practiced innocence.

“You know what! Say things that are gonna make me be all…” He trailed off, waving a hand expressively. Cas knew exactly what he was talking about, he just wanted Dean to say it.

“All what?” Cas said, eyes widening in a parody of that familiar cluelessness that was often not feigned.

“All…twitchy!” He stepped forward, crowding into the angel’s space a little, and jabbed a finger into his chest to emphasize the point. “You like knowing that I’m going to be squirming while you get things set up or whatever!”

It happened in the blink of an eye and after the fact even Dean would have to admit that he kind of started it by getting up in Cas’s face. The angel never had been able to resist an invitation like that, even an unintentional one.

Suddenly, fingers clamped with bruising force around the wrist whose hand had been prodding at Cas’s chest, and in one smooth motion, the angel had that arm twisted up behind Dean’s back. This served the dual purpose of knocking Dean off-balance so that he fell forward into the chest he had just been poking.

Nose-to-nose with Cas, whose face was set into stern but amused lines, he finally managed to take in a shuddering breath to replace the one that had been forced out of him by the manhandling. Only then did Cas actually speak.

“As chance would have it, I do rather enjoy knowing that your imagination is no doubt running away with you, making you wonder what I am doing,” as he spoke, Cas leaned forward, ghosting his lips across the side of Dean’s face until the breath from his intimate murmur warmed Dean’s ear. “what I could possibly be planning that requires such preparation, such forethought. Trying to divine what I intend to do to you. What I intend to make you do.”

Okay, this was damn well cheating. Just cheating. Dean could hear his own breath whistling in and out, a little strangled. His dick had taken note pretty much the second Cas’s hand clamped around his wrist (Jesus, he was some kind of fucked up, wasn’t he? At least it was only Cas that did this to him. He didn’t get all tingly when some random monster manhandled him, thank God), and the fact
that one of Cas’s thighs was halfway pressed between Dean’s legs wasn’t helping that whole situation. The second he tried to get his feet more firmly under him, Cas took a deliberate, small step backward, pulling Dean even further off balance and tumbling more of his weight onto Cas’s broad chest. Unsurprisingly, the angel had no trouble holding both his own weight and Dean’s.

The tip of a tongue traced the upper curve of Dean’s ear just before teeth closed on his earlobe, and damned if he didn’t whimper. The low, pleased growl in his ear didn’t do a whole lot to calm either Dean or his cock down. After a moment, Cas went on, as though Dean had actually responded to him. “Let’s be honest, though,” he said smoothly, as if Dean had been attempting to lie to him instead of just trying to remember how to breathe, “it’s no secret that your anticipation is enjoyable for me. The more important point is how much you love it. And, oh, Dean, you do love it, don’t you?”

Dean’s breath shuddered in and out, head spinning as he tried to figure out exactly how this moment had so entirely gotten away from him. He couldn’t remember how it had started and it didn’t especially seem to matter now.

He did and did not answer the angel. His words might’ve seemed a non sequitur, but both of them knew it was an admission of guilt as damning as a signed confession.

“Kiss me,” Dean whispered to the air, and the words were barely out of his mouth before Cas’s mouth was crushing his own. The fingers around his wrist tightened, a reminder that he was held captive, and the thigh between his legs pressed upward sharply, rubbing against Dean’s rock-hard cock through two layers of clothing. Fucking clothes. They were inconvenient as fuck, is what they were.

Cas wasn’t giving Dean a kiss so much as he was taking one, tongue thrusting roughly past his lips to plunder his mouth, the hard press of the angel’s lips forcing Dean’s head back. He didn’t have half a chance of achieving anything resembling dominance in a kiss like this. The best he could do was hang on for dear life and try to keep up.

It might’ve been one minute or ten before suddenly Cas’s lips were gone and Dean found himself standing upright, not entirely certain when his wrist had been released or how he’d gotten his feet under him. He blinked stupidly at Cas, then inhaled a low breath at the sight of the angel’s slightly swollen lips, redder than usual from the force of the kiss he’d stolen—no, taken. He hadn’t stolen anything. It had been offered freely.

The angel ran a thumb lightly over his lower lip, pupils blown wide, the front of his dress slacks displaying clearly that he had been just as affected by that little moment as Dean had. Dean swayed forward, his hands coming up to—well, he wasn’t entirely sure what they would’ve done. Gone for Cas’s pants? Twined in his lapels to drag him back in for another searing kiss? Whacked him upside the back of the head for being too sexy for his own good? It didn’t matter, because the angel neatly stepped back once more, putting him out of reach, and smiled slowly at Dean.

“Bake your bread, Dean. Bake your bread, spend some time with Sam, feed yourself—and him—lunch, and meet me in room B43 at precisely 1PM. If you can figure out some way to keep him busy in the meantime, so much the better. If not, I know a few sigils we haven’t tested out on him yet.”

Dean gawped at him, pretty sure he must look a little addled, but still trying to get his wits about him after Cas had flung them all over the floor with that brief but delicious display of dominance.

“That’s it?” Cas said with patient amusement, “repeat your instructions back to me, please.”
Dean spluttered for a couple seconds before finding his voice, and when he finally managed to get it working, it sounded a little reedy to him. “Uh…bake bread. Hang with Sam. Eat lunch and feed the sasquatch. Meet you in B43 at 1. Distract Sam without risking him decapitating himself for the greater good.”

“Good boy,” Cas purred. As Dean was still working on processing the mingling of pleasure and shame those words always caused, the angel neatly skirted past him and was gone, trenchcoat flapping in his wake.

Chapter End Notes

AUTHOR'S NOTE:

Y’all. Y’ALL. I don’t even know. This got kind of more disturbing than I expected it to, and then all of a sudden here I was, feeling HORRIBLE for poor Sam. I did not expect to feel bad for Sam. I bet you didn’t, either. To make up for it, have some manhandling!

Also...I owe everyone, most especially Sam, a serious apology for the chapter title. I had to. I absolutely could NOT resist.

And, in a tiny sneak peek, I’ll just tell you to look for Dean's foolproof plan to get Sam safely out of the way, coming to you on Friday.
Iocane

Chapter Summary

In which Dean hatches a foolproof plan to safely get Sam out of the way. What could possibly go wrong?

A single chapter-specific warning is included at the close of the chapter, along with a brief (for once) author's note.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Not for the first time, Dean had to take a minute to get himself and his dick under control before he could actually proceed with Cas’s list of instructions. Once he was actually breathing again, he glanced at his watch and went over to check how the bread dough was making out. Pleased to see that it had risen pretty much perfectly over the past hour, Dean spread flour on the counter and split the dough into three equal balls, then left them alone to rest for ten minutes. While he waited, he dug around in the walk-in freezer to make sure he hadn’t missed any other surprises fit for a carnivore such as himself. The best he came up with was a slightly freezer-burned pound of ground beef that he could probably salvage at least half of, and he figured the bread he was making would work reasonably well as hamburger buns, so that solved at least one more meal.

Pleased with the possibility of burgers sometime in the next day or two, Dean headed back to his bread-making, greasing three pans and transferring the dough into each after smooshing it into something that vaguely resembled loaves. He had another forty minutes to kill while it rose again, so he set the oven to preheat to 425 and wandered back out into the library. Sam-the-badass was still buried in his laptop, periodically making grunts of mild frustration or exclamations of delight as he dug through ancient Incan whatever. For once, Dean didn’t poke fun at him for being a nerd. At this point, he would pretty much support any activity Sam wanted to engage in that didn’t involve creeping on him and Cas or self-mutilation.

It did, however, mean that Sam didn’t actually make great company at the moment, so Dean needed to find some other way to occupy himself while waiting for the bread to do its thing. Another glance at his watch revealed that it was just shy of ten o’clock, and he made a mental note of what time he needed to come back to the kitchen before sketching a salute in his brother’s direction (Sam did not even appear to see it) and heading out into the hall.

The much fainter scent of burnt herbs encouraged Dean to go double-check the ingredient room. It wasn’t that he didn’t trust Cas to put out the fire and clean it up, he did, he just wanted to go assess the damage for himself. Dean hadn’t had a chance earlier to really get a sense of what Sam had gotten rid of, and now was as good a time as any. Trekking down a flight of stairs and over two hallways, Dean found the room in pretty good shape. The charred material had all been swept up and disposed of, and Cas had even managed to mop (or, more likely, mojo) most of the black soot off of both floor and ceiling. Dean headed to the airtight containers in which the herbs were stored and did a quick survey, shaking his head in disbelief as he realized how dramatically he had underestimated the number of herbs Sam had done away with.

Cas was right, the kid had obliterated practically half their stash, including herbs that Dean would’ve
sworn didn’t have any use in any kind of warding spells. Then again, Sam was likely to know of more obscure ones than Dean, and he probably hadn’t wanted to take any chances that Cas knew something he didn’t. On the whole, Dean thought they’d gotten off easy. He figured Sam could just as easily have torched the lot ‘to be safe.’ It didn’t seem out of character for him at this point.

He was just about to turn around to exit the room when he spotted the bulky canvas bag on its side, half-tucked behind one of the shelving units that held the charms and bits of bone that various spells called for. It took a moment, but by the time he reached down to right it, he was able to place the thing.

It was one of the bunker’s old first aid kits. They were liberally scattered throughout the place, and although the bags themselves were the originals, Sam had taken it upon himself to replace the objects in them—and speaking of him, Dean realized almost immediately that this must be where Sam had gotten the bandages from. Dean had just started to wonder how he’d even gotten the damn bag open, with as heavy as it was and as useless as his hands had been, when he spotted the fucking *tooth marks* by the clasp. Holy shit. Shaking his head and crouching to start replacing the various bandages, salves, and neatly labeled medication bottles that had spilled out of it, Dean silently renewed his vow to be a hell of a lot more careful about how he tried to put Sam out of commission moving forward.

It wasn’t until he had finished placing everything neatly back in the bag that the idea struck him.

~*~

Twenty minutes later, armed with the benefit of some solid internet research, Dean headed back to his bread. Pleased to see that it had risen perfectly, he sliced the top of each of the loaves, somehow managed to juggle all three pans into the large oven, then knocked the temperature down to 375 and set the timer for forty minutes. Since he was baking multiple loaves, it would probably take longer than that, but he’d need to check on them at that point, anyway. Dean didn’t mind the wait—he had a little more research to do and then a scavenger hunt to go on. This one, he hoped, would end better than the one he and Cas had just gone on.

By the time the bread (which was a perfect golden brown, much to Dean’s smug delight) came out of the oven, just shy of an hour later, Dean was ready to go and more than a little pleased with his ingenuity. After digging around the storage room in the attempt to figure out what the hell he was going to do about lunch, he discovered to his delight that he’d missed a five-pound bag of potatoes tucked into a corner of the storage room, and only a couple of them were unusable. Perfect. This would fit into his plans beautifully.

Poking his head out of the kitchen, Dean found Sam still hunched over his laptop industriously. When clearing his throat to get Sam’s attention was unsuccessful, Dean resorted to waving his hands until Sam looked up at him a little blankly, then pulled out one of his earbuds.

“Sorry to interrupt you, dude, I just wanted to check in about lunch. I found some potatoes and we’ve got just enough cream cheese and sour cream left that I think I can make us some mashed potatoes. I thought maybe I’d go ahead and make the chicken, too, and we can do sandwiches for dinner since the bread is still cooling.”

“Sounds great,” Sam smiled at him, “thanks so much for cooking all this time, Dean. I know I’ve been more useless than usual since I’m not even going in the hive.”

“It’s cool,” Dean told him, any inclination to give Sam the usual shit all but nonexistent, “although at some point once the snow is gone we’ll have to figure out some way to make you comfortable going in there again. I don’t want you starving if I’ve gotta be gone for some reason.”
Sam shrugged noncommittally and Dean let it slide, heading back to start prepping lunch. It was only 11:30, but since he still needed to cook and had been given an arrival time of 1 by Cas, he really had to get moving.

Forty-five minutes later, the chicken was steaming slightly in its cooling pan, Dean had just finished mashing up the potatoes, and it was time to execute his plan.

Tiptoeing to the kitchen door, he peeked out into the hallway. It was deserted. Nodding slightly, he headed back over to the counter and grabbed a pair of plates. He plopped a chicken breast on each, then cut the remaining one in half and split it between them. After dishing up generous amounts of mashed potatoes onto each plate, Dean reached into his pocket and pulled out the small pill bottle, double-checking the label to ensure he had what he thought he did. A quick google search on his phone confirmed that the markings on the pills corresponded to the label of the bottle, and Dean went ahead and tipped three of the small, round tablets into his palm.

Snagging the mortar and pestle from the cupboard (he’d laughed at Cas when he mistakenly placed the thing in here instead of in the spell-ingredient room, but it looked like the joke was on Dean), he carefully ground up the trio of pills into a fine powder that he tipped into the pile of mashed potatoes onto the plate on Dean’s left. Chanting “left, left, left,” silently to himself, Dean mixed the potatoes well, then added an additional dollop for good measure. He’d gone with Sam’s recommendation and mixed a couple drops of truffle oil into the mashed potatoes, pretty sure that the strong flavor would overwhelm any bitter-pill taste left by the Hydroxyzine.

Dean had gone through and discarded about five other sedatives the bunker had in stock before settling on this one. His research told him that it was fairly fast-acting, lasted longer than Benadryl, and that most people reported being knocked flat by the stuff. Considering that Dean had gone ahead and given Sam 1.5 times the standard maximum adult dose of 100mg (hey, the kid was enormous and Dean had researched enough to make sure it wouldn’t stop him breathing or anything), not to mention the fact that Sam was embarrassingly susceptible to Benadryl and this was in the same class of meds, Dean was feeling pretty confident about this plan. Sam wouldn’t be fighting them or sneaking his way into B43 or popping out from behind machinery or amputating his own limbs, he would just take a nice, long nap and awake a little groggy but refreshed long after Cas and Dean were finished with their scene. The worst thing that could happen was Sam falling asleep in his mashed potatoes and needing to have his face washed. Honestly, this was way better than anything Dean had put together before now, and he was feeling quite proud of himself as he scooped the plates up, continuing to chant “left, left, left” in his mind. It wouldn’t do to mix the damn plates up.

When he got back out to the library, Sam looked up and smiled at him, pulling out his earbuds and setting his laptop aside. Dean set the left-hand plate in front of Sam, who nodded his thanks. Setting his own plate down across from Sam’s, he pulled out his chair to sit down, but just before his ass hit the seat, Sam spoke up.

“Dude, this looks amazing, and I hate to be more of a pain, but do you think you could grab me a glass of ice water? I could get some myself from the bathroom, but it’s never cold enough.”

Smiling indulgently at Sam (What? Okay, so he might have been feeling just a little guilty, considering this morning and what he was about to do to Sam), Dean again rose. “Yeah, no problem, Sammy. I could use a drink, too, I just wish we had anything better than water.” Sam nodded his agreement, sighing a little at what Dean presumed was the thought of beer.

When he returned a minute or two later with the glasses of ice water, Sam smiled gratefully and accepted his. “Thanks so much, Dean. You really do take good care of me. I hope you know how
much I appreciate everything you do for me.”

*Don’t feel guilty, don’t feel guilty, don’t feel guilty,* Dean told himself silently, waving a hand in dismissal at Sam.

“It’s what I’m here for. Look out for my pain-in-the-ass little brother.” Accurate on all counts, Dean thought as he dug into his plate. The truffle oil was a good addition to the potatoes, but there was a hint of something in them that made him grateful he’d used the rest of the cream cheese now. It didn’t taste like it had gone off, exactly, more like it was on the verge of going bad.

Dean went ahead and decided to indulge Sam while they ate, asking him to talk about what he was finding among the researchers’ pictures and notes from the ruins. Sam was only too eager to share his conclusions, and Dean had to admit it was actually pretty interesting. Sam might just be onto something here, this could really add some depth and breadth to their knowledge of lore, and if it made their researching easier, Dean was all about it. The discussion also gave Dean the opportunity to watch Sam closely for any signs that the sedation was starting to kick in.

Twenty minutes later, Sam seemed as alert as ever and after a glance downward, Dean realized that both of them had cleaned their plates. He’d been so distracted from the discussion that he’d barely noticed.

Raising a brow at Sam, he inquired, “still hungry?” Sam nodded enthusiastically. “That’s all the chicken, but we’ve got plenty more potatoes. I’ll go grab them.”

He rose, then paused, brow furrowing a little as the room seemed to tip an inch or two on its axis. The fuck? He shook his head hard and everything settled back down.

“You okay, Dean?” Sam said, brow furrowing solicitously as he reached out a hand to steady him.

“Yup, I’m good,” Dean told him, snagging both of their plates and heading for the kitchen. He added a decent mound of potatoes for each of them, then headed back for the library at a somewhat slower pace than usual, his limbs feeling oddly heavy.

He made it back to the table, but by the time he dropped into his chair the room had started to tilt again, a little more crazily this time. Sam took the offered plate from his hands, then quickly grabbed Dean’s too, just before it slipped from his fingers, setting it down in front of him.

“You don’t look so hot,” Sam told him, “maybe you should go lie down?”

“No, I’m okay,” Dean said, frowning a little at the thickness of his tongue as he snagged the fork. The bite of mashed potatoes would probably have been delicious if it had made it into his mouth. Instead, he actually fucking *missed,* nearly impaling his cheek on the tines of the fork and scowling down at it as if it, rather than his aim, was to blame. What the fuck was up with him?

He managed a course-correction and got the bite of potatoes down, then two more, dimly registering that these potatoes tasted fine. Totally normal. The hint of wrongness in the last batch was nowhere to be found, and that was…that was a little strange, wasn’t it? Before that could fully process, Dean realized that Sam was watching him with eyes that were just a hair too sharp.

And come to think of it, the kid didn’t seem at all sleepy. His gaze was bright and clear and resting on Dean with an intensity that suggested he was looking for something specific.

It wasn’t until Dean had to actually forcibly uncross his own eyes that he started to put two and two together, and it took a while because his brain was moving awfully slowly at this point. Random,
apparently unconnected facts drifted around in his mind for what might have been a few seconds or a couple minutes, and eventually they seemed to assemble into some sort of order.

Dean had added hydroxyzine to Sam’s food to sedate him.

Sam had sent Dean to the kitchen for ice water.

The potatoes hadn’t tasted quite right before, and now they did.

Dean was feeling…very off. Heavy. Slow. Heavier and slower by the moment, in fact.

*Holy fucking shit.* The light bulb flickered on, a little sluggish but there.

“You…drugged me,” he accused Sam, swaying drunkenly in his seat.

“Well,” Sam said, smiling regretfully at him, “not really. If we’re being accurate, you drugged yourself. I just switched our plates when you went to the kitchen.”

“But…how…?”

“How did I know you drugged it?” Sam’s voice sounded a little distorted, but Dean could still hear him clearly enough. He blinked hard, struggling to keep his eyes open, his head feeling like lead weights were attached to it. “It wasn’t a hard leap, Dean. I know how upset you were about this morning, and I figured you would be on the look-out for another plan to get me out of the way that I couldn’t weasel out of. Since I got out of the dungeon, you’ve been looking at me like you think I’m going to break in half if you sneeze too hard in my direction, so obviously it wasn’t going to be something especially physical. Drugging me seemed like your natural next step. I just had to figure out whether you knew that I knew. If you thought I was clueless, you’d have put the drug in my food. If you knew I would suspect you, you might’ve put the drug in your food, figuring I would switch the plates. But then again, if you thought I might know that you knew that I knew, you’d also have put the drug in my food. It was really quite the conundrum. Required some very quick thinking to sort out.”

“I...wha…?” Dean said thickly, trying to sort out just what the fuck Sam was talking about—not to mention where he’d heard almost this exact lecture before now. The only thing that really processed was that somehow Sam had *known* what Dean was doing.

Sam’s lips twitched a little, straightened out, and he spoke a little slower and with exaggerated patience, “I said, I had to figure out whether you thought I might know that you knew that I knew, and—” Sam broke off on a chuckle, as Dean tried desperately to follow along, “—nah, I’m just fucking with you. I saw you drug the food.”

“...incon…inconshee—inconceivable,” Dean managed to slur out. How the fuck could Sam possibly have seen him? Dean had even double-checked the hall to make sure the kid wasn’t lurking anywhere!

“Not really,” Sam observed, “just kind of unlikely. You should know better than to think that I would leave a room unmonitored just because I can’t actually enter it.”

Dean’s head was spinning, but one thing he registered quite clearly was that he had been neatly and easily outsmarted by his genius of a little brother, and once he had the energy to feel anything, he was gonna be *pissed* about it. “Too…fuckin’ smart,” he grunted a little bitterly.

“No, just very logical,” Sam told him kindly. “Honestly, I would’ve simply refused to eat the drugged food, but you would have just started looking for another way to drug me, and I can’t very
well stop eating and drinking altogether, can I? This way is better. You’ll take a nice nap, you’ll
wake up, you won’t try to drug me again, everything will be fine.”

“B…bu…but you…” Dean was finding it incredibly difficult to hang onto a train of thought for any
amount of time. Every time he seemed to have settled on a coherent idea, it slipped from his
fingertips before he could get it out of his mouth. And it wasn’t like he didn’t have anything else to
focus on, either. Like the fact that the entire room was pitching and rolling like the deck of a storm-
tossed ship. The bunker wasn’t supposed to do that, right? He was…he was pretty sure the bunker
was on solid ground. Wasn’t it? Maybe he should ask. “S-Sam—my. Mo—moving?”

“It’s okay, Dean. You should stop fighting it. You’re just making this harder for yourself. Here,
why don’t you let me get you to your room?”

Suddenly Sam was beside him, reaching down to grasp Dean’s arms, and Dean exploded into
clumsy movement that really amounted to little more than flailing at Sam.

“Dun…fuckin’ touch…muh—me!” He was pretty sure he hadn’t sounded this wasted the last time
he’d actually been wasted, but he couldn’t remember clearly enough to be positive. Either way, his
explosion seemed to have worked because suddenly Sam’s face was back across the table, hands up
in surrender.

“Okay, Dean. It’s fine. I’m not touching you. You’re okay. I promise. I’ll just…get Cas to take
you to your room when he comes in.”

Oh fuck. Cas. He knew he’d forgotten something. There was something about Cas. Something
important. Dean was supposed to do something for Cas.


Sam’s face, which was coming rapidly in and out of focus, blinked a few times in surprise before he
glanced down and then responded. “It’s just about 1, why?”

“Uh…oh.” Dean wasn’t sure of much at the moment, but one thing that was somehow crystal clear
was the knowledge that he was in seriously deep shit. Like, the deepest. Swimming in a port-o-
potty deep.

By this point, trying to focus on Sam’s face was making him horribly nauseated, and his head was
just so heavy, and…

That was better. That was so much better.

He blinked a couple times and discovered that the entire room had shifted 90 degrees…or, no.
That…that wasn’t quite right. Because his head was comfortably resting in something warm and
soft.

And…squishy? His face shifted a little and sure enough…squishing. Smelled good, too. Earthy.
Rich.

Was it…? Yeah, it was. His cheek was pillowed on a pile of mashed potatoes. Turned out they
actually made a decent headrest. Who knew? At least his neck was no longer struggling to hold its
weight. And that meant…the room hadn’t moved, his head had. Okay, he was pretty sure that
actually made more sense.

But there was something. Something…troubling. Something he needed to remember to do.
Some…something…
He drifted, then, hearing the sound of clinking from far away, only registering in passing that the noise was Sam, continuing to serenely eat while Dean faceplanted in what was left of lunch.

Dickhead.

Dean drifted in and out, not quite unconscious but not entirely conscious, in some sort of twilight state. His vision was too blurry for him to make sense of whatever he was seeing in front of him, and he couldn’t bring himself to care much either way. He had very distant awareness of his surroundings, but when he tried to move or speak, he found himself unable to do either one. It might have been one minute or twenty (though the continued distant clink of cutlery on flatware suggested to him that it might not have been too long, if Sam was still eating--and it didn’t even bear mentioning how long putting that together had taken him), but eventually a familiar voice rang out, a little distorted, as if from very far away.

“Sam, have you seen Dean?”

“Yeah, he’s right here, Cas. Come closer, you just can’t see him because he’s--”

“Dean? Dean!!”

Suddenly Dean was jerking a little, firm and warm pressure landing on one of his shoulders.

“He’s fine, Cas, he just can’t speak right now. He might be hearing you, though, since his eyes are still open. He’ll probably be completely asleep in a minute or two, I have no idea how he’s held out this long.”

“Sam. You have exactly thirty seconds to explain why Dean is drooling on a mound of mashed potatoes before I revoke any and all vows I have made not to smite you.”

“Chill, Cas, it’s not that serious.”

“Twenty-seven, twenty-six, twenty-five…”

“Not to be that guy, Cas, but he started it.” For all the danger in Cas’s voice, Sam sounded remarkably unphased. Prick. Dean was pretty damn sure he was pissed at Sam, but he couldn’t quite remember why until the kid spoke again.

“Twenty-two, twenty-one…”

“Dean tried to drug me,” Sam said, much more plainly. Yeah, that sounded right. But if he’d drugged Sam, how come Sam was Mr. Alert and Dean was struggling to try to breathe past the mashed potatoes blocking one nostril?

“…he what?” The pressure on Dean’s shoulder suddenly increased until it was just this side of uncomfortable.

“He tried to drug me. I’m not totally sure what with, but the bottle’s in his pocket if you want to check.”

The pressure on his shoulder was gone, but a second later Dean felt himself flopping around a little as something squeezed into his pocket and then was gone again. His face settled back into his mashed potato pillow, which was no less squishy but somehow not nearly as comfortable as it started to cool and congeal.

“Hydroxyzine.” The gravelly voice was flat but somehow still seemed...kind of ominous. At this
point, Dean’s vision had dwindled down to a narrow slit of light for some reason, and his hearing seemed to be starting to go as well. It was no longer merely distorted and far away, he was pretty sure he was missing bits and pieces of the conversation.

“...powerful sedative…”
“...mashed potatoes, but I saw what he was...the plates after I…”
“...could have simply refused to eat…”
“...principle of the…”
“...cannot argue…apologize on behalf of…”
“...no need, not your…”
“...assure you I will be dealing with…”
“...figured as much...bedroom?”
“...cannot currently touch him without entirely losing my…”

Dean had the extremely dim sense that something important and very, very bad was happening, but he couldn’t for the life of him have put together what it was. For that matter, he wasn’t entirely sure of much of anything, up to and including his own name. He was just too tired for any of it to matter. Darkness was swimming just beneath him, waiting with open arms to catch him if he just let go. It had been for some time, and he couldn’t quite figure out why he had been fighting it.

He just...he just needed to rest for a while. He would figure everything out...later.

For now, though, the last bit of light stabbing into his eyes was gone, and that felt like a blessing. The darkness that roiled below him reached up filmy tendrils that brushed against him. There were voices somewhere, very far away, but the low buzzing sound in his ears had almost completely obliterated them, and whatever was going on there didn’t much seem to matter anyway.

The soothing wisps that had been licking at him turned into broad swaths of gossamer-soft blackness that wrapped around him, cocooning him comfortably.

Dean let himself sink into their embrace, the last sparks of the outside world snuffed out.

Sleep.

Chapter End Notes

Chapter-specific warning: Nonconsensual drugging takes place in this chapter. It doesn't happen exactly the way it was supposed to, but it definitely happens. If that's a squick for you, steer clear.

AUTHOR’S NOTE:

This chapter includes a little homage in it (I will be disappointed as hell in anyone who doesn't catch the reference). While I was previously debating between "I Wanna Be
Sedated" and "Asleep at the Wheel," I ended up deciding that due to said homage, I HAD to go with this particular title.

Meanwhile, I hope all of you have a lovely weekend while poor Dean is sleeping it off. I'll see y'all on Monday when we find out exactly how much trouble he's in!
Chapter Summary

In which things fall apart; the center cannot hold.

Chapter Notes

EXTREMELY RARE pre-chapter warning: This chapter earned the fic a brand new "angst" tag. Bear that in mind walking into it.

More specific warnings can be found at the conclusion of the chapter, along with a note about the title and the summary, both of which are borrowed from other, far more talented wordsmiths.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Dean came back to himself slowly, the world painfully piecing itself together around him.

Emphasis on the *painful* part, because goddamn did his head hurt. The thudding beat of his own heart pounded in his temples and sounded in his ears. He cringed away from it, groaning, but couldn’t actually escape from a sound that was entirely in his own head. Reaching both hands up to clutch at his forehead, he discovered that they still felt disproportionately heavy.

*Everything* did. His limbs felt like they weighed three times what they normally did and needed a couple more seconds than usual to process the signals his brain was sending them.

He waited for a moment, fingers digging into his scalp, hoping that the headache would ease. When it didn’t, he went ahead and tried to take stock of the rest of his body.

His body was not just heavy but incredibly stiff, as if he’d been lying in the same position for hours without so much as twitching. There was a foul, bitter taste inside his bone-dry mouth. His neck muscles felt drawn tight as rubber bands, which was probably contributing to the headache, but he couldn’t seem to make them relax, and he didn’t especially want to move his head more than strictly necessary.

The surface he was laid out on was soft and easily identifiable even without looking—it was his own bed, and for some reason, that seemed odd. Dean couldn’t for the life of himself remember crawling into bed last night—nor drinking heavily enough for a hangover of this proportion. Come to think of it, he couldn’t actually remember last night at all. He had no idea how or when he’d gotten into his own bed. The disorientation reminded him powerfully of that young childhood experience of falling asleep somewhere—on the couch, or the floor, or in his mother’s arms—and waking up tucked snugly into his own bed, as if by magic, except that this time it was unnerving rather than comforting.

He was trying to get up the energy to open his eyes when the voice broke over him. It was not particularly loud, but he still cringed away from the sound, fingers tightening on his skull as the words crashed against it.
“Feeling a bit worse for wear, are we?”

Dean groaned wordlessly, as much of a clear answer as he was capable of providing at this point.

“I imagine you are experiencing a rather impressive hangover,” the voice came again, just a little too level, a little too calm.

Dean groaned again, groping inside his brain for words and managing to lay his hands on a few that seemed appropriate. “…much I drank?” He was missing several words in there, he was pretty sure, but the most important ones made it out. And anyway, even the sound of his own voice had the approximate impact of a power drill taken to the inside of his skull, so fewer words were probably better.

The expected wry list of how much and what manner of alcohol Dean had consumed didn’t come. Instead there was a moment of silence and then a voice heavy with both amusement and something else Dean was having a hard time identifying rang out, closer than the last time.

“You do not remember, then. Give it a moment. It will come to you.”

Dean floundered inside his own head. Something about Cas’s words made him think he was reading the situation wrong, that he maybe hadn’t been drinking. Had he been injured? Maybe on a hunt?

No, that couldn’t be. They hadn’t been on a hunt in weeks, because of the snow. They’d been trapped in the bunker, he and Cas and Sam, and—wait. Wait a minute. Sam. And Cas. And the snow. And…

It came back in a rush and Dean froze solid, even his breath stuttering to a halt in his chest.

“There it is,” Cas said quietly, and now Dean easily recognized what was lurking behind the amusement. It was smooth, silken danger. “Before you say anything,” he went on, and Dean didn’t bother to tell the angel that he hadn’t had half a clue what he might say, “I advise you to think very carefully.”

Dean tried. He really did. The pounding beat of fire engines with full sirens on crashing into the sides of his brain made it incredibly difficult to actually put together thoughts in any coherent way, though, and after a moment he settled for just groaning again. Maybe if he was pitiful enough, Cas would start feeling bad for him and decide he’d suffered enough?

“I have less than no sympathy for you,” the angel told him flatly, “so no point in milking it.”

Well. So much for that idea. Maybe changing the subject instead?

“How long,” he croaked, voice cracking a little with disuse and the dryness of his throat.

“You have been asleep for approximately seventeen hours. It is now six o’clock in the morning.”

Holy hell. SEVENTEEN hours?

“Fuckin…Sam,” Dean said, a spike of fury stabbing through him and briefly clearing away the fog (although it returned almost immediately).

“Do not,” Cas said, voice tightly controlled, “even begin to blame this particular debacle on Sam. And certainly do not bother to hope that I am likely to do so.”

This was not good. This was not good at all. Finally, with those words, Dean began to get a sense
of just exactly how much trouble he was in. The pounding headache—not to mention the clouds of
cotton balls fogging his brain—still weren’t letting him really get his wits about him, which made it
damn hard to figure out how to defend himself. Before he could come up with some kind of
response that wouldn’t make things worse, Cas was speaking again.

“You are no doubt extremely dehydrated. I was able to rouse you just enough once or twice to have
you drink a little water, but certainly not enough, and you were not alert enough to eat anything. I
imagine you also have other bodily needs that are quite dire.”

Well, now that he mentioned it, holy shit, Dean suddenly had to pee so badly he wasn’t sure how he
hadn’t wet himself.

“Go use the restroom. I will meet you back here with something to eat and drink as well as
something for your headache. Do not detour. Do not take more time than is absolutely necessary.”

Dean grimaced a little and very carefully cracked his eyes open. The light in the room was very dim,
but still felt like needles stabbing into his brain through his retinas. Jesus. If he hadn’t needed the
bathroom so desperately, there’s no way he would’ve even considered moving.

Cas stood above him, several steps back from the bed, watching as Dean very slowly sat up,
swaying just a little and groaning as the room seemed to spin around him for a second. Under
ordinary circumstances, Cas would’ve offered to help him up, even if the issue had been a nasty
hangover from way too much alcohol. Now, though, the angel made no move to offer his hand,
merely watched with unreadable blue eyes for a moment. Once Dean managed to swing his feet
over the side of the bed, Cas turned around and strode to the door, opening it and vanishing into the
hall without another word.

Fuck. This was so not good.

~*~

Dean made it back from the bathroom ten minutes later. It probably wasn’t the most efficient he’d
ever been, but then he wasn’t usually restricted to shuffling at a snail’s pace in order to keep the
vertigo under control and refrain from making his pounding head worse.

Cas was already back in the room and waiting for him, seated in a chair that he had pulled up within
a few feet of the bed. A plate with two peanut butter sandwiches and a mammoth glass of ice water
rested on the bedside table alongside two pills that Dean immediately recognized as ibuprofen.

Making a beeline (or the closest thing he could manage to a beeline in his current state) for the pills,
Dean grabbed them and tossed them back with a swallow of water. Only when the cold liquid slid
down his throat did he realize how desperately thirsty he had been, and he went ahead and kept
drinking until he’d put away well over half of the glass. He emerged, panting slightly but able to feel
his brain start to sharpen a little. Dehydration certainly hadn’t helped either his fuzziness or the
headache, and with the combination of ibuprofen and water, he was really hoping he might start to
feel like a person again at some point in the near future.

He deliberately avoided looking at the angel, although he could feel Cas’s eyes on him, as weighty
as a hand clamped on his shoulder. Come to think of it, it was actually a little surprising the way Cas
was keeping his distance, almost as if he didn’t quite trust himself to get too close to Dean. And
wasn’t that just an unnerving thought.

Dean wasn’t actually all that hungry, was in fact a little queasy, but he knew better than to try to
argue with Cas about eating right now. Hell, he knew better than to try to argue with Cas period
right now. Instead, he grabbed one of the sandwiches and sat down on the edge of the bed, taking a bite and forcing it down.

Almost immediately after it settled in his stomach, the queasiness began to ease, so he went ahead and took another bite and then a third. Before he knew it the first sandwich was gone and he was reaching for the second—okay, so maybe he’d been hungrier than he realized.

He took a second to register that he’d done a kick-ass job with the bread (it was perfect, so at least that was one thing he hadn’t royally fucked up yesterday), but there was really no way to focus for long on anything so mundane when a dangerously quiet angel of the Lord was seated four feet away, drilling holes in Dean with his eyes.

Silence reigned in the room apart from the sound of Dean chewing and the occasional clink of ice when he snagged the glass for another drink. If he’d been thinking clearly, Dean might have slowed down a little, taken his time with the sandwich to delay the inevitable, but his body was really on autopilot at this point. It was gone just as fast as the first one, and Dean set the plate on the table beside the nearly empty glass of water and closed his eyes for a second to assess how his body was doing.

The headache was still there, of course, but seemed less intense after both eating and drinking. If he’d had to guess, Dean would’ve said it would likely be down to a very dull ache within another hour or two. His stomach felt much steadier with ballast added to it and his brain had sharpened dramatically, although he still clearly wasn’t running on all cylinders. While he sure as hell didn’t feel awesome, he was moving back in the direction of being something resembling a human being. And that meant he really couldn’t put it off any longer. If he tried, he’d just piss Cas off more.

Taking a deep breath, he settled himself cross-legged on the bed and lifted his gaze to Cas’s.

“Okay. First of all, thanks for getting the food and water and ibuprofen, I really appreciate it.” The angel nodded once in acknowledgement, eyes never straying from Dean’s face, but did not speak. “Why don’t you come sit with me and we can get this over with,” Dean offered, sighing slightly, “I can see that you’re barely controlling yourself.”

“I do not believe it is currently in your best interest for me to venture any closer. I have made a vow never to lay hands on you in anger, and despite how intense the urge may be, I have no intention of breaking it.”

Dean’s jaw clenched and he had to take a slow breath, forcing it to relax again. He got that Cas was pissed, and he was pretty sure he had at least a basic sense of why, but the unfairness of it all rankled at him. How was Sam getting off scot-free for this one? Taking another slow breath, he spoke again as soon as he was certain that he wouldn’t say something that might make this a whole hell of a lot worse. “I…appreciate that you’re looking out for my safety,” he said carefully, and he probably should’ve known better, because that’s what broke the dam.

“Well, somebody ought to, don’t you think?” the angel hissed, eyes narrowing to slits, “since you clearly cannot be trusted to ensure your own safety or, for that matter, that of your brother. Do you,” he went on, clearly not looking for an answer to that first question, “have any idea how reckless your actions were? How incredibly wrong your little plan could have gone?”

“I think it already went pretty wrong, considering that—“

“Shut. Up.”

Dean snapped his mouth closed, shrinking back involuntarily as a flash of something feral and
ancient flitted across the angel’s face.

“You will not speak until given permission. You may nod and shake your head. Do I make myself perfectly clear?”

Dean let out a slow breath and nodded once, jerkily.

“When I speak of your plan going wrong, I do not refer to Sam outsmarting you, although the fact that you did not see that coming would be laughable if it were not so distressing,” Oh, ouch. That actually kind of stung. Cas hadn’t truly called him stupid, not even really implied it, but it sure felt like he had—and all evidence suggested the angel was just getting started. “No, I am referring to the fact that you deliberately planned to overdose your brother—thus resulting in you overdosing yourself even more severely, as you are smaller than Sam—a dangerous proposition under the best of circumstances. And all of that is not to mention the fact that you did not appear to consider whether Sam might be allergic to the medication,” Dean opened his mouth to argue that it was a fucking allergy medication, for God’s sake, but shut it again almost instantly at the look on Cas’s face, and the angel pressed onward, “did you even consider the possibility of anaphylaxis? What if Sam had reacted badly? What if you had? I searched extensively—unless I managed to miss it, you had not even stashed an Epi-pen somewhere nearby. And you did all of this knowing perfectly well that I was three floors down and six hallways away. It would have taken far too long to get to me in the event of a serious reaction. He could have died. You could have died.”

…wait, what? Was that seriously where all of this was coming from?

Once he put it together, Dean’s shoulders dropped, the tension bleeding out of them. He was a lot less stressed out about Cas’s anger now that he understood its underpinnings.

He had scared the shit out of Cas.

Dean, who had never been late for a scene in his life (well, with the exception of that whole having-to-sneak-off-to-pee-when-he-was-supposed-to-go-right-to-the-dungeon thing), had failed to show up when he was expected, and when Cas came to search him out, no doubt already worried about him, he’d found Dean faceplanted in his mashed potatoes, insensible. Then Dean had been passed out for seventeen hours, unable to be roused to eat anything or to drink enough.

Yeah, now that he thought about it, Dean could see how that could be…unnerving, especially since Cas—hey. Wait a minute.

“Why didn’t you just heal me?” Dean blurted before slapping a hand over his mouth, as if the action would take back the disallowed words.

Cas’s skin actually blanched pale at the question, and there was something about the way his eyes slid to one side briefly, as if he was too ashamed to meet Dean’s gaze—something that Dean couldn’t quite pinpoint. He didn’t have the chance to figure out what it meant because a second later the angel’s eyes were once again locked with his, danger oozing from every pore as he rose from his chair and stalked forward several steps. He stopped only when he was looming over Dean, who actually had to force himself not to shrink away.

“I believe,” he said, voice just a little too quiet, “I told you to shut up. Do not make me tell you again.”

Dean nodded once, just slightly, indication that he understood. He didn’t dare break eye contact first, but he did register that a very fine, persistent tremor was running through Cas’s entire body. Jesus Christ, he was some kind of worked up. Dean must have really scared him senseless. And—
oh. Oh. That was what was behind the shame and even more than that, the fear.

For some reason, he had been unable to heal Dean. Maybe because Dean hadn’t actually been ill or in danger, just knocked flat by the drugs. There was no telling, but Cas had tried, and failed, and it had scared him even worse, especially when Dean couldn’t be roused for such a long time.

Dean generally trusted his instincts, and he went ahead and did so now. He let his hand fall away from his own mouth and reached out, very slowly, extending a hand toward Cas’s. His intent was to take the angel’s hand in his own, squeeze it, let him feel Dean’s warmth and solidity, let him really process that Dean was okay, and alive, and still with him, and was going to be fine.

Cas stood unnaturally still as Dean’s hand slowly breached the space between them. He wasn’t intending to surprise the angel—he wasn’t that stupid.

While Cas had said clearly that he didn’t trust himself to touch Dean, this wasn’t that. This wasn’t Cas giving in to his anger or fear, laying hands on Dean in uncontrolled fashion. This was Dean, reaching out, offering himself, offering a tangible reminder that Cas hadn’t lost him. This was what Cas needed, even if he didn’t know it yet. He needed the visceral reminder of Dean’s realness that the touch of skin on skin would provide. He needed to hear the thrum of Dean’s heartbeat, to feel the rise and fall of his chest as he breathed.

Dean really thought it was going to work. Cas’s hand twitched, shifting as if it wanted to turn over and welcome Dean’s offered hand, as if maybe he would press their palms together, entangle their fingers. As if maybe, he would crumple onto the bed beside Dean, allow Dean to gather him in, to rock him back and forth and whisper soothing nonsense. As if, just maybe, he would allow Dean to be the strong one, to be the one who comforted him when he was so clearly in need of it. As if maybe, just this once, he would acknowledge and give in to the terror that so often seemed to be what actually drove his fury.

Dean really thought it was going to work.

He was wrong.

The instant his fingertips grazed the skin on the back of Cas’s palm, the angel exploded into motion, so fast and uncontrolled that Dean actually threw himself backward, actually did something that he would forever try to pretend hadn’t been cowering.

He needn’t have done so. Cas didn’t lay so much as a fingertip on him. No, the movement had been quite the reverse—he had flung himself away from Dean with such abruptness that he knocked the chair he’d just been sitting in halfway across the room. Then, before Dean could even begin to get his wits about him enough to figure out a next course of action, what he could say, what he could do to defuse the ticking time bomb that was his celestial lover, it was too late. The door was flung open so fast and so hard that it cracked off the wall with a noise like a gunshot before rebounding enthusiastically enough to slam shut once more.

By then, Cas was already long gone.

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The first few seconds after Cas walked out on him seemed to last hours.

Dean wanted nothing more than to run after the angel, follow him, grab him by his shoulders and shake him until he came back in, until he actually communicated with Dean in any real way.

But he knew better. He knew better than to try. Cas could move at 37mph through the bunker’s
halls when he needed to get to Dean quickly. There was no reason to think he couldn’t move at least that fast when he needed to get away.

The angel could be anywhere by now, tucked away in any dark corner, impossible to find unless he wanted to be. And it wasn’t like he needed to come out to use the bathroom or eat or…

He could stay holed up for days, if he wanted to.

Shit.

This was a whole new universe of fucked up, and Dean didn’t even begin to know where to start fixing it. It wasn’t like their relationship was perfect. It wasn’t like they never disagreed, never argued, never bickered or got pissy with each other.

What they didn’t do was leave. Not like that.

What they didn’t do was refuse to even talk through what was going on.

