The Old-Fashioned Way

by cheeseburgersmakemecrazyhappy

Summary

So yeah, when Dean hit 30, his first thought was to register as a volunteer Alpha. He wanted to give back; pay it forward. The process, however, was no walk in the park. That was the thing with the system – you had to be cool with everyone knowing about your personal life because those folks at Pack Registry didn’t fuck around.

And then, after years of heat assistance service, Dean got a call he wasn't expecting. “Castiel Novak is interviewing for a mate, Dean. And you’re on his list.” There was only one Omega Dean had ever wanted to be permanently matched with since that first time five years ago when he was called out to help Castiel Novak – the Castiel Novak – with his heat. Cas traveled in some amazing social circles. He knew a lot of people, a lot of Alphas who were wealthier and better educated than Dean was. But Dean had one thing going for him that no
other Alpha did.
Chapter 1

“We’re over budget. And not by a little, Dean. Talkin’ $27,000 by my account. This fucking build is gonna kill us.”

Dean sighed and ignored his business partner’s announcement for a second, instead opting for a deep, cleansing breath of sweet – albeit thin – Colorado air. He and Benny had been working on this custom log cabin for the past seven months and the site had to be one of Dean’s all-time favorites. He leaned his head back to take in gorgeous azure skies before lowering his eyes to the tallest Colorado blue spruces he’s ever seen. Dean looked out over the valley from this small clearing on the top of this hill, a clear view of stunning mountains and lush valleys before him. His client paid a fortune for this little slice of heaven. Fucking awesome view.

Unfortunately, access on this particular road in the ski community of Breckenridge, Colorado would officially be impossible in T-45 days and counting. But of course W&L Mountain Chalets, Inc. had been told to “spare no expense,” so the partners had arranged for Italian granite and a monstrous, one-of-a-kind, 10’ wide chandelier crafted from fallen fucking elk antlers, per the client’s request. What had it gotten them? More demands; more delays; and more expensive, last-minute upgrades that were seriously screwing with their timetable. Dean did not want to think about getting all those river boulders for the fireplace up that dirt road once it started snowing.

The self-appointed “brawn” behind this operation dragged a hand down his tanned face and shook his head slowly. He huffed out a breath and leaned back against the green Ford F250 pickup truck behind him. He hated this shit. His guys busted their asses to make a one-of-a-kind log cabin home – correction, chalet – that would make any billionaire software mogul jealous. And Benny, the “brains” and Dean’s best friend who currently eyed him expectantly with a quirked brow, watched every penny. They had a solid reputation of providing the highest quality product on time and on budget. Fuck Fergus MacLeod if he thought for a second his ridiculous-request-of-the-day was going to take that away from them.


The Cajun shook his head, focusing his blue eyes intently at Dean. Benny was as easy going as an Alpha could get, but Dean could read the tension in the other man’s shoulders as readily as he could scent his concern, an acrid, toasted smell that made Dean uneasy. “That’s it in a nutshell, brotha. What do you wanna do?”

Before Dean could respond, because timing is everything, a guitar rift and heavy drums sounded, and then Bad Company’s “Feel Like Makin’ Love” erupted from his pants pocket. His face flushed in embarrassment as he fumbled for his cell phone, staring in surprise at the message that flashed across his lock screen. It had been forever since he’d received a call from Pack Registry; Dean had almost forgotten about the not-so-subtle notification tune he had assigned to their number.

“Is that…”

“Fuck! Benny I gotta…”

“Go, brotha, go!” Benny laughed.

Dean yanked open his truck’s driver side door as Benny took three large steps back and out of the
way. He tried not to kick up too much dust or rock as he threw the truck into reverse and then
barreled down the dirt road, adrenaline and excitement roaring through his veins. He glanced in his
rear view mirror in time to see Benny throw back his head and howl, a deep and booming sound that
was instinctively answered by the ten other Alphas on the job site. Dean could hear the primal and
collective surge of support inside the cab of his truck, and it had him grinning from ear to ear. His
fingers stabbed at the buttons on his steering wheel to activate hands-free calling.

“Call Pack Registry,” he said loudly. Dean had about 15 minutes before he lost cell reception. He
was probably going to have to pull over to the side of the—

“Pack Registry, Charlie Bradbury speaking,” came through the truck’s speakers, the sound of the
little redhead Beta typing away like mad barely muffled as she talked into her headset.

“Uh, hey Charlie! It’s Dean. Winchester. I just got a text?”

“Dean! So good to hear from you! One moment while I pull up your file…”

Dean swerved around a large rock in the road and willed himself to slow down, reminding himself to
breathe.

“Oh, Dean…” Charlie’s voice lowered to a reverent whisper.

“What?!” Dean blurted. His gut churned. This didn’t sound like a standard heat assistance request.
Was it bad? We’re they taking him off the list?

“Sweetie you just hit the jackpot,” she replied, a smile creeping into her voice. “Castiel Novak is
interviewing for a mate, Dean. And you’re on his list.”

Dean slammed on his brakes, the truck’s tires skidding across small rocks and pebbles for about ten
more feet before coming to a rest. Holy shit! He was on Cas’ mate list? That couldn’t be right. There
must be a mistake.

“Dean? Hey, buddy, you still there?”

“Oh! Hey! Sorry!” Dean all but shouted back. “Sorry, Charlie.” Great, now he was actually giggling like a
schoolgirl. He couldn’t help it, though. “Are…are you sure? Cas has me on his list?”

“Am I… of course I want… Cas put me on… Oh God, this was too good to be true. There was only one Omega Dean had ever wanted to be
permanently matched with since that first time five years ago when he was called out to help Castiel
Novak – the Castiel Novak – with his heat.

Charlie cleared her throat. “Dean, sweetie, you still with me?”

“Holy shit!” Dean all but shouted back. “Sorry, Charlie.” Great, now he was actually giggling like a
schoolgirl. He couldn’t help it, though. “Are…are you sure? Cas has me on his list?”

“Yes, Mr. Winchester!” Charlie teased. “I see it right here. Are you interested in an Omega mate,
Dean?”

Dean’s brain locked up as hard as his brakes had. Am I… of course I want… Cas put me on… Oh God, this was too good to be true. There was only one Omega Dean had ever wanted to be
permanently matched with since that first time five years ago when he was called out to help Castiel
Novak – the Castiel Novak – with his heat.

Charlie cleared her throat. “Dean, sweetie, you still with me?”

Huh? “Crap! Sorry. Okay. I’m here, and I am fucking over the moon about being on Cas’ list. Please
don’t tell anybody I just said ‘over the moon’ though. Sound like I’m 150 years old.”

Dean couldn’t help but smile at the light-hearted laugh that answered him. “God, you’re just adorbs,
Dean. I need you to come in and sign some boring forms and then get your interview scheduled. Can
you make it here by 4:30?”

Dean checked his watch. “Absolutely, Charlie. Don’t go anywhere until I get there.”
“Alright Dean. Drive safe. Don’t want to mess up that pretty face before your interview.”

“Shut up!” Dean laughed, and then realized he was talking to himself. Charlie had a habit of ending calls when it pleased her. He slumped back in his seat and caught his reflection in the rear view mirror. He was going to have to scrub the giddy smile off his face.

His eyes scanned the trees and brush as he tried to collect his thoughts. Cas hadn’t mentioned he was looking for a mate the last time they, what, texted? Back in March? But Cas wouldn’t mention it, really. Omegas all go through the Registry, submitting their list and also allowing the Pack to make recommendations. He wondered how many other Alphas were on Cas’ list. Probably a dozen. Castiel Novak traveled in some amazing social circles. He knew a lot of people, a lot of Alphas who were wealthier and better educated than Dean was. But he had one thing going for him that no other Alpha did.

Dean hit the button on his steering wheel again.