What they didn’t do was refuse to even touch each other.

Until now, anyway.

The tears that had risen in Dean’s eyes didn’t really register to him until he blinked and his vision got all smeary, and then he just felt like a giant jackass. What kind of a wimp got all weepy because his boyfriend needed a break to calm down? What the hell would John Winchester say if he could see his oldest son now?

Dean very nearly toppled into that snake pit, and there was no telling how deep he would’ve fallen if he’d let it happen.

Instead, he deliberately curled his fingers into fists, clenching them so tight that he could feel his nails digging half-moons into his palms. If there was one thing he’d learned over the years—and not only from what he and Cas did, from hunting, too—it was that pain had its uses. It could take you out of your own head when you needed it. It could focus you. And, yeah, maybe it wasn’t the single healthiest thing out there, but sometimes a little physical pain did a really good job of mitigating emotional pain, if you did it in a controlled way.

So Dean let his fingernails bite into his palms, just shy of hard enough to break the skin, and focused on that. He let his entire consciousness wrap around the sensation, sitting with it, breathing through it. When he finally forced his fists to unclench his fingers were a little stiff, but he felt steadier.

He might’ve stayed in his room for the rest of the day, brooding, ping-ponging back and forth between guilt and anger with the occasional detour into abject misery if he didn’t have at least one responsibility he really couldn’t abandon.

Sam still needed to eat, and despite the fact that there were plenty of MREs, Dean couldn’t quite bring himself to just leave him to eat those when it wasn’t strictly necessary. Plus, okay, fine, he probably owed the kid an apology. Despite Cas’s startlingly intense response to what had happened, Dean could acknowledge that the angel’s actual points hadn’t been entirely (or remotely) wrong. Dean’s plan had been reckless, and he hadn’t thought it through long enough or planned it near carefully enough to make it safe. While he still thought Cas was probably a little overwrought about the whole thing—the likelihood of a serious allergic reaction to an allergy medication was incredibly low—Dean shouldn’t’ve done it. He could accept that.

What he couldn’t accept was the fact that his boyfriend couldn’t even look at him.
And there he went, starting to fall down the damn rabbit hole again. For the second time, he closed his eyes, dug his nails into his palms, and breathed as deeply and slowly as he could manage.

Once he felt steady enough, he opened his eyes, shook his shoulders out, and climbed back off the bed, stripping out of his clothes. He desperately needed a shower and a shave after sleeping for the better part of a day, and maybe the hot water would help him clear his head. Maybe it would help him figure out his next move, figure out how to fix this.

~*~

It didn’t.

Some small part of him had dared to hope that by the time he got back to his room, fresh-smelling and clean-shaven, Cas would be waiting for him, ready to sit down, ready to talk it out, ready to twine his fingers with Dean’s and assure him that yeah, this was bad, but it wasn’t the end of the world. Wasn’t the end of them.

Yeah, okay, maybe that was ridiculous. It wasn’t like they were normal boyfriends who were likely to have a normal break-up. On the deepest level, Dean knew with perfect certainty that he would be with Cas until he died (and possibly longer, since it never seemed to stick when he did).

But there was a difference between what you knew at a bone-deep level, and what your insecurities whispered in your ear in moments of vulnerability. This? This was a vulnerable moment, and Dean had plenty of insecurities ready and waiting to swarm up and eat him alive.

So once again, standing in the doorway of his empty room with wet hair still dripping down the back of his robe, hopes for fixing this right now dashed on the floor at his feet, Dean had to take a second. He had to clench his fists and breathe through the moments of panic.

Once more they receded, but they weren’t happy about it, and he had the sense that if this kept up, if this inexplicable rift spun out much longer, they might not be battled back quite as easily.

Stepping a little unwillingly back into his room—which somehow felt emptier than it normally did when only Dean was inside it, much emptier than it felt when Cas was simply puttering around the bunker—he went to his dresser to pull out some clothes. And if he went directly for his pair of sweatpants and long-sleeved tee that Cas liked to steal most often, who was there to call him on it?

Clean, dressed, and pasting on his best game face, Dean left the room and headed toward the kitchen. Sam would likely be up within the hour, and he’d need something to eat, and maybe—no. No, Dean shut his brain down before it could even begin to wrap around the thought that Cas could be waiting for him in the library or the kitchen. He didn’t think he could grit his way through another disappointment like his empty room.

Steeling himself against the gut feeling that told him to strap in because this was far from over, Dean strode down the hall to rustle up some breakfast for Sam.

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The next 24 hours were by far the longest since the record-breaking snowfall blanketed the bunker.

They were also the loneliest.

Sam had readily accepted Dean’s apology, told him not to worry about it, and been nothing but solicitous in asking how Dean was feeling, whether he was recovering okay. He’d been more than happy to hang out with Dean, to take a break from his research and chat about nothing at all, to
watch a movie. Actually, he’d been very careful never to leave Dean alone with his thoughts for too long, to step in when Dean started to lose himself in the dark voice that insisted, ever more loudly, that Cas hadn’t come back because he wasn’t coming back. Because he was going to stay hidden until the snow melted and he could leave the bunker, and then stay gone for always.

Sam seemed to know where Dean’s thoughts were taking him and was good—was great—at yanking him away from the precipice without actually demanding that Dean give voice to what was wrong. Sam was wonderful—but all the while, those sharp hazel eyes were watching him. Reading him.

The kid didn’t ask where Cas was, didn’t ask what had happened between them. He didn’t put any pressure on Dean to talk about it, didn’t really demand anything of him at all, and Dean was grateful for it. For a little while, it was like having the old Sam—the real Sam—back.

If it weren’t for the dark storm cloud roiling over Dean’s head, the weight of absence on his shoulders, it might’ve actually been a really great day.

As it was, he was barely holding himself together.

It might’ve been an insult to Sam that, although the kid rarely left him alone (and Dean was grateful for it), Dean was still impossibly, heart-wrenchingly, soul-crushingly lonely. The issue was that he wasn’t yearning for company. He didn’t just want companionship. He didn’t need a voice in his ear or a hand on his shoulder or someone laughing at his shitty, half-hearted jokes, he needed that gravelly voice in his ear, that firm and steady hand on his shoulder, the slightly perplexed look that often preceded the moment in which Cas actually put together Dean’s joke and got around to laughing.

And those things, he couldn’t have.

~*~

Dean’s restlessness only grew, and by mid-afternoon, when it was going on 36 hours since he’d last laid eyes on the angel, he finally broke.

He and Sam were seated in the library, both nursing glasses of whiskey, half-watching Die Hard for the 8000th time—except suddenly the words were tumbling out of Dean’s mouth without his permission.

“What if he never comes back?”

Sam didn’t seem especially surprised by the outburst.

“He’s coming back, Dean.”

“How do you know? You didn’t hear—you didn’t see.”

“So tell me.” It wasn’t a demand; it was an offer. An ear, a friend, a brother, an advisor, maybe even a little bit of a he-could-not-possibly-be-thinking-about-actually-taking-Sam-up-on-this therapist. And maybe the fact that Sam had been so patient but on some level, had clearly been waiting for this—well, maybe that freed Dean up. Maybe that nudged him past his no-chick-flick-moments instincts.

Or maybe it was simple desperation.

Either way, Dean told him. Everything. From the moment he woke up with a pounding headache
until the second Cas vanished out the door to his room.

His voice cracked a time or two, but Sam was kind enough to pretend he didn’t notice.

When he finally finished Sam was silent for a long time, swirling the whiskey in his glass as he thought. Just when Dean was starting to think he might really lose it, Sam’s eyes finally rose to meet his.

“You already know some of what’s driving this—he was scared. You scared the hell out of him, Dean. When he couldn’t heal you—well. Suffice it to say it wasn’t pretty. And he’s an angel. He’s been alive for, what, billions of years, and he hasn’t spent a lot of that time being scared. He certainly hasn’t spent that time being scared of what he might lose. Fear is new to him, and he doesn’t handle it well.”

Dean shook his head a little, fists clenching yet again. He’d been through that particular dance so many times in the last 36 hours that his fingers were stiff and sore and tiny half-moon welts and divots covered his palms.

“But—I’m okay. I’m fine. I’m here, and I know he’s mad but I can’t fix it if he won’t even let me—if I can’t even—“ he broke off, floundering, blinking hard.

“I don’t think the idea of losing you is the only thing that scared him,” Sam said quietly, thoughtfully, and Dean swiveled to blink at him in surprise. Sam went on before Dean could ask, “Based on what you told me, I kind of get the sense that maybe he scared himself, too. I think…he was fighting really hard to stay in control, and when you tried to touch him, he came really close to snapping. I know you think he’s punishing you, but I don’t think you’re right, not completely. I think maybe the one he’s punishing is himself, for nearly losing control like that. He—look, what he did was kind of fucked up.”

“What, leaving? Yeah, I—“

“No. Not that. I mean when you talked. He made you shut up, right?”

“Well…yeah, he was pissed.”

“Exactly. He was angry. You weren’t in a scene. But he told you to shut up, told you that you couldn’t talk unless he gave you permission, you could only nod and shake your head. That wasn’t—that’s not kosher, Dean.”

“No, it’s not like that. This isn’t his fault, I shouldn’t have—“

“Maybe not. It doesn’t change the fact that he doesn’t get to use your bedroom power dynamics to exert power over you when you’re working through serious problems that have real impacts on your relationship—no, listen,” Sam said, holding up a hand when Dean would’ve broken in to defend Cas against his accusations, “I know you don’t wanna hear this right now, and that’s okay, but at some point you two are gonna need to talk about this, and I want it to be perfectly clear that from an objective standpoint, what he did there was not okay, needs to never happen again.”

“Okay, you need to stop. This is ridiculous, it’s—“

“I’m done, I promise. With that, anyway. Look, a big piece of this is my fault, too.”

Maybe under ordinary circumstances, when he wasn’t hanging on by a thread, wasn’t on the verge of losing it, wasn’t buried under the weight of so much self-recrimination that he could barely stand upright, Dean would’ve whole-heartedly agreed with this assessment. As it was, he couldn’t see past
his own stupid, selfish actions.

“You’re not—you didn’t make me try to drug you, Sam.”

“That’s not entirely what I mean, although I suppose it’s debatable. You were doing the best you could. What I mean is, under ordinary circumstances Cas wouldn’t have gone from zero to totally out of control that fast, and the reason he did is because he wasn’t actually starting from zero.”

“I…what the hell are you talking about, dude?”

“He was already mad as hell. He’s been mad as hell for days—at me. Come on, you don’t think I’m oblivious to how pissed you two are, right? He’s been hanging onto control by his fingertips for days, refusing to lose his temper because he thinks he might do something that can’t be taken back. You, though—he doesn’t think for a second he would ever actually smite you. He would never, could never, and he knows it. So it probably felt safer to him to be mad at you.”

“That’s…that’s stupid, he wouldn’t choose to get extra pissed off at me just ‘cause he couldn’t smite you,” but Dean’s protests were a little half-hearted. He thought maybe he saw where Sam was going with this, and it kind of made sense.

“Of course not, but it’s not like he made a conscious choice. On a deeper level, though, a more primal one, some part of him believed that because of the way he loves you, because he would never really hurt you, letting some of that pent up anger leak out, letting his fear over losing you feed off of it, was a lot less risky than letting go and losing his shit at me.” Dean didn’t say anything. Didn’t know what to say, and after a moment, Sam went on. “But it didn’t work out quite that way. Once he let himself get angry, he couldn’t keep a lid on it. It got bigger than it was supposed to, and it just kept getting worse the longer you were out. By the time you came around, I don’t even wanna know the kinds of things he wanted to do to you. He’d been scared and hurting, and some part of him wanted to make you scared, make you hurt. And that’s…well. In a standard relationship, that would be problematic enough. As it is, with your power dynamic? What he started to do in there—what he wanted to do—it scared the shit out of him. So he ran away, and now he’s hiding, but not because he wants to punish you and not because he can’t stand the sight of you. If he hasn’t cooled down, he doesn’t trust himself around you, and if he has, I guarantee he’s beating the shit out of himself for what happened and what could have happened, if he hadn’t left when he did.”

“That’s…a hell of a theory, dude,” Dean told him weakly. He wanted to say that Sam was out of his mind, had gone completely around the bend, but the more his brain worked through it, the more he thought maybe the kid was right on the money. And if he was… “so…what next? How do I—I mean, maybe he didn’t trust himself, but I do. I don’t believe for a minute he would ever have really hurt me, would ever have abused—what we do.”

Sam shrugged a little bit. “What next is…kind of up to you. We can wait him out, see when he’s ready to finally emerge and then you can talk to him…”

“…or?”

“Or,” Sam said, one lip quirking a little ironically, “we draw him out.”

“Draw him out how?” Dean asked suspiciously.

“Leave that to me,” Sam told him confidently, “but if we go with that route, you’re gonna have to let me talk to him first.”

“Why?”
“Because he won’t be ready to talk to you yet—or he won’t think he is, anyway.”

“Wouldn’t it be…really shitty? To pull him out before he’s ready?”

“Maybe. Or maybe the two of you are both wallowing, dragging yourselves through the mud, torturing yourselves, and it’d be a hell of a lot healthier to get everything on the table and sorted out now. I can’t say for sure, but I wouldn’t have offered to speed this process up if I thought it would do more harm than good.”

It was funny, Dean thought. Sam had been such a fucking pain in the ass lately, such a tone-deaf shithead, that he’d almost forgotten how perceptive he really was. And damned if Dean wasn’t actually seriously considering letting Sam try to move this clusterfuck in the right direction.

Everything else aside, maybe the biggest—or at least the most absurd—potential problem with this was that if Sam actually managed to save their relationship (including their sex life, what with the whole power dynamics issue that Dean hadn’t even begun to think about ‘til Sam brought it up), they were never gonna live it down.

What it came down to, ultimately, was that Dean couldn’t do this anymore. Couldn’t continue to wait, paralyzed by terror and nightmare visions of losing Cas forever. Taking in a deep breath and wondering whether he was signing them all up for an even bigger disaster, he nodded at Sam.

“Okay. Let’s do it.”

Chapter End Notes

WARNINGS: This chapter has a lot of bad feels to it, and not many good ones. There is some appalling BDSM etiquette (the use of power dynamics to exert control in an uncontrolled and unsafe way, outside of a scene, specifically), fairly non-specific allusions to the potential of physical abuse (none actually takes place), some extremely minor self-harming behaviors (Dean digs his nails into his own palms as a way to center himself), a whole mess of abandonment issues, and perhaps most surprisingly, Sam actually being helpful. You go, Sam. Now try not to fuck it all up, buddy.

AUTHOR’S NOTE:

I'm sorry, y'all. That was rough, I know. I was...really hoping to fix it by the end of the chapter, but it just wasn't to be. You're already getting a particularly long chapter, and there was simply no way to deal with everything that needs to happen without rushing the hell out of it. The boys deserve better than that, and so do you, my readers.

As it stands, I'm already hard at work on the next chapter, and if I manage to get it finished and betaed (and I'm feeling particularly generous, because let's face it, I do kind of like torturing y'all), there's a very slight chance it might post tomorrow instead of Wednesday. But only if you ask real nicely (and maybe not even then).

TITLE NOTE:

The title of this chapter is pulled from an Indigo Girls song called "Secure Yourself." That song was on repeat in my head as I wrote, and it was only right that it take the place of honor. Obviously, I do not own the song, but I share its lyrics with you here so
you understand just how apt it really is.

“In the ink of an eye I saw you bleed,
Through the thunder I could hear you scream,
Solid to the air I breathe,
Open-eyed and fast asleep.
Falling softly as the rain,
No footsteps ringing in your ears.
Ragged down worn to the skin
Warrior raging, have no fear.

Secure yourself to heaven.
Hold on tight, the night has come
Fasten up your earthly burdens,
You have just begun.

Kneeling down with broken prayers,
Hearts and bones from days of youth,
Restless with an angel's wing,
I dig a grave to bury you.
No feet to fall,
You need no ground,
Allowed to glide right through the sun,
Released from circles guarded tight,
Now we all are chosen ones.

Secure yourself to heaven.
Hold on tight, the night has come
Fasten up your earthly burdens,
You have just begun.”

SUMMARY NOTE:

The summary, in its entirety (with the exception of 'in which') is lifted verbatim from W.B. Yeats poem "The Second Coming." It's...a disturbing poem, to say the least. I won't C&P it here, but if you're interested you should go take a look. It's incredibly vividly written and the imagery is as compelling as it is chilling.

A great deal of gratitude and respect go to all of the above artists I poached from to provide this chapter with the setting it needed.
A Ghost of Comfort

Chapter Summary

In which Sam is either suicidal or a genius (possibly both) and even if Cas can't forgive himself, somebody else can.

Please see notes and warnings at the end of the chapter, as well as brief note on the origin of the title.

Chapter Notes

I forgot to do this last chapter, which is unconscionable, but at least I'm remembering now.

So many thanks and hugs and general adoration go to Dangerousnotbroken, reluctant, and majestic_duck for beta-reading and cheerleading last chapter in particular (in addition to my regular betas, who remain awesome).

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Ten minutes later, skulking in the corner of the kitchen nearest the door, Dean had just about decided this was a mistake and he needed to put a stop to it before it went any further.

After Dean had given the kid the go-ahead, Sam told Dean he should probably remove himself from the library so that Sam could talk to Cas one-on-one. What he ostentatiously hadn’t done was tell Dean to go far. So Dean hadn’t. Maybe eavesdropping was juvenile, but he was sure as hell not planning on leaving his addled brother unmonitored with his furious boyfriend for an indeterminate length of time. That seemed like a recipe for bloodshed, tears, broken objects, or worse. So here he was, literally lurking in a shadowed corner and waiting to hear any indication that Sam had somehow managed to conjure Cas out of thin air. Then he figured he could sneak down the hall and listen by the door, because if he was going to be a nosy 12-year-old he might as well go for broke.

Of course, all of that was five solid minutes ago, before Dean’s thoughts started to get away from him, making him conclude that this idea was completely unworkable and he’d been under the influence of a brief psychotic break when he agreed to it.

There was no way Sam wasn’t going to just make things worse. There was no way dragging Cas out of wherever he was holed up before he was ready was going to do anything other than exacerbate the situation. Dean needed to accept that it was going to take time, that Cas would come out when he was ready. He needed to be mature. He needed to be patient. He needed to—holy fuck.

A blur had shot past the kitchen doorway, so fast Dean thought for a second he’d been imagining it. At least, until the burst of wind followed it up a few seconds later, ruffling Dean’s hair and blowing a stack of napkins off the counter, scattering them across the floor. What the hell?
Wait, had that—had that been…? Dean squinted to himself, trying to make sense of what he’d seen. He guessed it had been vaguely human-shaped, and yeah, it had seemed mostly beige. Given the fact that the bunker was impenetrable to the best of their knowledge and nobody was getting in or out these days, the conclusion wasn’t difficult to come to.

_Cas_ had just zoomed past the door, and he’d been doing a hell of a lot more than 37mph.

Bad idea or no, this was happening.

Dean took a deep breath and crept down the hallway, plastering himself against the wall just around the corner from the library’s broad entranceway to monitor—okay, fine. To eavesdrop.

The sound of the familiar gravel made Dean’s innards clench just this side of painfully in some mingling of relief, longing, and misery that there was probably a German word for, but English was totally unequal to the task of truly describing.

“—is he, Sam?!”

“Take a breath, Cas. He’s not here, and he’s in no immediate danger.”

“But—your prayer said he was hurt! You said he needed me!”

“He is and he does. Just not in the way you were thinking. He’s not physically injured.”

There was a moment of ominous silence. Dean could feel the storm clouds gathering in the air and cringed silently, trying to decide whether he should flee back to the kitchen as fast he could before Cas came blasting right back out of the library, spotted him, and got even angrier. In the end, he decided that after 36 hours, he’d take that anger over continued radio silence. Hell, he’d take Cas’s rage, no matter how he wanted to vent it. He wanted to put Dean on his knees? Wanted to make him hurt? To make him cry? Make him scream?

Bring it on.

Dean could take it. _Would_ take it. A hundred times over, a thousand times over, he would take it, if his other option was that absence.

And, yeah, maybe that was twelve kinds of fucked up, but Dean didn’t give two shits.

By the time he came around to this conclusion, the silence in the library had been broken.

“You mean to tell me,” Cas said, his voice deceptively quiet, “that you summoned me from the bowels of the bunker under false pretenses, when I am certain by this point you knew perfectly well why I had retreated—and that the false pretenses you chose just _happened_ to be that Dean was in imminent danger and needed me to save him?”

Holy fuck, Sam. _That_ had been his gambit? He’d, what, prayed to Cas that Dean was hurt and needed Cas to heal him? That was…goddamn, that was practically suicidal.

“Yes, the combination of what you and I saw, and what you said to me,” Cas answered, his voice tight. “You thought, ‘If I’m the angel that can help, I’ll probably help, and he’ll get better. I’ll get there in time, and I’ll help him. He needs me.’ But—”

“—your other option was ‘he’ll die, and I won’t be able to help him.”

“Exactly. That’s why you thought sure enough, yes, he was in imminent danger, and now I’m here, and I’m going to help him, and everything’s going to work out.”

Huh.

“Actually, what I said was ‘Cas, please, if you’ve got your ears on, we need you. Dean’s hurt, and I think you’re the only one who can help. He needs you.’ You interpreted it in your own way. Nothing I said was untrue.”

“Sam…” Surely Sam could hear the danger in that voice. Dean was half a heartbeat away from forcing his way into the library just to distract Cas, because he was pretty sure the kid was about to get smited once and for all, no takesies backsies.
Frankly, if a meteor piloted by an English-speaking chinchilla from outer space had come crashing through the ceiling and landed in his lap, it couldn’t have surprised Dean more than what actually happened next.

Sam didn’t yell, but his voice was not quiet and it rang with the kind of command that even Dean would’ve been hard-pressed to disobey. “No. Don’t even start, Cas. You had your chance to talk and instead you walked away. So now you get to listen. Get your ass in here, sit the fuck down, shut the fuck up, and listen. That’s not a request.”

Holy shit, Sam really did have a death wish. It was like suicide by cop, only this time it was suicide by angel. Dean stood frozen, eyes wide in horror, waiting for the telltale sound of body parts splattering against the walls.

It never came.

Instead, after a moment of silence, there was the sound of shuffling feet and then the creak of a chair.

Dean’s jaw was hanging somewhere around his knees as he managed to put together through his shock that Cas had actually followed Sam’s instructions. He would’ve given anything to know whether it had been done meekly or resentfully, but he knew better than to think that poking his head around the door to the library would be anything but a huge mistake just now.

Instead he let his legs, now shaking from what he would resolutely insist was solely the aftereffects of his fear for Sam’s life (it certainly had nothing to do with how high the stakes for this conversation were for the future of Dean’s love life), give out on him. He slid silently down the wall to land in a graceless pile on the floor, closed his eyes, and listened for all he was worth.

“Thank you,” Sam said, much more quietly, “Look, dude, I know you’re hurting, and you’re mad, and you’re scared. You have every right to be, and I’m never gonna tell you what to feel. What I will tell you is what not to do—and vanishing for a day and a half, making Dean think that maybe you hate him, maybe you never want to look at him again, maybe you’re just waiting for the second the snow melts so you can get the hell out of here and never look back? That’s what not to do.”

Jesus. Dean hadn’t actually told Sam…any of that. Not really. Not in so many words. And still, somehow Sam had known. Somehow he had been completely aware of what was going on inside Dean’s head.

The kid was fucking creepy is what he was—not to mention, if he was this attuned to Dean, how the hell was he still rocking the delusion that they needed him to save their sex life? Hell, maybe if he actually managed to fix this, he’d feel like he had completed his mission and would leave them the hell alone. Dean could hope, anyway.

Back in the library, Dean thought he might have actually heard the click of Cas’s throat as he swallowed. “He—what? He thought—oh, Sam, I did not—“

“I know you didn’t,” Sam said patiently, “that’s why I’m telling you. Just listen, okay? I don’t know how much you’ve managed to put together while you were sulking, but Dean told me what happened in his room after he woke up, and I get what you were doing. I get what you weren’t doing. I get that you needed to get out of there before you did something you couldn’t take back.”

There was a low grunt of acknowledgment and the sound of a chair creaking. Dean’s mind filled in the gaps with an image that might or might not have been accurate, of Cas leaning forward in his chair and resting his elbows on his knees and his forehead in his hands.
“I had to—” Cas broke off on something that sounded like choking, but Dean was pretty sure had been his voice breaking. Oh, God, Cas was on the verge of tears and they had barely even started to talk about it. Dean’s hands curled into the familiar fists, fingernails finding one of the dozens of sets of half-moon welts already there and digging in harder than ever. This time, though, it wasn’t in the attempt to force his brain not to spiral away from him. This time, it was the only way he could think of to force himself not to jerk to his feet, go flying into the library, and wrap Cas in his arms—and much as he wanted to do just that, it was a bad idea. There were clearly things that needed to be said first. Things Cas needed to get off his chest.

Sure enough, by the time Dean managed to get the compulsion to go to him under control, Cas was speaking again.

“You cannot know what—the things I wanted to—terrible things, Sam.” Cas’s voice was so small, so miserable, it was hard to believe this was the same creature who had frozen Dean with a glance, silenced him with a few hissed words, only yesterday. This was neither perfectly controlled Dom nor awkward puppy. This was nothing more or less than a broken man.

Even though Dean registered the content of his words, recognized what Cas was admitting, he had never been less frightened of him. That Cas had wanted to hurt Dean seemed immaterial beside the pain he was clearly in, beside the self-flagellation that had clearly been taking place somewhere deep in a hidden corner of the bunker.

Sam had been right. Cas wasn’t punishing Dean. He was punishing himself. It wasn’t that he couldn’t stand to look at Dean—it was that he didn’t trust himself.

When Sam’s voice broke out, far more gently than before, it actually surprised Dean a little. He’d nearly forgotten his brother was in the room, nearly forgotten that Cas wasn’t simply confessing his sins to the universe at large, to the absent Father that Dean knew his lover still spoke to, even if he didn’t like to admit it.

“I know, Cas. Honestly, I get it.” Compassion layered itself over Sam’s words. There was acknowledgment there, and acceptance, if not quite absolution. That, at least, was something Sam could not bestow, even if he wanted to. That was something only Dean could grant him.

“You do not,” Cas insisted, voice rising in agitation, “you think you do, but you do not. I wanted—Sam, I wanted to hurt him. Wanted to frighten him. Wanted to put him on his knees and make him forget everything but who he belonged to. Make him beg for forgiveness and refuse to grant it. I wanted to put him on his knees—and I could have done it. I would not have even had to force him—though I wanted to. A single word and he would have done it, would have given himself to me, let me take him apart. It would never have occurred to him to do anything else.” Cas broke off, panting, as if he had run a marathon. There was a quiet sound, cut off, as though Sam had started to speak and Cas had motioned him back into silence. A moment later the angel went on, the words grating out as though it caused him unimaginable agony to force them past his lips.

It probably did.

“I wanted to take everything he has so freely offered me and defile it in the worst way imaginable, and for a few moments, I did not care that to do so would be to shatter his trust on the ground at my feet, so long as he was also on the ground at my feet.”

Dean may not have been the most religious guy on the planet, but he knew a confession when he heard one. Knew the sound of a man owning up to his worst sins, fully believing that he is already damned for them. And still, the angel was not done. Still, he had more to say.
“I was so angry. I do not—I have never been so—when I could not heal him, when he would not wake—I feared losing him, Sam, and in the very moment when I was sure that I had him back, I was ready to throw it all away. I wanted to. I don’t know that I have ever wanted anything so much.”

“I don’t think that’s true,” Sam finally broke in, so quietly that Dean had to strain to hear him. “I think right now you want to take it back more than you’ve ever wanted anything. But here’s the thing, Cas—you’re punishing yourself for something you didn’t do. You wanted to, yeah. You thought about it. You fantasized about it. But when push came to shove, in the moment, you stopped yourself. You had a choice, and no matter how hard it was, you made the right call. You’d never been angrier in your life and you said it yourself—you could have made him do anything. Could have had him on his knees in a heartbeat.” Cas’s choked groan said what it did to him to hear that simple truth acknowledged by another’s lips.

And it was the truth. Cas could’ve put him on his knees. Wouldn’t have even needed to make him. He would’ve offered himself up—even in that moment. Even when he could sense the waves of danger coming off the angel. Even when he could feel the roiling, barely-controlled fury. Even when some part of him had known that if Cas broke—if he started, he might not stop.

But that wasn’t Cas’s fault. It wasn’t his fault that Dean was willing to crucify himself, that his sense of self-preservation went out the window when it came to Cas. The angel hadn’t demanded that of him, had never wanted it at all. And ultimately, he hadn’t taken advantage of it, even though he easily could have done so.

Sam, when he went on, seemed to be of one mind with Dean about this.

“Listen to me. You’re missing the most important part of this. Yeah, you could’ve done all of that. But you didn’t. Instead you walked away. You got yourself out of there, as far as you could go, and holed up to calm yourself down. Which I’m guessing took about five minutes once you realized how close you had come to—anyway. You’re tearing yourself to shreds for something that never happened.”

“No, Sam, you do not—I am not calm. I am still so angry with him. So angry. And so I cannot allow myself to—I cannot trust myself—“

“Okay, answer me this. You’re still mad, yeah, but do you still want to do all those things to him? Do you still want to put him on his knees? Hurt him?”

“I—no. Of course not. I—would never.”

“Exactly. Anger isn’t dangerous in and of itself. It’s just an emotion, like any other. It’s what you do with it that matters. You can be angry with Dean without having to hide from him, without having to hide from yourself. You can get mad without it being the end of the world. I’m honestly not sure you’ve ever been able to trust yourself more than you can now. He’s probably never been safer with you than he would be right now.”

“But—he trusts me, Sam, he—“

“With good reason. With the exception of a very brief moment in which no real harm was done, you earned that trust yesterday. Look, I’m a lot less worried about what you wanted to do than what you actually did. And while I can’t speak for Dean, I’ve never trusted you more with him than I do now, because I know that you can skirt the edge of your control and still hang onto it. You can be furious and still manage not to do something irreversible.”

“No. If he knew—if he ever knew what I thought about—he could never look at me again. Would
hate me. And he should.”

And there it was. Dean’s cue.

Somehow, he wasn’t sure how or when it had happened, he was on his feet, and they knew exactly where to take him.

He didn’t make it past the doorway before the sight that met him brought him up short.

Sam stood, leaning back against the long table, Cas in one of the chairs in front of him. The angel was mussed, hair sticking out at even odder angles than usual, trenchcoat and suit rumpled and limp. His feet were planted on the floor, elbows on his knees and hands hanging limply as he hunched forward, as if trying to make himself as small as possible.

Dean’s already battered heart cracked in half at the sight. He knew exactly what he needed to say, but found himself speaking before he quite knew exactly how to say it.

“But I don’t.” His voice was stronger, steadier than he would’ve thought it could be. Confident. That was good. That was important. Cas needed to know that he meant it, that he was not just paying lip service.

The angel’s head jerked up as sharply as if it were attached to puppet strings, his blue eyes locking onto Dean’s. Entire universes of pain lived and died in those eyes, and Dean had to swallow hard before he could go on.

“I don’t. Hate you. And this is me, looking at you. I know. I do. I heard it all, okay? And I’m here. Right here. Still here.”

He wasn’t sure when he’d started moving, but suddenly he was halfway across the space, advancing on the angel—and wasn’t this quite a shift, because now it was Cas who shrank back before him. Not as if he were afraid of what Dean would do, oh no, as if he were still afraid of himself.

But Dean wasn’t.

If Cas couldn’t bring himself to bridge this gap, couldn’t give himself permission—Dean could. Dean would.

Still, he knew better than to force it on Cas. In a moment like this, that could be disastrous. So no matter how badly he wanted to, he didn’t fling himself at the angel, didn’t wrap his arms around the trembling creature before him.

Instead, moving very slowly, as if approaching a frightened animal (and, really, wasn’t he?), Dean crouched before Cas, forcing the blue eyes to lock with his green ones.

“Still here,” he told Cas, his voice much quieter and rasping with emotion, “and not going anywhere. Not leaving. Not unless you make me, and maybe not even then.”

“Dean,” Cas choked, “I have broken—“ Whatever he might have intended to say, whatever he’d been planning to add to that, whatever he wanted Dean to know he had broken, he found himself unable to go any further—and really, that was okay. The sentence as it stood said it all, and Dean knew just what to say. What to do.

“Then I’ll put you back together, like you’ve put me back together more times than I can count. You rebuilt me from ash and bone and dust and you think this is gonna be what finally breaks us? No. If
it’s broken, we’ll fix it.” Very slowly, without any sudden movements, he lifted his hand and extended it, palm up, toward the angel. An offering. A plea.

His gaze didn’t waver for a single heartbeat, didn’t even blink. He wouldn’t break the connection for even that long.

When he spoke again, his voice was barely more than a whisper. “We’ll fix it.”

The sharp lines of anguish etched into Cas’s face were slicing Dean into ribbons, tearing him apart, but still, he didn’t dare look away. Even when a trembling hand started to creep, almost unwillingly but with desperate hope, toward Dean’s outstretched palm, he didn’t twitch his eyes from Cas’s face.

When that hand finally made contact with Dean’s, there was a moment in which everything stopped. Dean’s heart skipped, his breathing stuttered to a halt. The very earth paused on its axis. Just for a split second, the ever-expanding universe hesitated in its age-old dance. Time itself broke in the moment when, at last, the final millimeters of a gaping rift were bridged.

And then, just like that, everything started up again, and Cas was toppling into Dean’s arms with a sound that would’ve been a wail, had it not been so choked.

Dean sat down hard on the floor of the library and pulled Cas into his lap. The righteous man gathered the angel of the Lord into his arms, cradled him like a baby, and very slowly rocked him back and forth, back and forth, lips pressed against the top of the weeping head.

Chapter End Notes

WARNINGS: More angst, y’all. Lots and lots of angst. We’re well on the way to fixing it now, but still plenty of ouchies to be had from this chapter. Also once again fairly nonspecific references to physical abuse and abuse of trust/power dynamics. None of those things actually take place; they’re just discussed.

Please note that because you got this chapter a day early, y’all will likely be waiting a bit longer for the next chapter, which I still plan to get to you on Friday. While there’s some chance that it could come sooner, don’t hang your hat on it, and expect that in either event, next week we’ll be back to our regular posting schedule of MWF.

TITLE NOTE: Once again, this title is poached from an Indigo Girls song. As you may have noticed, I’m rather partial to them. This song is called ”World Falls.” Here are the few lines from which the title was taken:

"I'm coming home with a stone, strapped onto my back
I'm coming home with a burning hope turning all my blues to black.
I'm looking for a sacred hand to carve into this stone.
A ghost of comfort, Angel's Breath - to keep this life inside my chest."

SPECIAL AUTHOR’S NOTE:

Dean’s thoughts early on in the chapter? The “I’d rather he tear me to shreds than leave” thing? Yeah, that’s not healthy. That’s not kosher. That’s not okay. Please don’t be Dean. There is no circumstance in which it is preferable to let someone take you apart—either physically or mentally—than to lose them.
This message has been brought to you by your friendly neighborhood kinky-destiel-fanfic-writing family therapist (yes, I'm a therapist).
Later, when Dean happened to catch a glimpse of the clock on his bedside table, he would be startled to discover that that the better part of an hour had passed while he cradled the angel close. In the moment, the passage of time seemed irrelevant, scarcely worthy of notice. Had he thought about it, he might’ve registered that at some point his ass had gone numb from the combined weight of he and Cas pressing it into the cold stone floor. As it was though, his full attention, his entire being was focused so intently on the angel in his arms that he was oblivious to everything else. The armies of hell could’ve marched through the bunker’s doors and Dean might not have noticed until they ripped Cas from his grasp.

Sam left at some point, slipping out of the library as silently as a wraith, recognizing (miraculously, and for once in his damn life) that some moments required privacy. Dean would have to thank him later—not for leaving, although that was noteworthy enough, but for being the unstoppable force that dragged them back together. Sam’s ability to clearly recognize what was going on when neither Dean nor Cas was whole enough to see the big picture, his quiet support until Dean was ready to talk about it, the plan he had hatched almost instantaneously, his uncanny knowledge of exactly how to get Cas to show up and (far more impressive) stay long enough to listen, the way he had acted as confessor for a Cas who had clearly been desperate, whether he recognized it or not, to own up to his perceived sins—well. As it turned out, Sam might’ve actually been kind of good at his back-up career choice if he’d decided to go with therapy (whether he would’ve been specifically good at sex therapy Dean couldn’t say, and was dearly hoping never to know). And Dean had a lot to be grateful to him for.

But that, like almost everything else, would have to wait. For now, the only thing on Dean’s radar, the only thing in the universe, was the violently trembling angel in his arms. Dean hadn’t been wrong a day and a half ago when his instincts told him that this was what Cas needed. He’d just had the timing a little off.

Cas wept for a long time, huddled into Dean’s arms, accepting out of sheer desperation (albeit a little guiltily) the comfort he clearly did not believe he was entitled to, and if a few tears also dripped down to land atop the angel’s head, well, Dean would never be ashamed of how intensely his own emotions were linked with Cas’s.

Dean might never be able to remember or reconstruct the things he said to Cas, the words he murmured into the mussed hair, whispered against the sweat-dampened forehead. The content of it seemed largely immaterial, at any rate. What mattered was the overarching message behind the words: that Dean was here, and that he wasn’t going anywhere, ever.
Eventually, very slowly, the worst of the sobbing seemed to pass. Bit by bit, the shuddering eased, the tears slowing if not stopping. Only when the angel lay exhausted but quiet against Dean’s chest did Dean draw back just enough to carefully sweep his thumbs across the angel’s cheeks, wiping away the worst of the tears. Although the slow trickle continued, it was really the gesture that mattered anyway. Cas’s bloodshot eyes lifted to his own for only a second, then dropped again, as if ashamed to meet Dean’s eyes.

“Hey,” Dean hadn’t known he was going to speak until he heard his own voice, impossibly gentle, “look at me.” It wasn’t a command so much as a plea, but Cas clearly felt unable to refuse Dean anything just now. Slowly, reluctantly, the red-rimmed, swollen blue eyes raised once more to lock with green.

“You’re okay. We’re okay. I love you.” Yeah, maybe they were words he wasn’t super comfortable saying, but if ever there was a moment in which he needed to get over his shit, it was this one. Cas needed to hear it right now, and Dean would never be able to deny him what he needed.

The gravelly voice was raw with both tears and pain when it emerged.

“You shouldn’t,” Cas told him, and there was so much self-loathing in those words that Dean’s heart broke anew with it.

“Lucky for both of us,” he told Cas, “you don’t get to make that call. I do, and nothing you say or do or think is going to change that. Ever.”

Cas tried to speak but choked on his words, settling for merely shaking his head—not a statement of disbelief, rather one of helpless negation, a silent statement that Dean shouldn’t feel that way, that Cas did not believe he was worthy of unconditional love.

“If you like,” Dean told him quietly, pressing his lips close against Cas’s forehead for a moment before pulling back once more, “I can give you the long-ass list of my sins, of the things I’ve done to you—not thought of doing, not wanted to do, but actually done—and then we can talk about who’s worthy of what.”

Cas’s head shook once more, eyes starting to drop, convinced that whatever sins Dean had on his own head could never begin to equal what Cas believed himself to be guilty of. Dean’s hands lifted again, untangling from around the angel to cup his cheeks, lifting that beloved face so that Cas had no choice but to meet Dean’s eyes once more, to really listen—but it was no use. He tried maybe another fifteen times, but words had never been Dean’s gift, and Cas was too stubbornly entrenched in his own guilt to be able to hear Dean’s reassurance.

Luckily, Sam wasn’t the only idea-man in the bunch. A plan was starting to assemble itself—a little absurd, maybe, given the circumstances, but the only thing Dean could think of that might be able to bridge the divide that speech was proving woefully inadequate against. If nothing else, it didn’t actually involve sneaking illicit substances into anybody’s food, which made it at least ten times better than anything Dean had come up with in recent memory.

Shifting a little bit, stifling a groan at the stiffness of his muscles, Dean once again gathered Cas in close to his chest, rising first to his knees and then to his feet. It was a little awkward considering the weight of the angel in his arms, but Dean managed it. Cas made a noise and shifted as if to slide out of Dean’s grasp. Dean was having none of it. His arms tightened, pulling Cas closer still until the angel relented, once again melting into the embrace.

The positions were familiar, if not the roles. How many times had Cas cradled Dean against his
chest, carried him like a new bride through these halls when his limbs or his heart were too weak to support himself? The very least Dean could do was return the favor in the moments when Cas was the one who had fallen apart. The very least Dean could do was figure out a way to put the shattered pieces of the angel back together—and he thought maybe, just maybe, he knew how. Perhaps, at the least, how to begin the process. Some of it, Cas would have to do himself.

Out of the library and down the dim hallway he carried the angel, directly to the same place Cas always took him. To Dean’s—no. To their room. Whether Cas theoretically had his own or not, this place did not just belong to Dean anymore. It belonged to both of them, and that was as it should be. There was no space for Dean, no space he wanted in his life that did not also have room for Cas. Cas belonged anywhere that Dean did. There was, simply, no Dean without Cas. Not anymore. The angel was as much a part of him (albeit in a different way) as Sam was. Without either of them, he could not go on. Would not know how. Would not know who he was anymore.

And Cas needed to understand that. Needed to know. And for that, he needed to forgive himself.

With a little maneuvering and one hand, he managed to open the door to their room, stepping inside. Cas made a small noise, as if to halt Dean, and he thought he understood why. In Cas’s mind, this was the scene of the crime. This was the place in which he had almost lost control, the place in which he had come as close as he ever had to doing something that he saw as far more terrible than any of the many sins already on his conscience. This was the place in which he had almost done something that could not be taken back.

And that was exactly why this was where they needed to go, where it needed to happen. Where Dean needed to unmake the memory, unravel what had happened and rewrite a newer, better, stronger memory over it.

He carried Cas over to the bed, but set him down on his feet. It did not surprise Dean when Cas was a little unsteady, and he didn’t plan on going far enough to let the angel fall, anyway. Would never let him fall.

Cas could still barely look at him and Dean allowed it for the moment, didn’t force it. The time would come when he would need to, but first he had to get them there.

His hands rose to Cas’s shoulders, fastening on the trenchcoat and beginning to slide it down his arms. Cas froze for half a second, then started to curl his arms in, as if to disallow this, to prevent Dean from pulling it away. What drove this was likely twofold: first, the trenchcoat acted as a security blanket, and Cas had rarely felt less secure than he did now—and perhaps even more importantly, some part of Cas sensed what Dean was about and believed he needed to put a stop to it now.

Dean paused, patient, ready to wait Cas out and see whether he relented. When it didn’t happen, he knew instinctively what to do, what to say.

“What’s your safeword?” The words shattered the silence of the room, but even more than that they shattered what calm Cas had managed to gather back around him. His eyes flared wide and he made a move to take a step back. Dean followed him, not giving an inch, backing him up until he hit the bedside table and had no further to go.

“Dean, no,” Cas whispered.

“Tell me your safeword.” Dean repeated, voice firm, fully in control.

“Dean…”
“Now, Cas.”

“Perdition. It’s…perdition.”

“Use it if you need to, but don’t you dare say it because you’re worried about me. Use it for you, or not at all.”

This time, when Dean’s hands went to the trenchcoat, Cas let him. As it puddled to the floor, Cas’s gaze lifted to Dean’s, pleading, uncertain. Dean met his eyes steadily, gaze gentle but unswerving, and after a moment, the angel’s eyes dropped once more.

Dean undressed him slowly, taking his time about it, and Cas allowed it, although the trembling picked up again and by the time Dean helped him to step out of his boxers, the angel’s teeth were buried in his lower lip. Dean’s hands came up to cup Cas’s face again, tilting it just slightly upward so that their lips could press together.

The first kiss was impossibly soft, sweet. Dean pulled back long enough for Cas to draw in a desperate gasp, as if he had been stuck underwater so long that he was starving for air, and before his lips could again press against Cas’s, the angel was speaking.

“No, Dean, you can’t. I can’t. I can’t touch you, I can’t—“

Dean could hear the rising panic in the angel’s voice and had no intention of letting it gain a foothold. He cut the words off, letting his instincts again take hold.

“Shhh. Then you won’t.”

Cas lapsed into silence, confusion warring with fear and hesitance on his face as Dean grasped his shoulders and maneuvered him until he sat on the edge of the bed. With gentle but unyielding touches, he got Cas fully laid out with his head on the pillow.

“Hands above your head,” he ordered, still gentle, still mindful of how wounded Cas was, but brooking no disobedience. If Cas wanted to stop this, he knew how. He knew the word that would bring it all to an end.

Slowly, eyes still pleading with Dean not to do this, not to get close enough, not to put himself in what Cas somehow, inexplicably still perceived as danger—as if he was ever safer than when his body was locked against the angel’s—Cas lifted his hands above his head.

Dean turned and crouched, easily grabbing what he needed from the pile of discarded clothes on the floor, then climbed onto the bed, straddling Cas and crawling up him until he could seize the strong but slender wrists in his hands. He crossed them, wrapping Cas’s tie around them three times, tying it off before he tied the trailing end to the headboard.

Both of them knew this was little more than a symbol. Cas could be out of it with a single thought if he so desired, but true restraint wasn’t the point, anyway, and Dean needed him to understand this.

“If I wanted to,” he told Cas quietly, “I could go to the dungeon and get angel-warded cuffs. I could lock you down so tight you couldn’t move an inch no matter how hard you fought. But I’m not doing that. Do you know why?”

Cas’s damp eyes met his and timidly, just once, he shook his head. No, he didn’t know. Dean had known he wouldn’t.

“Because I don’t need to. Because you know I want you to keep your hands there, and you’re going
to do it. Because if you want out, you know what to say, but otherwise you’re going to do as you’re told. Because I’m trusting you, and you’re going to trust me in return.”

The sound that leaked from the angel could only be called a whimper. For just a moment, Dean wanted to drop all of it, to throw away his plan, wrap himself around Cas, and just hold him. All evening, all night, all week—however long it took.

But it wasn’t enough. Wouldn’t be enough. What Cas needed right now, no matter how frightened he was of it, was to discover that what had happened had not, in fact, broken them. That they were bound as closely as ever they had been. That perhaps the purest form of prayer either of them could muster was in the moments when their bodies locked together and moved as one.

So he didn’t relent. Didn’t give in to the wordless pleading in the angel’s eyes. Instead he looked beyond the fear to what lay beneath—to the naked yearning for connection. To the desperate desire for contact, for absolution. Cas wanted this as badly as he had ever wanted anything in his billion-year existence. He just didn’t believe he could have it. Didn’t believe he deserved it.

Dean knew better.

His voice when he spoke was still not harsh, but it left no room for rebellion. “Say ‘yes, Dean.’”

Cas’s voice was scarcely more than a whisper, but for a moment his eyes on Dean’s were a little clearer, a little steadier. That was enough to reassure Dean that he’d been right, that this really was what Cas needed. That he really did want this, he just wouldn’t have let himself have it without Dean guiding him there.

“Y—yes, Dean.”

Dean didn’t want Cas to call him ‘Sir.’ Didn’t want that kind of power dynamic, not really. This wasn’t truly a scene, not in the way they were used to. Cas still had the use of his safeword, because Dean needed a way to know for sure whether he was pushing the angel too far, but this wasn’t about testing his limits. This wasn’t really about pain or about power. Dean had taken control simply because it’s what Cas needed right now, not because it gave him any particular joy to have power over the angel.

No, what he was seeking from this—what Dean was aiming for and what Cas needed most—was connection. Closeness. The renewing of a bond that felt a little strained after the weight of the last several days.

So, in a moment in which Cas no doubt would’ve said ‘good boy,’ Dean did not. Instead, he sat on the bed beside Cas, then leaned over and brushed his nose lightly against the angel’s, pressing their foreheads together just long enough to murmur, “thank you, baby.”

Then he got back to his feet and set about undressing himself, just as slowly and deliberately as he had undressed Cas. The first time the angel’s eyes started to stray, to drop as if he didn’t believe he had the right to witness this, as if he was sure he didn’t deserve to see it, Dean spoke again, a firm command.

“No. Look at me. You don’t look away. You look right at me until I tell you otherwise.”

“Yes, Dean.” There it was. Cas was getting the message, and the more control Dean exerted, the more the angel seemed to relax into it. The more Dean showed that he was in perfect command of the situation, the more the anxiety seemed to bleed out of Cas. Taking half a second to be grateful that his instincts had steered him right this time (they were usually pretty damn good, but he would
never forget what had happened yesterday when he was so certain that all Cas needed was the touch of their hands), Dean continued to disrobe, dropping his sweatpants before setting his fingers into the waistband of his boxers. Cas’s eyes rested steadily on him, as ordered, and Dean could see the angel’s chest rising and falling with the speed of his breaths. It was funny; Cas didn’t actually need to breathe, which interestingly enough made his breathing one of the simplest ways of gauging his mood. Now, the rapidity of those breaths was a battle between terror and sheer, unadulterated need.

While arousal certainly wasn’t necessarily synonymous with want (there was more than one kind of desire, and mixing them up was the cause of a whole lot of pain in Dean’s experience), the fact that Cas’s body was already taking note of the proceedings, his cock starting to fatten and lengthen, did little to disabuse Dean of his certainty that this was exactly what needed to happen.

Dean went ahead and slid his boxers down over his hips, let them drop to the floor so he could stand fully naked before Cas. He remained motionless as the angel’s gaze, as intense as a physical touch, swept him from the top of his head down to his feet and then back, lingering here and there, in the spots Dean knew Cas most loved to touch, to taste, to stroke, to bite. The sharp vee of his hipbones, the curve of his damn bowlegs, the arch of his neck. Cas’s cock was well over half-mast now, apparently on board despite any lingering reservations his northside brain might still have been harboring.

He waited until the angel’s eyes locked once more with his own before he spoke, and then it was with great deliberation, ensuring that Cas heard and understood every word, despite his growing arousal.

“You don’t trust yourself. Don’t trust your self-control, think you might break at any moment. I have a higher opinion of you than that. I think you can control yourself. In fact, you are going to control yourself. You’re going to lie there and watch while I prep myself for you, and you’re not going to move. You’re going to stay right where I put you, and you’re going to watch me finger myself open for your cock. Do you understand me?”

This time, when Cas whimpered, there was something completely different behind it. The angel’s hips rolled upward a little, involuntarily, and as Dean spoke his cock had risen to full engorgement, the tiniest pearl of liquid gleaming at its head. Somehow, with no small effort, Dean managed to restrain himself from climbing onto the bed and burying that hot, hard length to the root in his throat. Instead, he waited, eyes steady and unyielding on the angel’s, and after a long few seconds, Cas answered him, voice uneven but determined.

“Yes, Dean.”

“You can do this, Cas,” he said quietly, “I already know you can. This isn’t for me. You don’t need to prove anything to me. This is for you.”

Cas’s eyes welled up at those words and Dean stepped forward, climbing onto the bed and crawling up the angel’s body. He kept himself up far enough that there was no unintentional brush of skin against skin, leaning over to gently wipe the dampness from beneath those beloved blue eyes.

“There’s one other way you can end this,” Dean whispered, leaning close enough that his vision was swallowed up by that intense blue, close enough that Cas could see nothing other than Dean’s eyes staring back. “All you have to do is tell me you forgive yourself. All you have to do is tell me you trust yourself. You tell me that and I’ll untie you, let you put your hands anywhere you want them, let you do anything you want. You tell me that and you can take back the reins.”

Cas made a soft noise, a broken sound of yearning, but he did not speak. Dean had known full well
that he would not, did not expect to hear those words from his mouth. Not while they were doing this, not for a long time. Maybe not ever. He hoped he was wrong, desperately hoped he could get Cas there, but he hadn’t that much faith in himself. He didn’t believe he could send a message strong enough that Cas would accept what Dean was trying to transmit, accept that there was nothing to forgive, that there had been no breach of trust, not really.

Nevertheless, he waited a moment, searching Cas’s eyes until it became perfectly clear that the angel’s silence was deliberate. Then he leaned down again, brushing his lips with feather-lightness against Cas’s lips. Finally, those lips moved under Dean’s, just a little, not merely yielding but shaping to his in the ghost of a returned kiss.

Good. That was good.

Dean knelt up, then leaned over, pulling open the drawer to his bedside table and easily locating by feel the small bottle he needed. Knees planted on either side of Cas’s thighs, he clicked open the cap. Dean kept his gaze locked with Cas’s, able to keep half an eye on what he was doing without breaking that connection. Upending the bottle, he drizzled the thick liquid generously over the index and middle finger of his right hand, deliberately giving himself a little more than he needed, letting a few drops patter down against the angel’s bare hip. Cas jerked slightly at the contact, then took a harsh breath and forced himself to still, forced his own hips back down to the bed. Dean nodded at him once, acknowledging the self-control Cas had employed, the self-control only one of them felt sure of.

Then, slowly, making sure Cas was watching, Dean capped the bottle and set it down beside them before he reached his left hand down to grip one of his cheeks, pulling them apart. His right hand followed, index finger probing at the ring of muscle before nudging past it, heedless of the awkward angle he was working at. It really was a hell of a lot easier to have someone else prep you, but Dean was willing to take one for the team given the circumstances.

He hissed out a soft breath as his own finger breached him and slid in to the hilt, hips arching just a little. Cas’s mouth opened in a tiny ‘o,’ blue eyes wide and intense as they slid from Dean’s gaze down to his hips, as though, if he just focused hard enough, he could see through Dean to the place where he was fingering himself open.

Dean didn’t wait long, didn’t give himself much time to adjust to the single finger before he was drawing it out and replacing it with two. He went ahead and gave voice to the low sound of pleasure and wanting that had demanded an outlet, figuring the lesson would be unlikely to stick if Dean didn’t actually make it hard for Cas to keep his hands and his body to himself.

He took his time stretching himself on those two fingers, first leaving them buried within, then spreading them, scissoring his tight muscles open, readying them for the weeping length rising from Cas’s groin. By the time his left hand reached for the bottle, right hand withdrawing so that he could drizzle more lube, this time on his three middle fingers, Cas was practically twitching. The angel’s teeth were digging hard into his lower lip, breath unsteady and rapid, his hands shifting slightly but unendingly in their bonds—but he made no movement to escape the ties that they both knew could not truly hold him, did not lift his hips the bare inches it would take to rub his cock against Dean’s.

“Look at yourself,” Dean murmured as he set the bottle aside once more and reached back with three slick fingers, “Look at how good you’re being. Look at how—oh, God,” he had to interrupt himself with a groan as his fingers drove back in, dragging lightly across his prostate, “—how hard you’re working to stay still, to stay where I put you. So good.”

Cas groaned, bone-deep, eyelids fluttering for a moment before his gaze settled back on Dean, who leaned over once more, still stretching himself on that trio of digits. “Tell me you trust yourself. Tell
me you forgive yourself. Say it and you can finish getting me ready for you. Say it and I’ll take my fingers out, we’ll replace them with yours. You know I love the feel of your fingers in me, opening me up for you. So much better than mine.”

The angel groaned once more, eyes practically fever-hot, but no words escaped him, and after the briefest of pauses, Dean went on, driving his fingers harder, fucking a drop of precome out of himself. It rolled off the head of his cock and dripped with perfect precision onto the head of Cas’s.

The sound that tore itself out of Cas’s throat was so feral it was practically a snarl, and still, somehow, he managed to keep his ass pressed against the bed. Dean was goddamn impressed, and made sure Cas knew it.

“So good for me, baby. So good. Fighting so hard, no matter how bad you want it. I knew you could, and now you know it too.”

Dean couldn’t have begun to describe the noise the angel made in response to this—a breathless, high-pitched, desperate sound. That was okay. Dean was done making him wait. Dean was done making himself wait. He slid his fingers out of his ass with a wet sound that made both of their cocks twitch in unison. The wild, ridiculous thought that, at this rate, their dicks could engage in synchronized swimming tumbled across his brain, yet another oddity to go into the mental register of weird-ass things that occurred to Dean during sex.

Letting that go (because, while he had many turn-ons, synchronized swimming was actually not one of them), Dean walked forward again on his knees until his ass hovered just above the angel’s cock, which had flushed to an angry red in objection to how understimulated it was. Dean had every intention of fixing that.

Taking up the bottle of lube for the third time, he coated his palm, reaching behind him to wrap his fingers unerringly around Cas’s cock, jacking it firmly three or four times until it was as slick with lube as Dean was. He was aiming for an easy entry and a smooth ride. Roughness was not what either of them needed just now.

Cas whimpered desperately as Dean’s hand wrapped around him, fingers convulsing as his wrists twisted in the tie. To anyone else he might have appeared to be struggling. Not to Dean. Dean knew that he wouldn’t need to struggle if he had any intention of actually escaping. Cas was not even testing his bonds, not really. He was simply unable to stop the tiny, restless movements, pouring all his energy into keeping himself from giving in to the desire that Dean had ruthlessly stoked and thus far left unsatisfied.

It wouldn’t be for much longer.

Dean’s hand slid down Cas once more, fingers encircling the base and holding it steady so that he could sink down. He rubbed the head of Cas’s cock against his crack teasingly, once, twice. Cas whimpered again, and this time managed to wrap his mouth around words.

“Please, Dean, please.”

“Tell me you trust yourself, Cas. Tell me you forgive yourself.”

“I—I can’t.”

“That’s okay. It’s okay, babe. We’ll get you there.” This time, Dean believed it. Was certain that they would get him there. It seemed that in working to help Cas find his lost faith in himself, Dean was discovering a secret wellspring of faith in himself. Funny how that worked. Hovering over Cas
with the angel’s cock rubbing against him, catching on his rim—well, it wouldn’t seem to be the set-up for emotional revelations, but their relationship had never exactly been traditional, had it?

With a groan of his own, Dean settled the head of that cock—flesh he knew every bit as well as he knew his own—against himself and finally, finally, sank down onto it. He slid down slowly, steadily, until his ass was flush with Cas’s thighs, until he could feel every inch of that swollen length impaling him.

They sat like that for a moment, both vibrating with tension, somehow managing not to move. Of the many things that might be lacking between them (although Dean could not honestly think of any just now), self-control sure as hell wasn’t one of them.

Once he caught his breath—or as close as he was likely to get—Dean very slowly lifted himself back up, until only the very tip of Cas’s cock remained inside him. He hovered there for a moment, working hard to ensure that his own desperation didn’t show on his face, waiting until he saw Cas’s fingers curl into fists that he was absolutely certain involved the angel’s fingernails digging half-moons into his palms.

When all was said and done, maybe they’d be left with matching welts from this impossibly long and trying few days.

As it was, Dean trusted his instincts once more and kept waiting, his thigh muscles starting to ache from the bizarre angle. It took only another few seconds before he got what he had been looking for, another desperate plea.

“Dean, please.”

“Tell me you trust yourself. Tell me you forgive yourself.”

The angel tipped his chin down in shame at his inability to give Dean the words he was looking for, blue eyes welling up. Dean shook his head, fingertips again rising to brush away the tears as he made gentle shushing noises.

“Shhh, baby. No. No, it’s okay. It’s okay. I’ve got you.” Okay. Too far, too soon. He wanted to push Cas, yes, but not to break him. Never to break him. Indeed, he was aiming for the opposite, here. He was aiming to put the angel back together, to affix the splintered shards of his heart back where they belonged, one piece at a time, smoothing out the jagged edges.

Rather than letting Cas start to lose himself once more in self-recrimination, Dean let himself slide back down, again burying Cas inside of him, both of them groaning in concert.

He didn’t ask again. Instead he rose and fell once more, setting a steady rhythm as he fucked himself on Cas’s cock.

While the angel may still have had some doubts about his own self-control, Dean had none. The fact that Cas was keeping his ass flush against the bed, was somehow managing not to buck his hips upward into Dean the way he so desperately wanted to—well, it was goddamn impressive is what it was. Dean had been in that position. He knew how hard it was. It took incredible restraint, and the angel was exercising his perfectly, no matter how much of a struggle it was.

Since the words hadn’t worked, since Cas couldn’t bring himself to say it, Dean thought to try something a little different, once again letting his instincts guide him. Really, he was feeling his way in the dark, had not a goddamn clue what he was really doing. The perfectly composed, entirely in control attitude he was projecting was just that—a projection. He took a second to wonder whether
Cas sometimes felt this way when he was Domming, then let the thought slide away in favor of focusing on what was right in front of him—the man he loved, still in pain, still fighting to come back from the internal torture he’d been subjecting himself to for a day and a half.

“You don’t have to say anything, baby, don’t have to say a word, but the moment you trust yourself, you can move. The moment you forgive yourself, you can move. This doesn’t have to be all me. It doesn’t have to be like this. It can be both of us. I want it to be both of us.”

He did, too. This mattered on a whole host of levels. What was happening now, what would happen—well, the entire future of their relationship hinged on it. Dean had never been more acutely aware of that than when he held the reins in his hands, for once—when he held the power that he usually willingly relinquished to the angel. If Cas couldn’t forgive himself, if he couldn’t find it in him to trust himself—well.

Dean loved him for a hell of a lot more than their sex life, but it would put a serious cramp in things if Cas couldn’t even bring himself to touch Dean freely for fear of losing control. You couldn’t be a Dom if you didn’t have total faith in your own self-control, Dean knew that perfectly well. Cas did too. If they couldn’t fix this, if Cas couldn’t manage to see that his self-control had actually been stronger than ever in those moments when he yearned for terrible things but didn’t give into them...a chapter in their relationship would be over, and Dean didn’t have half a clue how they would move on from there.

But he wasn’t going to put that additional pressure on Cas. It couldn’t come from a place of fear. Dean couldn’t force him into recognizing how strong he really was, how strong he had been yesterday when he looked straight into his own capacity for monstrous things and turned his back on them. How incredibly strong he had been when he was eye-to-eye with his own worst self and told him ‘no.’

As it was, Cas’s eyes met his own, and Dean could see the struggle within. For the first time, he thought Cas wanted to get there. Wanted to be able to let go, to forgive himself, to see the truth of things. And that was a damn good first step. Dean reached across the distance and helped him to take the next one.

“Look at yourself, babe. Look down at yourself. You want nothing more than to jerk your hips up, to tear your hands free and grab onto me, to take control. It’s what you’re best at, it’s what you know, it’s what you love. It’s what I love. But you’re not doing it. You’re not doing it because I asked you not to, and because it’s that simple for you. Because all it takes is a word from the man you love, and you’ll fight every instinct in your entire being and win.”

Something about that. Something about those words. Dean would never know exactly what it was, exactly what he said that finally did it. What he did see was the exact second in which it clicked. The exact second in which the blinders of self-hatred fell away from Cas’s eyes and he saw things clearly.

Dean knew enough about such things to recognize that this wasn’t a permanent or a perfect fix. There would be moments—probably many of them—in which Cas second-guessed himself. In which he got lost in his own head and fell back down the rabbit hole. Moments in the dark in which he would once again question what he was capable of, would again flay himself alive for the things that had never happened.

And that was okay. Recovery was never a linear process.

What mattered was that right now, in this moment, Cas believed.
Still, he hesitated, searching Dean’s face, looking yet again for the permission that Dean had already granted over and over again. Rather than reminding him of this, Dean simply nodded.

Just like that, the bindings wrapped around Cas’s wrists simply…fell away. The tie unraveled itself, as if by magic (and really, what else was angel mojo), and Cas sat up, his arms lifting to wrap Dean in close against him.

Dean tangled his arms around the angel in return as he tipped his head downward. Their lips crashed together far harder than their bodies had of yet. There was a hunger, a need in the kiss that Dean hadn’t dared to bring out before now. He’d been treading so very carefully, trying to get Cas to this point. Now that he was finally here, Dean didn’t waste a second in giving in to it.

Cas’s hips rose to meet Dean’s and they fell into a steady rhythm, faster than before but still unhurried. The urgency that colored their frantic kiss did not extend to the other place they were joined, undulating against one another with the ready ease of familiarity.

Dean couldn’t have said what it was that clued him in. He didn’t think he’d consciously registered any noise, although there must have been at least some, and certainly, seated atop Cas and facing the wall of his bedroom, he hadn’t seen anything. Nevertheless, he knew.

Disentangling his lips from Cas’s, he pressed a single finger against the angel’s lips when he went to recapture Dean’s mouth, pausing him briefly so he could speak.

“We’re doing fine in here, Sam. Really. Thanks for checking up.”

“Oh, just making sure,” came the voice from the doorway, “I’ll leave you to it.”

This time, Dean registered the sound of the door clicking shut and the footsteps retreating.

They managed to wait until the footsteps had receded entirely before losing it, but it was a close thing.

Dean and Cas seemed to be of one mind about this. For some reason, after everything, Sam’s interruption seemed nothing so much as painfully hilarious, and both of them broke down, rhythm stuttering to a halt as they fell against each other, laughing uproariously until they both had tears streaming down their faces and their stomachs ached.

Only when both of their laughter had faded to the occasional snort or giggle did they seem to recall that they were still joined. Cas lifted his hips experimentally, wringing a low moan out of Dean, and that was all it took to pull them back into the mutual headspace they had so entirely toppled out of.

Just like that, they were moving against each other once more, lips colliding, tongues entangling as Dean rose upward before falling once more as Cas rose to meet him. The rhythm sped, but not much, force increasing just enough that the sound of hips colliding with ass became more prominent than the soft, wet sounds of entry.

Dean fell off the precipice first, shouting into Cas’s mouth as his release streaked both of their stomachs. The clench of his ass dragged Cas behind him, and Dean swallowed Cas’s groan as greedily as his still convulsing muscles milked the release out of Cas’s cock.

They continued to kiss long after the motion of their hips had stilled, feeling no urgency to move, no urgency to allow Cas’s softening cock to slide out of Dean.

Cas’s voice was still raw when their lips finally broke apart, when he asked the question that clearly still plagued him.
“But—how can you forgive me, Dean?” He understood, clearly, that Dean was not harboring any anger, any resentment, he just didn’t seem to be able to put together why—so Dean told him.

“Because there’s nothing to forgive, baby.”

They were silent for long moments as Cas processed this, and just when Dean started to worry that it was hopeless, that he was vanishing back into that well of despair, the angel nodded. Just once, and just slightly, but it was enough.

~*~

Some time later, freshly showered and laying together on the bed, Dean’s arms snugly holding the angel against his chest, the strain of the last 36 hours started to catch up with him. Waves of exhaustion rolled in to capture him, but before they dragged him down, he lazily rolled his neck to nuzzle his face tenderly against the mussed head resting in the crook of his neck.

“Be here when I wake up?” Dean asked, voice thick with encroaching sleep.

“Always,” Cas murmured, turning his head to brush his lips against Dean’s chest.

Good enough.

Better, in fact.

Perfect.

Chapter End Notes

Chapter-specific warnings/tags: Very light bondage/tie kink (mostly because it's what happened to be convenient). Switching-ish. Bottoming from the top. Coitus, as always, interruptus (ohai Sam). And finally, a sexual encounter that could, if you squint just right and REALLY want to make trouble, potentially be read as borderline dubcon. It isn't. I want to make that perfectly clear. Cas does consent to what happens. His reservations all stem from his concerns about his own self-control. Dean does not do anything that Cas doesn't want, no matter how much Cas feels he shouldn't be allowed to have it.

That being said, that doesn't necessarily make how Dean goes about this okay. He pushed Cas pretty hard here, at a time when he was extremely vulnerable. It paid off, but there's an argument to be made that it could just as easily have gone very badly, if he misread the situation--and we've already seen that sometimes he DOES misread the situation.

Basically, what I'm saying here is that this fic is not an instruction manual for how to relationship. Get affirmative consent from your partners, not just 'they didn't safeword'. In the real world, sex is not a tool that should be used when one partner is seriously emotionally compromised, regardless of why they are.

AUTHOR'S NOTE:

Well, there you have it. As such things go, I think there are worse ways to bring a painful chapter (or three chapters, as the case may be) in this saga to a close.
Now that we've got this unexpectedly angsty story arc (seriously, I promise I had no idea going into this how dark it was going to end up being. I follow where the boys lead me, and sometimes they go somewhere that surprises the hell out of me) squared away, we're headed back toward calmer waters--insofar as any waters in the absurdity that is this fic are calm. I think y'all will get a kick out of where we're headed next, and I promise I haven't forgotten the smokin' hot role play you (and Cas) have been promised. We'll get there. Pinky swear.

TITLE NOTE: Once again, the title is poached from the Indigo Girls. It seemed only fitting to close out this particular story arc with their help. The phrase is lifted from the song "Strange Fire." The verse it was taken from is C&Ped below:

"I come to you with strange fire  
I make an offering of love  
The incense of my soul is burned  
By the fire in my blood  
I come with a softer answer  
To the questions that lie in your path  
I want to harbor you from the anger  
Find a refuge from the wrath"

Come find me on tumblr! I'm nice and even sometimes amusing!
Recalibration

Chapter Summary

In which Dean and Cas feel each other out (but not like that), Dean gets some feels over how little actual feeling out is going on, the food situation is getting dire, someone's a grumpypants, and Cas puts his big girl panties back on (but not like that).

Please see the end of the chapter for an author's note, since I always seem to have something to say.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Cas was as good as his word. When Dean swam upward an hour and a half later (as the bedside clock informed him when he finally got around to looking), the angel was still curled warmly against him. The mussed head was nestled snugly in the crook of Dean’s neck, arm wrapped around his torso. Although Cas must have sensed the change in Dean’s breathing and heartbeat as he climbed back to awareness, he did not move or lift his head.

Dean lay for a moment, trying to feel out Cas’s state of mind by osmosis, to sense whether he had tripped once more into that well of despair. He hoped that their joining—and even the absurd moment in which they had laughed themselves silly after Sam’s interruption—had managed to pull Cas far enough above that dark place that he wouldn’t so easily tumble back into it.

When he was able to pick up nothing (what he wouldn’t have given for some angel-senses right about now, or the ability to read minds—even if it was an invasion of privacy), he settled for turning his head to press his lips against the ruffled hair several times, murmuring into it, voice still thick with sleep. “How you doing babe?”

“I am…okay,” Cas said, after a moment’s pause in which to give the question due consideration. Yeah, it wasn’t the most ringing pronouncement of well-being Dean had ever heard, but the voice was grave and thoughtful, telling him that Cas was answering honestly and not merely trying to provide him with empty reassurance.

“Fair enough,” Dean told him, dropping another kiss on his head. Cas shifted then, drawing back just enough to turn his head and rest his chin on Dean’s chest, finally letting Dean get a good look at his face.

He looked…okay. Not great, maybe, his eyes were still a little red-rimmed as though his emotions had still been just a little too raw after Dean had fallen asleep—but not like he’d been truly weeping; not like he’d silently fallen back to pieces. Dean craned his neck, tipping his chin forward enough to brush his mouth against each of those eyes (Cas obediently let them fall shut) then tracking slightly south so their lips could meet. The kiss was soft, sweet, and slow. There was no urgency to it, no true heat. It was not a prelude to anything, nor did it need to be.

By the time they drew away from one another enough to lock eyes once more, Cas’s gaze was a little steadier and Dean had the sense that the angel might be close to upgrading from “okay” to “reasonably content.” Good.
The rest of the evening passed quietly. Cas, having expressed the desire to thank Sam for his help, took the kid aside while Dean made himself scarce in the kitchen. By the time he poked his nose back out into the library to check on things, Sam was clapping Cas reassuringly on the back while the angel smiled at him with real affection.

Dean took a moment to reflect that what had happened between himself and Cas had been a long time coming, regardless of what set it off. Sam had been a part of the problem—probably still was—but how could they stay mad? His brother had been quick to step in and offer his help, potentially putting himself on the line, given Cas' dangerous state of mind, and that went quite a ways towards repairing the strain on both their relationships with him.

Lips quirking in a small, secret smile, Dean withdrew back to the kitchen to sort out what to feed the two members of Team Free Will who were also on Team Needs Calories. Sam, giant mystery that he was these days, had graciously saved Dean a huge portion of the remaining mashed potatoes rather than demolishing them while he’d been dead to the world. Between the leftover potatoes and what remained of the ground beef he’d salvaged from the freezer-burned package discovered prior to The Great Drugging Incident of 2016, he was able to cobble together a pretty damn good dinner for himself and Sam. It was likely the last one of those they’d manage since at this point they’d gone entirely through their stores of frozen meat and fish and even the vegetables were starting to look a little sparse. Once this latest batch of bread was gone, Dean figured he could maybe make another couple loaves if he did some serious substituting and accepted that they were gonna be a little… weird, but after that, even his own noteworthy skills in the kitchen wouldn’t be able to make up for the lack of ingredients.

They were headed toward MRE territory real quick, and despite the fact that they were well into February, the snow showed no signs of melting. Temperatures remained below freezing and maybe the only redeeming quality to this was that it was actually too cold to snow even more.

Sam confessed a little guiltily that while Dean had been out cold, he’d actually started making some phone calls, seeing whether any of the hunters they knew might know someone anywhere near Lebanon who had a snow plow big enough to do the job and who owed a favor. Attempts at figuring it out were made, but the consensus was that the hunter network had nothing to offer, favor or no. Dean suspected said network was also probably now laughing at them. Damnit, he missed Bobby. Yeah, he would’ve laughed too, but he would’ve also fixed it.

Basically, they were back to square one, waiting for mother nature to get her shit together. Sam, still discouraged from this failure, immediately perked up at the idea Dean floated of doing some research about whether it might be possible to give the outside of the bunker some warding against snow for the future. At the very least, if they could put some kind of protection spell on the door and the stairs immediately outside, Cas could get in and out no matter how much it snowed and take them with him.

As the agreed-upon research guru of the pack, over the next few days Sam started dividing his time between that and his work on the ruins on Isla Del Sol. Dean and Cas spent the time…well, Dean wasn’t quite sure what to call it. Reacquainting themselves wasn’t quite right, because it wasn’t like the rift had lasted years; they still knew each other just as well. Renegotiating their relationship wasn’t right either, because there really wasn’t much actual conversation about things. It was more just…feeling each other out. Settling back into one another, back into the ease they’d had together for so long. In some ways it felt a little like the earliest days of their relationship, when they were still trying to figure each other out. There was nothing uncomfortable or awkward about it, not really, it was just…an exploration. They were both being a little more careful with one another than usual,
treated each other as if they were more fragile than they ordinarily would.

Still, a little bit at a time it eased, the brief pauses before speaking fading away, the split-second hesitation before touching eliminated. They fell back into one another and into what Dean thought of quite simply as “Us.”

By mutual and unspoken agreement, they hadn’t had sex since that first emotional reconnecting, choosing to fall back together in other ways first. During those first several days, Dean could easily sense that Cas still wasn’t in any state of mind to dominate him, and he was pretty sure that the angel would feel compelled to try regardless. To avoid any misunderstandings or backsliding they instead settled into bed each night, exchanged idle but sweet kisses for a few minutes before Dean tucked Cas’s head against his chest and drifted off.

At least, until somewhere between the second and the third night, without really thinking about or planning it, they shifted back to what their sleeping positions had been before. Although he fell asleep with Cas cradled against him, he woke up to find the angel’s arms twined around him, his head pillowed on Cas’s chest. It was surprisingly reassuring to Dean, the little signs that things were returning to what passed for normal between them.

Sam, with that uncanny sixth sense of his, never poked his head into their room or appeared at random moments, apparently knowing without being told that they had put another (albeit unofficial) moratorium on sexual activity.

~*~

It had been four days since Dean bound Cas to his bed and dragged the wounded angel back to him the best way he knew, and this afternoon found them curled up together on a blanket on the floor in front of the library’s fireplace. Considering that they were snowed in and it was the dead of winter, the fireplace hadn’t seen nearly enough use in the past few weeks. There was enough firewood stacked in an otherwise empty storage room for them to keep the fireplace lit around the clock for at least a month, maybe two (some smack talking about eight months before had led to a bet between Sam and Dean about who could chop more firewood. Long story short, they were really fucking well-stocked and Dean would forever insist the bet had been rigged from the start because Sam’s arms were freakishly long).

“You know,” Dean said thoughtfully, taking a chance on bringing up the topic they had studiously avoided for the past days, “what I still can’t figure is how the hell Sam knew to switch the plates in the first place. I checked. I checked right before I spiked the food, went to the door and looked down the hall and everything. I would swear he was in here, at the table, on his laptop.”

Cas grimaced but didn’t even twitch at the mention of the failed drugging, which Dean counted as excellent progress. The sasquatch under discussion was currently ass-deep in the archives, trying to cross-reference warding spells and weather patterns. Better him than Dean. Cas, meanwhile, shrugged his shoulders before observing, “I have many questions about how he has managed his… attentiveness over the past several weeks. There are at least two times I can think of in which he managed to get past locked doors, unless some newfound prescience allowed him to know where we were going to be ahead of time and conceal himself."

Dean shook his head. “It wouldn’t be the first time he’s seen the future, although that hasn’t happened in, what, nearly a decade? And anyway, he never saw shit like this. It always had to do with Azazel’s other ‘special kids,’ and as far as we know the rest of them are dead.”

“Well, he certainly has not been consuming demon blood while locked away in here,” Cas pointed out reasonably.
Dean nodded thoughtfully. “Actually, I’m pretty sure he said something about how I should know better than to think he’d leave a room unmonitored just because he couldn’t enter it. Made it sound almost like he had surveillance set up in there or something, but I can’t think how. He hadn’t decided to be the savior of our sex life until after we found Cu—the day that he stopped going into the kitchen.” Mentioning Curtis was still never a good call. The only thing that made Cas look more like a kicked puppy was mentioning Al. By this point, it was second-nature for Dean to step around both monuments, and he simply wasn’t asking how Cas had kept those little blue flowers on both memorials alive for endless weeks.

Cas allowed the near-miss to slide (the recent rift was fresh enough in both of their memories that neither had the heart to be upset with the other, even for small things), cocking his head thoughtfully before his eyes suddenly bugged out almost comically. Dean’s brows shot upward.

“What,” he demanded, “you look like you just saw a ghost—except that you’re actually way more chill when you see actual ghosts.”

Cas continued to look stunned for a few more seconds before seeming to gather himself. His lips started to quirk upward a little ironically. “I believe I may be able to solve this mystery,” he told Dean wryly. “About a week ago, one of the bulbs in the kitchen shattered. Not went out, shattered. You were asleep at the time. When I came out after cleaning up, intending to go to the storage room to get a fresh bulb, Sam told me he needed to go down there anyway and would grab one for me. The bulb he brought up looked a little strange to me, but he assured me it was simply a different brand.”

“Oh, my God,” Dean said, rolling his eyes upward, unsure whether to laugh or cry, “that little shit deliberately broke the bulb! Probably used a slingshot or something. Did you find anything weird on the floor?”

“Come to think of it, there was a small pebble mixed in with the shards of glass.”

“Unreal. That took some serious strategizing. He fucking manipulated you into planting a surveillance camera for him so he could keep an eye on us even though he wasn’t willing to go in! I’ve got half a mind to leave it in there and use it to fuck with him, but—“

“—but after all he did for us so recently, it does seem churlish to do so, I agree.”

“I’m not leaving the damn thing in there, though. It’s just too much. If he’s going to be creeping on us, I at least want to know he’s doing it. I can’t get down with this whole Big Brother is watching you shit.”

“He is your younger brother,” Cas pointed out helpfully. Dean’s lips twitched slightly.

“I know, it’s from 1984. George Orwell. Seriously, you really should read it. It’s a classic, not to mention I bet some of it’ll sound familiar considering—wait, was this seriously not in Metatron’s crash course?” He narrowed his eyes on the angel suspiciously. “Are you just fucking with me?”

Cas made a noncommittal noise (which was as good as confirmation that he was being messed with, in Dean’s eyes), lips twitching slightly, before he diverted back to the main point. “We could simply remove the camera and make no mention of it,” he suggested, “considering that Sam will be unable to replace it. I am not likely to be taken in again, after all.”

“That’s probably our best bet. Maybe we should check our room too, just to be safe. He could’ve snuck in there and planted one anytime. Actually, I don’t remember having a whole bunch of spare surveillance equipment lying around, so he might’ve exhausted his supply with the whole kitchen
Unwilling to let this revelation interrupt what was shaping up to be a really good snuggle session, they didn’t bother going to the kitchen to test their theory until Dean had to get up to pee and get a snack (a peanut butter sandwich made with the second-to-last loaf of bread—after this it was all MREs). Sure enough, when they did, Dean found a tiny surveillance camera cleverly inserted into an actual light bulb. Unsurprisingly, the same skills that made Sam a great ally also made him a giant pain in the ass when he was creeping on you.

They ended up opting to simply remove the bulb and replace it with a normal one, telling Sam that something must have been wrong with it because it had gone out after only a week. Dean ensured that the camera couldn’t be salvaged by crushing the entire thing under a boot (something he probably should have thought better of doing, since it seemed to give poor Cas a flashback to Curtis) before disposing of it. Sam seemed to take their explanation at face value when he joined them for dinner, apparently unperturbed by the loss (or possibly just doing a really good job of hiding his disappointment).

The next day brought with it news of a warm front that got all of them excited before they discovered it was set to miss them by a solid 100 miles. It looked like it would bring relief from the remaining snow further south, at least. As it was, they weren’t the only ones still paralyzed. The news from the surrounding regions suggested that everyone else was still struggling to dig out from the kind of storm that no snow-removal infrastructure, no matter how well-organized, had been prepared to deal with. Honestly, one of the biggest problems everyone seemed to be dealing with was quite simply where to put the stuff. You couldn’t remove it if you had no place to remove it to.

Dean felt for everyone else dealing with this, he really did. It was just that he couldn’t be bothered to spare a whole lot of mental energy worrying about them when the situation was getting so dire right here at home. Sam could probably survive on MREs without too much strain, except for how badly he already missed fresh and even frozen fruits and vegetables. Dean, though—he was not cut out for this. The best thing about getting a real home had been the ability to start making his own food, and finding himself unable to do so left him frustrated and irascible. Add to that the fact that cooking and baking had been one of the primary ways he occupied his time while trapped in here, and by the time they’d gone a couple days with only MREs and the occasional peanut butter sandwich, he was about ready to start tearing his own hair out in chunks.

Cas tried to keep him busy and distracted, bless him. He really did. First he broke out the board games, then a jigsaw puzzle (which backfired since, as Dean had insisted always happened, they were down two pieces when they finally got to the end, and this infuriated him to an unreasonable degree). When neither option served them well, he somehow came up with several decks of cards and a very old set of poker chips, demanding that Sam and Dean teach him how to play poker. ...which went about as well as could be expected. It was funny, since under ordinary circumstances the angel held the best poker face on the planet without breaking a sweat, but as soon as he was actually playing poker, his face turned so expressive he was practically a cartoon character. He telegraphed every single hand, making it so obvious what he was doing that Sam said he didn’t even need to bother trying to count cards (something Dean had insisted for years he was doing and Sam had previously always denied). With one cheating opponent (it was cheating, okay, no matter what Sam said) and one who was completely hopeless, Dean finally threw in the towel and flatly refused to play another hand.

Ultimately, what it came down to was that he was getting restless, and not just in the traditional sense. They were now nearly a week out from their make-up sex, if that’s what you could call it, with no sign of any sexual activity since. Even Sam was starting to look at them with thoughtful
concern, and Dean was pretty sure he and Cas had both had shifty eyes when he’d walked into the library this morning and they’d hastily changed the subject. It wasn’t a hard leap to conclude they were probably talking about his general grouchiness, and that only served to make Dean grouchier. His foul mood grew darker still when he overheard a muttered conversation scarcely 45 minutes later, just after he stomped out of the library to head for the kitchen. When Sam’s voice rang out, Dean paused just around the corner, choosing to listen in this time.

“Man, dude needs to get laid,” Sam observed.

“Tell me about it,” Cas agreed dryly.

“Uh--” Sam had clearly been about to do exactly that, but Cas, wising up, forestalled him.

“On second thought, Sam...don’t.”

“But you’re actually in a position to--”

Cas again interrupted. “Talk of positions is a hard limit, Sam.”

“That was not even remotely what I was going to point out, Cas.”

That was about all Dean could handle. “Jesus Christ, it’s like you assholes want me to hear you.”

He didn’t bother to wait for a response, but he did make sure they heard his snort of derision as he stalked the rest of the way to the kitchen.

Look, he had no intention of pressuring Cas into anything. He’d done enough of that the last time, although he still felt certain his actions had been the appropriate ones, and he would have done it again in a heartbeat in the same circumstances. What it came down to was that he really wasn’t a Dom. He was certainly not above initiating sex, bottom or no, but given recent events he was completely sure it was paramount to leave the ball(gag?) firmly in Cas’s court. Dean had already made it clear that he had no problem touching Cas. Now Cas needed to decide that he really did trust himself. Honestly, Dean probably would’ve even settled for some nice, mainstream vanilla sex at this point, but that wasn’t actually what he wanted—and nobody knew that better than Cas.

So here they were, Dean trying (and miserably failing) to be patient, letting Cas work through his shit in the knowledge that he would come to Dean when he was ready.

And if he was a little bit of a sulky dickhead in the meantime, well, he’d never claimed to be the most adaptive guy when it came to handling his frustration like a mature adult.

Exactly one week after the last time he and Cas had touched each other in any not-suitable-for-a-young-adult-novel way, Dean was in the kitchen cleaning yet again (quite unnecessarily, since nothing was being prepared in there at this point). Turning around to grab a sponge, he practically hit the ceiling when he spotted Cas, leaning against the doorway with arms casually crossed over his chest.

“Jesus, man!” Dean gasped weakly, “I really need to get around to putting that bell o—“

“Dean,” Cas interrupted, and although his voice was mild, there was something underlying it that Dean hadn’t heard in what felt like forever. He found himself standing a little straighter without really intending it, his body responding automatically to the familiar overtones, “hush.”

The order hadn’t really been necessary at this point. The second he really looked at the way Cas leaned so casually against the doorway, really spotted the not-quite-concealed heat in those blue eyes, he had pretty much lost the ability to speak. He found himself nodding with almost
embarrassing readiness, wondering whether it would be overkill to drop to his knees, crawl over to the angel, and blow him right then and there. God, he had missed hearing that commanding tone, seeing how comfortably the authoritative demeanor settled over the angel. As it was, he didn’t have a chance to embarrass himself further before Cas continued.

“You have been a little…difficult for the past several days. That’s really my fault, I suppose. I should have dealt with this behavior as soon as it arose, rather than letting you carry on with this childish moodiness. I know you well enough to recognize when you need structure, and rest assured I plan on providing it from this point forward.”

Okay, strike that whole thing about not embarrassing himself, because Cas was all the way across the room, they were both fully clothed, and Dean still didn’t manage to quite bite back the whimper those words drew from him. He just couldn’t help it. After days in which there had been nothing but sweet and gentle touches between them, Dean wanted it so badly he thought maybe he was starting to understand how Sam had felt while in withdrawal from the demon blood. Yeah, it was possible he was a little bit of an addict, but he was at peace with that as long as Cas continued to give him his fix.

Dean knew better than to respond with more than that sound, and it appeared to be more than enough for Cas in any case, if the slight smile that settled upon his face was any indication. The angel’s eyes raked Dean from tip to toe, dragging from him an involuntary shudder that he didn’t even try to conceal.

“You have a very simple decision to make, Dean, and then I will be taking the need for further decision-making out of your hands.” Goddammit, there was always a fucking decision. Before Dean could start getting really annoyed about it, Cas went on, and Dean understood why the decision had been necessary this time. “We can pick up where we left off, with the role play that had to be unfortunately postponed, or we can save that for another time. Either way, your attitude needs a serious adjustment, and I firmly plan to see that it receives one.”

Dean heard his throat click when he finally managed to swallow. Jesus Christ, how the hell did Cas manage to turn him into a squirming mess with nothing but the weight of his gaze and the quiet intensity of that gravelly voice? The question would have to wait for another day, because Dean had a more important question to attend to at the moment.

In the end, though, the decision wasn’t a hard one. Cas had been waiting a long damn time for this, and then had it snatched away from him at the last minute by Dean’s ill-considered actions. Dean wouldn’t make him wait even longer.

His voice was a little bit of a hot mess when he first spoke, and he had to pause and clear his throat before going on. “We—uh. We can do the…the first thing.” Somehow, he couldn’t quite bring himself to say “role play” but Cas knew what he was getting at anyway.

“Very well,” the angel told him, lips quirked in something that was very nearly a smile and all the more dangerous for it, “in that case, you will go to your room—“

It might have been a little suicidal, but Dean found himself interrupting Cas without actually making up his mind to do so. Honestly, this was important enough that it was worth the trouble he might earn himself with the interruption.

“Our room,” he corrected. Cas halted for a moment, face unreadable, and Dean tensed, waiting for the hammer to fall.

It never did.
Instead, the angel’s lips quirked upward almost imperceptibly, a slight softening in his eyes telling Dean that he understood the enormity of the correction he’d just made. Without addressing the interruption in any way, Cas picked up where he had left off—with one small change. “You will go to our room,” Dean couldn’t help the half-smile he gave the angel, “dress in slacks, a white button-down, your red and black striped tie, dress shoes, and your Men of Letters blazer. It is currently 2:26 PM. I will expect you to knock on the door to B43 at 2:45 exactly. Do not make me wait for you, Dean.”

A few months back, Sam and Dean had discovered a cache of blazers tucked into a storage room, all emblazoned with the Men of Letters crest. Dean had joked that they looked like they belonged to students of the weirdest parochial school ever. Apparently, at some point Sam had shown them to Cas and pointed out that particular similarity, because the angel was clearly intending to exploit the resemblance in order to help get Dean ‘into character,’ God help him.

Dean didn’t realize he’d been gaping wordlessly at Cas until he spoke again, lips twitching faintly. “I think you had better repeat your instructions back to me.”

Dean got his jaw to stop flapping after a moment and was pretty impressed with just how level he managed to keep his voice (spoiler alert: it really wasn’t all that level; it just wasn’t the total wreck it could have been).

“Um. Put on slacks, a button-down, my red and black tie, dress shoes, and my Men of Letters blazer. Meet you at B43 at 2:45. Don’t be late.”

“Good boy,” Cas praised, then nodded toward the doorway, telling Dean wordlessly to get his ass moving. After half a second’s hesitation, Dean turned to set the roll of paper towels and bottle of cleaner on the counter, wiping his hands on his sweatpants as he turned back to Cas. The angel made no move to shift out of the doorway, clearly intending for Dean to have to brush right past him.

Dean knew better than to delay or make any smart comments about the fact that Cas was still blocking half the doorway. Instead, he went ahead and did as he was told, moving to step around the angel. He had rarely been less surprised than when a hand suddenly closed around his bicep, despite the fact that Cas’s arms had been crossed over his chest a split-second beforehand.

“Are you ever in for it,” the angel murmured in his ear, before drawing back and releasing Dean’s suddenly gooseflesh-covered arm. Dean kept moving, not trusting his voice to speak or his slightly unsteady knees to hold him for much longer.

Right before he turned the corner to head to his room, the angel’s voice chased him down the hallway. “Oh, and Dean?” He pivoted to face Cas once more, hoping that his expression would serve as inquiry enough. It apparently did, because Cas went on, imparting one last piece of information. “You will call me Mr. Novak when you arrive. Do you understand?”

“Ye—“ he had to pause and lick his dry lips before he could go on. Cas’s eyes followed the motion intently from afar. “Yes, Sir.”

“Good boy. It is now 2:29. You have 16 minutes. Get your ass in gear.”

Just like that, Cas turned his back on Dean and vanished around the corner opposite him, leaving Dean staring stupidly at nothing at all, scarcely able to process what was coming next except to be abstractly impressed that somehow, with a weeklong hiatus and a few sentences, Cas had him drooling at the idea of something he had originally refused to even consider doing.
Goddamn, he was good, and Dean wouldn’t have had it any other way.

Shuddering slightly at the memory of the way those blue eyes bored into him, Dean turned the corner and headed for their room.

He had his orders.

Chapter End Notes

AUTHOR'S NOTE:

Well, it seems everyone's recovered from our traumatic side-journey (except possibly all of you, sorry about that) pretty well. And hey, look what's coming next! We finally made it! One hell of a role play, coming up.

Also—holy crap, gang. Chapter 40. Chapter FORTY. We're having one hell of a journey together, aren't we? I did not in any way anticipate, when I started this three months ago, that we'd be here, 215,000 words later, still going strong. But I'm not a bit sorry. I'm having so much fun, and I hope you are too.

With that in mind, I hate to do this to y'all, but poor Imp The Cat (yes, it's possible my username has something to do with him) is due for a check-up with his oncologist, and it's a bit of a trek to get there. We're doing that on Wednesday, and I have no idea how long it'll take, especially with the 3-4 hours total commute time figured in. With that in mind, I can't actually promise that you'll get the next chapter on time. It's possible that I'll have to push it back to Thursday. I will make every effort not to let that happen, but consider yourselves forewarned.

I promise, it'll be worth the wait. And all y'all (not to mention Cas) have already been waiting for this one for some time. What's another day or so?

Till next time, tell me what's on all of your minds. You're falling down on the job at commenting (except for those of you who aren't, you beautiful sweet cinnamon rolls, you know who you are). Get your shit together!

Seriously, I love hearing from you. No matter what you have to say. Even when it's just incoherent, wordless flailing. GIVE IT TO ME. And if you're one of my more active commenters, you get the added benefit that I learn who you are, I fall in love with you, and if you've got something you want me to write in the future, you're gonna end up a priority. JUST SAYIN'.

Yeah, yeah, I'm not above bribery, what of it?

Oh, hey, and come find me on tumblr if you haven't already. I'm charming, I promise.
Chapter Summary

In which if school had been a little more like this, Dean might not have dropped out.

[NOTE: My incredible beta phaelsafe would like to register her displeasure that I dropped the ball on what could've been a really awesome "PUDDING!" reference. For those of you who are a little bewildered (bless her, she has a slightly cockamamie sense of humor) I recommend going and reading the lyrics to 'Another Brick in the Wall']

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Time was a funny thing. When you were really looking forward to something, it always seemed to crawl. Minutes could stretch out interminably. On the contrary, when something you were dreading was on the horizon, hours or even days had the tendency to pass in the blink of an eye.

The next sixteen minutes managed to both fly by and crawl past for Dean, and he had no idea how that was even possible. Cas had been kind enough to give him incredibly clear instructions, which meant Dean didn’t have to waste any time in decision-making or dithering between various options. Theoretically. In actuality, within the framework he’d been given, there were still about a hundred things to decide. Should Dean go commando or wear boxers? And if so, which ones? Should he go with his nicest slacks, or those old ones that were a little tight? They weren’t the most comfortable, but they made his ass look amazing. The white shirt was easy—those were all the same. Likewise the blazer—he’d brought only one of them to his room, mostly because it amused him. He’d never really had any call to wear it, but it fit perfectly.

He had to pause to debate himself again on the socks, since Cas hadn’t bothered to give him any instruction. Simple black ones, or some of his sillier, colorful ones? (In the end, he opted for the neon pink and green argyle Sam had gag-gifted him a year or two ago, because why the hell not?) And finally, he had his red and black tie already on, perfectly centered and neatly tied, before it occurred to him that if he was going to play at being a high school student, especially an ill-behaved one, being too sharply dressed seemed like a bad call. So he took a leaf out of Cas’s book and undid his tie, retying it with a much messier, more haphazard knot, leaving it a little too loose around his neck and unbuttoning his top button. Taking a glance at himself in the mirror, he was a little surprised to see how well his outfit really did as a reasonable facsimile of student-at-hoity-toity-academy.

It felt a little like hours had passed while he debated with himself, but he still found himself shocked when a glance at his watch informed him that a whole eleven minutes had slid by while he made up his mind. Silently telling time to make up its goddamn mind, Dean messed up his hair a little artfully in the mirror and then set out, noting that he'd have to book it so he wasn't late. B43 was three levels down and at least seven hallways away, set in an area of the bunker they almost never ventured into. Actually, come to think of it, while Dean knew its approximate location and was pretty sure Sam had explored down there thoroughly when they first adopted the bunker as their home base, he wasn’t certain he’d ever visited that particular room himself. He figured it was probably an unused, empty storage room that Cas had been able to convert to his own purposes.
It was a close thing, but he made it with about twenty seconds to spare, breathing a little hard. Only now did it occur to him that he should’ve grabbed one of his old backpacks from his closet to complete the picture. Shrugging slightly to himself, Dean silently mouthed along with his watch’s countdown toward zero hour, hovering his hand over the door. The second it clicked from 2:44 to 2:45, he rapped sharply on the surface. There was a brief pause, even though Dean was absolutely certain Cas had been waiting patiently just on the other side of the door.

He hadn’t really had much time to think or get anxious about what was coming—he’d been too rushed to make sure he was ready—but those thirty seconds more than made up for his previous distraction. By the time the door finally clicked open, Dean was practically vibrating with anticipation and nerves. He was also totally unprepared for what awaited him.

Somehow, despite Cas’s clear instructions to him, it hadn’t occurred to Dean that Cas would do some costuming of his own.

Granted, it wasn’t nearly as different from his normal uniform as Dean’s clothing was, but still. The angel wore his customary suit and white shirt, but there was a neatness and precision to it that it generally lacked. While Cas certainly hadn’t had the time to iron it, it nevertheless hung off of him, pristine and with razor-sharp creases. The white shirt also looked pressed and starched, fastened to the very top and—here was the big one—his normal blue tie had been replaced by a much staider dark grey one with burgundy pinstripes. That was surprising enough, but when you considered that it was tied perfectly, snug around his throat, and facing forward—well. Add in that his hair was neatly combed and gelled and he was wearing a pair of horn-rimmed glasses (where the hell had even found those?) and the full picture was…compelling, to say the least. Cas was the very picture of strict, detail-oriented teacher, and Dean found himself with jaw hanging open an inch or so, staring wordlessly and wondering how the same suit as ever hanging off the same body as ever had him already half-hard.

To be fair, it wasn’t just the costume and hair choices that got him. Cas also stood particularly erect, and the look on his face—damn. If Dean thought he’d seen the angel look stern before now, this was a whole new level. He gazed down at Dean over his glasses (seriously, how did he manage to loom over someone who was two inches taller than him?) disapprovingly, and Dean found himself shrinking a little, shoulders slouching just a hair, as if to make himself smaller.

“You are late, Mr. Winchester.” Dean almost opened his mouth to protest that he’d been exactly on time, but something about Cas’s expression told him that this was all a part of the game. Taking a deep breath, Dean realized that this was the moment when he decided how to play this. Was he gonna do just enough to humor Cas, or was he really gonna go for broke and throw himself into the deep end?

Honestly, it wasn’t even a question.

When he spoke, he was a little impressed with the fact that his voice actually sounded a little higher than usual, an echo of the 18-year-old he had once been. “I’m really sorry, Mr. Novak. I had to stop off and let Coach know I was gonna be a little late for practice. This isn’t gonna take too long, is it? We’ve got a big game tomorrow night, and—“

“I am not interested in your excuses, Mr. Winchester,” Cas broke in sharply, “as you always seem to have a ready supply of them. It is your own actions that find you here, and you will find that I am unswayed by any arguments that suggest that athletics are more important than your education. Come in.”

Hot damn. Cas was…he was really into this. And he was killing it. Dean actually felt a little resentful and defiant. The slightly sulky, borderline fuck-you expression settled onto his face quite
naturally as he stepped into the room, slouched a few steps past Cas—and then froze.

Holy shit. It was an actual, honest-to-God classroom. A blackboard spanned the front wall, perfectly pristine, although several pieces of chalk and an eraser rested on the wooden protrusion at the bottom that all chalkboards seemed to have. A large, flat-topped desk of dark wood dominated the front of the room, facing outward toward five rows of five much smaller wooden desks, arranged with perfect precision in neat lines. Now that he thought about it, Dean dimly remembered Sam making mention of there being one or two of these awhile back, positing that the bunker could serve as a training facility for the Men of Letters, if need be. How delighted Cas must have been when he discovered this! As it was, it certainly contributed to the full effect, dragging Dean even further into character.

A single, straight-backed chair—the only one in the room—was placed directly in front of the large desk. Behind the desk sat a much bigger and more comfortable looking chair. Cas brushed past Dean and crossed toward that chair, pulling it out and settling into it before folding his hands neatly on the wooden surface. When Dean continued to stand, shifting uncomfortably from foot to foot, Cas motioned impatiently to the straight-backed chair. “This will only take longer if you dilly-dally, Mr. Winchester.”

Dear God, did he just say dilly-dally? When had he even picked up that particular phrase? Dean shuffled over to the chair and dropped into it just a hair too heavily, the way he’d gotten so adept at when he wanted to silently register his defiance as a teenager without risking actually opening his always-smart mouth. Cas’s lips thinned just slightly, suggesting that Dean’s wordless protest had been noted and disapproved of.

“Now then,” Cas said, adjusting his glasses just slightly before folding his hands on the desk once again, “I trust you know why you are here?”

Goddammit, that wasn’t fair. Did Dean have to make up some pretext? Well, whatever. He went with the old standard, one he’d gotten nailed for more than once.

“Cause I was talking to Angela Parker in class today,” he told Cas, using his best bored voice.

“No, Mr. Winchester. That is not why you are here, although that was certainly the latest in a long line of precipitating factors.” There was a moment of silence in which Dean remained stubbornly silent, as if determined to wait his teacher out. Cas watched him steadily for perhaps thirty seconds (and thirty seconds was a long damn time to stare at someone in silence) before he sighed and stood again, coming around the side of the desk to perch on its edge so he could look down at Dean.

“Dean, I am going to speak frankly. I have called you here because our previous discussions do not seem to have had an impact. You continue to be distracted in class, you do not stay on task, and you frequently distract the other students. While I recognize that you are certainly capable of passing with minimal effort, the rest of them are not. As a result, and despite your exemplary test scores, I am forced to seriously consider failing you.”

Dean went ahead and let his eyes widen in horror, straightening up in his chair as if only just realizing how serious this was. When he spoke, he was a little surprised by the note of earnest pleading in his voice. “No, sir, come on, you can’t do that. If I fail your class, my GPA’s gonna drop too low for sports. I could lose my scholarship.”

Cas tilted his head just slightly, taking in Dean in silence for a moment as he gazed desperately back up, twisting his hands together.

“I have no desire to destroy any student’s opportunity to further their education, Mr. Winchester, but I simply cannot overlook your behavior any longer. With that in mind, I will give you a choice.
You can deal with the consequences of your actions as any other student would, via your grades, or we can handle this...privately.”

There it was. Dean didn’t even hesitate, making it clear that in his desperation he had completely missed the slightly ominous note to the last word. “Privately, sir, please, I’ll do anything, I can’t lose my scholarship.”

Cas’s lip twitched almost imperceptibly as he rose and stepped back around his desk. “Very well.” He opened a drawer in the desk and leaned over it. Dean held his breath, waiting to see what Cas was going to bring out. A heavy strap? One of those old-school paddles with holes drilled in it? It could be anything, it could be—a pad of paper?

Wait, what?

No, it was definitely a simple pad of paper, followed by a nondescript pen. Cas set them down decisively in front of Dean, then settled back into his seat, eyes not straying from Dean’s face for a moment. “Mr. Winchester, you will sit in that chair and write ‘I will remain on task and not distract the other students in class’ 500 times before you leave here today, and every day for the next week.”

Dean didn’t even have to pause to think about this before the words tumbled out of his throat.

“Red. Red. RED. Perdition. RED. What the fuck, I did not sign on for that.”

This had to be the first (and likely the last) time that the response to his safeword was Cas bursting into uncontrollable laughter. He laughed for at least a full minute, head thrown back, before getting himself under control. By the time he finally calmed down, Dean was on his feet, arms crossed over his chest as he stared accusingly at Cas.

Cas lifted his glasses and wiped his eyes, sighing a little in amusement before he turned his gaze back on Dean. “I am sorry. I…you should have seen your face. Dean, I recognize why you chose to use your safeword, but please give me some credit that I know what I am doing, and I know exactly where I am taking us. We can certainly stop right now if that is what you feel we need to do, but I would ask that you give me another…shall we say, two minutes, and if you have not changed your mind by then and do not wish to continue, we will stop, no questions asked. Can you do that for me?”

It was unheard of for Cas to argue with Dean about stopping a scene in progress. Safewords were pretty much sacred, and if Cas was asking Dean to put his on hold, there had to be a damn good reason. Narrowing his eyes on the angel, Dean seriously thought about telling him to go fuck himself—but something in that earnest, open gaze held him back. Sighing deeply, he nodded once. “Fine. Two minutes.”

“You mentioned,” Cas said, “that you had practice, earlier. Perhaps that is something that your alterego would like to mention again, given how time-consuming 500 lines would be?”

Dean recognized that Cas was clearly laying out the appropriate path for him to take, giving Dean a little spoiler in order to ensure that the next two minutes took them where Cas intended for them to go. Okay, he appreciated that, and could definitely make use of the tip. He nodded acknowledgement, still just a little sulky, and Cas smiled encouragingly at him.

“What is your color, Dean?”

Dean paused for a second and thought about it. Was he actually green? Well—not really, but he wasn’t actually red either. Even yellow was a little far, and with that in mind… “Chartreuse,” he told
Cas, grateful that Sam had a creepy knowledge of various shades and had reliably informed him more than once that chartreuse was a yellow-green.

Cas’s lip twitched and he rolled his eyes a little at the snark, but slipped easily back into character, repeating his previous order.

“You will sit there and write ‘I will remain on task and not distract the other students in class’ 500 times before you leave here today, and every day for the next week.”

“Mr. Novak, no!” Dean cried with impressive passion, putting his distaste for the idea in his words, along with a hint of panic, “Sir, I have practice today. I have a game tomorrow. I can’t miss it, if you make me write 500 lines I’ll be here for hours. Coach will kill me if I can’t start.”

Cas made a low noise of warning in his throat and Dean immediately fell silent, actually wringing his hands this time. “Despite your unwillingness to follow directions and remain on-task in my classroom, you are once again expecting me to accommodate your needs without regard to the consequences of your actions. Very well, Mr. Winchester. I will agree to cut your lines down to 50 and restrict your punishment to today only—“

“Oh, thank you, Mr. Novak, thank you so much, I promise I’ll pay attention in—“

“I am not finished,” Cas said, volume rising just enough to be heard over Dean, voice snapping as sharply as the bite of the belt. Dean cringed back a little bit, eyes widening as he fell silent. “If you continue to interrupt me, I will be forced to reconsider my generous leniency.” Dean stayed quiet, letting his face reflect pleading. “Now, as I was saying. I will cut your lines down to fifty, and restrict your punishment to today only. However, I will be forced to apply more…extreme measures in order to ensure that this decreased number still serves as a valuable lesson in maintaining focus. Even under duress.”

…okay. So Dean could sort of start to see a hint of where this might be going, and maybe he was actually kind of on board with it. This was sounding a hell of a lot more promising than 500 fucking lines, anyway. There was a hint of something in Cas’s expression that said he, Cas, the real Cas, was asking him, Dean, the real Dean, whether he was still on board. Dean gave him the tiniest hint of a nod, and Cas dropped back into character completely. “You may change your mind at any time, but if you do, you will write 500 lines before leaving today, and every day this week. If you refuse to comply, I will not hesitate to fail you.”

Dean’s voice was colored with relief when he spoke. “Okay, sir, I’ll do the 50, I’ll do anything, I can’t miss practice, I can’t miss the game. I can’t fail.”

“Very well. Stand up, drop your pants, and bend over my desk.”

Dean let his eyes bulge out of his head, standing up fast enough to knock the chair he’d been seated in over as he stared in disbelief and derision. “What the fuck, Mr. Novak, is this some kind of sick joke?”

Cas remained in his chair, again steepling his fingers as he looked steadily at Dean. “Not at all, Mr. Winchester, and I advise you to watch your language. I will not be forgetting your disrespect. I thought I had made our terms quite clear, but if you would prefer the 500 lines, I have several extra pads of paper, and I am not the one bound by a strict schedule. The decision is entirely in your hands.”

Dean stared at him, scowling, aiming to let Cas—Mr. Novak—see on his face that he was struggling with himself for a long moment. Then his shoulders dropped and he hung his head down for a
moment, closing his eyes. “Okay. Okay, fine. I—fine.”

“Let us try that again. You will use proper English, and you will be respectful.”

“I—yes, sir.”

“Much better. Now, then. If you continue to dither, I may simply decide that it is clear you are not motivated enough to complete your punishment with any expedition and remove the choice altogether. You have your instructions.”

Dean set his jaw and narrowed his eyes just a little. Not enough to get nailed for disrespect, but enough to register his protest. He was killer at this. He’d been the high school kid with the bad attitude, it didn’t take much effort to summon up those patterns again.

Stepping forward to the edge of the desk, he fumbled with his belt for a minute before getting it unfastened. Cas watched him steadily with cool impassivity as he finally got his pants unbuttoned and unzipped, letting them slide down his legs to the floor. Cas raised a single brow, challenging.

“Boxers, too, Mr. Winchester.”

Dean opened his mouth furiously, as if to protest, then took one look at the steely gaze his teacher was giving him and snapped it shut, fingers sliding into the waistband of his boxers. He hesitated a moment before he went ahead and slid them down over his hips, letting them drop as well. Cas nodded once, sharply, then tipped his head toward the surface of his desk in wordless instruction.

Feeling his cheeks flame red, he bent forward with obvious reluctance, until his forearms rested on the surface of the desk. Only then did Cas rise, reaching back into the same desk drawer and withdrawing something that he kept concealed in his palm. He trod slowly around Dean, standing back there for a few moments in silence, clearly just taking in the picture before him. Dean craned his neck over his shoulder and was met by Cas’s disapproving gaze. With a single finger, he motioned for Dean to turn back around, and when he did, the sound of soft footsteps rang out behind him.

A moment later, a warm hand rested on one of his ass cheeks, pulling them ever-so-slightly apart. Dean made a quiet sound in his throat that Cas ignored as a single dry finger from his other hand suddenly probed very lightly at Dean’s hole. Dean jumped slightly, hips jerking a little.

“Have you ever had anything in here before, Mr. Winchester?” Cas inquired casually, that hint of steel still easily audible in his voice. Dean was silent, swallowing hard and shifting his weight from one foot to the other. All the while, the finger stayed poised, not entering him, merely applying light pressure.

Cas chuckled quietly. “Yes, I thought as much. You have been experimenting, Mr. Winchester. Well, that will serve you well today.”

The finger was gone, but the telltale click of a cap promised its rapid return, and Dean was not disappointed. When it came back, it did not waste any time, sliding immediately inside Dean to the hilt. He gasped, making as if to stand up. A hand slammed down on his upper back, stopping him before he could make it more than an inch or two. “You will not move until given permission, Mr. Winchester. You know how to stop this, and you know what the consequences for that will be. I would think very carefully.”

Dean grunted, sagging back over the desk, back slumping a little as if in defeat. Meanwhile, that single finger remained buried within, unmoving. After a brief pause, Cas withdrew it, and when it returned it was joined by another. Dean again made a soft sound, hips twitching a little, but the hand on his upper back remained firm. Cas was silent as he went to work, fingering Dean open with
methodical patience. Dean curled his fingers into fists on the desk, making himself the picture of unwilling, anxious compliance. After a moment he was gasping at a particularly forceful drive of Cas’s fingers, and his voice spilled out weakly.

“Mr. Novak, this is…this is so messed up. Sir, please, this isn’t even legal, you can’t—“

“Are you changing your mind, Mr. Winchester?”

“…no, sir,” Dean said, his quiet voice warring between desperation and resignation.

“Once again, you can stop this at any time, but short of that, the next time you complain there will be consequences.”

Dean remained silent, unclenching his fists and digging his fingertips into the wood of the desk, dropping his head to knock softly against its surface. Cas chuckled again quietly, and went back to work.

He managed to almost entirely avoid Dean’s prostate, which was probably a mercy since, as it turned out, this might actually have been more of a kink for Dean than he’d thought. He was hard as a rock and could feel himself actually dripping the occasional drop of precome. Cas had been quite right about waiting the extra two minutes, apparently.

Dean was able to keep his own counsel, right up until the fingers slid out of him and he felt the smooth silicone of the plug replace them, pressing forward without delay or ceremony. Something about the shape of it—Dean thought he just might know which plug this was, and if he was right…if he was right, Cas was fucking diabolical. Gasping, his head jerking back up, Dean was speaking as if he hadn’t quite given himself permission to do so but couldn’t stop himself.

“Sir! Mr. Novak, you can’t—“

“That is five, Dean.”

“…five what?” He demanded, trying to stand, but the hand on his back pushed a little harder, forcing him further down in an unnecessary show of dominance.

“Make that ten, for trying to rise once again without permission.” Suddenly the hand was gone, the voice back. “However, you now have permission. Pick up the chair and be seated in it.”

Dean made a low sound of disbelief, but stood, feeling his face burn hot as he turned, having to brush past Cas and bend over once more to pick up the chair. He could feel the angel’s eyes on him and narrowly refrained from squirming as he set it upright before reaching down for his pants and boxers. He’d only gotten them up to his knees before the voice snapped out, as he’d known it would, “Oh, no, Mr. Winchester. You will sit just like that. In fact, remove your pants and boxers altogether. Fold them neatly and place them on the floor.”

Dean swiveled to look at him, glaring, and Cas once again raised that single brow. Dean let his shoulders drop once more, stepping out of both pants and boxers. He recognized the exact moment when Cas spotted his ridiculous socks. The angel’s lips twitched once, twice, and he cleared his throat slightly before getting himself back under that tight control. Mouth twisted in distress and unspoken defiance, Dean nevertheless stepped forward and gingerly settled himself into the chair after folding his clothes. As soon as his ass made contact with the cool wood, the plug was pressed more firmly inside of him, nudging his prostate and making him jump. Cas returned to the desk, perching on its edge once more and gazing down at Dean steadily.

Dean had maybe never wanted to safeword less in his entire life.
Reaching slightly behind him, Cas seized the legal pad and pen and set them down in front of Dean once more. “As previously discussed, you will write out ‘I will remain on task and not distract the other students in class’ 50 times. You will write neatly, regardless of what distractions may occur. Every time your pen jerks enough to disrupt your cursive, you have earned yourself another five.”

“But five what,” Dean demanded, “five more lines?”

“Oh no, Mr. Winchester. Not more lines.” Cas stood, moving back around the desk and settling in his chair. For the third time, he opened the same drawer. From within it, he drew an old-fashioned, impressively sturdy looking ruler. Leaning forward just slightly, he set it down with weighty precision just in front of the legal pad. Dean’s voice rose almost instantly.

“No way. There is no way you’re going to spank me, Mr. Novak. This is sick.”

“Once again, Mr. Winchester, are you changing your mind?”

“I—Sir, please, I can’t miss practice. I can’t miss the game.”

“In that case, your whining just earned you another five. Your current count stands at fifteen. Would you like to make that twenty, or would you like to get started?”

Grinding his teeth together ostentatiously, Dean reached out and took the pen, edging his chair forward, closer to the desk. Glancing back up at Cas, Dean was met with an unflinching gaze and a single nod toward the pad.

Finally breaking eye contact, Dean leaned forward and set pen to paper. He started to write, pausing halfway through the line to look back up at Cas in wordless question.

“I will remain on task and not distract the other students in class. That is your line, Mr. Winchester.”

Dean nodded grudgingly and bent back to the pad, finishing the line before he looked back up at Cas in defiance. His cursive had been perfect. Cas nodded once in recognition, then tapped the pad with two fingers, urging Dean to go on. He did.

He was three and a half lines in, and his student persona was starting to feel like, okay, he could do this. Yeah, the plug was…well, you couldn’t miss it, that was for sure. His muscles couldn’t help but clench a little around it, and it lightly grazed his prostate every time he did, making him squirm a little. But he could do it. He was doing it.

That, of course, was the precise moment that the plug started to vibrate.

Despite the fact that some part of him had known this was going to happen, Dean jumped about a foot, and the pen skidded wildly across the paper, leaving a dark streak in its wake.

Cas tsked at him, voice quiet, “Five more. That makes twenty. Focus, Mr. Winchester.”

Dean made a soft sound that was nearly a whimper, looking up at Cas. A very, very slow, feral smile tugged up the corners of those familiar lips, and Dean-the-student suddenly and for the first time got a sense of exactly what kind of twisted, borderline sadistic personality was concealed behind neatness, precision, and an insistence on proper protocol. His mouth went dry and he stared wordlessly, shrinking a little as if he could escape the predatory stare by making himself smaller. It did not, of course, work. Once more, Cas nodded to the paper, the smile not faltering for a second.

Dean bent over the pad of paper, acutely aware of the very low but inescapable buzzing of the toy in his ass. Unable to control his squirming, he nevertheless set to work. It sure as hell wasn’t easy, but he was managing it. He was another five lines in and, while certainly not relaxing, starting to settle
into a rhythm.

And that was when Cas again pressed his fingers against the remote that was no doubt hiding in his pocket. The vibrator’s intensity suddenly jumped, and Dean’s pen went wild once more, releasing a frantic scribble across the paper to join the earlier streak.

“Twenty-five, Mr. Winchester. Clearly, the lesson is not yet sinking in. Continue.”

His voice held a quiet sort of amusement, a soft enjoyment that spoke of just how much *fun* he was having with this little game, how greatly he appreciated the opportunity to back student-Dean into a corner and force him to submit to this. Dean started to lift a pleading gaze to his teacher, then caught a glimpse of that same smile and dropped his eyes once more. He could practically *hear* the smile widen another few millimeters.

Leaning over the pad yet again, he settled his pen to the next line and began to write.

This time, he made it through seven lines and felt himself once more moving toward that rhythm where, despite the insistent buzzing of the vibrating plug, he could do this. And if he was squirming, well, who could blame him? Certainly “Mr. Novak” did not appear to mind—actually seemed to greatly appreciate the sight of Dean, bare-assed and unable to completely restrain his wriggling as he forced his way through the lines.

It came as no surprise to either Dean when the vibrator suddenly hit its third speed.

The pen didn’t go quite as wild this time. His control was better, but the line was still obviously disrupted. Cas stood suddenly, causing Dean to jerk again, pen twitching for the second time in a row. But surely that didn’t count; he hadn’t even started back up again.

Cas stepped around the desk again, moving behind Dean and leaning over, his front pressing against Dean’s upper back where it extended above the chair’s backrest. Again that soft click of the tongue rang out before Cas spoke. “Better, Mr. Winchester, but not good enough. That was twice, I believe. Thirty-five. When you are halfway through your lines, I will be delivering the strokes you have earned thus far. That should give you something else to think about while you finish the remainder of your lines.”

The sound that escaped Dean at this news was half groan and half wordless protest, but Cas appeared entirely unperturbed.

As he set pen to paper once more, Dean took a moment to realize that his dick was actually legitimately dripping precome at a slow but steady pace, pattering against the floor and his ridiculous socks. Jesus, he wasn’t sure he’d ever been more turned on in his life. He couldn’t believe he’d waited this long to try this shit. This was *awesome.* Cas obviously knew exactly what he was doing, as Dean should’ve known he would, and—holy hell, yeah, if he wanted to do this again sometime, Dean was so on board he was practically steaming across the Atlantic.

Somehow, he wasn’t sure how, he managed to get through the rest of the twenty-five lines with only one more precipitous pen jerk. That one wasn’t even because Cas had bumped the speed up—Dean’s squirming had suddenly landed him at just the right (or wrong, depending upon one’s opinion) angle against the plug, jarring its buzzing tip hard against his prostate. He was lucky he didn’t actually blow his load right then and there, and he was more than willing to forgive himself a little pen jerk. Cas spotted it, of course, and noted the additional five strokes.

Dean paused as he finished the twenty-fifth line, hesitating but not looking up, as if trying to decide whether he should just forge ahead and hope that Mr. Novak might change his mind about the
spanking. He wasn’t a bit surprised when the voice rang out from behind him. “Very good, Mr. Winchester. Halfway through. Stand up and remove your jacket—no need to stand on ceremony—then bend over my desk and take hold of the far edge.”

Dean hunched over a little, not getting up, glancing downward at his lap as if just realizing that standing up would reveal his arousal. Cas waited a few more seconds before his voice rose again, sharp and commanding.

“NOW, Mr. Winchester.”

Dean squirmed once but still didn’t move, and as soon as it became clear that he didn’t plan to do so, a firm hand closed around the scruff of his neck hard, jerking him to his feet. He went, gasping, face flaming even hotter (if that was possible) as the full scope of the problem became visible. His cock curved upward toward his belly, bright red, hard, and weeping. A moment of ominous silence stretched out before Cas once again chuckled, voice a smooth purr. “This is supposed to be a punishment, Mr. Winchester.”

Dean was mortified. Cas was so fucking good at this, because Dean was legitimately mortified. He opened his mouth, started to stammer something totally nonsensical, but Cas was having none of it. Releasing Dean’s neck, he snagged his suit coat by the shoulders and tugged, easily divesting Dean of it and setting it aside. Dean stood, shifting from foot to foot uneasily, until that familiar hand returned to the scruff of his neck, using the tight grip to bend him forward over the desk. Cas slid forward, snuggling his hips against Dean’s ass, deliberately letting him feel the hard length of Cas’s cock nudging against him.

Dean gasped sharply, breath whistling back out in a harsh wheeze as Cas leaned his entire body over Dean’s, covering him before grabbing his hands and forcing them to grasp the opposite edge of the desk. One of the hands then snaked under Dean’s stomach, landing unerringly on the ruler and drawing it out. Cas backed off, standing beside Dean and lightly grazing the cool wood of the ruler across his ass cheeks. Dean gasped, twitching a little but otherwise holding still.

“Very good, Mr. Winchester. You will maintain position while I deliver your punishment.”

Dean sensed the moment before the ruler fell and braced himself as best he could, inhaling sharply at that first bite. The crack of wood against flesh echoed slightly in the confined space, and Cas made a soft sound of appreciation.

“Your skin does pink up quite nicely, Mr. Winchester. It’s a shame I waited so long to resort to this.”

The quip seemed designed to provoke a response from Dean, maybe to try to add on another five strokes, but this time student-Dean couldn’t actually find his voice and had to settle for a quiet, pleading sound.

Cas was unmoved, as Dean had known he would be.

The ruler fell once more, just beside the first stroke, and Dean hissed out a breath, then another as it fell again, twice in quick succession.

It was nowhere near as intense as the belt, but it stung like the dickens, in a way that neither Cas’s hand nor the belt really did. Nevertheless, Dean did his damnedest to stay still. He really did try.

It was just no use. There was no way in hell he could’ve refrained from squirming with that ruler so relentlessly imparting such a sharp sting to every inch of his ass before venturing to his upper thighs.
By the time he was halfway through his forty strokes, his hips were moving endlessly in a fruitless attempt to escape the sting.

With a soft, impatient noise, Cas stepped closer, settling his groin against the side of Dean’s hip, reaching his left hand across to grasp Dean’s opposite hip firmly, holding him motionless for the bite of the ruler. Dean noticed again that Cas was very much enjoying this, and wasn’t too surprised when the words tumbled from his lips, even without him actually planning it.

“I—Mr. Novak. Sir.”

“Yes, Dean?” Something in Cas’s voice said he knew what was coming and that he just dared Dean to try it.

“If you—if you stop, if you…if you end the…sp- spanking and let me stop the lines, I…I could take care of that for you. Make it…make it worth your while. Sir.”

There were a few moments of silence, as if Cas was considering the offer, and Dean waited, body tense, fingertips tightening around the edge of the desk.

“The fact that you believe you can get out of what you have coming to you the way you always do tells me that you are more sorely in need of a firm hand than even I suspected. But I will be taking what you have so generously put on offer. After your lesson is complete.”

Dean groaned, clunking his head hard against the desk before he spoke up hastily.

“But—that wasn’t the deal. I’m not—you can’t—“

“Oh, but it is the deal now, Mr. Winchester. You’ve made an offer. I intend to take full advantage of your willingness to…repay me for considering your oh-so-important schedule while kindly providing your much warranted punishment.”

“I…I…yes, sir.” Dean let his voice drop a little in resignation and maybe, just maybe, a hint of anticipation? He could hear the smile in Cas’s voice as he spoke again.

“Now, then. We have the matter of another twenty strokes to attend to, followed by another twenty-five lines. Shall we?”

He did not wait for an answer, merely settled Dean more firmly against his hip and went to work, applying the ruler with enthusiasm and skill to Dean’s already pink ass. By the time they hit stroke thirty-three, Dean was making low noises, grunts and whimpers after each strike, and the satisfaction was practically radiating from every inch of Cas.

He wasted no time in finishing up the forty strokes, delivering the last five to that incredibly tender spot where thighs met ass, earning a cry from Dean as he added an extra stroke, directly across the base of the plug.

“And that, Mr. Winchester, is for believing that I can be bought. Consider yourself quite lucky that it is only a single stroke, and that I do not remove my belt in payment for the insult.”

Dean whimpered as Cas reached out and again grasped the back of his neck, pulling him upright and guiding him forcefully back into the chair. Dean gasped, shining eyes prickling again as the full weight of his body pressed his already well-spanked ass into the hard seat. A moment later, Cas stepped back, again appearing behind his desk, that small smile still firmly in place. He settled himself into his chair without ever taking his eyes off Dean. There was a warning in those intent eyes, a warning to think very carefully before he started complaining again, or risk Mr. Novak (holy
shit, he had just actually **thought** of Cas as ‘Mr. Novak,’ that was…that was a whole other level) raining down a world of wrath upon him. He took the warning to heart, picking up the pen and again leaning over the paper.

Remembering that he was a snarky, rebellious high school student who was submitting only under pain of failing, he went ahead and shifted in the chair, settling his legs just so and lifting his ass maybe a centimeter off the seat, letting the strength in his legs hold him as he dutifully started back up on the twenty-sixth line. He had scarcely gotten two words in before that voice, pure steel, broke over him.

“You will sit properly in your seat and let your well-spanked ass be the reminder it is intended to be, Mr. Winchester, or so help me, I will turn you across my knee and go back to work with that ruler until I think I’ve managed to impart the lesson more fully.’”

Dean’s ass hit the seat almost instantly, and harder than intended. He winced visibly, and Cas’s smile widened just a little.

“Very good, Mr. Winchester. Although I still haven’t ruled out putting you across my knee. I cannot deny that there is a certain…**attractiveness** to the proposition. I cannot say I would not enjoy doing so. Keep that in mind as you choose how to comport yourself while you finish your lines.”

“Yes, sir,” Dean muttered, dropping his chin to break eye contact and returning to his paper.

“Oh, and Mr. Winchester? You’ve already earned yourself an additional ten strokes with that little stunt. Carry on.”

Dean groaned softly but did not otherwise protest, squirming slightly. God, the unending buzzing of the vibrator in his ass, combined with the sting that somehow didn’t seem to be fading (that probably had to do with the pressure of the seat on his ass), was making it hard as hell to focus on anything but his almost painful arousal. He was about ready to rip the plug out himself, break character, and beg Cas to fuck him—but he couldn’t do that to the angel. Not when he was so clearly enjoying every second of this, and not when he’d waited so patiently for so long to get this chance.

Sighing deeply, Dean returned to his lines.

He made it through four before the plug’s buzzing intensified precipitously, and the pen once again danced haphazardly across the second sheet of paper he’d now moved on to. Cas hummed softly and spoke only a single word. “Fifteen.”

Dean hunched his shoulders up around his ears, actually biting the inside of his own cheek to prevent himself from coming right there. Cas would not be pleased if he didn’t manage to hold out.

Back to the lines, then. Another four and a half went by before the next jump in the vibrator’s intensity, and Jesus fucking Christ, how many speeds did this thing **have**? Dean dimly remembered something about a ten-speed butt plug that he had insisted on getting despite Cas’s doubts, and sort of wanted to cry. Goddammit, past Dean. Just…goddammit.

The one piece of good news was that, despite this jump, somehow Dean managed to keep his writing perfectly straight. Not a single twitch in the pen. He had no damn clue how he’d done it, but he wasn’t looking a gift horse in the mouth.

Cas paused for a moment, leaning closer to him and gazing at the paper upside down, as if looking for any evidence at all that Dean had given in to the distraction. When he could find none, he made a quiet sound of approval. “You’re getting better, Mr. Winchester. Perhaps it’s time to really test
“Wait, what? What the hell does that mean?” Dean demanded before he could stop himself.

“Twenty, Mr. Winchester. Return to your lines.”

Dean did, grimacing and grinding his teeth together as he did so. A second later, Cas came around the desk yet again, this time crouching beside Dean.

Dean told himself he was ready, he was prepared, he could handle this. He even sort of believed it. Right up until nimble fingers closed around his dick, making both him and his pen jump sharply.

“Twenty-five,” Cas said implacably, just before the entirety of his hand closed around Dean’s cock and began, slowly but firmly, to jack him. Oh, come on.

Dean whimpered openly as he bent back to his lines. What were there, fourteen more? Fifteen? That was nothing. He could totally do this. He would not let Mr. Novak (there he went again thinking ‘Mr. Novak’) get the best of him. He absolutely would not.

Spoiler alert: he did. He definitely, definitely let Mr. Novak get the best of him.

It was just…between the combination of that hand expertly jerking him off (and stopping just in time, every single damn time) and the plug randomly switching speeds what felt like every thirty seconds, Dean was a hot mess, and he figured it was kind of amazing that he only earned another twenty strokes by the time he finished the fiftieth line.

There was a moment’s silence, a pregnant pause as Dean slapped his pen down on the paper, a small act of defiance. He wasn’t really surprised at the serene voice as it declared, “Making it an even fifty, then. Very well done on your lines. You did better than I expected.”

Dean froze, blinking a few times before he turned his head toward Cas. “I…really?”

“Yes, really, Dean. But we still have several matters to attend to.”

Without asking, without urging, without even bothering to see whether Dean would do so of his own volition, that hand was again grasping the scruff of his neck and jerking him upright. Dean sighed a little in relief at the pressure being removed from his spanked ass, even though he knew the sting that had finally faded somewhat was about to be rekindled in spectacular fashion. He found himself bent forward across the desk for the third time, but this time as he started to bring his hands to the opposite corner, Cas spoke easily above him. “That will not be necessary, Mr. Winchester.”

There was a quiet sound of rustling fabric and then Cas’s hands suddenly closed on Dean’s wrists and jerked them backward, crossing them at the small of his back. Before he could fully process what was happening, they were tightly bound (but not tightly enough to impede blood flow) by what he was completely certain was Cas’s nice grey pinstriped tie. He gasped, starting to rise before the hand returned to the scruff of his neck and squeezed once in warning. He collapsed back over the desk, letting it take his weight, and the hand squeezed again, this time in silent praise.

“Mr. Novak, sir,” he said weakly, “you don’t—you don’t have to—I’m not going to try to—“

“I know I don’t have to, Dean. But it pleases me.”

Welp. There you had it. Both Deans were speechless, and a second later the ruler was again being lifted from the desk.
“I know you have practice to get to, Mr. Winchester,” Cas purred, silken danger layering his voice, “so I thought perhaps we would speed things up a bit, combine several steps. Now you can pay for your lapses in focus while you repay me for being generous enough with my time to provide you with the correction you so desperately needed.”

“I…thank you, sir?”

“Oh, no, Dean, I will require a somewhat more…substantial expression of gratitude.”

And that was when the plug suddenly, finally went still and silent within him. A moment later it was withdrawn, and Dean gulped audibly, his legs suddenly tensing up.

“Finally caught up, then?” Cas inquired casually, over the sound of a cap clicking followed by the wet slide of flesh on flesh.

Dean held his breath, knowing better than to respond, and a second later he felt a thick head nudging at the still fluttering ring of muscle. Cas wasted no time in sliding in to the hilt, leaving Dean gasping at the slick slide and the low burn of muscles that had not been quite stretched enough by the plug to leave this entry totally painless.

“Mmmm, Mr. Winchester, so tight. You fit me like a glove. I do believe we may have found a new way of disciplining you moving forward.”

“Sir,” Dean gasped, unable to find more words, and Cas laughed.

“Good boy, Dean. Now, about those fifty strokes…”

The ruler began to fall, unhurried but efficient, striking the sides of his butt and thighs, the top of his ass, and even lower down, just above where Cas’s cock had started up a leisurely rhythm, fucking him forward until the desk took his entire weight, unable to support himself. His wrists jerked a little at the bindings but found them unyielding, as he had known they would be. Still gasping, Dean found his breaths breaking on whimpers as the ruler rose and fell mercilessly. Eventually the whimpers were replaced by quiet cries as Cas fucked him a little faster and a lot harder, the hips jarring against his ass stinging nearly as much as the ruler which continued to paint his ass a brighter pink with every stroke.

“Mr. Winchester, you take my cock even better than you take a spanking. It seems you are multitalented. Next time I believe I will avail myself of that smart mouth of yours, see what else it might be good for.” His next words were each punctuated by a sharp thrust directly against his prostate, “What. Do. You. Think. Of. That?”

“I…yes, sir,” Dean breathed, his ass rising as much as it was able, trying to meet the cock that continued to batter it. He had no fucking clue how he hadn’t come yet, just knew that he would damn well finish this delicious spanking before he finally let loose, and—

He heard the clatter as the ruler fell to the floor and was confused, surely it hadn’t yet been fifty strokes?

“I cannot resist the heat of your ass against my palm, but I think you will find it quite up to the task of finishing up your spanking, Mr. Winchester,” Cas said, even his formerly steady voice sounding more than a little wrecked.

He was as good as his word. His palm fell with no less force than the ruler, imparting a deeper throb beneath the already sharp sting, and Dean was pretty goddamn sure he didn’t even pause when he hit fifty, blew straight past it, but who gave a damn, because Dean was about to blow, too.
Cas seemed to sense this, as always, the hand that wasn’t falling on Dean’s ass sliding around to grasp his cock and jerking it once, twice, three times.

That was all it took. If not for the desk holding him up, Dean would’ve hit his knees at the force of the orgasm that crashed over him. He realized dimly that he was wailing and couldn’t seem to care as his cock pulsed over and over again, streaking the desk with impressive enthusiasm. It seemed to go on for ages, Cas fucking and spanking him straight through it. Only when Dean’s cock had dribbled its last did Cas stop the fall of his hand, releasing Dean’s cock and setting both hands hard on Dean’s hips as he drove in still harder, chasing the pleasure he’d already given Dean.

He found it without much trouble, and Dean’s ass had barely stopped fluttering with the aftershocks of his own climax when he felt the warmth and wetness that heralded Cas’s release. The other man was remarkably silent through it, shaking apart far more quietly than Dean had.

Cas’s thrusts slowed but did not come to a halt until his cock had stopped jerking deep inside Dean. Then he collapsed over Dean’s back, breathing as if he’d just run a marathon (or the angelic version of one—what was that, 26,000 miles or so?). Their combined panting was the only thing that disrupted the silence of the room for perhaps ten seconds. Maybe not even that long. Honestly, later on Dean would simply be grateful that it didn’t happen earlier.

The sound of ominous creaking came from the back corner of the room. Cas rose, whirling, and Dean half-rolled onto his side, arms still bound, to get a look at the cause of the sound, even though he was already pretty damn sure he knew what he would see.

He was right. Mostly. He’d expected Sam. What he hadn’t called on was the fact that the kid was crouched atop a tall cabinet tucked into the corner, and that the cabinet was creaking dangerously. Still working to catch his breath, Cas was the one who spoke up this time.

“Get down from there, Sam, it sounds like it is going to break and you might be injured if it does. We do not need any more splinters.”

Sam hopped down nimbly, shaking his head to knock some hair off his face. Dean nudged Cas with the tip of his foot and the angel turned back to him, starting to work on the knots that bound his wrists while Dean gave Sam a half-smile.

“Still good, Sammy. Thanks for checking up on us.”

“Yup, I can see that. Glad you two have gotten back to…er, normal.”

“Dinner at 6?” Dean suggested.

“Sounds good. MREs again?” Sam asked, lips quirking ironically.

“Afraid so, unless you’ve discovered a magical burger joint somewhere in here.” Dean stretched his newly freed arms, reaching down to snag his boxers and pants and tug them up. He winced a little as they scraped at his raw ass.

Sam, still chuckling wistfully at the idea of a burger joint, shook his head, “I wish. See you at 6.”

“You got it,” Dean told him, watching for only a couple seconds after Sam vanished through the doorway.

There was a brief and slightly awkward pause as they listened to Sam’s footsteps recede down the hallway.
“Well,” said Cas thoughtfully, “I suspect that at this point—“

“—it’s probably best just to roll with it,” Dean agreed. “Hey, did you bring any orange juice down?”

Chapter End Notes

Chapter-specific warnings/tags: Teacher/Student Role Play (which could be read potentially as underage, although in my mind Student-Dean is an 18-year-old Senior, which is why he's talking about having a scholarship to college already. It also could easily be read as dubcon, given the power dynamic, but again, it's a role play, it's for fun), use of a vibrating, remote-controlled butt plug (because Cas is downright diabolical), writing lines, manhandling, spanking with ruler and hand, anal sex, and (last but never least) Sam, kindly checking up on everyone.

TITLE NOTE: The title, of course, is borrowed from the Van Halen song of the same name. Thanks, Van Halen!

AUTHOR'S NOTE:

And there you have it, y'all. Not only do you get this chapter on time, it's an extra-long one (something something dick joke, extra long, I'm a 12-year-old boy at heart). Imp's vet visit had to be postponed because of some seriously nasty weather, but it wouldn't have mattered either way. I wrote this entire chapter, all 9250 words of it, in about four hours yesterday morning. Broke my single-day record and my speed record in one fell swoop, mostly because I had the plot mapped out in almost excruciating detail before I ever sat down to write the thing. (In other, totally unrelated news, don't write seriously filthy smut in public, gang. It's in poor taste. Especially don't write filthy smut in a hospital infusion center while hooked up to an IV. That would just be gauche, and we can't have that, can we?)

I'm not gonna lie to you, I'm pleased as punch with how it turned out. I hope y'all are too. I know this was promised to you some time ago, and then I pulled a detour into Angstville just when you thought we were headed to Kinktown. I hope this was worth the wait and made up for the pain of the last story arc.

Y'all went above and beyond last chapter with commenting. You really listened to my pleas for feedback, and I can't tell you how much joy that brought me. Now, if this chapter brought you some joy or maybe a few tingles, I want to hear about it. Don't leave me hanging (something something hanging dick joke, remember, 12-year-old boy). I want to know what you think. I DEMAND to know what you think. Don't make me get the ruler.

In other news, we really are nearing the end this time. No joke, no takesies backies. I can guarantee three more chapters at minimum, but unless another story arc comes out of nowhere and splatters me against the ruins of my plans, we're actually for realsies within five chapters of finishing up. I know that's gonna make some of you sad--it makes me kinda sad, too--but I promise we're gonna have fun on our way there.
As always, thanks for reading. All y'all make this so very rewarding for me.

Feel free to come find me on tumblr. I'm reasonably amusing, and you can always send me asks or message me. I love hearing from my readers.
Chapter Summary

In which school is back in session.

Nuff said.

Chapter Notes

Chapter-specific warnings and tags can be found at the conclusion of the chapter, as ever, in addition to an author’s note bitching all of you out. Which is also kind of as usual, come to think of it.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Cas had indeed brought orange juice—two whole bottles, suggesting that he’d thought Dean might need some extra special aftercare following their brand new experience. He had handed one to Dean, then nodded for him to lean back against the desk, recognizing that sitting down was not likely to be uppermost on Dean’s list at the moment. He was starting to move to clean up the props they’d used, albeit keeping a close eye on Dean as he did so.

As it was, and despite Sam’s untimely (if predictable) interruption, Dean had rarely felt less hazy or out of it in the aftermath of a scene. Quite the contrary, he felt calm, crystal clear, content—even energized. In fact…

“You know,” he told the angel breezily, after taking a sip of the somehow still ice-cold bottle of juice, “I know we had…y’know…finished, when Captain Clumsy nearly crashed through the furniture, but there’s an argument to be made that we were still in mid-scene.” Okay, yeah, fine, maybe he’d been sort of into it.

Or completely, ridiculously, overwhelmingly, inarguably into it. Whatever.

It was just possible that he wouldn’t be able to get away with poking fun at Cas’s previously unsuspected flair for the dramatic anymore, given the evidence that he himself also had just a bit of one.

In the wake of Dean’s airy statement, Cas was silent for a moment. Dean went ahead and continued to sip his juice just a little too casually to successfully portray the air of nonchalance he was going for. He ruined it further when, after a pause that seemed just a little too long, he slid his eyes sideways to where Cas had been using a baby wipe to clean off the plug. The angel’s lips twitched ever-so-slightly before he set the plug down with firm deliberation, took the bottle of orange juice from Dean, and recapped it before setting it aside.

“That is an excellent point,” Cas said with a far better version of studied casualness than Dean had managed. “Green?”
“Green,” Dean affirmed, and no sooner was the word out of his mouth than he found himself spun neatly to face the desk once more, that firm hand again closing around the scruff of his neck to bend him ruthlessly across its surface. He hadn’t even had the chance to suck in a not-so-startled breath when half a second later, his pants and boxers were once again around his ankles, his wrists had been jerked to the small of his back, and Cas’s tie was wound (but not actually tied) around them.

There was the soft clinking sound of Cas unfastening his own slacks once more, and although one of the benefits of being an angel was zero refractory period, Dean didn’t think Cas was aiming to go right back at it. Instead, he was—

The angel’s hips snugged up against his ass, his now soft cock briefly brushing against Dean’s crack and making him inhale sharply, but a second later he was drawing back again. Exactly as Dean had thought. Cas was simply rewinding them to the moment in which Sam had nearly fallen through the cabinet, pantomiming withdrawing his cock from Dean once more.

“Well, Mr. Winchester,” it was incredible, the instantaneous difference in Cas’s voice, the edge of sharpness that was not at all Cas, the purr of a different sort of predator than the one Dean was used to hearing. This was entirely ‘Mr. Novak,’ and Dean thought he most assuredly wouldn’t mind getting to know Mr. Novak a little better, “I cannot deny that you took the latter portion of your punishment a great deal more…maturely than the first half.”

Dean took in a slow breath and let it out, a little shuddery, as if he was still trying to figure out exactly what the fuck had just happened. “I…yes, sir.”

“Nevertheless, I did go out of my way,” Dean could hear the quiet sound of Cas’s pants being once again fastened up, “to ensure that you were punished appropriately, and I was kind enough to cater to your schedule. What do you say?”

“Thank you, Mr. Novak, sir,” Dean said instantly.

“For?”

“For punishing me, and accommodating my schedule, sir.”

“You are most welcome, Dean. However.”

Dean, who had been starting to push up from the desk’s surface, froze solid. That single word alone would’ve been enough to stop Student-Dean in his tracks, and combined with the purr of dark promise in Cas’s tone of voice, it sent a shudder down his spine and made his voice sound very small and even younger than 18. “Y-yes, Sir?”

“It seems to me,” Cas told him, stepping forward and suddenly reaching between Dean and the desk, swiping a fingertip through the streaks of come that he hadn’t yet gotten around to cleaning up, “that you enjoyed your correction just a little too much.”

Cas extended his arm, presenting Dean with the evidence of his own climax.

“Yes, sir. Sorry, sir.”

Cas wiggled his finger a little, the instruction unspoken but no less clear for that. Dean leaned forward the necessary inch or two to take the digit into his mouth, giving it a leisurely, unnecessarily thorough clean-up. He didn’t particularly enjoy the slightly bitter, salty taste of his own spunk, but he sure as hell did enjoy the effect this had upon Cas, who drew in a slightly unsteady breath. “As I suspected, Mr. Winchester. That mouth clearly has more uses than merely sarcasm and backtalk, doesn’t it?”
The finger withdrew, leaving Dean available to answer the ironic question. “I…suppose so, sir,” he said quietly, as if he thought maybe he ought to protest but actually kind of wanted to enthusiastically sign on.

“That being the case, you should expect that I will find better uses for it after school the next time I discover you talking out of turn or speaking disrespectfully in class. Do you understand me?”

“I understand, sir,” Dean said, once again starting to rise. This time it was a hand on his upper back that stopped him. Dean paused, then spoke, as if trying to figure out the magic combination of words, “Sir, do you think you could untie me? And may I please get up? I…I really need to get to practice now."

“Certainly I could, Dean. And no, you may not.” The voice was sharp, but the hand that cracked against the lower curve of Dean’s ass was even sharper. He grunted softly, dropping his head against the desk. “You and I will get on a great deal better as soon as you accept that when you are in my classroom, you are at my mercy, Mr. Winchester. And I am not a merciful man.”

Dean whimpered and Cas laughed softly, the hand that had just delivered a swat now settling gently against his ass, squeezing his smarting cheek just hard enough to make him squirm a little. “Had you but controlled yourself and stayed on task in class, Mr. Winchester, all this could have been avoided…but you simply could not do that, could you?”

“I’m…I’m sorry, sir,” Dean whispered, as if he was torn between fear and thinking this was the hottest thing on the planet.

“I rather imagine you are…and part of you is, at any rate. As it stands, now that I have taken an…interest in your education, I think you and I will be having weekly check-ins to assess your progress in my classroom. And in your other classes. You will have your instructors fill out a progress report that I will provide for you on a weekly basis. I will expect reports of your behavior and academic performance to be exemplary, or there will be consequences, Mr. Winchester. Do you understand me?”

Holy shit. Were they really gonna do this every week? Yeah, real Dean was down with that. Real Dean was so down with that he was practically in Australia. Student-Dean was a little more uncertain, or at least embarrassed by how into that he really was. He lifted his head again, voice rushed and not totally steady.

“Sir, that really isn’t necessary, I—“

“Oh, but I think it is. I think it is quite necessary. Do you understand me, Mr. Winchester?” the warning in that tone could not be ignored, and Dean tipped his chin down once more, pressing his forehead against the desk, making his voice small and torn between resignation and anticipation.

“Yes, sir. I understand, sir.”

“In fact,” Cas went on, a smile in his voice, “it seems that I may not have done as thorough a job as I believed, if you still have enough rebellion in you to argue with me.”

“Sir, no, please, I wasn’t arguing, I was just—“

Student-Dean may have been surprised when that hand withdrew and fell again, a little harder, on his other cheek, but grown-up Dean sure wasn’t. He made a soft sound, then a slightly louder one when the hand remained where it had fallen, fingertips digging hard into heated flesh that Dean knew had to be bright pink.
“Are you,” the voice was tinged with amused irony, “actually arguing with me about whether or not you were arguing, Mr. Winchester? I would think very carefully before you answer.”

Dean paused, breathing a little quickly, pushing his forehead a little harder into the desk. Before he could open his mouth to respond, the hand that was not digging into his ass tangled in the hair at the top of his head, tugging his head off the hard wood. “None of that, Mr. Winchester. It wouldn’t do to give yourself any marks. Well—marks that can be seen when you are fully clothed, at any rate. If I am not much mistaken, you already have a number of the other sort, don’t you?”

Dean was silent for a moment too long, assuming the question was rhetorical, and the palm cracked against his ass for a third time, making him jump. “I asked you a question, Mr. Winchester. You are being rude.”

“Yes, sir.”

“Yes, sir, what?”

“Yes, sir, I already have—have marks. Under my clothes.”

“Good boy. Now, where were we? I believe I had just inquired whether you were arguing with me about whether or not you were arguing. I am still waiting on an answer—and I would still advise you to think very carefully before you lie to me, Mr. Winchester.”

“I—yes, sir, I was arguing. About whether or not I was arguing.”

“And was that mature? Or respectful?”

“No, sir, it was immature and disrespectful.”

“And what happens to immature and disrespectful young men, Mr. Winchester?”

Jesus Christ on a cracker, Cas was a fucking natural at this. Sometimes Dean forgot that he had actually been a Captain in his garrison, that he had commanded forces, that the authoritative demeanor he adopted so naturally was not actually new to him. This, though? He was much mistaken if Cas had ever actually been a teacher, and he was killing it at this regardless.

Dean didn’t quite realize how much time had slid by while he mused about how fabulous Cas really was at this. At least, not until the hand tightened in his hair, jerking his head around so that their eyes could meet.

“I asked you a question, Mr. Winchester. I expect prompt and respectful responses when I speak to you, unless you actually want to make this worse for yourself.” Dean felt himself blush for what had to be the tenth time this afternoon, which was kind of impressive since ordinarily it took a hell of a lot for him to get there. “Ah,” said Cas quietly, “is that it? I do believe some part of you, however small, rather relishes your comeuppance. Interesting.” Cas smiled just slightly, deliberately letting Dean watch as his eyes abandoned Dean’s face to slide down his prone body and bare, pink ass. “Now answer me, Mr. Winchester.”

Dean gasped again at the tug on his hair, dropping his gaze to the desk in shame. “I…I don’t remember the question, sir.”

“Then I shall repeat it, keeping in mind that maintaining focus was what you were called to answer for in the first place, and that I am extremely displeased at this evidence that you have not taken the lesson to heart. The question, Mr. Winchester, was ‘what happens to immature and disrespectful young men?’ You will look at me when you answer.”
Dean lifted his eyes, as if unwilling, to meet Cas’s unflinching, slightly narrowed gaze. “They—they get punished, Mr. Novak, sir.”

“Yes, they certainly do.”

The hand in his hair suddenly loosed, and Dean was allowed to turn his head frontwards once more. This was a bit of a relief—no matter how much he loved having to stare into Cas’s unyielding eyes, the angle had been hell on his neck.

He couldn’t stop himself from jumping a little when he heard the sound of wood scraping on tile. Cas had just reclaimed the ruler from the floor.

Dean made a low sound of mingled protest and plea, and Cas chuckled behind him. “I think ten will serve as a reasonable reminder to watch your mouth when you speak to your elders, Mr. Winchester.”

There was a split second in which Dean very nearly lost it and started laughing, because Cas sure as fuck was his elder—by a billion years or so. He managed to keep it together with only the utmost effort, huffing a breath out through his nose to stifle what really wanted to be a snicker. He could feel Cas behind him, perfectly aware of Dean’s instinctive response and probably stifling a grin of his own, but both of them managed to hold to their characters impressively. When Dean finally managed to get himself together and thought he could open his mouth without risking cracking up, he spoke again.

“Yes, sir.”

Crack.

No sooner had he spoken than the ruler fell against the underside of his ass, its length spanning both cheeks. He barely had time to catch in a breath before it fell for the second time.

Crack.

This stroke was just below the first, at the apex of ass and thighs, and earned a quiet, squeaky sound.

Crack.

The third one fell on his upper thighs and made him jerk a little against the desk. He braced himself for the fourth stroke, but instead Cas’s voice broke over him. “Spread your legs, Mr. Winchester. Wider. Wider. Yes, just like that.”

He knew exactly what was coming next, based on these instructions, and was not surprised when—

Crack.

—the next stripe fell against the inside of his right thigh, just as mercilessly as every stroke before it. The whimper it tore from him was louder still, and he actually had to work hard to keep his wrists where they were, because the tie (although wrapped around his wrists) still wasn’t actually tied. Dean rather thought Cas had been intending to unwrap it almost immediately and thus hadn’t bothered retying it, but had found himself getting swept back up in the renewed scene and forgotten all about it. Whatever, he could manage to keep his hands at the small of his back without help for fifteen minutes. It was the least he could do. He just had to breathe through the pain, and be prepared for—

Crack.
—the fifth stroke, which fell directly opposite the fourth, on the inside of his left thigh. *Oh, God.* That…yeah, that was intense.

The next four strokes alternated between left and right inner thigh, leaving both stinging relentlessly, and drawing all sorts of noises out of Dean that he would resolutely deny ever having produced. Walking was gonna be fun for the next couple hours, that was for sure.

Dean was frozen, waiting for the tenth stroke to fall for what felt like ages when suddenly the ruler was placed lightly on the desk beside his head. The breath he hadn’t been aware he was holding hissed out of him sharply as he swiveled his head around to look at ‘Mr. Novak.’

Cas was still smiling. If anything his smile was a little wider, a little more dangerous. Dean shivered slightly, turning back to face front, then groaned as a strong hand grasped one of his inner thighs and squeezed lightly.

“Ah, yes. That should give you a little something to think about during practice, Mr. Winchester. It seems to me that perhaps I should give you a little something else to think about as well, what do you say?” The hint of mocking in his voice made Dean’s spine stiffen a little in instinctive rebellion (as an actual 18-year-old, nothing had taken him from zero to 60 faster than the sense that adults were laughing at him), but he forced himself to breathe a few times before speaking.

“…whatever you think is best, sir.” Okay, so he didn’t totally manage the respectful tone, but the words were spot on.

“You are beginning to get the hang of this, Mr. Winchester, although your tone does leave something to be desired.” Dean caught a glimpse of movement out of the corner of his eye, just behind him on the desk, and whipped his head around to try to catch it.

He was too late. The ruler sat, unassuming, beside him, but there was nothing else on the desk’s surface, nothing to indicate what Cas had just done.

Something was pricking at him, something he ought to remember, something he had seen before, but he couldn’t seem to grasp it.

Not until he heard the oh-so-familiar click of a cap. Again.

That was when he remembered the newly cleaned plug which had been resting on the edge of the desk.

*Oh, God.*

There was a brief pause, a moment of silence, as Dean waited to hear Cas slicking up the plug again. It didn’t come. Instead, the cap clicked again, this time closing, and Cas set it decisively on the edge of the desk to Dean’s right. Then he reached out, neatly snagging his tie and unwinding it from around Dean’s wrists. Dean let out a slow breath in relief—his shoulders had been starting to complain, just a little—and let his hands drop, pressing them against the surface of the desk to either side of his torso.

“Yes, Mr. Winchester, you will have the free use of your hands once more available to you in a moment, but first I have a job for you.”

…wait. Wait, did Cas mean to make him—

“Reach back and spread your cheeks for me, Mr. Winchester. Nice and wide.”
“Sir, ple—“

“I do not like being kept waiting."

Dean made a soft sound of wordless frustration, but reached back with both hands, grimacing a little as he dug his fingers into his smarting cheeks and pulled them apart, revealing the ring of muscle between them that Dean could feel was still glistening with lube and Cas’s own come.

“Very good, Mr. Winchester. Hold them just like that, now.”

Cas swept the bottle up again, cap clicking, and now Dean heard the sound he’d been waiting for before, the wet sound of lube being slicked generously over the butt plug. His fingers stung his ass something fierce as they continued to hold his cheeks apart, but Cas didn’t seem intent on making him wait this time. Instead, seconds later, the plug was again pressing at his rim.

There was no tease, no gentle press and withdrawal, no taunting rub. Still slick and well-stretched from Cas’s cock, his muscles gave easily to the insistent pressure with which Cas pressed the plug inside him. Dean grunted loudly as the broadest part slid within before the flared base came to rest flush against his ass.

“Sir…?” Dean said, voice strangled.

“Something for you to keep in mind during practice, Mr. Winchester. You may not remove that yourself. If I find that you have done so, I will be extremely displeased with you, and I think we both know that it is not in your best interests to displease me, is it?”

“N—no, sir. But—I can’t leave it in all ni—“

“Of course not, Mr. Winchester. I am not an unreasonable man. I still have a number of papers to grade, and will be here well into the evening hours. When you complete practice, you will report back to my classroom, at which time I will remove it for you. In the meantime, you should put some thought into how you will thank me for my guidance at that time.”

Holy shit. It was probably safe to say that when Dean pointed out to Cas that they really hadn’t quite finished their scene yet, he hadn’t had the first clue of just what he was getting himself back into (which pretty much only emphasized that sometimes he was a dumbass, cause he really should have known), but he sure as hell wasn’t complaining.

Once again he’d started to get lost in his thoughts, but the sharp snap of the ruler cracking against his ass, coincidentally enough (or more likely not at all coincidentally) directly across the base of the plug, dragged his attention directly back where it ought to be.

“That, Mr. Winchester, does not count toward your ten strokes. That was merely to get your attention, which continues to wander. You are making me seriously consider whether I have gone too easy on you.”

“I—I’m sorry, sir, I just…yes, I’ll think about it. During practice. Sir.”

“Better. You think about that, and I will think about other ways to secure your focus. I will expect to see you back here in two hours, am I understood?”

“Sir, what if practice goes over?”

“Then you may choose to remain until it is over, as long as you do so with the understanding that I do not like being kept waiting,” his voice was a little sly, as if ‘Mr. Novak’ enjoyed the idea of
making Student-Dean decide between earning some form of devious punishment or disappointing his coach and teammates by leaving practice early after arriving late.

Dean went ahead and made his voice a little sullen in response to the catch-22. “Yes, sir.”

“Now, then, one small matter to attend to and then you may be on your way.”

Dean didn’t have a chance to steel himself or take in a breath before the loudest *crack* yet sounded in the room. The force of the ruler’s strike (yet again it fell against the base of the plug, jolting it into his prostate) pushed Dean up on his tiptoes as he resisted the urge to try to stomp or kick away the sting. A little whine escaped his throat as the ruler was immediately followed by the slide of a palm against the welt that was still rising. The hand slid down a little, weighing Dean’s right ass cheek, then lightly squeezing it before withdrawing.

“And there we are, Mr. Winchester. You may rise and set your clothing to rights.”

Dean took a moment to catch his breath, swallowing hard a couple times before he stood on slightly unsteady legs. Cas shifted again, moving to lean against the edge of his desk, just a little inside Dean’s personal space as Dean reached down to snag his pants and boxers, pulling them back up gingerly. He’d gone ahead and selected some of his softest boxers because despite popular opinion he could be a pretty smart guy when he wanted to. Even those scraped a little against his ass, making him incredibly grateful that he hadn’t actually gone commando the way he’d been considering.

Once he fumbled his belt back into place, he looked around for his blazer only to find that Cas was holding it out to him, those blue eyes resting intently on Dean. Something in that gaze said that he’d only just managed to restrain himself from shoving Dean right back down over the desk and replacing the plug with something a lot warmer and more lively, no matter how recently he’d been buried in Dean’s ass. Dean’s breath halted for half a second before he got it moving again, eyes dropping to the floor in an instinctive gesture of submission.

“What are you going to do, Mr. Winchester?”

“I’m…going to go to practice and then come back here in two hours, Mr. Novak.”

“And what are you not going to do?”

It took him a second before his flailing brain finally landed on what he was pretty sure was the right answer.

“I’m not going to remove the…the thing before I get back here.” What 18-year-old was going to comfortably talk about the butt plug his teacher had inserted in his ass?

“Good boy,” Cas murmured, voice deepening a few notches as he crowded into Dean’s space. Dean would likely have backed away out of sheer instinct (the escape-from-a-predator knee-jerk response was hard to suppress), but he suddenly found a hand tangling in the hair at the back of his head, holding it steady for the hard press of lips covering his own. He gave into the kiss immediately, letting Cas’s tongue force his mouth open and delve within for long moments.

When the kiss finally broke, he was gasping, eyes wide.

“You see, Dean? If you behave yourself, I will reward you. Just as I will punish you when you need it. And you do need it, don’t you?”

“Y—yes, sir,” he whispered, Student-Dean unable to stop the response that tumbled from his lips.
without his permission.

“Not to worry. Now that I am aware of what methods…speak to you, I will ensure that you get exactly what you need. Now off you go.”

He forcibly pivoted Dean around (not that Dean was resisting) and sent him toward the classroom door with a very firm swat, just overtop of where the plug was nestled. Somehow he knew exactly where to spank, even through clothing. Seriously, did the angel have x-ray vision or something?

Dean got his hand on the doorknob, sensing that the scene would end when he walked through that door. Of course, at that point he would be standing in the hallway with a thoroughly spanked ass, a boner, and a plug up his ass, but they could cross that bridge when they came to it. Just as he turned the knob, the voice rang from behind him, a little amused.

“Oh, and Mr. Winchester? I rather recommend that you change your clothes in one of the bathroom stalls in the locker room, or you might find yourself fielding rather uncomfortable questions.”

“Oh! Yes, sir. Thank you, sir.” Dean said, tone a little relieved, as if he couldn’t believe he hadn’t thought of that himself. There was a quiet chuckle behind him.

“Oh not at all, Dean. You may find my methods…exacting, but I will always take care of you.”

Dean glanced over his shoulder before ducking his head, then gave ‘Mr. Novak’ a shy nod of acknowledgement (so very different than the cocky, sulky attitude he’d walked in the door with) and stepped out into the hallway, clicking the door shut softly behind him.

Holy shit.

That had been…holy shit.

Dean didn’t really have a chance to complete a more thorough assessment of what had just happened before the door clicked back open and Cas, the real Cas, was standing in the doorway, staring wide-eyed at Dean. The glasses were gone and it looked like he’d run his hands through his formerly perfectly coiffed hair, because it stood up in every direction. Somehow, in a few seconds, he had transitioned entirely back to the slightly awkward and somewhat mussed boyfriend Dean was so crazy about.

They stared at each other in silence for a few moments, both reeling from the intense fuckyeah-ness of what had just occurred. Finally, Cas broke the silence, sounding a little shell-shocked.

“That…that was—“

“Yeah,” Dean agreed instantly, “it sure as hell was.”

“We—“ Cas broke off, as if groping for words, and Dean picked the thread back up, finishing the thought without a moment’s hesitation.

“—are so doing that again.”

Chapter End Notes

Chapter-specific tags/warnings: Teacher/Student role-play (implication is that both
characters are over the legal age of consent, but WITHIN the role play it can certainly be read as dubcon. Again, that's a role play, Dean and Cas both consent ENTHUSIASTICALLY to all of the proceedings), butt plugs, spanking, manhandling, humiliation, discussion of a domestic discipline type teacher/student relationship, and let's face it, the pretty clear indication that Dean and Cas are gonna be doing some more of this. Whether or not we'll actually get to SEE that at some point in the future remains unclear.

AUTHOR'S NOTE:

Sorry the chapter comes quite late today. I've been moving slow the past couple days. The body is being...uncooperative.

That being said...God fucking dammit, you guys. Alright, CONFESS. Own up. Whichever one of you sold your soul to Crowley in order to ensure that I was NEVER GOING TO FINISH this thing, raise your hand.

No, but seriously. I had the final three chapters laid out perfectly. Charted. Outlined. Ready to go.

And then I actually pulled up the empty word doc and started to write, and Dean promptly informed me that, excuse him very much indeed, he was not done with the scene, regardless of Sam’s interruption.

And, well, you saw the rest.

I don’t…I don’t even know.

So here we are, right back where we were at the end of LAST chapter, with me telling you I have three more very specific chapters planned out. Only this time I’m just going to admit that despite the fact that I can guarantee those three chapters ARE going to happen, I haven’t the slightest fucking clue what ELSE might also happen in the meantime.

Let’s find out, shall we?

Keep up with the commenting. I THRIVE on your feedback. I LIVE for it. It sustains me. And it's just possible that the OVERWHELMING response to last chapter had a little something to do with everyone getting an unexpected extension on Wednesday's assignment...if you will.

Okay, I've tested this metaphor about as far as it's willing to go.

So...what grade did I earn? *ducks thrown fruit*

Feel free to come find me on tumblr!
A Week in the Life, Part 1

Chapter Summary

In which every story needs a montage, and sometimes all you can really do is laugh.

Chapter-specific tags and warnings at the end of the chapter, as ever, along with your typical authorly advice, scolding, and logistical details.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

SUNDAY NIGHT

They both stood gaping at one another in motionless silence for another few moments before Cas suddenly startled and shook himself hard, reminding Dean of nothing so much as a dog that is astonished to discover itself soaking wet. He reached a hand out to Dean, who took it readily, allowing himself to be pulled back into the classroom.

“Drop your pants,” Cas told him, sounding a lot less authoritarian, and Dean barely had the chance to start getting into the idea of going again, right here, right now, before (somewhat to his disappointment) Cas added, “let’s get that plug out of you and get you cleaned up.”

Dean, whose fingers had already been fumbling with his belt, paused immediately, turning around to pin Cas with an offended glare. The angel blinked once, then again. “Or…not?”

“No,” Dean told him definitively, “Two hours is what I was told and if an 18-year-old Dean could handle it, 37-year-old Dean sure as hell can.”

Cas’s lips twitched a few times before he cocked a brow and inquired, “are you entirely sure of that?”

“As sure as I’ve ever been of anything,” Dean insisted, somehow feeling a little defensive of his ability to wear a butt plug for two hours, and not at all willing to explore where that defensiveness was coming from.

“No matter what?” Cas asked, just a little too innocently. Dean should’ve known better, but…

“No matter what,” he affirmed. At the response, Cas’s lips curved into a devious, slightly predatory smile—but this one was all him. There was no hint of the almost maniacally precise ‘Mr. Novak’ in this expression. Maybe someone who didn’t know Cas as well couldn’t have seen the difference, but it blazed as brightly as a 500-watt halogen bulb to Dean.

Maybe…maybe he should think about back-tracking.

Except they both knew he wouldn’t. He was too goddamn stubborn for that. Now that he’d dug his heels in, it didn’t matter what hell Cas decided to subject him to, he would—

“Very well,” Cas told him, “two hours. When the time is complete, you will come find me so that I may remove it.”
“…and?”

“And nothing,” Cas said serenely, “by that time it will be after dinner. I thought perhaps we would watch a movie and make it an early night.”

Oh. Oh, so that was his game. He was going to let Dean get all worked up by the plug for the next two hours and then not fuck him tonight. Well, fine, Dean could just—

“And if you lay so much as a single finger on your own cock, from either hand, I will manage to find enough busywork to keep us both occupied all day tomorrow as well.”

...he should’ve seen that coming. Hell. Scowling at Cas, he mentally reorganized his plans. Fine, he’d just go lie down on his stomach on the bed and not move at all until dinner, in order to avoid stimulating himself unnecessarily. That was a damn good plan.

It would’ve worked, too, if Cas’s voice hadn’t rung out yet again only a second later. “In the meantime, Dean, why don’t you go work out?”

It was phrased as a suggestion, but it wasn’t one. At all. Huffing loudly but wordlessly (his ass had already been thoroughly warmed, and he didn’t really need to invite further attention upon it at this point), he pivoted to head for the gym.

He didn’t make it more than a step before a hand on his elbow brought him up short, swinging him back around. He found himself gathered into Cas’s arms, the strong grasp winding around him, the angel’s lips against his cheek as he murmured, “And lest this be in any way unclear, my beautiful man, this is not because I do not or will not want to touch you. Quite the contrary, it will require practically superhuman—"

“You’re not as funny as you think you are,” Dean interrupted a little grumpily, trying to pretend like he wasn’t amused by the pun.

“—self-control,” Cas went on as though there had been no interruption, “but I will manage it anyway, because it will be all the better tomorrow when we do break our brief celibacy. Do you understand, baby?”

“Yeah, yeah,” Dean groused, and he knew Cas was remembering what had kicked his last two drops off because the angel didn’t even reprimand him for grumbling, just held him a little tighter.

“If you feel yourself starting to drop, if you feel sad or particularly irritated or anything other than pleasantly sexually frustrated, you come find me immediately, is that clear?” The earnestness in Cas’s voice made it hard to stay annoyed with him.

“Crystal clear,” Dean told him, slightly less grochulily, “I’m okay, babe, just being a grump.”

“You are well within your rights,” Cas said, “and if this is too much, say so. Do not get so entrenched in your stubbornness that you will not put a stop to things if necessary. You have already done so much today. I am so very proud of and pleased with you. Nothing you decide now could in any way cloud that.”

Okay, that helped. Feeling a lot less like he wanted to punch a wall, Dean nodded, “No, I can do it. Just…can you leave the remote alone? I think if you make the thing start vibrating I might explode in more ways than one.”

Rather than responding verbally, Cas released Dean, only to immediately reach into his own pocket and pull out the remote, neatly clicking open the panel on the back of it and removing the battery.
Replacing the panel over the empty compartment, he handed the battery to Dean, who tucked it into a pocket, smiling a little at the fact that Cas had felt it necessary to do more than simply agree to the request.

“You know you could have just said ‘okay,’ babe, and I would’ve believed you.”

“I know,” Cas said, gazing deeply into Dean’s eyes, “but I want it to be clear how seriously I take your boundaries, right now more than ever. What you are doing is tantamount to continuing a scene for an additional two hours, right after trying something brand new and extremely intense. This does not work if we are not quite clear that the ultimate control rests with you.”

“Ten-four, good buddy,” Dean said, leaning forward to brush his lips lightly across the angel’s, “And I got this. Seriously.”

“Then I have only one final instruction for you,” Cas told him, tugging him back toward the desk at the front of the room.

“What’s that,” Dean inquired as the angel released his hand and went to dig around in that same drawer in the desk—what was that shit, like Mary Poppins’ magical bag? It seemed like all sorts of stuff came out of there.

A second later, Cas withdrew two small bottles of juice, one of which was already opened and both of which were ice cold. Dean didn’t have a chance to ask if that was due to the magic of angel mojo before Cas set one bottle in each of his hands.

“Drink.”

~*~

It maybe wasn’t the easiest two hours of Dean’s life, but by That-Name-He-Wasn’t-Supposed-to-Even-Think-During-Anything-Sexy-Cause-It-Was-Cas’s-Dad-But-Generally-Thought-Anyway, he got through it. He even worked out for a full hour and somehow managed not to come in his pants, then trekked up three flights of stairs, got two MREs ready to go (okay, so that wasn’t actually an especially taxing task, all it required was filling up the heater with water and dumping the meal into it to heat up) and was all set for dinner with Sam at 6:00.

By the time the plug came out, Dean was more than ready to bid it farewell. Cas, much to Dean’s relief, did not take advantage of what would’ve no doubt been an excellent opportunity to tease him, merely removed it in a businesslike fashion before dragging Dean down the hall for a much-needed shower.

Dean managed to refrain from slamming the angel against the wall and bodily climbing on his cock while they showered, but it wasn’t easy. Honestly, he was pretty sure Cas would’ve just let him shower by himself to reduce the risk of Dean jumping his bones if it hadn’t been for that first horrible drop toward the beginning of their confinement. It had happened during a shower Dean probably should not have been left alone for, and he didn’t think Cas would ever forget it.

The rest of the evening was actually really nice, much less uncomfortable than Dean would’ve expected it to be considering the lack of…relief. Curled up together on Dean’s—no, their—bed (and that was love, the willingness to offer shared ownership of his beloved memory foam), they watched a movie before Cas gave Dean the kind of neck and back massage that practically had him melting through the mattress. In addition to soothing all of the muscles that had been tied up in knots from the scene and the subsequent work-out, it also left Dean incredibly relaxed. He fell asleep almost instantly when Cas joined him on the bed and wrapped him in those strong arms, totally bypassing
what would ordinarily have been some serious tossing and turning while he tried to get the by now low-level but still omnipresent arousal under control.

Never let it be said that Cas wasn’t a strategist when he needed to be.

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**MONDAY**

Dean woke up in such a good mood that it was only slightly dampened by Cas’s amused refusal to give him any help with his enthusiastic morning wood. His excellent spirits were even undaunted by a breakfast of MRE scrambled eggs (some things should not ever be reconstituted, for God’s sake), and apparently obvious enough that Sam actually called him “chipper” over the powdered scrambled eggs that the kid actually appeared to be enjoying (fucking weirdo).

By the time late morning rolled around and Cas stumbled across Dean actually dancing around the laundry room, singing into a makeshift microphone (okay, fine, it was actually a bottle of fabric softener, but whatever) while he folded their whites, the angel was heard to wonder what the opposite of a sub drop was. Dean didn’t honestly know whether such a phenomenon actually existed but either way, he wasn’t arguing with a killer mood, especially when it could so easily have been quite the reverse.

Dean continued to serenade himself (and anyone else within hearing distance) throughout the morning, until shortly after lunch Sam finally shut his laptop with a snap and declared that he was going down into the archives to do some more research. Dean was pretty sure that had more to do with his own dulcet tones than with Sam actually needing to hunt down the obscure book he claimed to be seeking, but he let it slide—if only because Cas had started to size Dean up with a certain, very familiar look in his eye, and Dean was all about turning that look into some action.

Cas didn’t make any moves immediately, but that was cool. Dean was flying high today and nothing seemed to have the power to torpedo it. Nothing more happened until a good half hour had passed and Dean had moved on in his one-man karaoke session from Zeppelin to Metallica while dusting books in the library. He was so intent on his work (and let’s face it, on shaking his butt to the music, because why the hell not) that he didn’t actually spot the angel barreling around the corner toward him until Cas slammed into him, knocking him back into a bookshelf hard enough to rattle it. Chapped lips sealed over his, a tongue thrusting into his mouth before he’d actually gotten further than half a startled breath. Well, okay then. Dean tossed the Swiffer duster over his shoulder (so carelessly that it actually flew over the top of the bookshelves, presumably landing in the next aisle over), wrapped his arms around the angel, and enthusiastically joined in on the fun.

They made out for a couple minutes, Cas pressing him so hard into the bookshelves (and Dean pushing right back forward, only to be slammed back again) that a few books actually rattled out of their shelves and thumped to the floor. Shit, they would have to deal with that before Sam came back upstairs or they would end up having to listen to way more scolding than Dean wanted to deal with on a day that was shaping up to be pretty awesome. For the moment, though, he couldn’t be bothered to spare more than half a thought for ancient and priceless tomes hitting the floor, especially when Cas palmed his cock before breaking the kiss and wrapping two bruising hands around his biceps, yanking him away from the shelves only to spin him around and shove him forward again.

Dean, breathing hard, got his hands up just in time to prevent himself from face-planting into a copy of some book that appeared to be in Latin, bracing himself against two of the shelves (and knocking a few more volumes to the floor, oops) as Cas’s nimble fingers got his belt undone.
His jeans and boxers were around his ankles about three nanoseconds later with a quiet rustling of fabric. The telltale click of a cap came rapidly on its heels, and Dean barely had a chance to spread his legs a little and cant his ass up toward the angel before a single finger slid unerringly home.

Groaning, Dean pressed his ass back into the finger, earning a sharp smack on the outside of his thigh (which was basically back to normal already—apparently the ruler’s superpower was stinging like holy hell but leaving behind next to no true damage) and a growled admonition to stay still. That lasted all of three minutes before Cas replaced the single finger with two, and Dean found himself again pressing back wantonly. Another smack on his thigh was his reward before that same hand slammed down on his upper back, knocking him hard into the shelves—and there went another few books. Dean went ahead and wrapped his fingers around one of the shelves, digging them in hard. That helped a little, centering him enough that he somehow managed not to fuck himself back on the three fingers Cas was driving into him spare moments later.

Cas didn’t seem to care much, since the hand on his back shoved him forward yet again, knocking him against the bookshelves with almost teeth-rattling force. The angel knew how much he loved being manhandled, whether or not he was deliberately provoking it, and Dean was turned on enough that it didn’t even occur to him to be concerned about the potential for paper cuts in delicate spots.

This particular body slam shook four or five more volumes out of their slots, one of them so close to Dean’s head that he had to recoil quickly or risk getting a faceful of old book. Cas waited just long enough for the book to hit the floor before a hand twined in Dean’s hair, pushing his face forward until it nestled into the gap left by the sizeable tome.

And that was when he spotted the single, alarmingly close hazel eye peering back at him from the next aisle over.

The bookshelves, like most in libraries, were largely backless. Without the barrier of the books, there was a clear view through from one aisle to the next. That wasn’t weird. What was weird was—oh, hell, at this point nothing about this was especially weird. Just another day, really.

“Sam?” Dean managed to inquire between hard thrusts of Cas’s fingers against his prostate.

“I’m researching,” Sam’s voice floated through the gap in books, already a little defensive at the ire he anticipated from them at the interruption.

“Yeah,” Dean told him, able to speak a little more easily as Cas’s fingers suddenly paused, buried in him to the hilt, “you’ve been doing a lot of this kind of research lately, haven’t you? Then again, research is what you’re best at.” His lips twitched a little as he spoke, but he managed to keep an impressively straight face, which was quite the accomplishment—particularly when Sam nudged another book aside and Dean got a clearer look at him. One side of the kid’s head had a thick layer of dust blanketing it, a single fluffy bit of Swiffer duster sticking out of his hair. Dean must’ve accidentally beaned him with the duster when he tossed it over the shelves. Oops.

“You know,” the voice came back, suddenly a lot more relaxed at the lack of anger in Dean’s voice and apparently unperturbed by the dust he was wearing, “you could be just as good at research if you’d put your mind to it.”

“I could,” Dean agreed, “probably, yeah, but I prefer to put my mind to…other things.”

Sam totally missed the innuendo, bless him, blazing right past it. “Yeah, you always have. That’s why I’ve gotta be extra good at the research, I’m picking up your slack. Oh, and you’re cleaning up and re-dusting any books you knocked down.” He didn’t actually sound grumpy about it—they both knew he loved the research angle and was used to the books being disrupted by various
activities—and his good cheer had returned quickly once he realized he wasn’t going to get yelled at.

“Yeah, no problem, we were already gonna do that. Don’t worry your dusty little head about the books, they’re gonna be fine.”

“You know, all joking aside, you really do need to be more careful with them. They’re priceless, and a lot of them are the only known copy still in existence.”

“I know, you’re right, but I thought we talked about making sure the rarest and most valuable were moved down to the archives where they could be more strictly temperature and humidity controlled?”

“Dean!” Sam exclaimed in delight, “you remembered!”

“It’s not like I don’t listen when you talk at all, I just…sometimes tune you out when you keep going for an extra-long time.”

Suddenly, from behind Dean’s back, a voice that had yet to be heard from snapped out, laced with irritation. “Excuse me, but do the two of you mind? I was occupied, and I would very much like to get back to it.”

Dean froze, awareness suddenly expanding again to the trio of fingers buried to the hilt in his ass, his throbbing cock, and the very disgruntled angel behind him, who was not especially thrilled to discover how easily Dean could be distracted from his attentions.

Maybe it was the good mood he’d been in all day, but suddenly the fact that he was carrying on a totally normal conversation with his brother through the stacks while getting finger-fucked by his boyfriend struck him as maybe the funniest thing that had ever happened to him. The fact that Cas’s annoyance was unlikely to be eased by Dean dissolving into hysterics did exactly nothing to dampen his amusement, and Dean promptly lost his shit entirely.

He laughed so hard that his knees tried to give out on him, and he only remained on his feet by virtue of a very strong arm wrapping around his waist, jerking him back against Cas’s broad chest. Somehow those three fingers remained buried in him, even drove a little harder into his prostate, as if to spite him for laughing. It felt goddamn good, and Dean’s cock jerked hard, but at this point not even that was sufficient to cut this case of the giggles off at the pass. In fact, something about Cas trying to fuck him back into sobriety seemed even funnier than the initial conversation with Sam. Dean’s shoulders shook with silent cackles as he buried his face in his own elbow, but he couldn’t keep it together for more than ten seconds or so before the cackles turned into outright guffaws. Tears streamed down his cheeks and somehow the increasingly irritated angel behind him just made everything funnier.

Dean was laughing so hard he barely heard the next exchange.

“I…do you know what…that’s all about?” Sam’s voice registered only dimly.

“His good mood appears to have elevated into some form of dementia?” Cas suggested, hitching Dean a little higher against him as Dean’s knees continued to try to give out.

“D’you think we should…do something? He’s gonna pass out if he doesn’t manage to get some more breath.”

“I would not be too concerned. I can think of a number of excellent ways to sober him up rapidly.”

“Oh, I just bet. Should I leave you to it?”
“That seems prudent. We will clean up the books when we are finished.”

“Thanks, just let me know if there’s any damage so we can try to set them aside for restoration as soon as we’re out of here. And absolutely no jizz on the books.”

“You have my word.”

This conversation did nothing to dim Dean’s amusement (no jizz on the books, for fuck’s sake?) and in fact he continued doing what Cas would resolutely insist was braying like a donkey for at least three minutes after Sam excused himself, right up until a very threatening voice in his ear informed him that he had a date with Mr. Novak and the hairbrush coming at some point in the next several days in payment for his ‘distraction.’ That sobered him up long enough for Cas to replace those fingers with his cock, and while there were a lot of intensely funny things about the angel, the way he fucked wasn’t one of them.

TUESDAY

So, yesterday evening’s conversation about trying their best to restrict sexual activities to their room so they weren’t actively encouraging Sam didn’t seem to have taken.

Dean knew this because thirty seconds ago, as the hot water from a pair of showerheads splashed down on them, Cas had grabbed the scruff of Dean’s neck when he bent over to wash his feet, frog-marched him forward five steps, shoved him to his knees (suddenly there was a thickly folded towel right where they landed, thanks angel mojo) and bent him over the metal bench. Why there was a metal bench bolted to the middle of the floor in the shower room had been a topic of debate for quite some time now, and for the first time Dean wondered whether maybe this was why.

Either way, he would never deny its usefulness again.

Cas had fucked him up against the wall of this room more times than he could easily count, had slammed his back into the tiles and wrapped Dean’s legs around his waist, or bent him forward and made him plant his hands on the wall and push his ass back into the thrusts, but this? This was new. Dean was on board.

Cas took the bare minimum amount of time needed to prep him, producing silicone-based lube from who-the-hell-knew-where (it wasn’t like he had pockets what with being completely nude, he’d probably conjured the stuff out of thin air. Hey, thanks again, angel mojo) and fucking a pair of fingers into his ass three or four times before adding a third and repeating the motions.

That was all he got before Cas was on his knees behind Dean, driving into him with a thrust that forced the breath out of his lungs entirely. He made a strangled sound, then wrapped his fingers around the edge of the bench and gripped it hard, widening his knees a little and bracing himself. This was gonna be a rough ride.

He wasn’t wrong. The thrusts started hard and fast and only got more so, the sound of flesh cracking against flesh at least as sharp as a bare-assed spanking would be.

That probably shouldn’t have been as much of a turn-on as it was, but whatever.

Dean was actually starting to get close—and boy, that was fast—when he suddenly saw a flash of movement from the corner of one eye.
He turned his head sharply toward it, because he absolutely had to have been seeing things. It must’ve been his overactive imagination, one of those things that floated across the inside of your eye and made you think you saw movement, a delusion, something. There was just no way in hell that—holy shit.

Maybe there was.

Yeah, that was definitely Sam’s face staring up at Dean from between the grates in the fucking shower drain. There was a heart-pounding second in which Dean had to look past the get-up to make sure it really was Sam. The usual hazel eyes were hidden behind a pair of swimming goggles, and a fucking rain hat, rubber and wide-brimmed, topped his head like the weirdest condom ever.

Dean was gonna have to figure out exactly how big the drain system was, because there was no way in hell he’d thought Sam could actually fit down there.

Cas, who hadn’t seen this, was still thrusting away, which left Dean in the unenviable position of having his eyes locked with his brother’s (at least, he assumed so. Sam’s face was turned toward him, anyway, although the tinted goggles—which incidentally made him look a little bit like a bug—made it impossible to see where his eyes were directed) as his boyfriend fucked into his ass from behind.

Eh. It wasn’t the weirdest or the most awkward thing that had happened to Dean in the past month. Not even close.

Maybe that was why the thought that occurred to him was so utterly absurd.

He managed to speak despite the thrusts that kept driving the breath from him.

“Y—you know, S—Sam,” and there it was. Suddenly Cas’s thrusts stuttered to a halt. Dean could sense him looking around, trying to figure out where the hell Sam was lurking, and he felt Cas stiffen as he spotted what Dean had seen at least 30 seconds ago. Dean went on, “knowing how kinky we are, did it ever occur to you to worry that if we were getting it on in a room with a drain, we might just be into something like golden showers?”

Sam, who had already not been doing much moving, froze completely, water still dripping off his hat.

This time it was Cas who lost it first. Something about drowned-rat Sam, who was clearly wide-eyed and horrified behind his bug goggles, was just too much for the angel to maintain calm through.

Once Cas started, it was over. His snickers (which rapidly built to outright howls) set Dean off, and soon he actually needed the bench’s support, because his stomach muscles were working too hard with his laughter (and were still sore from yesterday’s hysterics, actually) to support his weight.

Dean let him stew for a minute before he went ahead and put the kid out of his misery between gales of laughter. “Oh, calm—calm down, that’s not our gig. But anyway, that’s a—that’s a seriously risky-ass place for you to be hanging out. Even without having to worry about piss, there’s bound to be bodily fluids of other kinds.”

The rapidity with which Sam’s head wordlessly disappeared (and the sound of splashing footsteps echoing hurriedly through the drain thereafter) told Dean his warning had been heeded and understood. Cas, meanwhile, had draped himself over Dean’s back, not out of a need to get closer but because he was no longer able to hold himself up either. Their laughter echoed off the walls of
the shower room, and how Sam managed to make his retreat sound so offended without ever saying a single word Dean would never understand.

They really, really tried, but they just couldn’t stop laughing long enough to finish. Every time they thought they had themselves under control, one or the other would snicker and it was all over. Eventually they had to give the whole thing up as a bad job, but neither had it in them to be angry with Sam. How do you hold a grudge against someone who’s probably had your lube dripped on them and who makes you laugh that hard?

WEDNESDAY

Today they actually kept to their vow and restricted their activities to their room, and that was a serious concession considering that Student-Dean and Mr. Novak had made an appearance again. They decided to just pretend they were back in the classroom, and Cas had even pulled one of Dean’s bureaus that was about the right height away from the wall, placing a chair in front of and behind it so it could serve as a “desk.”

It turned out Cas had been quite serious about his threat of the hairbrush on Monday, because Mr. Novak informed his student that he would be receiving 50 strokes of the brush as punishment for the sole negative mark on his progress report—laughing at his math teacher. Apparently, Cas was still a little perturbed about Dean’s hysterical giggles on Monday, even though he’d been the one who lost it first yesterday. Whatever, it had been a long time since the hairbrush came out and Dean rather enjoyed its heft.

Cas was seated in one of the straight-backed chairs and had Dean’s ass thoroughly warmed up (a hundred or so solid hand spanks tended to do that job) when the angel paused, looking around before he spoke.

“Yellow. Damn, Dean, have you actually seen the hairbrush today?”

“Not since this morning, I don’t think. I’m pretty sure I threw it on the bed after I brushed my hair. You don’t see it?”

“No, it’s not there.”

“Should we…look for it?”

That was when the brush came sliding smoothly out from under the bed and across the floor, stopping neatly at Cas’s foot. Blinking, Dean grabbed it and lifted it up to show Cas, as if he hadn’t seen exactly the same thing Dean had. Cas leaned forward a little, examining it as if it was going to explain itself.

The hairbrush didn’t have anything to say, but somebody did. From underneath the bed came a muffled but very familiar voice.

“It must’ve fallen behind the headboard. You cannot imagine what a bitch it was to wriggle it out.”

Dean tried. He really, really tried. He put everything he had into restraining himself, but it was a losing battle. The opportunity was just too perfect. Lips twitching violently, he burst out with it at the top of his lungs.

“THAT’S WHAT HE SAID!” Too pleased with himself for words, Dean didn’t even bother to try to
hold back his sniggering.

There was a moment of silence before the sound of snorts of laughter came out from under the bed—which was suddenly shaking, presumably because Sam, who had somehow crammed himself under there (Dean’s bed was even lower to the ground than Sam’s was) was laughing hard enough that he was shaking, too.

Cas, meanwhile, was frozen solid for a minute as he processed the horrible quip.

“That’s…that is just…you know what?” the angel demanded, “give me that fucking hairbrush.”

He snatched the brush out of Dean’s hand and promptly started laying down some very enthusiastic swats, apparently feeling that the use of this ancient and trite joke (no matter how fucking perfect it had been because, come on, who could’ve resisted that opportunity) deserved some serious punishment.

If Dean were smart, that’s when he would’ve stopped laughing.

Apparently, he wasn’t that smart.

By the time Cas hit ten or fifteen strokes, Dean was pausing for the occasional ‘ouch!’ or ‘fuck, ow!’ between hysterics, but he couldn’t make himself actually stop.

“Okay,” Sam said through his chortles, “seems like you two are doing fine, I’ll get out of your wa—

—stuck. I…seem to be stuck. Um, shit. Help?”

There was a moment of ominous silence in which both of them wondered whether Cas might just smite the pair of them and call it a day.

As it turned out, that wasn’t what the pause was about.

Dean could feel a very light shaking start up in Cas’s body a few moments before the hysteria escaped his mouth. The angel laughed so hard that he actually let Dean topple out of his lap. Somehow landing on the side of his very tender ass on the floor didn’t make things any less funny, and it took them a good five minutes to get themselves together enough for Cas to lift the bed so that Sam could wriggle out.
The kid wasted no time after that in taking off, still snickering himself.

By the time Dean and Cas managed to catch their breath, the best they could do was quickie hand-jobs before they had to lie down and rest their aching stomachs.

Dean was pretty sure the tiny bit of softness that had always hung around his belly over the years was gonna be destroyed by the time they got out of here. This much laughter had to be killer for his abs.

“Dude,” he said to Cas about an hour later, one hand resting protectively on his sore stomach, “we should write a book about all this shit.”

“Nobody,” said the angel, who had been around for billions of years and seen more incredible things than Dean could imagine if given several lifetimes, “would ever believe it.”

Chapter End Notes

Chapter-specific tags/warnings: Butt plug, enforced celibacy, anal fingering, anal sex, manhandling, rough sex, spanking with hairbrush and hand, very brief teacher/student role-play, a whole hell of a lot of laughter during sex, and Sam, bless his fumbling little heart, interrupting.

AUTHOR’S NOTE:

You guys. YOU GUYS. You'll never believe it. ___ don't believe it, but I DID IT. This chapter right here is one of the three chapters I've had planned forever!

Well. Sort of. This is actually HALF of one of the chapters. It was intended to span the full week but, in a twist of fate that should shock absolutely nobody, I ended up getting a bit more in depth than I was planning on for each of the days. So instead of one week with the promise of at least two more chapters, you get half a week with the tentative promise of at least three more chapters. There's a very slight chance that, having divided this chapter up, I may be able to squish together the next two chapters into a single one, which would leave us with one to two chapters to go after that point, but again, this is all subject to change.

What you will notice is that I've done something brand new--there's no longer a question mark in the "how many chapters will this bad boy have" section. For the moment, I'm calling it a total of 46 chapters, but this is still subject to change, because we all know how I work.

Now that the logistics are out of the way, let's have a chat. (If you're ace or celibate, feel free to skip the next little bit, cause it doesn't apply to you.)

There was a lot of laughter in this chapter, much of it during sex. Y'all, if you're not having sex in which you laugh hysterically from time to time, in which you giggle and snort and chortle and poke fun at one another and generally amuse yourselves, you're doing it wrong. Sex is important, and should be given the gravity to which it's entitled--but it's also a lot of fun, and laughter shouldn't be out of place in your bedroom. I mean, think about it. Think about how ridiculous it is that we insert Tab A into Slot B, or whatever other form of sex you're having. The entire thing is totally absurd, and if it
didn't feel so damn good we'd NEVER be able to keep a straight face while doing it. And all of this goes double if you're kinky. Scenes can be very serious places, but there's nothing wrong with occasionally falling completely out of your headspace and laughing your asses off when something silly happens--and a whole lot of silly things are prone to happen when you're kinking it up. ENJOY, people!

And finally, all of you jerks who have admitted to bargaining with Crowley to keep me at this, you're all fired. Because of your interference, my damn muse has me chained up in her basement and is threatening to keep me here indefinitely. Turns out she's a scary bitch when she wants to be, and it's cold as fuck down here. Send blankets and maybe a bolt cutter while you're at it. First person to smuggle me out without her seeing gets to give me a prompt.

Come find me on tumblr, when I can manage to sneak onto the computer while she's distracted. I'm amusing and I love hearing from my readers.
A Week in the Life, Part 2

Chapter Summary

In which a very busy week continues, a mystery is solved, Sam fucking Winchester is no coward, and Dean and Cas test a theory.

Chapter-specific tags and warnings can be found at the end of the chapter, as ever, along with an author's note and a plea for help, you jerks.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

THURSDAY

Dean would never stop finding it adorable that Cas felt the need to draw a tiny cartoon bee on every note he left for Dean.

And he’d never stop finding it hilarious that the angel did so even when the contents of the note were filthy. Today’s note (which had been waiting for Dean on the kitchen counter when he stepped in to grab Sam a glass of water) read, “My room, 3:15. If you are not on your knees within five seconds of closing the door, I will put you there. Do not make me put you there.”

It would’ve left Dean feeling pretty damn squirmy no matter what, and he still had a good hour and a half before he was due to meet Cas, so he supposed he should be grateful for the little addition to the note that left him stifling a snort.

The cartoon bee was there, as ever, but this time it had a tiny speech bubble declaring, “you should listen to him!”

It was just so patently ridiculous and so utterly Cas at the same time.

One of these days Dean was gonna have to confess that he had kept every note the angel had ever left him, which meant he had a very clear record of the progression of the cartoon bees. Cas was getting better at them over time, adding more detail.

What Dean would probably never confess was that he’d secretly christened the little dude “Beestiel.”

By the time 3:00 rolled around, Sam had vanished back off to the archives after tearing the library apart trying to find a specific tome that he insisted would help him sort out some mystifying symbols in one of the latest pictures the archaeologists at Isla Del Sol had posted. Dean had enthusiastically encouraged this obsessive hunt, if only because he figured he ought to at least put a token effort into seeing whether he and Cas could actually achieve some privacy.

Not that he was holding out much hope at this point. He wasn’t stupid.

At 3:15 on the nose, he turned the doorknob to Cas’s room. It was very dim, lit only by a single lamp, and at first glance appeared to be empty. Dean’s spider senses did their job, telling him that Cas stood just behind the open door. Nevertheless, Dean knew how this worked, and he didn’t turn to face the angel. He had his instructions and although he was certainly not above deliberately
disobeying for the pleasure of the punishment he’d earn, today he felt more like going with the flow.
Nudging the door shut behind him with a foot, Dean promptly hit his knees, falling hard onto the pillow that had clearly been placed there for this exact purpose.

Cas always did make it a point to take excellent care of him.

He kneeled for a moment, feeling the intense blue eyes on his back. It was a good thirty seconds before it occurred to him that if he’d been instructed to kneel upon entering a room, there was more to it than just getting on his knees. It had been long enough since they’d done this particular sort of thing that he was a little out of practice, but he figured Cas would let it slide (or not, and although his ass was still somewhat tender from the attentions of the brush, Dean was on board with a little reprimand). Anyway, delay or not, he went ahead and arranged himself the way he knew Cas expected of him.

Settling his ass back onto his heels (then hissing a breath and shifting a little as one of those heels dug hard into a particularly sore spot), Dean reached down to pull his shirt off, folding it neatly and setting it beside him. Then he crossed his wrists at the small of his back and bowed his head.

There was no telling how long Cas would make him wait. Sometimes he knelt for close to an hour while Cas silently watched him. Sometimes Cas’s placid voice told him in exquisite detail what the angel was going to do to him. Sometimes there was a hand tangling in his hair bare seconds after he got into position.

Today, Dean waited only a minute or two with the weight of those eyes boring into him before a quiet rustle of clothing told him Cas was moving. The brush of soft fabric—suit pants, he thought—against his back informed Dean reliably when Cas stood just behind him, and a moment later the angel crouched, pressing his nose against the back of Dean’s neck and inhaling deeply, as though taking in the scent of his submission.

Jesus. How he could make such a small gesture so unspeakably hot would forever be a mystery to Dean—one that he hoped continued to plague him for a long time to come.

Cas’s face stayed where it was, lips lightly brushing just below the nape of Dean’s neck as warm fingers wrapped around each of his wrists, then slid up his arms to his shoulders, squeezing lightly in reassurance and praise. The clink of a belt being unfastened came quickly after those hands withdrew and Dean wasn’t especially surprised when the leather strip wrapped itself around his wrists, binding them snugly together.

What did startle him was that as soon as his hands were tightly fastened, another quiet clinking sounded, one that Dean probably should’ve been able to place but couldn’t quite. It didn’t matter; a moment later the source of it became clear, his downcast eyes taking in the sight of those familiar, beloved hands coming around him from behind, one of them carrying two tiny clips joined by a thin chain.

Cas’s free hand immediately seized one of Dean’s nipples, worrying it between his fingers until it stood proudly at attention. He wasted no time in fastening the simple metal clamp on it, making Dean hiss out a barely-stifled curse.

The free hand immediately shifted, slapping the side of Dean’s thigh in admonition for his brief loss of control. Dean jerked only slightly and managed to keep still and quiet when Cas made short work of fastening the second clamp.

Finally, the quiet gravel rang out as Cas rose to his feet and came around to stand before Dean.
“Do not speak. Nod or shake your head. Green?”

Dean nodded instantly, Cas’s hand briefly carding through his hair in quiet affection and praise.

A moment later, the hand was withdrawn, and when Dean heard the soft sound of a zipper, he knew what was coming. Still, he left his head bowed, watching out of the corner of his eye as Cas freed himself, giving his already rigid cock an unnecessary stroke or two.

He resisted the urge to pout—that was his job—and a moment later his patience was rewarded when the hand that had slid so gently through his hair tangled in it harshly, pulling his head up.

“Suck me. You have four minutes to make me come, or you don’t come today. And you swallow every drop I give you.”

Holy hell, that was…yeah, okay, Dean could get down with that.

The tip of Cas’s cock slid into his mouth a second later, and Dean set to work, using nearly every skill he had, almost every trick he knew, gauging his progress by how strong the taste of precome was on his tongue, by the way the engorged length in his mouth twitched and jerked.

Cas gave him a countdown, ticking off each minute in a voice that got less stable each time he spoke.

By the time the voice rang out above him the last time, Dean was pretty sure he was gonna make it. “One more minute, Dean. If your mouth cannot get the job done, I am going to bend you over the edge of the bed and take my pleasure from your ass instead. But first, the cock cage for you.”

Oh, hell no. Dean loathed that fucking thing. It was one thing to not be able to come—it was another entirely to not even be able to get hard. There was no way he was going to subject himself to that.

So he cheated.

Well, okay, it wasn’t actually cheating, but it was definitely the nuclear option.

Taking a deep breath through his nose, he suppressed his gag reflex, slid his mouth steadily down the length of Cas’s cock until his nose nestled into the dark curl of pubic hair, and swallowed hard, three times in succession.

Mission accomplished. Cas’s cock jerked, shooting its load down his throat. Dean continued to swallow around it until the angel’s tight body started to relax and he slowly slid his softening cock out of Dean’s mouth.

They both took a moment to catch their breath before the soft voice rang from above him. “Good boy. Managed it with twelve seconds to spare. Cutting it a bit close.”

Dean grinned cheekily up at him and Cas’s lips twitched slightly.

“You’ve earned yourself a bit of quid pro quo, I think,” the angel told him, and Dean bit back a groan at the idea before a hand around his bicep helped him to his feet, steadying him. Dean appreciated the assistance—getting to your feet without the use of your hands was harder than you might think.

It took about ten seconds for Cas to flatten him onto his back on the bed (heedless of the awkward angle at which his hands were pinned beneath him), jerk his sweatpants down to his ankles, and engulf his cock to the root.
If they both didn’t already know perfectly well how much blowing Cas turned Dean on, he might’ve been embarrassed by how quickly he came, at least halving the time it had taken Cas to get there.

To be fair, Cas sped the process along a bit when he slid one finger, slick with Dean’s own spit, into his ass while jerking the nipple clamps off.

Dean’s cock convulsed so hard that it might need anti-epilepsy drugs if it kept that up, shooting down Cas’s throat hard enough that Dean saw stars for a moment.

They lay together in silence for a few minutes, once again catching their breath before they got to their feet to head for the door. Cas wanted Dean to eat a snack, of course, and he hadn’t brought anything with him, figuring that this was going to be a fairly light scene.

They made it halfway to the door before Cas froze.

“Dean,” he said wonderingly, “look around.”

Dean did, staring around the room to try to find what had caught the angel’s attention.

There was nothing.

It took a minute for that to fully process.

*There was nothing.* No Sam. No Sam!

“Oh my god, do you think the curse is broken? He’s not here, he’s—“

They should’ve known it was too good to be true. A small and embarrassed voice snaked out of— the fucking wall?

“Uh. Actually, he is here, and he’s…pretty sure he’s stuck again.”

“Sam? The fuck are you?”

The rattling sound coming from near the ceiling directed their attention to the grate through with the climate control flowed.

“…the ventilation system, Sam? Truly?” Cas’s voice was a little wry.

“How do you think I’ve been getting into and out of locked rooms? I can’t believe you guys didn’t figure it out before now. I found the blueprints the first week we were locked in here, while I was trying to research a way out.”

“Well, that explains a lot,” Dean observed, getting on tiptoe to peer through the grate. He could just make out Sam’s eyes staring back at him. “So how did you manage to get stuck?”

“I…most of the shafts are a little bigger than—“

“THAT’S WHAT—“

“I swear by my father, Dean, if you finish that sentence I cannot be held responsible for my actions.”

“Awww, you’re no fun, Cas.”

“Be that as it may. Sam, am I to assume correctly that you have already unscrewed the covers so that you could come and go freely?”
“Yeah, I just—one of my arms is kind of scrunched up and I don’t think I can back out the way I planned on. If one of you can get ahold of my shoulders you can probably pull me out, though.”

Lucky for Sam, it turned out they could.

FRIDAY

Dean was bent over the kitchen table, gripping its opposite edge tightly as Cas fucked him so hard that the heavy wooden legs were actually scraping across the floor half an inch or so with every thrust. If it wasn’t for that movement, he likely would never have seen it.

As it was, the table had already traveled at least a foot, and as a particularly teeth-rattling pump forced him against the edge of the table hard enough that he was pretty sure his hips were gonna bruise, he caught a glimpse of something that made no sense.

It made no sense because this was the kitchen. This was the fucking hive, and if there was one truth more reliable than Sam’s interruptions, it was the fact that the kid absolutely did not enter this room.

Except that apparently, now he did.

At least, Dean was pretty sure it was Sam. Via process of elimination, there were really no other options—and the get-up was really a dead giveaway.

Swathed head-to-toe in camo (where the hell had the kid found all of that camo in his size, anyway?) and wearing what Dean was pretty goddamn sure was a colander on his head, Sam’s face was invisible behind the mosquito netting swathing it, draped over his head underneath the colander-cum-helmet. Both of his hands were wrapped in death grips around two large cans of Raid.

Sam had come equipped for battle.

Apparently today was a day for firsts, because Dean had never laughed hard enough to choke on his own saliva before now.

Cas caught on to what was going on almost instantly, eyes coming to rest unerringly on the fully outfitted warrior, ready to take on an army of cockroaches in order to save their sex lives, and then he was right behind Dean in more ways than one, his laughter shaking him violently.

“You guys,” came a voice out of the depths of the mosquito netting, tight with consternation, “come on.”

Sam, who had been such a good sport up till now about their hysterics, had apparently reached his limit. Dean figured this probably had something to do with the fact that he’d battled incredible anxiety to enter the kitchen, and now here they were, cackling instead of fucking.

Unfortunately, this didn’t actually make things any less funny.

Cas was again draped over Dean’s back, cock still buried to the hilt in him, which meant that the laughter that shook both of them was having interesting effects on Dean’s prostate. Nevertheless, Dean was pretty sure if the hysterics kept up much longer, sheer lack of air would start to have a negative impact on both of their erections.

Sam gave them a few seconds to see whether they would get themselves under control and return to
the task at hand, but their giggles showed no sign of receding. Hey, Dean dared anyone to look at Sam outfitted in his ridiculous get-up and not lose it, especially since the kid’s head kept darting from side to side, frantically scanning the room for any sign of little Curtises coming to get him.

Which didn’t stop him from scolding them.

“Get it together, you two! This is serious!”

“I know,” Dean gasped, “I know, but you gotta give us a minute, dude. Have you seen you?”

“Stop laughing, dammit!”

“I’m trying,” Dean told him, not entirely honestly, “but it’s hard.”

“Well, yes,” Cas agreed, getting himself together enough to stand up. Dean craned his neck over his shoulder at the angel just in time to see him frown down at the place at which his cock was buried inside Dean, “but not for much longer, at this rate.”

Forget it. An erection pun, from Cas of all places? It was over.

Dean was pretty sure he was actually wheezing, and if the table hadn’t been holding him up, he definitely would’ve slid to the floor by now.

Sam finally reached up, hooking a single finger (presumably there was no way in hell he was giving up one of those cans of Raid, even for a second) into the mosquito netting and jerking it up far enough that they could actually see him glaring at them. It was a hard call whether he looked more pissed or terrified.

Dean knew he shouldn’t. He knew he shouldn’t. It was a terrible idea, especially considering that at some point, they were gonna have to get Sam comfortable enough to come back in here. A terrible idea.

But he simply couldn’t help himself.

Seizing on the acting abilities that up till quite recently had generally been confined to use in hunting, Dean made his head jerk over to one side, forcing himself to stop giggling for a moment.

“Hey,” he said, “is that a roach?”

Sam was probably already two floors and four hallways away before the colander that had flown off his head as he fled precipitously rattled to a stop.

SATURDAY

Poor Sam had not emerged from the bowels of the bunker until many hours after his rapid retreat yesterday. He had appeared in the library a couple hours after dinner time (Dean strongly suspected that it was only his impressively demanding stomach that had finally convinced him to come within shouting distance of the kitchen again), still looking shaken enough that Dean had had a single fleeting moment of guilt.

But only a short one. Sam had brought that shit on himself by braving the kitchen in the first place and then having the gall to be pissed at them for laughing at his ludicrous outfitting.
Under the best of circumstances, there was something painfully hilarious about a 6’4” muscle-bound, battle-hardened warrior who went catatonic at the mere mention of insects that rarely exceeded a couple inches in length. Adding in the fact that said warrior was in the grips of cabin-fever-induced psychosis and on a mission to save their perfectly healthy sex life didn’t exactly make the whole affair less amusing, and by the time Sam’s costuming came into play, Dean was pretty sure even the Buckingham Palace guards would’ve lost their shit.

And, yeah, maybe actually making Sam think there was a real cockroach in the kitchen had been just a little mean-spirited.

It had also been worth it.

Dean was kind enough not to mention Sam’s freak-out or the hours he’d presumably spent crouched in a corner rocking back and forth. Instead, he just grabbed one of Sam’s favorite MREs (some of them were less foul than others, at least) and got it ready, plopping it down in front of him before pouring him three precious fingers of their nearly exhausted supply of whiskey.

The kid looked like he needed it.

Sam had retreated shortly after dinner, apparently still uneasy about being even that close to the kitchen, muttering something about calling it an early night. Dean figured he’d give him a day or two to calm down before admitting that he’d just been fucking with Sam.

Neither Cas nor Dean had been particularly surprised when Sam stayed in the library only long enough to eat breakfast on Saturday before beating a hasty retreat back down to the archives. By 11:00, Dean had finished all the chores he’d planned on getting done today (it wasn’t like there was a whole lot of backlog building up, considering the amount of free time they all had) and was kicked back in the library, scowling at his laptop. Cas, who sat across the table from him reading a book in some language Dean was pretty sure he’d never seen (he refrained from asking lest he invite yet another lecture on the evolution of ancient languages), glanced up as Dean huffed out an irritated breath.

“And what seems to have caused that extremely pretty pout,” the angel inquired, then added just a little slyly, “I take great pride in being the only one who can cause you to sulk like that.”

Dean responded with his best unamused face before flipping the laptop around to face Cas, showing him the map depicting the newest warm front—which was again going to miss them, this time by about 70 miles.

“We’re never getting out of here. We might just have to bite the bullet and sacrifice the warding at some point. Man cannot live by MREs alone.”

“Setting aside the fact that man can indeed live on MREs alone, the fact that there are warm fronts at all is encouraging, is it not?”

Dean grunted, not feeling particularly glass-half-full at the moment. He was ready to be out of here.

“And this one is coming further north than the last one,” Cas continued soothingly. “Perhaps the next one after this will make it to us.”

“Even one warm front might not be enough. If it only hits 45 or so it’ll take a long-ass time for the snow to melt, and it doesn’t do us a whole lot of good for it to get down to only six and a half feet.”

“Have faith,” Cas counseled sympathetically, “and I will make you a bargain. If none of the snow
has melted in another two weeks—"

"Two weeks?"

"—we can revisit the warding at that time. And in the meantime, I am certain we can keep ourselves entertained."

"Oh yeah? I never thought I’d say this, but I can only binge-watch so much Netflix before I wanna tear my hair out."

"I was not referring to Netflix, although it is my understanding that there is still quite the collection of supernaturally-themed movies you wish to subje—er, to expose me to."

"I caught that," Dean told him disapprovingly, "and don’t pretend like you don’t enjoy it."

"Some of them are very distressing," Cas said defensively.

"You’ve seen empires rise and fall, witnessed wars and plagues and famines, even taken part in battles between the forces of heaven and hell, and you’re telling me you’re freaked out by some horror movies?"

"I dislike it when harm comes to animals or children," the angel informed him censoriously. Dean refrained from reminding Cas for the hundredth or so time that movies were fiction. It was a losing battle.

"Okay, so you weren’t talking about Netflix and I’m guessing you’re not suggesting that I start reading through the archives. What’d you have in mind?"

"I thought that perhaps," Cas said, the corners of his lips pulling upward slightly, "we could investigate just how far Sam’s bizarre spider senses extend, see if we can outsmart him."

Dean cocked a brow at Cas, pushing the laptop to one side and kicking his feet up on the edge of the table since Sam wasn’t there to glare accusingly at him for doing so. The angel accurately read this wordless encouragement and went on. "Well, it seems to me that thus far, with the exception of early on in the proceedings when Sam came upon us in the boiler room, we have generally restricted our sexual exploits to places that were fairly predictable."

Dean was almost offended by that. Predictable?! They’d been all over the bunker! He was opening his mouth to object when Cas put up a hand, forestalling him. "No, think about it. What locations have we availed ourselves of? Our bedroom, my room, the dungeon, the garage, the bathrooms, the kitchen, the library. Every single one of those locations, with the possible exception of the classroom—and I believe I even mentioned to Sam the area of the bunker I had been in prior to the unfortunate drugging incident—is one that Sam knows perfectly well we have used more than once in the past."

Dean paused to think about this and realized after a moment that Cas was right. None of those places had been new locations for them. Sam had come upon them going at it now and again in the past, and they’d definitely warned him to stay out of certain areas for his own good at other times. "Huh," he said wonderingly, "you know, you might be onto something."

"Indeed. If he’s been monitoring specific areas of the bunker—and as he cannot be everywhere at once, he has no doubt adopted a strategy—it is likely to be those areas that he knows we are partial to, yes?"

"Yes," Dean agreed, starting to see where Cas was going with this, "and if you’re thinking what I think you’re thinking—"
“New location,” Cas affirmed succinctly, “and ideally one that lacks ventilation.”

“That might be a little harder,” Dean frowned, “since I’m pretty sure all the rooms are ventilated.”

Cas rose abruptly, a little smile on his face. “On that note, perhaps you will consent to come with me.”

Dean absently closed his laptop before dropping his feet back to the floor and standing. “Lead on, Macduff.”

Naturally, Cas got that reference.

~*~

Cas brought him only a single floor down, likely aware that Sam was somewhere below them and it wouldn’t do to run into him when the name of the game was evasion.

They wended down three hallways before arriving at Cas’s destination, a small wooden door tucked into a corner. Its hinges squealed in protest when the angel pulled it open before extending his hand in a clear ‘after you’ gesture.

Dean went ahead and stepped inside the room—except it wasn’t a room. The space was scarcely five feet from wall to wall and not much more than that from front to back, shelves stacked with ancient cleaning supplies, a couple brittle-looking mops and brooms tucked into a corner. A small nightlight that was somehow still working (how was that even possible, considering its age?) cast a very dim glow on the space.

“Seriously?” Dean whispered, feeling for some reason like they needed to keep it down, “a broom closet?”

“Look around,” Cas murmured in his ear, “no ventilation shaft.”

Cas was right. Dean saw no grate, and the small space was stuffy and a little smelly, suggesting that the men of letters hadn’t thought it was important to ventilate a cupboard that would only be used for storage.

“Oh my God,” Dean whispered, “we might actually manage this. You’re a fucking genius.”

“Let’s not get ahead of ourselves,” Cas cautioned quietly, “this is still simply an experiment.”

“I’ll experiment you,” Dean leered, causing the angel to shake with silent laughter as Dean made short work of his belt and zipper.

“I thought we could try something reasonably quiet this time,” Cas murmured, “as long as we are aiming for stealth.”

“I’m quiet,” Dean protested, just a little too loudly.

Cas simply raised a brow at him until Dean finally shrugged in annoyed acknowledgement. Cas leaned forward a little bit more, sliding his face along Dean’s, lightly scraping their stubble together. “Or,” the angel murmured, “I could simply gag you.”

Dean considered this before shaking his head. “Nah, I vote for making this quick and dirty. The less time we take the less chance of Sam somehow dropping in on us.”

Cas nodded, reaching forward and tugging Dean’s sweatpants down to mid-thigh, letting his cock
spring free. Producing a small bottle of lube from one of his pockets, Cas poured a few drops into his palm before wrapping his hand around Dean’s cock. It only took five or six strokes before he was stiffening and lengthening to full hardness.

Breathing a little unsteadily, he stole the bottle of lube from Cas and returned the favor, his warm hand rapidly bringing the angel to attention. Pretty sure he had the general gist of what Cas was about, Dean shuffled forward, close enough that he could fist both of their cocks together and begin jacking them.

The angel let him go on for only a minute or so before he stopped Dean, seizing his wrist in one strong hand. Dean got the message and released his grasp with an almost inaudible whine of protest. Cas was unmoved, stepping even further into Dean’s space and snagging one wrist in each of his hands before he drew them behind Dean’s back and transferred them into one of his hands.

Dean had to give Cas this; he knew exactly how to get Dean going. Suddenly, confined and controlled by a single unyielding hand, Dean was about twice as revved up as he had already been. Dropping his forehead to Cas’s shoulder, he inhaled sharply as the angel’s free hand took up where Dean’s hand had left off, the pull of his fingers sliding their cocks together. The soft, slick sounds only enhanced the taboo feeling of the whole thing. It was funny, this was about the tamest thing they’d gotten up to in weeks and it still somehow felt secretive and dirty, being tucked away in a little closet, trying to stay silent. Dean felt like a teenager again, exchanging hurried hand-jobs with a classmate in a bathroom stall.

By the time another minute or two had gone by, he’d actually clamped his teeth down into the angel’s shoulder to keep himself quiet (okay, fine, maybe Cas had a point about his tendency to be vocal), and that was why he didn’t notice as soon as Cas did.

It didn’t occur to Dean that something was weird until the pull on their cocks slowed a little and Cas’s head suddenly moved away from where it had been pressed against the side of Dean’s face.

Unlatching his teeth, Dean lifted his head. That was when he saw it.

It was…snowing.

In the closet.

Maybe four or five seconds of total disorientation were followed by realization. Okay, it wasn’t snow. It was…plaster dust? That was weird. Why would there be—

The creaking sound was very quiet, but no less ominous for all that.

Cas figured it out half a second before Dean did, and by that time it was way too late. The angel’s eyes suddenly flared wide and the hand that had been clamped around Dean’s wrists released them, flailing desperately for the doorknob. That was when Dean put everything together.

Just in time for Sam to come crashing through the ceiling.

Cas, bless his superhuman speed, got them almost entirely out of the way somehow. A couple seconds earlier and Sam would’ve dropped directly on their heads. As it was, he still knocked them on their asses, but only because he caught their legs before Cas had quite managed to throw both of them into the hallway.

A concert of ‘Oofs’ and groans sounded together as all of them hit the floor, Sam rather dramatically harder than either Dean or Cas, thanks to gravitational acceleration (what? Dean had kind of enjoyed physics, okay?). Giant chunks of plaster exploded as they hit the floor, releasing a massive
cloud of fine white dust into the air that set all three of them coughing.

Dean was the first to even begin to catch his breath enough to demand between wracking coughs, “the fucking ceiling, Sam?”

A low, pained groan was the only sound that met him, interspersed with coughs.

Half a second later, Cas snapped his fingers and all of the dust still floating around suddenly hit the floor or shelves or humans it had been drifting over. Dean found himself blanketed in a thick layer of the stuff and immediately gave in to an impressive sneezing fit. When he finally opened his eyes, Cas was frowning a little sheepishly at him. “I am sorry, I may not have thought that through carefully enough.”

“No, it’s—” he had to pause to sneeze a few more times, “—fine, that’s actually better than the coughing. Sam, dude, you with us?”

The low groan came again, and Dean finally stuck his head back into the closet to see the damage.

Sam was flat on his back, knees bent upward, face screwed up in an agonized grimace.

“Oh shit, you okay kid?”

Sam finally got himself together enough to speak. “Fuck. Threw my back out when I hit the floor.”

Cas sighed, stepping forward and leaning over Sam. “Allow me,” he said dryly.

“No, Cas, it’s fine, don’t waste your strength” Sam grunted, “it’ll sort itself out in a day or so, always does. Just, do you think you guys can get me to my room?”

Dean raised a brow, staring down at Sam. Seriously? He was gonna refuse healing? That was just dumb. Opening his mouth to tell Sam not to be stubborn, he was stopped by Cas’s hand settling on his shoulder and squeezing hard enough to hurt. Opening his mouth in offended protest, he caught a look at the angel’s face and snapped it right back shut.

Oh.

If Sam was gonna dig his heels in and insist upon letting this sort itself out…that meant he would be almost entirely confined to bed for the next 24 hours at least. And that meant freedom.

Holy shit, if the kid could barely walk, there was no way he could be climbing around ventilation shafts or creeping between floors or whatever the fuck else it might occur to him to do. The last time he’d thrown his back out, he’d needed Dean’s help to hobble his way to the bathroom to piss. This was a golden opportunity!

“Yeah, totally, Sammy,” Dean told him smoothly. “We can dose you up with a painkiller and muscle relaxer too, make it less miserable for you, I bet.”

“Sounds good,” Sam grimaced, “in fact maybe you could do that now, before we move me?”

Dean was more than happy to go hunt down the first aid kit, and even brought it back so that all of them could see exactly what pill bottles he took the meds from and that he gave Sam only the prescribed number of pills, given recent events. Sam tossed back the pills with a bottle of water, then consented to let Cas use his mojo to at least clean the plaster dust off of him. The three of them waited around, and under questioning Sam admitted to suspecting (much too late) that the symbols he hadn’t been able to decipher on the blueprints must have indicated that the ceiling was largely unreinforced in this particular area of the bunker. Dean refrained from saying what he was thinking (Oh, you don’t say? Because having a moose fall on me wasn’t enough of a clue-in) with no little
effort.

What Sam flatly refused to tell them was how the hell he figured out where they were in the first place.

Seriously, kid was a fucking ninja. Kind of a bumbling one lately, but a ninja nonetheless.

Twenty or so minutes later, Sam relaxed visibly as the meds started to kick in. They gave it another ten minutes just to be safe, and by the time they hefted him up between them and toted him up the stairs and to his room, his pain was under control enough that at least he wasn’t screaming.

They got him settled on his bed with a walkie-talkie and strict instructions to call for help when he needed the bathroom, but by that time he was already half-asleep thanks to the combined effects of narcotics and muscle relaxers.

They tiptoed out, closing the door and making a beeline for the library, bursting into the room and turning to face each other with matching wide grins.

“Oh my God,” Dean said gleefully, clapping his hands.

“Freedom!” Cas crowed, actually pumping a fist in the air.

They really should have known better.

Chapter End Notes

Chapter-specific tags/warnings: bondage, nipple clamps, blow jobs, rough sex, hand jobs, manhandling, references to insect phobias (poor Sammy), and Sam’s increasingly fumbled interruptions. Oh, and Beestiel. Can’t forget Beestiel.

AUTHOR’S NOTE:

I gotta tell y’all, I’m extremely curious to see what you make of this chapter. One of its scenes—I’m not gonna tell you which one—I have been waiting to write for weeks, so it’s possible I’ve built it up bigger than it actually is. We’ll see what you think.

In any event, I had a damn good time writing this Week in the Life, and if you had half as much fun reading it, I’ll count it as a job well done.

Now to housekeeping. At the moment we’re still on track for two more chapters after this, but again, I make no promises since new plot arcs have a tendency to whack me in the back of the head like a two-by-four while I’m looking the other way.

As far as Friday’s chapter is concerned, there’s about an even chance that it’s gonna be late. Tomorrow I’m taking Imp-the-Cat to see his oncologist (we had to cancel last week due to weather), and it’s a bit of a trek. I anticipate that taking most of the day, and while I may have some decent wait time in which I can write, I don’t think it’s wise to count on it. Thursday is the first night of Passover, one of the few things that actually takes precedent over fanfiction (Things That Beat Fanfic Writing: my cat’s health and major religious observances. That’s…about it, at this point). With that in mind, I’m actually hoping to get all of Friday’s chapter written today, but that’s a pretty ambitious goal. We’ll see how I do. If it doesn’t happen, there’s a decent chance that you’ll get the new
chapter on Saturday instead.

Don’t tell my muse, she’s already pissed.

And on that note, if someone could get their ass in gear and get me out of here (all of your lock picks were appreciated, right up until I remembered I have no damn clue how to pick a lock. She ended up confiscating all of ‘em, but there was really no point. I was basically just scowling and poking pointlessly at the locks), it would be great. She doesn’t seem swayed by arguments about cat oncologists and Seders. On the bright side, she has assured me that unlike her sister, she doesn’t plan on killing me once my vision has been realized.

But I’m not sure I believe her. SEND HELP.
Mile High Club

Chapter Summary

In which nobody is EVER gonna believe this one...

Chapter-Specific tags and warnings can be found at the end of the chapter, along with an author's note.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

It was official. Dean was calling it.

Castiel, Angel of the Lord, Warrior of God, was the biggest buzzkill on the planet.

“But why not,” Dean demanded, recognizing the whiny edge in his tone but not caring enough to stop it, “when this is like the perfect opportunity and we have no idea how long it’ll last?”

“Because,” Cas said serenely, “I have no intention of simply tumbling to the floor and rutting like maniacs.”

“I repeat, why the hell not?”

“First of all, we are both caked in plaster dust and you have not gone two minutes without sneezing in forty-five minutes.”

“I have n—n—no—achoo!”

“As I was saying. Perhaps more importantly, this will be the first time in weeks that we have actually had uninterrupted sex, and it will not be a frantic, desperate quickie. I plan to take my time with you. I was under the impression that you would not object to waiting several hours in order to ensure that I’ve had planning time, but perhaps you would prefer to simply wait until tomorrow?” Cas smoothly raised one brow in challenge.

“Oh, uh, no,” Dean wasn’t sure he’d ever backtracked faster in his life—and not only because the appearance of what he secretly thought of as Cas’s ‘Dom brow’ was a sure sign that he should tread very carefully. “No, not objecting at all, I was just…you know, eager. I can’t help it that you’re so dead sexy.” He was hoping to at least earn a chuckle, but instead he got a distinctly unimpressed face.

“Dean, has flattery ever actually won you cookie points?”

“It’s ‘brownie points,’ babe, and now that you mention it, not really—but I’m no quitter.” He grinned rakishly and was pleased to see that this time the angel’s lips did twitch slightly.

“Be that as it may,” the tone was no less stern despite the fact that Dean knew Cas was secretly amused, “the longer you continue to bicker with me, the longer you will have to wait to have my cock in you, so you tell me. Shall we continue this conversation, or are you ready to listen?”
Rather than speaking, Dean cupped his hands behind his ears and gazed at Cas with overexaggerated, rapt attention.

“You are walking a very fine line,” Cas told him, lips twitching even harder, “but as your silence is a rare and precious gift—”

**Hey, what the hell?!** He was plenty quiet! Sometimes. Occasionally. Maybe.

“—I will go on nonetheless. You will go take an antihistamine—non-drowsy, I need you awake—and then shower and clean yourself up. Then you will eat some lunch and find some way to relax for a time. Hand me the walkie-talkie, if you please.”

Frowning a little as he tried to figure out what Cas’s game was, Dean handed over the walkie-talkie that was Sam’s link to them. Cas slid it into his trenchcoat pocket and nodded once. “I will retain custody of this. I will tend to Sam’s needs. I will see to it that he eats lunch and gets to the bathroom when necessary. I will ensure that he is not in an undue amount of pain and that he has access to the medications he needs. You, my codependent love—”

“Hey, that’s not fair—”

“Shush. You will not hover around him anxiously. He is fine. If he were in any true danger I would have healed him, regardless of his objections. And if you cannot have sex with me immediately, your next instinct will be to ignore your own needs in favor of tending to Sam, as usual. Hence, I am making it explicit that you are not to do so. I will take care of Sam. You will do as I have asked, and then meet me at the door to the garage at 2:30. I will expect you to arrive naked, as it would take unnecessary time and effort to divest you of clothing that you will not need for some time afterward. I will have your robe ready for you to wear when we are finished. Am I understood?”

The angel had his determined face on, telling Dean that there was no point to arguing against anything he’d dictated. But since when had Dean accepted when things were hopeless?

“You know—”

“That was a yes or no question, Dean,” Cas’s voice was implacable, but there was a warning in his eyes.

“Yes, Sir. You’re understood.”

“Good boy,” Cas purred, and then all of a sudden there was a strong arm around Dean’s waist, another tangled in his hair, and Cas’s lips collided with his hard enough that their teeth actually clacked together.

The kiss could not have lasted more than fifteen seconds, but Dean was still panting like he’d run a marathon by the time Cas stepped neatly away.

“A preview,” the angel told him, quirking a sultry half-smile. “I will see you in slightly under two hours.”

Just like that, he was gone.

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Climbing out of the shower thirty minutes later, Dean had to admit that both the antihistamine and bathing had been a good idea. He was a hell of a lot cleaner and a hell of a lot less sniffly than he
had been half an hour ago, both of which were a relief.

He dried off and padded back down the hall to his and Cas’s room, where he threw on a pair of sweatpants and nothing else. No point in dirtying extra clothes that he’d only be wearing for an hour or so at this point.

Cas must’ve been creepily tuned into Dean’s metabolism or something, because he always seemed to be the first one to know when Dean would be getting hungry. And, yeah, it was about lunchtime, but still—Dean’s stomach started growling at exactly the point in the proceedings when Cas had instructed him to get some lunch.

The kitchen boasted an impressive amount of MREs neatly stacked in the pantry where real, non-gross food usually lived, and Dean dug through them as if there might suddenly be a new and delicious variety that he’d missed till now. It didn’t take him long to abandon the futile quest and grab one of the lighter meals, figuring it was probably wise not to go with anything too heavy since Cas hadn’t told him exactly what they were gonna be getting into.

Even though he hadn’t been instructed, Dean made sure to drink plenty of water with lunch. Only after he finished his food, completed the almost nonexistent clean-up, and checked his watch (he had another 25 minutes before he was due with Cas) did he actually start thinking about the rest of his instructions in greater detail. Obviously, yeah, he got why Cas didn’t want him hovering around Sam like the world’s butchest helicopter Mom. He did have a tendency to attend to Sam’s needs selectively over his own. Cas wasn’t crazy about that under the best of circumstances, and had no intention of permitting it prior to a scene.

But—then there was the other piece of it.

The garage. Cas wanted him in the garage.

The last time they’d played in the garage—well. That had been one holy hell of a scene.

Don’t get him wrong, Dean had liked it. He’d liked it a lot. He wanted to do it again. Hell, he wanted to do a lot more than that. He wanted to go ahead and try those 40 strokes, maybe even 50. He wanted to go shopping for some new toys, some heavier implements. He wanted all of those things, and he wanted them badly.

But…now? Did he really want them now?

If he was honest with himself, he’d never say no to a good spanking, but a strapping was more than that, more intense than that, and generally precluded the kind of athletic sex that Dean was really hoping for. There were all sorts of things he’d be all about Cas doing to him right now—but most of all, absolutely more than anything else, he wanted Cas to fuck his brains out, if only because every time they’d attempted it in the past week, something (Sam) or another (always fucking Sam) had prevented them from finishing up.

By the time he finished percolating on this, Dean found that when left to its own devices, his brain had taken the instruction to find some way to relax and carried him directly to Sam’s door.

Huh.

Well, fine. Cas had told him not to hover over Sam, but he’d also told him to relax. And, Dean rationalized like a champ, making sure Sam was okay would totally relax him.

It took a man of some talent (or one with no sense of self-preservation) to justify a blatant deviation from orders that fast but then, Dean had always been a pretty talented guy.
Without missing a beat, he poked his head around Sam’s door and stepped inside.

“How you holding up?”

Sam lifted his head a couple inches and gave Dean a slightly hazy smile. He was clearly still under the influence of his meds, but seemed somewhat more alert than earlier. “Pretty good, actually. The meds were a good call, I’m not in too much pain. You just missed Cas—“Good thing, too, Dean thought, “—he was here not five minutes ago. He brought me lunch, got me to and from the bathroom and left me those.” Sam pointed to the bedside table, where a large glass of water sat beside what looked like new doses of the meds. Beside them a small note was propped with the time at which Sam could take the next dose.

Dean noted with a small stab of satisfaction that there was no cartoon bee on the note. He hadn’t realized it before, but apparently he felt a little possessive of Beestiel, and was pleased to see that Cas reserved the little dude for Dean alone.

“Glad you’re holding up okay,” Dean told him, smiling, “and hopefully you’ll be up and around again by tomorrow night.”

“Should be,” Sam said, “last time I came out of it pretty quick.”

“I remember,” Dean agreed, “I guess that’s one of the benefits of being built more solidly than the bunker.” Sam grinned at him and Dean went on, “anyway, I wanted to poke my nose in and see how you’re doing. I gotta head out, and I’m not gonna be in shouting distance, but use the walkie-talkie if you need anything. It might…take a little while for someone to get to you, but one of us will come help you out. Don’t try to get out of bed yourself if it takes some time, okay? The last thing we need is you faceplanting and splitting your skull open.”

“Aye aye, Captain. Jeez, you and Cas are like Mama and Papa Bear, he told me almost exactly the same thing.”

“Then maybe you’re twice as likely to listen to us,” Dean told him, quite familiar with Sam’s stubbornness when it came to doing things for himself.

“Don’t worry, I’ve got no intention of getting up by myself till this eases up. See you later?”

“You know it.”

Dean headed out, feeling a lot better after getting reassurance from Sam directly that he wasn’t gonna try to get out of bed and end up braining himself if he tried to get in touch with them mid-scene and didn’t get an immediate response. And it didn’t hurt to get confirmation that the kid really was in no shape to somehow hunt them down and creep on them again.

Another glance at his watch told him he had just enough time to get to his room, get rid of his clothes, and make it to the garage. Speeding his steps slightly, Dean shrugged off the certainty that Cas would be distinctly annoyed by Dean’s disobedience. It was pretty much immaterial, since the angel had almost certainly been in the garage getting things ready while Dean checked in with Sam.

By 2:28, Dean was naked but for his watch and padding down the final hallway that led to the garage door. As usual, Cas slid the door open at precisely 2:30. He gave Dean a small, unreadable smile before taking his hand and tugging him inside, wasting no time in pulling him across the cold concrete floor toward the Impala.

Baby sat in the same bay, black finish gleaming under the glow of the bright lights.
The sight that awaited him on her hood gave Dean a rush of déjà vu, and he slid to a stop ten feet or so away, despite Cas’s pressure on his hand.

The same nylon straps from before rested neatly against the hood, again exactly far enough apart that when a carabiner was fastened to the leather cuffs that sat benignly in the center of the hood, they would stretch Dean’s arms out to their full length.

Cas knew without being told what caused Dean’s hesitation and smiled, stepping in closer to slide his hand reassuringly through Dean’s hair.

“The only thing I intend on doing with my belt is removing it, Dean. Unless, of course, you have any designs on provoking me. I do endeavor to be flexible.”

Dean shook his head immediately. Today was not a day for having the hide skinned off of him. Cas nodded, lips curving fondly, and when he tugged Dean’s hand, encouraging rather than compelling him to again move toward the Impala, Dean went.

He should’ve known instantly what to expect when, as soon as they stood just in front of Baby, Cas propped a foot against her bumper, lifting his knee. In fact, he had just started connecting the dots when Cas’s hand slid from Dean’s fingers up to his wrist and jerked once, hard.

Not expecting the yank, Dean stumbled forward the necessary step and almost immediately found himself upended across Cas’s raised knee. The hand that gripped his wrist neatly twisted it up behind his back, both pinning it there and keeping more than enough pressure on Dean’s back to prevent him from rising.

He had barely enough time to draw in a breath to demand what he’d managed to do that could be termed provocation in the last five steps, and never got the chance to actually say a word. Cas’s right hand exploded against his ass with incredible force and speed, painting every inch of its surface before venturing down to his thighs. They were too fast to count, but Dean estimated the angel gave him a solid thirty smacks, and by the time the hand came to rest on Dean’s stinging backside, he was gasping sharply with each swat and squirming over the upraised knee.

“Mmmm,” Cas said appreciatively, his hand rubbing firmly over the curve of Dean’s pinkening ass, “I do love that sight. And I find that sometimes, this position is the most conducive to certain conversations. Let’s chat, Dean.”

He knew. Dean knew immediately that Cas was perfectly well aware that Dean had outright disobeyed, had gone to see Sam, and he wasn’t best pleased about it.

“Look, you told me to relax, and I—“

“When I suggested that we have a chat, Dean, I was not actually inviting you to speak. You may answer when asked a question, am I understood?”

“I’m just trying to—“

He really ought to have known better. The hand that had been so nicely rubbing the sting from his cheeks again set to its task, dropping another fifteen or twenty smacks to Dean’s upper thighs and that particularly tender spot where his ass and thighs met.

Dean was wriggling hard by this point, but Cas simply tightened his grip on Dean’s wrist before hitching him up a little higher over his knee.

“Am I understood?” The angel inquired again, as though there had been no interruption.
“Yes, Sir. Understood, Sir.”

“Now, then. I was extremely clear about what you were not to do. I asked you not to look in on Sam. I told you that I would handle it, and I did. I ensured that your brother was well-cared-for and had everything that he needed.” Cas continued to lay down spanks, no less hard but much more slowly and steadily, as he spoke. “I am forced to wonder whether perhaps you do not trust me with your brother. Is that the case, Dean? Do you not trust me to look after Sam?” The angel paused his smacks again, returning to rubbing the sting out of Dean’s cheeks, which were no doubt blushing a much deeper pink by now, and for the first time Dean actually thought about what it looked like, that he’d gone ahead and looked in on Sam despite Cas’s assurances that he would take care of the kid.

Oh, shit. It did make it look like he didn’t trust Cas, didn’t it?

“Oh, Cas, no,” Dean said hastily, real apology in his voice, “Of course I trust you with Sammy. It’s not that. It’s just… it’s Sammy. Of course I gotta check on him. It’s just how I’m programmed.”

Cas sighed, and Dean steeled himself for that palm to start falling once more.

It didn’t. Cas continued to rub, but there was a thoughtful quality to it now.

“Dean,” the angel said, “I asked you to allow me to see to Sam because I wanted you to focus on your own well-being for a little while. For you to feed and clean and tend to yourself and you alone. This is important under any circumstances, but far more so in the lead-up to a scene. I need to know that I can trust you to do this.”

Well, shit. When he put it that way…

Dean felt like a heel. His body, which had been hanging onto a fair amount of tension (you try being super relaxed with a knee in your stomach and your ass being set ablaze), went limp over the angel’s knee. Cas wasn’t being a jerk when he banned Dean from seeing to Sam, he was trying to take care of him. The way he always did.

“Cas, I’m—“

The angel interrupted him before he could dive into an apology. “Nevertheless, I would be lying if I said I was surprised. If I spanked you every time you disregarded your own well-being on behalf of Sam’s, you would never sit down again.” There was a brief pause in which Dean could practically hear Cas thinking. “Then again, I think I would perhaps not mind that. I do so enjoy feeling the heat of your freshly spanked backside when I take you, and red is an excellent color on you. Setting that aside, however, can we agree that when we are preparing to scene, you will trust me to tend to Sam if he requires it, and make yourself a priority instead?”

Rather than rushing to agree to anything Cas demanded, as Dean was often known to do while getting his backside tanned, he actually took the time to think about it before responding. “I’m gonna do my best. I’ll probably fuck up some, but I’ll work a lot harder to focus on it. Promise.”

“Thank you for your honesty,” Cas told him, a slight smile in his voice, “but be aware that in the future if I find that you have neglected your own well-being, I reserve the right to cancel any planned scene. Am I clear?” The tone in his voice told Dean that arguments would not be appreciated.

“Crystal clear, Sir.”

“Very good. You know, I had not actually planned on spanking you today, but as long as I already have you here—“
Dean was not especially surprised when that rock-hard hand began to rise and fall again.

Cas gave his ass another solid once-over, perhaps fifteen more impressively firm smacks before releasing Dean’s wrist and letting him slide back onto his feet.

Dean’s hand had barely slid three inches toward his ass before the voice rang out sharply, “Oh, no. No rubbing. You know better than that. Who’s the only one who gets to touch your ass after a spanking?”

“You are, Sir.”

“That’s right. Now, shall we return to the proceedings?”

“Yes, Sir.”

Leaning forward, Cas snagged the cuffs from Baby’s hood. Anxious to prove that he could be good, Dean extended a wrist helpfully. The angel’s lips twitched a bit, no doubt perfectly aware of what drove the instant compliance, but he said nothing as he fastened first one and then the other cuff snugly around Dean’s wrists.

“On your back, please, Dean, and arms to either side of you.”

That was a bit of a surprise. Dean had banked on being bent over the hood. Maybe that’s what Cas had planned on too, but Dean was pretty sure the angel couldn’t resist making Dean press his freshly spanked ass against the car’s hood.

Pasting on a preemptive grimace, Dean stretched out on the hood on his back. The placement of the O-ringed nylon straps was such that if Dean had wiggled a little, he could’ve gotten his ass hanging off the edge of the car, preventing pressure from being put on it.

He knew better.

The press of the hard metal against his ass wasn’t great but it really wasn’t too bad. The spanking, though rapid-fire and quite thorough, hadn’t been anywhere near the worst he’d ever gotten, and—

His thoughts were interrupted as Cas leaned over him, tie in hand and a slight smile on his face.

“Open that pretty mouth. No speaking for you today.”

Okay, confession time: Dean loved it when Cas used ‘pretty’ as a descriptor of him. For years, he’d despised being called a pretty boy (and he’d heard it a hell of a lot), and that particular combination of words still wasn’t a favorite, but Cas never called him that. Instead he’d talk about Dean’s pretty ass, or his pretty mouth, or the pretty sounds he made, and for some reason, that felt totally different. That felt...well, he couldn’t even put into words how it made him feel (especially since Cas was neatly slotting his tie between Dean’s teeth, wrapping it around his head and tying it snugly), but it was good. Really good.

After the makeshift gag was in place (they’d played around with ball gags at one point and discovered that it just didn’t really appeal to either of them, they much preferred when Cas improvised—which usually involved his own tie or the panties he’d torn off Dean), Cas backed off, simply gazing down at Dean appreciatively.

The tie wouldn’t keep him silent—not even close—but it would prevent him from successfully forming actual words. Cas could still make him moan and whimper and cry out (one of the many reasons the angel preferred this to more effective gags), could appreciate the somewhat muffled but
far from totally dampened sounds he wrung out of Dean.

“Now that I have your attention,” Cas said smoothly, “let’s see what we can do about getting you ready for me.”

Cas reached down, grabbing Dean’s ankles and making him bend his knees and plant his feet against the front edge of Baby’s hood. The angel nudged Dean’s legs a little wider, then paused to examine him before pushing them wider still.

“Mmm, perfect. I love the sight of that pretty hole, tight and dry, just waiting for me to slick it up and work it open.” Oh, hey, that might’ve been a new one. Pretty mouth, pretty ass…yeah, pretty hole was new. Dean liked it.

“Show me your nonverbal safewords and we can get started. First yellow, then red.” Cas told him, somehow managing to make even that sound sexy.

Dean did, offering the two simple hand gestures that served as indication to slow down and to stop. Cas nodded approvingly before taking a step backward. Dean wanted to lift his head and watch, but he forced himself to keep it where it was and wait.

The click of a cap came as no surprise, nor did the light, taunting press of a slick fingertip.

Cas teased him what felt like forever before that finger finally slid home, making Dean’s back arch and a little groan of enjoyment leak out from behind the gag.

“So eager for it. I love that eagerness,” Dean could hear a ‘but’ coming, and he was not wrong, “but I thought today would be a good time for you to learn some patience. I want to take my time with you.”

Oh, God. Maybe he should’ve gone with the strapping. Nothing was more torturous than when Cas insisted upon teasing and playing when all Dean wanted was for the angel to fuck him into the mattress (or the car hood, as the case may be).

He whimpered a little, hoping that if he made pretty enough sounds, the angel might have mercy on him, but he knew deep down it was a losing battle.

He was right.

It felt like hours in which Cas slid that single finger in and out of Dean’s hole, occasionally removing it altogether, sliding it up and down his perineum, tracing and tapping his balls before slipping it back in. He paused frequently to add more lube, until Dean could feel it dripping down his crack and onto Baby (who he sent a silent apology to).

Dean had just about decided that Cas was trying to kill him with understimulation when the single finger was unexpectedly and delightfully joined by another, just as slick. Dean’s hips pressed eagerly into the pair of fingers, and they instantly withdrew.

“Ah ah ah,” Cas scolded lightly, “you do not get to say how much you get, and how fast. I do. Ass down.”

Making a sound halfway between a plea and a grumble, Dean settled his ass back onto the hood, and a moment later the pair of fingers returned. Dean made a low sound of enjoyment as they grazed feather-light across his prostate before beginning a leisurely slide in and out.

Dean could hear the soft, wet sounds of Cas’s digits thrusting into him. He loved that sound so
damn much. He loved this (as much as it was driving him out of his mind), the chance for them to really take their time, for Cas to take him apart slowly and patiently. God, it felt like forever since they’d been able to do this without threat of interruption. It was glorious.

The two fingers were just as patient and slow as the lone finger had been, taking their time scissoring and thrusting, occasionally ghosting against his prostate but mostly avoiding it. Dean’s cock was desperate for some kind of contact, hard and curving upward, the occasional drop of precome dripping down its length and producing a sensation that was unsettlingly not-enough.

Dean’s groan was bone-deep when at long last a third finger joined the fray. They were getting closer, closer to when Cas would actually fuck him, and God, whether or not Cas thought so, Dean was so ready. He was desperate to feel the angel’s cock stretching him (although at this rate, by the time Cas was done it wouldn’t be much of a stretch).

Still, Cas was patient, slow, methodical, and at some point Dean lost track of time altogether, body loosening on the hood, clenched fists easing a little, head tipping back against the metal, warmed from his body.

That seemed to have been some sort of signal to the angel, whose trio of fingers suddenly seemed to be moving with greater purpose, driving a little harder, spreading a little wider.

Dean scarcely dared to hope, when they slid free, but a second later he heard fabric rustling.

The sound went on long enough that it finally occurred to Dean that Cas was actually disrobing entirely, removing all his layers before fucking Dean.

Oh, yes.

Dean loved how vulnerable it made him feel, being totally naked before a fully clothed partner. He loved the feeling of exposed helplessness. He always would.

But sometimes, he wanted nothing more than to feel Cas’s skin, warm against his own. To feel the slide of flesh against flesh.

Somehow, the angel always knew what he needed.

Dean was listening for it, and felt himself trying to smile around the gag when he heard the sound of Cas slicking himself up amply.

Honestly, at this point it was redundant. Dean was as slick and ready as he’d ever been, but Cas was nothing if not thorough.

There was another pause, though, an interminable moment when he was expecting the push of a cock into him. Lifting his head, he saw the angel standing before him, slickened cock at attention and fiery blue eyes locked between Dean’s legs.

“I do enjoy the sight of you before I’ve touched you but oh, Dean, I love looking at you like this. That pretty, pretty hole, slick and stretched and desperate for me. If it could speak it would be begging me to fill it up.”

Dean could hardly fault the accuracy of this statement, and a moment later all of that flew out of his head entirely because Cas was finally, finally stepping into him. Dean whimpered out a wordless plea when he felt the too-light pressure of Cas’s cockhead rubbing across his crack, catching on the ring of muscle before sliding past it again.
He was afraid the angel was going to once again tease, take his time, drive Dean even wilder than he already was, and the mere thought was enough to have him begging desperately, even through the gag. His words were totally indecipherable, but Cas got the gist of it, smiling a little at the sound of the pleas.

“So greedy. You are just besides yourself. I think I could make you do anything, if only I promised to put you out of your misery, to fill you up and take you hard.”

The groan that leaked out of Dean was wanton agreement and plea mixed together, and it seemed to flip a switch in Cas.

“Perhaps next time,” the angel mused, “I will see just what I can get from you before I fuck you. For now, though…”

Yes. The first true thrust was no tease. Cas simply drew his hips back and sheathed himself to the hilt inside of Dean, whose walls parted easily to admit him. There was no hint of a burn, no need to adjust. Cas had done his job exceedingly well, and it was only too easy for him to take up a steady pace, unhurried but far from sluggish.

Dean still wanted more. He wanted it harder. He wanted it faster. He wanted Cas’s cock to batter his ass, wanted the angel’s hands to bruise his hips, wanted it all, wanted it now, and although his words were still impossible to make out, he nevertheless cried out exactly what he wanted, begged for it.

It seemed there was some mercy in Cas, or maybe his perfect self-control could only last so long, because with a deep grunt, the angel gave Dean what he’d been begging for for what felt like hours. His hips drew back once more, but this time they returned with such force that the cracking sound of flesh on flesh echoed through the garage.

Dean wailed, eyes falling shut as he threw his head back.

Cas took up a hard and fast pace, snapping his hips into Dean, planting his hands on either side of Dean on the hood in order to give himself additional leverage.

Dean kept his feet planted, arms straining at their bindings—not because he was actually trying to get away, but simply because he couldn’t control himself.

It was perfect. It was everything he had been needing and wanting, whether he’d known it or not. And it was all theirs. This moment belonged to Dean, and to Cas, and to nobody else.

It felt like it had been years in coming and not merely a month or so.

Dean had no control over his body at this point—it did what it wanted, or rather what Cas wanted, since he was held immobile while the angel used him.

His eyes flared wide as a particularly vicious thrust slammed against his prostate, and he could feel it starting to build to a head, could feel his balls beginning to tighten.

With all that going on, it took him a second to even process what he was seeing, and a hell of a lot longer than that to actually make sense of it.

There was…something…above them.

He had to be hallucinating, because Dean could’ve sworn that perhaps ten feet up, a very small but perfectly recognizable hot air balloon floated above them.
Whatever noises he’d been making stopped entirely, the climax that had been building suddenly banished by sheer astonishment.

What in the living fuck was a miniature hot air balloon doing hovering over their—wait, was that…?

No. Couldn’t be. There was no way in hell that Sam’s miniature face was staring down at him from the miniature bottom of the miniature hot air balloon.

This was Not. Fucking. Possible.

But since when had a little thing like what was possible gotten in Sam’s way recently?

Dean had just about decided that he was hallucinating this, that strain and stress and lack of beer and bacon and confinement and Sam’s relentless interruptions had conspired to simply crack Dean’s mind once and for all.

And honestly, he was okay with that. He could live with that.

That’s when the tiny Sam started waving merrily at him.

Dean made a low sound that was somewhere between disbelief and resignation as reality crashed back in and his brain at last made the final connections as it registered a small symbol overlaying Sam’s waving hand.

He wasn’t hallucinating. This wasn’t psychosis. Somehow, he had no fucking clue how, Sam was fucking facetiming a cell phone that was somehow, he had no fucking clue how, fastened to the bottom of a tiny hot air balloon that somehow, he had no fucking clue how, Sam was piloting from his room.

What in the actual fuck were their lives?

Cas, who had continued to thrusting away during the thirty seconds or so that Dean lay frozen in confused disbelief, suddenly seemed to tune into the fact that Dean’s reactions were not what they had once been. He hesitated a little, and Dean took the opportunity to start speaking through the gag. His words were still indecipherable, but the insistent, not-at-all pleading or passion-driven tone to his voice must have served just as well as words would’ve.

Cas leaned up, leaving his cock buried inside Dean, and quickly unfastened the gag.

“Dean, are you well? You did not use your nonverbal safe—“

Dean didn’t bother to let him finish, simply interrupted, tone of voice hovering somewhere in the bizarre space between horror, hilarity, disbelief, and resignation. “Cas. Look up.”

Cas’s head whipped around instantly. Dean was kind of looking forward to the unmitigated pleasure of watching his face go through the same series of emotions that Dean had, but he never got it.

All he saw was the shock before Cas, who must have been balanced a little unsteadily on his toes in order to get the angle he needed, literally fell off of Dean and landed on his ass on the floor with a grunt.

It was a damn close thing. It could’ve gone either way in that moment. Dean could feel the hysteria start to bubble up in his gut, and firmly told it to fuck right off with that, because he absolutely could not lose it before finding out just what the shit was going on.
There was no sound of movement from Cas, who was presumably still on the floor and staring up in utter astonishment. Dean, who’d had a little longer to get used to the totally unbelievable sight above him, spoke up.

“Sam…” he trailed off for a second, then took up the thread again with a single word that pretty much covered it, “how?!”

A tiny moose-hand waved dismissively from aloft. “Not important, we can talk about that later. Didn’t mean to startle you. You guys just go back to what you were doing.” He paused, then added with a mischievous grin, “I promise not to fall on you this time.”

The dual voices that rang out simultaneously carried identical notes of demand and warning.

“SAM.”

“Okay, okay.” Sam said, rolling his eyes at them, “funny story, I was hunting for birthday presents for Dean and I stumbled across this in some weird catalogue. I thought it would make a kinda cool present, a little remote controlled hot air balloon, so I went ahead and bought it. Then we were all a little distracted by being trapped in here on your birthday, and I was pissed at you for how many times I’d run across the two of you going at it, and then I honestly forgot the thing for a little while, until it occurred to me that it might actually come in handy if I were incapacitated, and I could just give it to you afterward. So I rigged it up with one of our burner phones just in case. I would’ve used it when I was in the dungeon but I didn’t have the remote or my phone on me. Anyway, the point is, I can help out even while I’m confined to bed. How great is that?”

Dean had dimly registered the sound of Cas getting up while Sam spoke, but had no attention to spare for the angel. He was entirely focused on his animated brother’s tiny face gazing down, clearly quite pleased with himself.

“Sam,” he said carefully, “buddy, I really appreciate your—“

That was when the booming explosion rang out through the garage. Dean barely had the chance to jerk in surprise before suddenly both phone and oddly misshapen balloon were plummeting toward him.

A single hand reached out unerringly and caught the bizarre projectile about two inches from Dean’s chest, and he hissed out a relieved breath before lifting his head toward the angel.

In one hand, Cas held the wreckage of what was clearly a destroyed hot air balloon and phone (no, seriously, there was a huge hole through both of them). In the other he held a shotgun, still smoking slightly.

“I regret to inform you,” the angel said grimly, “that your birthday present from your brother was irreparably damaged in an unavoidable accident.”

Dean lost it.

He was well on the way to yet another uncontrollable laughing fit, the kind that would’ve totally destroyed any chance of further sexytimes, when there was a sharp cracking sound and a line of searing agony spread out from his thigh. Laughter entirely banished by shock and pain, Dean jerked his head down to see Cas standing over him, doubled-over belt dangling from one hand, his face thunderous and extremely intent.

“Now that I have your full attention once more,” the angel said with razor-sharp precision, “where were we?”
Nothing could put you back in the proper headspace quite like the bite of a strap.

Thirty seconds later, gag firmly replaced in his mouth, Dean was again moaning as Cas’s cock pounded him.

The discarded shotgun and hot-air-balloon wreckage bore silent witness from the floor as Dean and Cas fucked each other raw and hoarse.

Neither of them paid any mind to the muffled squawking of a walkie-talkie in the background.

Chapter End Notes

Chapter-specific tags/warnings: manhandling, spanking (plus a single strike with a belt), anal fingering, bondage, rough sex, Impala sex (sorry again, Baby), and possibly the weirdest and most surreal interruption thus far—and that’s saying something!

AUTHOR’S NOTE:

And here she is. I’ve been waiting a long damn time to break out that tiny hot air balloon, and I feel compelled to show you guys the inspiration for this chapter. Prepare to laugh your asses off. Special love goes to phaelsafe, who not only showed me that marvelous story but had the thought that Sam would have use for one of those babies. It was a damn good idea, my friend, and I hope you’re happy with the execution of it.

Astonishingly enough, we’re still on track at this point for there to be one more chapter. Keep in mind that I have yet to write a single word of that chapter, and we all know how quickly things can go off the rails—but we’re almost there, y’all. I don’t even know how to wrap my mind around the idea of finishing this, my Magnum Opus, but I won’t be abandoning the ‘verse when we’re done, and I very much hope all of you will decide to join me in seeing where my writing takes me next.

For those of you who were asking, or were kind of enough to offer support and love to Imp-the-cat and I on our trip to his oncologist—I’m sorry to say that it wasn’t a good day. There’s evidence that his very rare cancer is back. We’re waiting on some test results, but it looks like another surgery is our next step. As you might imagine, I am heartbroken.

Between that news, the beginning of Passover, and the fact that I have had a really rough couple days physically (as many of you know, I’ve been pretty sick for a number of months. While the good days have outnumbered the bad lately, some of the bad days are REALLY bad), things are less than awesome. I tell you this not to inspire pity but because there’s a chance that Monday’s chapter will be late, and y’all deserve to know why. You’ve stuck with me for a long time now—over three months, for those of you who’ve been here since the beginning—and I promise to do my best to give this story the ending it deserves, even if that takes some extra time.

Thanks so much for your support and your patience, and I really hope you laughed as hard as I did at the image of a naked, furious, shotgun-wielding Cas breaking the sad news about Dean’s birthday present to him.

I’ll see y’all soon, hopefully Monday!
On the Bright Side

Chapter Summary

In which Christmas morning has nothing on this.

Chapter Notes

I'm saying this at both the beginning and the end:

You'll note that there are two more "chapters" after this one.

LIES.

The next "chapter" is a very, very brief and optional epilogue penned by my spectacular beta, phaelsafe. She did it to amuse me, not expecting anyone else to see it, but it was too good not to see the light of day.

The "chapter" after that is a final author's note, with acknowledgements, thanks, and some information I've been sitting on about the writing of the piece. If you're interested in learning more about Snowbound and how it came to be, that note is your jam.

And now, on to the shocking conclusion (okay I'm lying it's probably not that shocking)!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

If Dean had realized what Cas was about to do, he probably would’ve interceded before the angel smashed the walkie-talkie to bits on the garage floor.

Probably.

Figure maybe a 70/30 chance he would’ve convinced Cas just to turn the fucking thing off. He got it, though. He really did. After thirty minutes of Sam’s (muffled, but still audible) squawking, silence wasn’t just golden, it was fucking platinum.

Not that there was much actual silence to be had, even after the walkie-talkie was firmly and permanently out of commission.

As it was, Dean didn’t know about the walkie-talkie’s fate until some time later. By the time Cas entirely lost patience with and dispensed with the thing, Dean was not only gagged but blindfolded as well. At some point—he hadn’t a fucking clue when except that both of them had already come at least twice—Cas had unfastened him and flipped him onto his stomach before clipping the leather cuffs together at the small of his back.

Dean scarcely registered the sound of plastic casing smashing and certainly didn’t have enough brainpower left to care. Somehow he was hard for the third time in—well, he didn’t know how long, but it was way too soon considering that he was thirty-fucking-seven, and he was pretty
goddamn sure angel mojo had something to do with his nonexistent refractory time. Frankly, at this point it was amazing there was enough blood left upstairs to keep even the most rudimentary parts of his brain functioning.

After round three, even angel mojo couldn’t get Dean’s cock back in on the action, but that didn’t stop Cas any. Something about Sam’s most bizarre interruption yet seemed to have flipped a switch in the angel. He seemed more feral, wild creature than human, determined to rut until he was sated. Toward the end of round four (he was pretty sure it was toward the end—Cas’s thrusts had yet again gotten harder and more erratic, stuttering unevenly), Dean was pretty sure if Cas decided to go for round five he was gonna have to break out the nonverbal safewords.

It wasn’t that he didn’t want to go on, it was just that after awhile, even ample lube couldn’t completely stop the chafing from that much friction. His ass was starting to feel like a slab of raw meat, and he was pretty sure he was going to be limping for at least a day, maybe two.

Thankfully, either Cas sensed that Dean was at his limit or he’d reached some indefinable peak of satiation, because shortly after his thrusts slowed to a stop after coming for the fourth time, he slid his cock out of Dean’s hole with a care that said he had at least some sense of just how utterly used up his lover was. There was a moment of silence before a hand slid down Dean’s spine, firm but gentle, worshipful.

“If you were pretty all dry and tight, and even prettier slicked up and just open enough for me, you are utterly *transcendent* like this, beautiful boy. Fucked wide open and raw, your ass still grasping like somehow it still wants more. Like it’s begging me to come back. Leaking my come after I filled you with it to overflowing. Can you feel it trickling down your thighs? I’ve half a mind to plug you up nice and tight, so you don’t lose any more of it.”

Dean’s cock gave a valiant twitch, desperate to rise to the provocation but totally unable, his ass clenching tight (which *stung*, goddammit) as if to ward off intruders. He whimpered brokenly into the gag, knowing that if Cas actually succumbed to temptation and slid fingers or cock or a plug back into him, it would be miserably painful—and yet he still somehow wanted it.

But not enough that he wouldn’t safeword in a heartbeat if Cas actually thought about following through on his musings.

There was a quiet chuckle before he felt the angel leaning over him again. His fingers had just started to shape themselves into the sign for “red” (this wasn’t even a ‘slow down,’ this was an ‘I’m done, tapping out’ moment) but before he got there, Cas neatly pulled free the blindfold and then the gag. Dean wheezed out a relieved breath, suddenly becoming aware of the cool air of the garage sliding over his sweat-soaked body.

Cas unclipped his wrists and efficiently removed the leather cuffs as a fine tremor started up, vibrating Dean against Baby’s hood.

He scarcely heard Cas asking permission to use his grace to clean Dean off, just together enough to nod permission. A soft fabric he recognized as his own robe wrapped around him a few seconds later, and Cas guided him to his feet just in time for Dean to discover that after four enthusiastic rounds with no break in between, his legs were still out to lunch.

He would’ve toppled if not for the angel’s warm, steady arms, scooping him easily up into the familiar bridal hold.

They didn’t even make it to the garage door before Dean was out for the count.
“Oh, fuck me.” The hoarse words that broke from Dean’s mouth when awareness returned might not have been the most eloquent, but they were about the only thing that adequately expressed the distinct sense that he had been beaten with a blunt object. Repeatedly. Intimately. Internally.

A few seconds later, he remembered enough to register that he had been beaten with a blunt object, and that it had been all of those things. The fact that it had been his boyfriend’s superhuman cock didn’t lessen the effects.

He dimly recalled Cas settling him on the bed on his stomach and somehow coaxing a bottle of juice and something sweet—chocolate, maybe?—into him, but it felt like a dream, likely because Dean had been well over half asleep at the time.

Just as dimly he thought he could hear the echo of words of praise and adoration, soft in his ears, serenading him fully into dreamland.

He didn’t actually register the fact that his head was pillowed on a warm chest or that there were strong arms around him until the arms shifted a little and the chest rumbled with amused words.

“I rather expected that you would request some recovery time, given how…athletic our activities were last night, but if you would prefer to go again now…”

Oh, God, that wasn’t even funny.

“Bite your fucking tongue,” Dean rasped. “If you come anywhere near my ass with that tireless…thing, I can’t be held responsible for what I do to it.”

The chest rose and fell rapidly with Cas’s hearty chuckles.

“Duly noted. Keep my cock to myself, sir, yes, sir,” the angel teased, and Dean grimaced against his chest.

“Ew, don’t ever call me that again. This ain’t opposite day, and since I already feel like you turned my ass inside-fuckin-out, the least you can do is not trip me out.” Did that even make sense? Fuck it, he was barely awake.

Cas was laughing again, and it was jarring Dean’s head unpleasantly. Clearly, the only solution was to swivel his head and bite down on the chest in warning. Unfortunately, that didn’t lessen Cas’s amusement. He kept laughing, but paused to add in a warning of his own. “If you hope to prevent me from having any further designs on your ass, that is a poor way to accomplish it.”

“Ugh, I have to pee.” Okay, so it was a bit of a non sequitur, but he had no plans on dignifying Cas’s threat with a reply, so instead he settled for going with something that was both true and reasonably urgent.

“I imagined you might. Can you stand?”

Dean opened his mouth to insist that of course, he could stand, then paused and considered. “…let’s find out.”

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It turned out he could not only stand but walk to the bathroom—even if he was limping noticeably. His ass felt kind of like churned butter, but Cas assured him there was no actual damage, simply the
after-effects of being well-used. The look in his eye when he said it caused Dean to reiterate threats of mutilation if Cas even considered making it better-used.

It wasn’t until Dean had hobbled back to their room that things fully clicked into focus and he remembered the moose in the room.

“Oh, shit, Sammy!”

Cas was speaking almost before the words were fully out of Dean’s mouth. “He is fine. I visited last night and…ensured that he would not need the restroom overnight, as well as—”

“Wait, you what? Do I even want to know how you did that? That sounds…I don’t even know what it sounds like, but not good.”

Cas huffed out a breath as he dug a very soft, well-worn pair of sweatpants out of Dean’s drawer and carefully helped him step into them.

“I used my grace, Dean. Sam was entirely unharmed by the process, and I assure you this was a better solution than actually helping him to the bathroom. I was…decidedly displeased with him, and needed to ensure that his needs were met without spending more time than absolutely necessary in his presence. For his own safety.”

Dean paused to consider that before nodding. “Okay, that’s fair. I’m gonna go check on him.”

Cas sighed. “I do not suppose there is any way I can convince you to eat breakfast beforehand?”

“I’m sorry, have you met me?”

“Very well. I will heat up an MRE for you. Ten minutes, Dean, no longer.”

“Aye aye, Captain Bossypants.”

He left Cas in his bedroom, looking perplexed and like he wasn’t quite sure whether to be amused or horrified by the new nickname. Laboriously gimping his way down the hall to Sam’s bedroom, he came around the corner to find his brother propped up on a pile of three pillows, tapping away on his laptop. Sam brightened at the sight of him.

“Oh, hey! You okay? Cas wouldn’t talk to me last night, and—“

“Yeah, I’m fine, how are you feeling?”

“Better. Pretty sure I can make it to the library for breakfast if you think you can help me stand up.”

“You sure? I don’t want you overdoing it and making it worse.”

“Nah, it eased up a lot overnight. Hey, where’s the hot air balloon? It needs to be charged before —“

“It was irreparably damaged in an unavoidable accident,” Dean deadpanned, remembering Cas’s grim declaration from the night before, “involving a shotgun and my very pissed off angelic boyfriend.”

“He what?! Goddammit! That thing was on back order! It took four months to get it shipped! Do you have any idea—“

“Sam, you’re lucky as fuck that Cas didn’t use the shotgun on you. Count it as getting off easy, and
I would definitely advise against getting bitchy with him about it if you know what’s good for you. Now are you getting up for breakfast or not?"

Bitchface firmly in place, Sam nevertheless accepted Dean’s assistance in getting up, and Dean managed to keep his own grimacing to a minimum.

Three minutes later, the pair of them were both limping down the hallway toward the kitchen. Sam shot him a sidelong glance as they hit the library, lips twitching a little.

“T’d ask what happened to you, but I’m pretty sure I can guess. You know, I think you’re actually more bowlegged than usual?”

A choked sound erupted from the reading nook that Cas favored. Dean shot a sharp glance in that direction only to find Cas resolutely hiding his snickers behind the Enochian book he’d been working his way through for the past couple days. Dean was unsure who to glare at first, but Sam solved the dilemma when he went on.

“You know, if you keep going like this, one of these days, they’ll stay—“

“Dude, quit while you’re slightly behind, or I’ll go find the shotgun wherever Cas left it.”

“Okay, okay, just saying.”

“And you,” Dean said, tearing a blank sheet of paper off the top of Sam’s nearest notepad and bouncing it neatly off the angel’s head, “don’t think I didn’t hear that.”

Cas’s head popped up from behind his book, blinking owlishly at Dean, his face just a little too solemn. “I’m sorry, did you say something, Dean? I was reading.”

Now it was Sam who was hiding snickers behind his hand.

“I should’ve let him smite you,” he told Sam grumpily, “and as for you,” he pivoted back to Cas, “if you’re ever hoping to get another piece of this ass, I’d tread really fucking carefully.”

Resolutely ignoring both of their poorly-muffled snorts of amusement, Dean flipped both of them off before heading for the kitchen with as much dignity as his obvious limp would permit.

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The rest of the day passed remarkably peacefully. Dean took a nap mid-afternoon and woke up to find that his ass was completely back to normal. He was pretty damn sure who was responsible for that, but even though it generally went against their policy for Cas to get consent before healing, he let it slide. It had been the angel’s version of a peace offering for making fun of him this morning, and limping around got old, anyway.

It didn’t mean he had any intention of letting Cas into his pants for the next day or two though. He had to regain his pride somehow, and Cas wasn’t the only one who could enforce some celibacy.

Dean stuck to his guns throughout the evening, burying himself in one of the games Charlie had installed on his laptop last year and giving Cas the brush-off when he sidled up behind Dean and started to kiss his neck.

“Not now, babe, I’ve gotta get through this dungeon or—“

“You know we have our very own dungeon,” Cas said in a sultry voice, and Dean snorted, tapping
keys hastily.

“It’s not that kind of dungeon, and I’m not stopping til I hit a save point, and then only to grab a glass of water. Now scram, go read your book.”

This time, the poorly-stifled snickering came from behind the book Sam was reading.

Cas took the rejection with reasonably stoic good humor, recognizing that, healed or no, Dean was entitled to some recovery time after their athletic activities of the previous evening.

They all called it an early night, Sam worn out and sore from how much time he’d spent out of bed, Dean still recovering from what he would forever privately think of as the Marathon Fuckfest.

It was just as well they were both in bed before ten, because for the second time in just over a month, Dean was awoken shortly after seven by a cry of surprise from the library.

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He was halfway to his feet, propelling himself off the chest of the reclining angel (who had been holding his Enochian book in one hand, the other arm wrapped around Dean) before Sam’s frantic shout came echoing down the hall.

“DEAN! CAS! YOU GUYS, HURRY!”

Dean had his machete in one hand and his gun in the other as he heard Cas’s book hit the floor. The angel pulled the door open and Dean shot out of their room and down the hall, still clad in only his sweatpants. He came around the corner into the library at a crouch, eyes already scanning to assess whatever the threat might be.

At the sight of the apparently normal library he skidded to a halt, grunting as Cas came around the corner and promptly ran into him. Jostling forward a step, he turned to scowl at Sam, opening his mouth to tear into the kid for scaring him.

The irritation barely had time to begin carving itself onto Dean’s face when he registered the look on Sam’s and cut off his irritated exclamation at the pass.

“What the fuck, Sam, you—“

The kid’s jaw hung open half an inch, eyes enormous as they settled on Dean. There was something in them, something—big. Something huge. Some kind of wild emotion, barely tamped down, but Dean couldn’t quite read what it was.

Letting his weapons fall to his sides, Dean frowned at him.

“What, Sammy? Are you—“

Sam’s voice trembled with barely restrained intensity as his eyes flipped rapidly between Dean and Cas.

“You—you guys. Look around. Dude. Look around, what do you see?”

Dean stared blankly at him for a moment. The kid could not possibly be trying to play a game of I-fucking-spy with them at ass o’clock in the morning. Dean would murder him. Cas wouldn’t have a chance to smite him, because Dean would fucking murder him.

Something about that look on Sam’s face stilled the furious exclamation on his lips for the second
time, and he actually started looking around the library.

Everything was exactly as it should be, nothing out of order, except…something was different.Dean couldn’t pinpoint what it was. Cas seemed to be undergoing the same struggle, his eyes scanning the library from one end to the other. Dean turned away, dismissing him as no help. He’d just returned to his examination when suddenly a sharp inhalation sounded from the angel at his back.

“Oh,” Cas said, sudden wonder in his voice. Sam immediately pivoted to face the angel, and that was when Dean recognized the barely-restrained look in his eyes for what it was—excitement.

What the living fuck could be causing that much excitement in a totally unchanged library?

Cas and Sam stared at one another, faces reflecting the same wild, hopeful joy.

“Okay, if one of you doesn’t cut out the googly eyes and tell me what—” he paused, suddenly registering why the unchanged room nevertheless looked different. “Hey, does it seem a little brighter in here to—oh. Oh.”

Dean would be grateful later that he’d immediately engaged the safety on his gun when he discovered no real threat in the library, because both weapons clattered from his numb fingers to the floor as he whirled on his heels.

The library was brighter, because a good deal more natural light than they had seen in quite some time was filtering in through the room’s giant windows. Jaw hanging down to what had to be his knees, Dean simply stared at it, feeling the same desperate excitement he’d seen in both Sam and Cas start to build in his own chest.

Was it—was it possible? Could it be?

There was still a thick wall of snow blanketing the windows—but it was a noticeably shorter wall than they’d gone to bed with. Bright morning sun beat down against the windows, and thin rivulets of water were trickling down their beveled surfaces in what Dean’s brain effortlessly recognized as melting snow from the roof.

Melting. Snow.

Dean actually jumped a little when Sam’s voice rang out, despite the fact that it couldn’t have been more than five seconds since Dean himself spoke.

“Yes. YES!”

Dean whirled again, flying across the room to the table, grabbing the nearest laptop—which happened to be Sam’s—and throwing it open so hard that he was lucky the screen didn’t crack off. The internet browser opened onto the New York Times website, across which an enormous, two-word headline was plastered: AT LAST.

The subtitle underneath, in somewhat smaller letters, read “National Weather Service warns of flooding potential as Midwest’s rainy warm front finally melts record-breaking snow.”

“Holy shit, holy shit, holy shit,” Dean didn’t actually realize he was the one chanting until he registered that Cas and Sam had come up behind him, one on either side, each bending over the laptop to read what Dean had already spotted.

Unlike Sam, Dean didn’t feel the need to actually read the article, and instead hastily clicked on the
bookmark for Sam’s favorite weather site.

All three of them stared in silence for a few minutes, trying to process the impossibility of it because really, there was no fucking way, absolutely no way in hell that it was legitimately sixty-fucking-four degrees outside. There was no fucking way, absolutely no way in hell that it was legitimately going up to seventy fucking degrees later today.

Dean didn’t even fight it when Sam hip-checked him out of the way to take control of the laptop, clicking frantically here and there. Dean fell back, pivoting once more to face the library windows.

“Cas,” he croaked, “how much less?”

The angel understood instantly what Dean was asking and turned as well, sizing up the snow-darkened portion of the window for a few seconds before responding.

“Twenty-three inches. There is now six feet and eight inches of snow.”

“Holy shit, holy shit, holy shit, holy—“

“I think he’s broken,” Sam threw over his shoulder to Cas as Dean took up the chant once more. “Knock into him, it always works on record-players.”

“Shut the fuck up, bitch,” Dean told him absently, no real heat in his voice.

“You first, jerk,” Sam told him, equally half-hearted, before starting to read aloud from whatever article he’d settled on—probably the original New York Times one, if Dean knew him.

The upshot was that the predicted warm front had exceeded all expectations, coming much further north and bringing much higher temperatures than forecast. A warm rain had been falling for most of the night throughout much of northern Kansas and southern Nebraska, melting the snow at a rate that meteorologists said was basically unheard of. The rain was forecast to start up again by nine and fall steadily throughout much of the day, continuing the melt-off, likely just as fast. There were major concerns about flooding in the affected areas, as the ground would be saturated pretty quickly and wouldn’t have enough time to really soak up enough of the run-off.

But, fuck, flooding they could handle. Flooding was GREAT. There were a few canoes tucked somewhere in the bowels of the bunker, Dean would fucking row to town if he needed to, anything to get out of here.

Twenty minutes later, Sam and Dean hadn’t calmed down any. They both sat slumped in chairs facing the windows, as though by glaring at the snow they could force it to melt faster, periodically swatting halfheartedly at each other when their excitement required a vent.

Cas, who was spending more time watching them than the window, a small amused smile on his face, seemed a great deal calmer than either Dean or Sam after the initial shock had passed.

“If you two will excuse me,” the angel said wryly, well aware that neither of them had any fucks to spare for anything but the melting snow, “I have a few things to take care of, and you two seem to have the market on willing the snow to melt cornered, at any rate.”

Sam ignored Cas completely and Dean managed a halfhearted and dismissive wave in his direction. It wasn’t until another ten minutes had passed that it occurred to him to wonder just what the hell Cas could possibly have to take care. Before he could get too involved in that mystery, Sam pointed out a large chunk of snow that had just crumpled away from the window, leaving a sizeable gap through which more light filtered, and Dean forgot about Cas altogether.
Had it not been for the angel, who returned some time later (the angle of the light had changed enough that Dean guessed a couple hours had gone by), the two of them might have sat there all day, neither eating nor drinking, maybe not even getting up to use the bathroom. Cas would have none of it though, and very firmly sent each of them to shower and shave in turn before sitting them down in front of MREs—it turned out there was one kind of meal the angel was actually capable of fixing without disastrous results—and insisting that they eat.

The rest of the day passed in a haze. The rain started up again shortly after breakfast, and per Cas’s assessment (when they asked him for approximately the sixtieth time), by the time the daylight began to fade to twilight, another eighteen inches of snow was gone. For the third time that day, Cas bullied them into a meal neither of them had much interest in before at last giving up and abandoning them to their vigil.

Even after the sun went down, Sam and Dean refused to be moved from the library, glaring at the windows as if they could somehow develop x-ray vision that would tell them how much more snow had melted if they only looked hard enough.

It was nearly eleven when Cas reappeared and insisted that they both go to bed, going as far as to grab them each by the bicep and frog-march them bodily down the hall to their respective rooms. Under dire threats of patrolling the halls and chaining any escapees to their beds (in the not-fun way, presumably), both of them retired despite noisy objections. Dean was completely sure he’d never be able to fall asleep, too excited to even begin to relax.

It was a little like his childhood, when he’d climbed into bed thrumming with adrenaline from some exciting adventure or the other and suddenly, inexplicably been dead to the world regardless. Apparently an entire day of vibrating nearly out of his skin had worn him out.

He woke sometime in the middle of the night and staggered down the hall to the bathroom, but before he could sneak out to the library just to check on the status of things (despite the fact that he wouldn’t actually be able to see shit), Cas appeared and ushered him directly back to bed. He went with poor grace, only consenting to remain when the angel crawled into bed as well, pulling Dean firmly against his chest and instructing him to ‘for the love of my Father, go the fuck to sleep.’

After enough grumbling to make it clear that he was doing so under duress, Dean did.

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It was a little like the one true Christmas morning Dean could remember from early childhood. It had many of the same ingredients: The sudden awakening with the feeling that something impossibly exciting was happening; the few seconds’ pause in which his mind started to assemble itself in some kind of order; the lightning-strike realization of exactly what was so exciting, followed by a careless tumble out of bed and frantic, kamikaze barreling toward what he’d been so eagerly awaiting.

And if what he was so excited about was how much more light was coming through a towering wall of windows rather than the festively wrapped presents stacked beneath a twinkling, ornamented tree…well, priorities changed, okay? If his three-year-old self had been trapped somewhere for a month, he would’ve been at least this excited about the possibility of escape. He also probably would’ve thrown way more tantrums.

It was a mark of how much he loved his brother that he actually detoured on his way to the library to pelt Sam in the head with a pillow, awakening him so he could join in the excitement.

Sam leapt out of bed in a crouch, swinging a knife at the unknown assailant, then breaking into a fit of sneezes as the pillow he’d just slashed wide open promptly produced a small volcanic eruption of
goose down all over him. Dean laughed so hard he had to lean against the doorjamb for support as Sam coughed and spat, dropping the knife to frantically swipe tiny feathers out of his hair. By the time the kid finally caught his breath, after most of the down settled into little snowdrifts on the floor, Dean was wiping tears from his eyes. Sam took in a deep breath, scowling down at the sad-looking remnants of the pillow before rounding on Dean.

“What the fuck, jerk?”

“Damn, bitch, what’d that pillow ever do to you? Brutal. If you’d rather I let you sleep, fine, but I’m gonna go see how much—“

Sam’s eyes widened as realization hit him just as hard as it had Dean, “—more snow has melted! Fuck, let’s go!”

“That’s what I figured,” Dean called over his shoulder, on the move again already, bare feet slapping hard against the polished stone floor. Sam was hot on his heels, and they actually careened off each other coming around the corner into the library. Cas, seated at the table, looked up mildly from his book, then rolled his eyes.

“Do I want to know why Sam looks like he was the altar on which several baby geese were sacrificed?”

“He’s getting restless from so long without a job and has started murdering pillows to keep his skills honed,” Dean threw over his shoulder, wide eyes locked on the wall of windows.

“Both of you shove it or I’ll switch from pillows to hunters and angels,” Sam told them absently, standing shoulder-to-shoulder with Dean and gaping at the sunlight streaming in and bathing the room.

“How much, Cas?” Dean demanded, not turning away from the windows.

“I estimate there are just under two feet of snow remaining. And before you ask, yes, I have attempted to open the door. Not quite, but very nearly. Another several hours, perhaps.”

Dean did something that he would never admit—oh, fuck it, who cared? Dean fucking squealed with delight, and Sam was never going to give him shit for it because the kid was making an even higher-pitched sound of excitement, actually flapping his hands frantically to vent his emotions. Dean thought about making fun of him for it before he realized that he himself was actually hopping around like a demented rabbit.

Cas, meanwhile, had retreated back behind his book and was making small choked noises that clearly resulted from his valiant efforts to not laugh hysterically at the pair of them.

Well, whatever. Fuck him, if he didn’t see how exciting this was.

And actually, come to think of it, why wasn’t he more excited?

Dean turned to face him, calming down enough to stop bouncing at least before he demanded, “how the hell are you so laid back about this? You were the most upset to get stuck in here and now it’s like you could care less that we’re getting out!”

“I am entirely delighted at the possibility of escape, I assure you,” Cas told him dryly, “I simply choose to find more productive ways of dealing with it.”

Okay, that was a little weird, but before Dean could probe more deeply, Sam started swatting at his
shoulder excitedly and Dean had to turn around to squeal a little more. He was so fucking ready to be out of here. He had never been more ready for anything in his life.

He loved the bunker. He did. The place was home. It would always be home. But even Buckingham Palace would probably get real goddamn old after a while when you couldn’t actually leave it, not even to grab a breath of fresh air.

Cas lost patience with them after another five minutes of suspiciously teen-girl-like displays of excitement and firmly ordered Sam to go shower and shave. The kid actually complied, after wringing assurances out of both of them that if somehow another foot of snow melted before he was done in the shower (and come to think of it, that was actually possible, given the presumed complexity of his hair care rituals), they would come get him immediately.

As soon as Sam decamped, Dean found himself stuffed bodily into the chair Cas had been seated in, with strict instructions to stay put while Cas grabbed him some breakfast. Only now did Dean actually take the time to check his watch, which informed him that it was just past 7:30. He’d actually slept later than he’d expected to, but he guessed that the sheer intensity of yesterday’s excitement had been enough to exhaust him more than he’d realized.

A slightly stomach-churning meal (his very last, Dean reminded himself!) of powdered scrambled eggs later, Dean went back to fidgeting in front of the windows. Cas put up with this for another ten minutes before finally standing up with a grunt of annoyance. After instructing Dean to go shower as soon as Sam emerged, he vanished down the hallway, muttering about making a phone call.

That was weird enough to bring Dean up short for a minute. He was actually half-considering running after Cas to figure out just what the fuck he was on about when Sam reappeared, dressed in jeans, a henley, a flannel, and boots, clearly ready for the outdoors. Dean forgot entirely about Cas in his rush to take care of his own hygiene needs, and by the time he was showered and dressed (in record time; he didn’t want to miss the moment of truth), the angel was back in the library, bent over his book.

“You know,” Dean said to whoever was listening, eyes still affixed hawk-like on the windows (and damned if the snow level wasn’t continuing to slowly drop) “as of today we’ve been trapped in here an entire month.”

Sam, whose eyes had been locked on the windows as well, swiveled to face Dean, brows lifting in surprise. “Wait, seriously?”

“Yeah, I just looked. The snowfall was overnight between January 21st and 22nd. Today’s February 22nd.”

“I’ll be damned,” Sam said, shaking his head, “felt like a lot longer than that.”

“Ain’t that the truth,” Dean agreed, shooting the kid a sidelong look and narrowly refraining from pointing out that Sam had been why the fucking lock-in from hell had been so…well, hellish.

They lapsed back into silence for another twenty minutes, both of them turning to look at Cas every minute or two until he finally looked up from his book to inform them that he’d let them know when it was time to try the door, and to stop staring.

“What’s the first thing you’re gonna do?” Sam asked suddenly, swiveling to face Dean (since it was quite clear that Cas had no interest in joining in on the excitement).

“Bacon cheeseburger,” Dean said, tipping his head back and groaning in anticipation of that first
juicy bite, “with a cold beer or five. You?”

“Salad,” Sam said yearningly. “the biggest one I can get my hands on. Oh, God, fresh greens. But I’m with you on the beer.”

“Something in you is broken,” Dean told him, shaking his head a little.

“Yeah, we’ll see who’s having a quadruple bypass at 45 and then discuss who’s the broken one.”

“Dean’s arteries are entirely clear of plaque,” Cas observed without glancing up, “although ensuring they remain that way has been quite a chore, given his eating habits.”

Dean swiveled to face Cas at the same time Sam did, gaping at him. “Wait, you mean, you…”

“It scarcely seemed prudent to allow things to progress to the point where you were at actual risk of a heart attack,” Cas told him, flipping a page in his book, “and I certainly have no intention of allowing any butcher with a scalpel anywhere near your heart. The solution was obvious.”

Sam spluttered at Cas for a moment, as if trying to decide whether to be annoyed that Dean wasn’t going to suffer any ill effects from his poor eating habits or grateful that he wasn’t going to have to bury his brother before the age of fifty. Ignoring Sam’s confusion, Dean turned back to Cas, undergoing his own internal struggle.

“I…thanks, I guess? But next time, could you…I don’t know, give me a heads’ up that you’re screwing around in there?”

For the first time in quite some time, Cas lifted his head from the book, quirking a single brow at Dean, amusement twinkling in his eyes. “Dean, I do all manner of ‘screwing around in there’ on a regular basis, and you have never—“

“Yeah, yeah, very funny,” Dean cut him off at the pass, recognizing that the angel was about to come out with another dirty joke and presently in no mood for it.

As if this had been some sort of signal, Cas neatly snapped the book shut, then turned his intense blue gaze toward the window. He stared in silence for a moment, tilting his head just a little to one side, inquisitively. Dean had seen enough of him to know that Cas was still reading something, but nothing so mundane as a book.

He and Sam both stared at the angel in expectant silence. Thirty seconds trickled by, then a minute. Dean tapped his fingers restlessly against the table while Sam squirmed in his chair.

Then, finally, Cas straightened in his chair, eyes moving from the windows back to Sam and Dean. His lips quirked upward faintly and he gave them a slight nod.

Nobody needed to ask what it meant.

They were both on their feet and halfway to the stairs in a whirlwind of movement. They hit the staircase at the same time, careening off of one another like overexcited pinballs, tripping over each other and practically tumbling back down the stairs at least twice.

Sam’s foot hit the landing first, but Dean was hot on his heels, ready to hip-check him out of the way to get at the door first.

At least, until an iron grip closed on his elbow, stopping him a good two feet shy of the door. Dean whirled on Cas, opening his mouth to unleash a furious torrent on the angel—but the damage was
already done. Sam’s hands were on the door. Practically gasping in uncontrollable delight, Sam turned the knob and pushed.

There was a moment in which nothing happened, and the bottom seemed to drop out of Dean’s stomach. Oh, come on. This had to be it. It had to be.

Then, with a shudder and a squeak of ill-used hinges, the door very slowly swung outward a couple inches. A rush of frigid water flowed in over the landing, dripping through the grating and onto the floor below. None of them paid it any mind. Sam’s biceps were bulging through his flannel as he put his back into it, forcing the door open despite the fourteen or so inches of snow still blocking it.

Sam looked like he was actually shaking as he finished muscling the door halfway open, but Dean would’ve bet anything it was from elation more than exertion. Warm, spring-scented air flooded in through the open door, and all three of them inhaled deeply. Sam let the breath out on a moan of pleasure and took a single step out the open door, then another, flinging his head back to look up at the brilliantly sunny sky.

Dean went to shake off Cas’s arm, to follow Sam. He had never wanted anything as badly as he wanted to feel the ground, the real ground under his feet. To take off his shirt and let the sun beat down on his back. To squelch through the mud and maybe even throw a couple snowballs. To climb in one of the trucks that had a snorkel (there was no way he was taking Baby out when flooding was a possibility) and get their asses to town.

But Cas wasn’t letting go.

In fact, his hand tightened on Dean’s bicep to the point of pain, and he leaned forward, a ferocity in his face that Dean knew only too well, and was all-too-accustomed to obeying.

Sure enough, when Cas murmured in his ear, the growl was an order that did not even allow for the possibility of disobedience.

“Wait.”

Dean seriously thought about throwing a legit, four-year-old level temper tantrum, was opening his mouth to tell Cas (Dom voice or no Dom voice) where to shove it when the angel pulled back a little, locking his eyes with Dean’s, and spoke very quietly. His voice was no less intent, but it was no longer an order.

“Trust me,” he said, then added, “and before you ask, Isla del Sol.”

Dean stared blankly at him. He was still trying to figure out what the fuck Isla del Sol had to do with anything when Cas released his arm and stepped past him, bending down to neatly scoop up a duffel bag that had been resting in a corner of the landing. Dean hadn’t noticed it before in his rush to get to the door.

Cas crossed the final few feet to the open door and stepped through, until both feet were firmly planted on solid ground—but then went no further. Dean could tell something was happening, but could not for the life of him figure out what.

Sam stood perhaps four feet in front of Cas, still basking in the glow of the sun, head tilted upward in bliss. What happened next took no more than ten seconds, and Dean watched it all from just inside the door.

“Sam!” Cas called, voice urgent, “Heads’ up!”
Sam was too well-trained not to respond instantly. He whirled to face Cas, who flung the duffel at him. Sam’s arms came up, fumbling a little bit but catching the thing before it hit the ground. As he juggled it, Cas stepped forward and neatly brought a hand down on his shoulder.

Just like that, Sam was gone.

Dean blinked stupidly at the spot his brother had just been before swiveling his eyes to the angel, who had turned back to face Dean, an expression of supreme satisfaction on his face. Dean shook himself hard before finding his voice.

“Where did you—oh! Isla del Sol!”

The angel’s face broke into a broad grin, all of his subdued, self-contained equanimity melting away entirely to reveal a Cas who was as pleased with himself as he had maybe ever been. “Isla del Sol,” he agreed happily, “in his bag he will find airtight false credentials which present him as a well-respected archaeologist from Columbia University. He is also in possession of a pre-paid reservation at the island’s finest resort (in whose lobby he currently finds himself, incidentally) for the next month. He will have a nice, long, warm vacation in which to explore the ruins to his heart’s content.” Cas was positively beaming at this point, clearly delighted to finally get to reveal the depths of his planning to someone after keeping it to himself for God only knew how long. “And,” the angel added after a moment’s thought, “a month to get his head on straight.”

Dean stared, agape, making a distant mental note never to underestimate Cas’s ability to be stealthy and maintain his chill. It took a minute, but finally he worked his way through all of it. Scarcely daring to hope, he squinted at the angel.

“Really? We’re...he’s really gone?” he inquired with desperate hope.

“She’s really gone,” Cas confirmed, still grinning.

“And...and you’re sure you didn’t send him to the middle of the ocean with lead weights attached to his feet?”

Cas sighed slightly, but his smile was undiminished. “If you must, you can feel free to call him, but I swear to you on my Father that he is alive and well unless a nuclear explosion has suddenly demolished the lobby of Las Olas.”

Very slowly, a smile started to reestablish itself on Dean’s face, gaining a foothold before it grew rapidly into a broad grin. Cas nodded once, content that Dean believed him, and went on.

“Now, how about that bacon cheeseburger? We can stop at the grocery on our way back. If I am not much mistaken, there is a case of beer and several pounds of bacon with your name on them.”

The angel stepped back up to the door, reaching out a hand to usher Dean back into the real world, under the warm glow of the sun he had so desperately longed to feel on his face.

“Oh, my God,” Dean said reverently, “that sounds amazing, but...”

Cas frowned a little, concern knitting his brows together. “But?”

Dean reached through the door, seized the extended hand, and yanked. Hard.

Taken completely by surprise and jerked nearly off his feet by the force of Dean’s tug, the angel stumbled back through the door and inside.
The second Cas crossed the threshold, Dean slammed the door shut and threw him up against it. Kicking his own boots off, heedless of the frigid water soaking into his thick socks, Dean seized both trenchcoat and suit coat and jerked them down Cas’s arms, letting them drop carelessly to the floor.

“But,” he went on, leaning forward until his lips hovered a scant inch from the angel’s, “suddenly, some more quality bunker time doesn’t sound so bad after all.”

Chapter End Notes

Chapter-specific tags/warnings: blindfolds, gags, and a Marathon Fuckfest, in Dean's colorful words.

Please see the next chapter for a brief and optional epilogue by everyone's favorite beta, phaelsafe, and the following chapter for a final author's note (or don't, if you're a big jerk and don't care what I have to say. Never mind, I'll just sit here in the dark... [Jewish mother humor FTW]!)!
Epilogue (by phaelsafe)

Chapter Summary

In which Sam is a douchebag. Again.

Chapter Notes

Y’all, my magnificent beta [phaelsafe](mailto:phaelsafe) wrote this painfully hilarious little coda. She wrote it for my amusement, and didn't expect anyone else to see it. But it was too perfect. I had to share it.

Show the woman some love, would you?

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#).

Dean's lips have just started to close the spare distance between his mouth and Cas's when his phone rings. He glares at it, recognizing an international call.

"Hello?" he tentatively responds despite Cas's suddenly impatient scowl.

"So, I think Cas may have been the cause of the storm after all," Sam says as his greeting. "I'm sitting here, the middle of South America, my tourist attraction hotel buried under eight feet of snow."

Dean blinks, his mouth abortively opening several times in an attempt to process what his brother has just said.

"Nah, I'm just fucking with you. Adios!"

Dean stares blankly at his silent phone.

"Bolivia rests as far south of the Equator as we are north of it. I could ...make some arrangements. Nobody would be the wiser save for a few weather sprites in New Mexico," Cas growls. "You know, for trying to cockblock while thousands of kilometers away...."

Chapter End Notes

Please see the next chapter for a final author's note.
Welp.

Here we are, y’all.

We made it. Can you believe it? I can’t! Three and a half months, 250,000 words, and 45 chapters later (remember, one of them was an intermission, so there are actually 45), Snowbound is no longer a work in progress.

More than three months ago, I posted Cumulonimbus, my first piece of fanfiction. Almost immediately, I realized I’d created a universe that I kind of wanted to play around in some more, and thus Snowbound was born.

When I started this behemoth, I knew it would be longer than Cumulonimbus. I knew it would be my first multi-chaptered work. I did not know it would be…this. I planned on straightforward fluff and smut, much like its prequel, and figured it would be between 20,000 and 30,000 words. How very, very wrong I was.

I began Snowbound with only the most basic concept of where it was going. Less than a concept, in fact. What I started the fic with was rules. Two of them, to be precise. Two unbreakable rules that would define the shape of the work. Can you guess them? If you think hard, I bet you can.

I’ll give you a hint: 250,000 words later, I haven’t broken either of them.

For those of you who are still mystified, allow me to clue you in:

1. Nobody leaves the bunker.
2. Dean and Cas never engage in any sexual activity without an interruption by Sam. Sam must at some point be present for or come across every single sexual encounter, with no exceptions.

Those were pretty straightforward rules when I was looking at 20-30K words. They got a lot more challenging to stick to (or at least Rule 2 did) when the fic started to expand beyond all sense.

Fairly early on it occurred to me that it would be pretty hilarious if Sam started to go through the five stages of grief and loss with respect to his traumatic stumbles into Dean and Cas’s sexytimes (this is what happens when you give a therapist a pen and tell her to write smut and humor). Originally, my plan was to have Sam enter “Acceptance” and simply cease entirely to care about running across Dean and Cas. You know, they were going at it in the bathroom, he would step over them to brush his teeth, totally oblivious.

As you know, that’s not actually what happened. You have, yet again, the magnificent phaelsafe to thank for that. She was the one who said, “yeah, you could do that, but what if Sam decided to try to critique them from what he learned in his queer studies class at Stanford or something?”

The idea appealed to me on multiple levels, so I stole it and I ran with it. Thus we ended up with amateur sex therapist, actively delusional Sam.

For those of you who were really hoping for or expecting a supernatural explanation for Sam’s creepy-ass behaviors, I’m sorry to disappoint. There’s nothing creepier here than a kid brother who was so traumatized by unwillingly witnessing his brother’s kinky sex life that he came all the way out the other side and into doing the traumatizing. I’d like to think of it as cabin-fever-induced psychosis. I’d tell you what Sam will have to say about things now that he’s free and once he has a
chance to clear his mind, but I’m going to have far too much fun writing that timestamp to spoil things now.

And as far as that goes—there will be timestamps. I have at least four or five already sketched out, one of which is going to be truly epic. It’ll require some suspension of disbelief, and a slightly alternate universe, but I’m pretty sure you’ll forgive me for fucking with the timelines once you see what I’ve done. We’re not done with the Let It Snow ‘verse, y’all, and we’re gonna have a damn good time playing around in what’s left of the snowbanks.

And now, on to acknowledging how very much I owe to so many other people.

So many seeds of the funny, brilliant, clever things in this fic didn’t start with me. Many, many of the original ideas came from the aforementioned phaelsafe. Some came from AtYourCervix, who betaed for me early on in the story. Some were courtesy of my beloved Dangerousnotbroken. All of them were genius, and I can only hope to have done them justice.

And on that note, let me send some gratitude out where it belongs.

Always, first and foremost, to phaelsafe. You amazing creature! I don’t have the words. I already wrote a love-letter to you back in Chapter 19. Everything I said then still stands, and then some. You are a wonder, and this fic quite simply could not exist without you. Thank you, thank you, thank you.

To AtYourCervix, my cheerleader. I know I haven’t relied on you as heavily on the back end of this fic, but never for an instant think I appreciate you and value your input any less. I love you!

To majestic_duck and reluctant, who have stepped in more than once to beta read for me when I really needed input, whose writing I worship, and whose friendships I feel so lucky to have gained through this process.

And finally, last but never, ever least, to my darling Dangerousnotbroken. What can I say that I haven’t already said? One of the most important gifts Snowbound has given me is your friendship. You have been enthusiastic cheerleader when I needed one and relentless whip-cracker when someone had to keep me in line and get me writing (seriously, y’all, you have no idea how much you owe to this woman for how many chapters got done on time). You have laughed and cried and flailed with me, enthusiastically read bits and pieces at least 10 times a day, cheered me on and supported me, made me laugh when I desperately needed it, given me structure when I was floundering. Thank you so much. I adore you (And, oh yeah, your writing KILLS me. I can’t wait to co-write this year’s DCBB with you. We’re gonna have so much fun).

And of course, always, to you. My readers. However you came upon this fic, whenever you got on board, whatever led you to it and to me, I am so grateful to you for deciding to stick around. I am so grateful for your comments and kudos and tumblr follows and fan art. Thank you for taking what was supposed to be a frivolous pastime to keep me distracted from my broken body and turning it into so very much more. Thank you for laughing and crying and squeeing and flailing and crawling into your bunks.

If you liked Snowbound, if you had fun, here’s what you can do now. You can share it with your friends. You can rec it on tumblr and pass it around to other Destiel trash. You can re-read it, if and when the mood strikes, and Lord knows you can always comment and tell me what you think. If you haven’t done so yet, you can toss me some kudos. You can come find me on tumblr. You can give me prompts.

And if you think that just maybe, you want to see what I do next, you can go ahead and click on my
username and click “subscribe.” AO3 will be more than happy to send you an email to whatever train wreck I come up with next.

I don’t know exactly what that will be, but I do know we’re gonna have a damn good time.

Join me, why don’t you?

With love and gratitude,

Jess
February 13, 2019 - 1:30 PM CST

“Cas?” Dean called, a slight frown creasing his forehead as he poked his head back into the library for the third time. The beer run with Sam had only taken 45 minutes, and upon leaving the angel had been curled up in a chair at the long library table, poring over his laptop (there were really no words for how much everyone’s quality of life had improved when they finally got him his own, absolving him of the need to stealthily poach either Dean’s or Sam’s when he had a hankering for cuteanimals.tumblr.com). Dean had fully expected to find Cas in exactly the same spot, possibly completely oblivious to the fact that he’d left at all. He’d discovered baby hedgehog photos last week and had barely been heard from since. Dean had actually been heard to idly wonder whether he was going to have to rustle up a hedgehog costume if he had any hopes of getting laid at any point in the near future. Sam hadn’t been much help, having slammed his hands over his own ears hard enough that it was probably lucky he hadn’t ruptured his own eardrums at first mention of hedgehog costumes. Frankly, Dean considered this overwrought evidence of trauma a significant improvement over a few winters back, so he wasn’t complaining.

Anyway, the point was, he’d figured Cas wouldn’t have so much as twitched by the time he got back, let alone having apparently vanished altogether. He was no longer in the library, although the laptop remained, lid shut and standby light blinking sedately. He wasn’t in their room or the kitchen or the tv room, and there was no sign of him outside or in the garage, and if he’d left the bunker, he’d left on foot, as his monstrosity of a truck was still parked silently in its bay. Dean checked his phone again, but there was still no text message or missed call, which meant the angel was likely somewhere within the confines of the bunker.

It never would’ve occurred to him to check Cas’s old room—as far as he knew, the angel hadn’t set foot in there in well over a year. Why would he? All of his things were in their shared room, their belongings carelessly jumbled together in a way that spoke of lives intertwined, warming Dean’s
heart even as he rolled his eyes while picking Cas’s discarded sweatpants up off the floor for the twelve thousandth time. Dean might’ve marched right past him and never known it, except that he happened to be in the right hallway when he sent the “where r u” text message.

A soft, familiar chime sounded behind Dean, and he backtracked slowly, brows creasing further in confusion. The light from the hallway, dimmer than usual thanks to a burned-out bulb that Dean made a mental note to replace, barely illuminated the room beyond the open door, so it was no wonder that in his rapid stride, he hadn’t noticed the barely etched shape of a familiar silhouette. Pausing in the doorway, Dean’s heart clenched at the sight of the beloved figure seated on the edge of the bed, broad shoulders hunched and shaking ever-so-slightly. It didn’t take a genius to know that something was wrong.

A cynical part of Dean’s brain snarked that the angel was bound to have stumbled across a baby hedgehog tale whose ending wasn’t uplifting after so many days of trolling for them, but he stamped down on it. Whatever the cause, Cas was obviously hurting badly, and Dean would’ve been a shitty partner if he didn’t see to Cas’s pain, regardless of the cause of it.

“Hey, babe,” he said softly, advancing a step or two into the room, “you okay?”

The answer was obviously ‘no,’ but he had to start somewhere.

The thickened voice that responded was confirmation of what Dean already suspected—whatever was going on, it had inspired tears in a creature that very rarely cried. “I am—fine,” Cas ground, as if each word had been dragged agonizingly along a cheese grater on its way out.

“Really earning the Winchester name with that kind of denial,” Dean offered with gentle humor. “Mind if I join you?” The hunched shoulders lifted and fell disconsolately in a brief shrug, which was good enough for Dean, who trekked across the brief distance to settle onto the bed beside Cas, slipping an arm around his shoulder. “If you wanna talk about it, I wanna listen,” he said quietly, leaning in to brush a kiss against a tear-sticky cheek.

“It’s—stupid, I did not even know her that well, she was rarely in the mood for visitors, but I—” the voice broke, and the shoulders, always such a solid beacon of strength for Dean, shook with renewed sorrow.

“Hey,” Dean said, “first of all, it’s not stupid, but you’re gonna have to backtrack a little for me. Who’s ‘she’ and wha—”

Before he could finish the question, Cas lifted his hand, offering up the phone he’d been clutching tightly enough that his knuckles were blanched. Dean reached out, taking the phone in his empty hand, leaving the other curled around Cas’s shoulder in a way he hoped was comforting. Cas never bothered to put a passcode on his phone, so all it took was a swipe across the screen to bring vivid color back up. Cas’s browser was open to twitter, and a tweet from NASA took center stage. “One of the most successful and enduring feats of interplanetary exploration, our @MarsRovers Opportunity is at an end after almost 15 years exploring the surface of Mars. Designed to last just 90 Martian days, here’s a look at this record-setting mission:” A video began to autoplay under the text, but Dean watched only the first fifteen seconds of the three minutes and fifty-two seconds. He didn’t need to see them to understand.

“Oh, babe,” he said quietly, “I’m so sorry.”

They didn’t discuss Cas’s penchant for NASA’s Mars rovers particularly often, but after he revealed his friendship with the Curiosity rover during their month-long lock-in three winters back, Cas would occasionally mention his extracurricular visits prior to vanishing for a day or two. Dean didn’t
begrudge the angel his quirks, and this was just another one of them he’d come to accept—actually, one of the most endearing, probably. They said humans could pack-bond with anything, but Dean had never found anyone more prone to developing bizarre attachments than Cas. From cockroaches to robots to mythical German nightmare creatures, the angel could and would befriend just about anything, in Dean’s experience. It was a bit of a mystery to Dean, who was generally pretty happy with his relatively small circle of family, but even if he couldn’t quite fathom what had led to Cas venturing to Mars to befriend robots in the first place, he knew a little something about grief, and Cas was grieving.

“As I said,” the angel mumbled, “it is stupid. I did not know her nearly as well as Curiosity, but—” He trailed off, shrugging again, a little helplessly, as if to indicate that he didn’t actually understand the depth of his own sorrow either.

“It is not stupid,” Dean repeated, “grief sometimes knows more than we do about what’s important. Do you want to tell me about her? Help me remember her with you?”

He couldn’t fix this for Cas, but what he could do was listen, and sometimes that was enough.

“She—her name was Opportunity, but she preferred ‘Oppy.’ She landed on Mars in January of 2004, along with her sister, the Spirit. Each of them was designed for a 90 day mission, but—”

“Hold up,” Dean said, knowing that interrupting Cas right after asking for more information was a dick move, but startled enough to want to make sure he was getting this right. “They landed in 2004 for a 90 day mission and she only—” shit, he had no idea how to word this, what did you say when a robot went belly up?? “—uh, died today? Cas, that’s fifteen years.”

“She was extraordinarily determined. Spirit died in 2010, but even that—six years, when she was only designed for 90 days. She and Oppy landed on different parts of the planet, but they remained close. They spoke often. Oppy missed her, once she was gone,” Cas said, blinking hard as a fresh wave of tears skittered down his flushed cheeks. Dean shifted, turning sideways on the bed and setting down Cas’s phone so that he could wrap both arms around the angel, pulling the perpetually messy-haired head down to rest on his shoulder. Cas held stiff for only a moment before his resolve crumbled and he leaned heavily against Dean. “And anyway, she has really been gone since last June, but today marked the final effort to make contact with her, to see if she could be repaired remotely. It seems not.”

“Do they know what happened?” Dean asked, aware that he should probably quit interrupting but finding himself wrapped up in the little rover’s story despite himself.

“Her batteries were solar powered—that is how she was able to maintain power for such a long time, and in June she was caught in a massive sand storm. They blot out the sun entirely, and her batteries—” Again, Cas’s voice broke off, and Dean could sense they were getting to the meat of the issue here.

“Her batteries couldn’t recharge because of it?” Dean asked as gently as he could.

Cas shook his head silently, tears leaking down his face. He took a shuddering breath, then another one, and visibly steeled himself. “She was able to get one last message to Earth before—before she died. She said ‘it’s getting dark and my battery is low.’ It was dark, Dean, and she knew she was dying, and she was all alone.”

“Oh, Cas. Oh, babe,” Dean said, the final pieces clicking into place, blinking a little rapidly himself, feeling his heart contract at the sheer loneliness of that final message. “You couldn’t have known. There was no way for you to know what was happening and go to her.”
“I know,” Cas said, his voice very, very small, “but she must have been so lonely. I should have visited her more often. Tried harder. I knew how alone she felt, and I just—left her.”

“You told me last year that you looked in on her, at least briefly, almost every time you visited Curiosity, right? It was Opportunity you were talking about?”

“Yes,” Cas said glumly, wiping his nose on Dean’s flannel. Dean opted not to mention it, given the circumstances.

“And most of the time she didn’t want to talk, right?”

“No, but—”

“And the times she did want to talk, you spent as much time with her as she wanted, didn’t you?”

“Well—yes, I did, but—”

“And has anybody else ever even bothered to look in on her? Any other angel, I mean?”

“Not to my knowledge, no.”

“Only you. Out of the entire heavenly host.”

“Or what’s left of it.” Okay, maybe best not to draw attention to how many of them Cas slaughtered a decade or so ago, but Dean never had been great at this. Hell.

“You’re the only one who thought to go give his time and energy to a few lonesome rovers stuck on a planet millions of miles from home.”

“I—suppose so.”

“Then it seems to me that any reprieve from loneliness that Opportunity—Oppy? Dean interrupted himself, continuing at a nod from Cas. “—Oppy had, she had because you were empathetic enough to worry about her, and to keep trying even when she didn’t make it easy for you. Far as I can tell, you gave her more than anybody else ever did. You gave her the gifts of your friendship and your patience, and as much as it hurts that you weren’t able to be there for her at the very end, I promise you she knew that you cared, and I know it must’ve made a difference to her.”

Cas curled a little deeper into Dean’s embrace, his shoulders trembling harder as the first audible sobs shook loose, sounding like the kind of bone-deep, exhausting tears that cleanse.

“She—she gave so much to earth, Dean,” Cas wept, “we learned so very much from her, and she worked so hard. She cared deeply about her work, and she fought to do it as long as she possibly could.”

“Then it sounds to me like she lived and died doing what she loved. I can’t really imagine a better fate for any of us, can you?”

“I—suppose not.”

“And—here, gimme a sec. I’ve got a hunch.”

Dean was no internet expert, but he’d picked up enough from Sam to have a sense of how these things worked, so after he snagged Cas’s phone, it didn’t take too much effort for him to check trending tags on twitter. Sure enough, right there at the top: “#ThanksOppy.”
Dean clicked on it and shifted Cas in his arms a little, settling them so that he could see his phone as the dozens and hundreds and thousands of tweets spooled out, people from all over the country—from all over the world—offering their gratitude, their thoughts. There were poems, there were comics, and even a tweet with a modified version of the song “Candle in the Wind” from the Curiosity rover’s twitter account (leaving aside the fact that even Mars rovers apparently had twitter now, while Dean was still staunchly refusing to jump on the bandwagon). There were dozens of pictures taken by Oppy, modified with text to thank her for her hard work. It was an outpouring like Dean had rarely seen before, even at the death of beloved public figures. An entire planet coming together to remember one golf-cart sized little engine that could.

“She’s not gonna be forgotten, Cas. She’s only alone up there in the physical sense, because all over this planet tonight, people are going to be looking up and thinking of her. People are going to go read about her work. They’re gonna learn about what she taught us. Tomorrow, in schools all over the country, in science classes, teachers are going to tell kids all about the Opportunity, and why we sent her up there, and how she gave us so much more than we asked for. How she went above and beyond. You said she loved her work—and now the entire world is talking about it, babe. It sounds to me like the most fitting tribute to her memory imaginable.”

“I think you are right,” Cas said quietly, wonder in his voice as he scrolled through pages and pages of tweets. “I suppose—in some sense, she will live forever through what she taught us, won’t she?”

“She will,” Dean confirmed, “and maybe nobody else knows that when things got hard for her up there, every now and then a friend came to remind her why it was worth it, but you do, and I do. So thanks, Oppy, and thanks, Cas, on her behalf and on ours, for helping her along the way.”

There was a long moment of silence, and then an even longer shuddering breath.

“It was an honor and a privilege,” Cas said, voice firm and clear.

“I think she’d say the same to you,” Dean told him quietly.

Cas smiled.

Chapter End Notes

Goodnight, Oppy, and thank you so much for everything. <3

Works inspired by this one

Cas and Curiosity by spandwiches, With desperate hope by spandwiches, (art for) Snowbound by featherfluff

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!