A digital image of a blonde-haired little girl with watery blue eyes and a wide grin lit up the lower portion of his windshield. “Hey there, baby girl,” he whispered fondly, barely restraining himself from leaning forward to touch the hi-res version of her chubby cheek.
Five Years Ago…

“Pack Registry, Charlie Bradbury speaking,” a chipper voice sang out over the clicking of skilled fingers on a computer keyboard.

“Yeah, hi. Dean Winchester. I got a text?”

“Hello Mr. Winchester! How are you? Let me pull up your file, hang on.”

Dean huffed out a quick breath to steady his nerves as he fidgeted with his coffee mug, slowly spinning it counter-clockwise with his thumb and middle finger. After all the rigmarole and 10 months of waiting, Dean had frankly been shocked when his cell phone went off that morning. He had stared at the one-sentence text for 15 minutes before finally calling in, and thankfully it was early and he was still alone in the temporary office space he shared with three other Alpha general contractors at Sandover Industrial Construction. His eyes flitted restlessly over the four messy desks arranged haphazardly throughout, each strewn with invoices, customer billings, site design plans, Styrofoam coffee cups, and pens with barely any ink left. He wanted to get this call handled before his privacy evaporated in a cloud of testosterone and glazed donuts.

“Ah. Dean we have a request for you for heat assistance in Denver. Should be a week from today. Is that enough time for you to arrange service days off from your employer? Pack Registry will cover your travel expenses.”

“Uh, yeah!” Dean replied, trying to keep the excitement he was feeling from bleeding into his voice. Have to sound responsible, not like some horn dog who just got a wink on Growlr. “Let me pull up my calendar. Hold on.” He put Charlie on speaker and fumbled with the app on his phone until he could see his schedule for next week. He had one new client consultation and the Vail build, but Victor could take care of those. “I should be good. Can you send me the bio?”

“Of course! You’ll have it in your inbox in 20. You’ll need to come in for a health screen within 48 hours, sooner the better, K? And thanks, Dean. Arapaho Pack truly appreciates your service. Have a great day!” With that, the line cleared.

“You too,” he chuckled to himself. Dean set his phone down on his desk and leaned back in his chair. My first heat assistance call. Wow.

Dean couldn’t help but smile. He had always considered himself a loyal kind of guy. And grateful – very grateful. Pack Registry had been there for him and his family all those years ago when his mother had passed. In fact, they already knew where he, his dad and his baby brother had landed within 24 hours of the fire that changed their lives. The pack quickly assigned a rep to help his Alpha father, John, through the grieving process and to talk to him about how they could help him raise four-year-old Dean and six-month-old Sam. He vividly remembered a young, lanky man knocking on their neighbor’s door with a tray of lasagna and an envelope stuffed with pamphlets. Garth had smiled at them with kindness and sympathy as he handed Dean a foam football and set a little stuffed bear next to Sam on his play mat before gently moving John to the kitchen table to talk about support programs.

And thank God for Garth and the rest of them. The boys were enrolled in the local pack nursery and surrounded by helpful Betas and a few retired Omegas who volunteered their time to cherish 22 little ones. Dean remembered clutching tightly to his father’s hand as they entered the overly bright and
cheery classroom, Sam barely swinging in a car seat basket at John’s other side. He had been
overwhelmed by the flurry of pre-kindergarten energy as boys and girls busily moved around them.
Dean had up until then spent his days in his mother’s kitchen or playing in their back yard; he had
never been around this many kids his own age at one time. And then an older woman who
introduced herself as Omega Moseley knelt in front of Dean and shook his hand. She had smelled
like the hot cocoa his mother made for them every day snow fell, and Dean couldn’t help but reach
out and touch her dark skin to see if his fingers would come away the same color as her cheeks.

Now without the grounding presence of their Beta mother, they were offered access to Alpha family
housing, which John gladly accepted. So they left the stereotypical suburban life Dean had always
known for a two-bedroom apartment in a complex populated by broken families just like his. Tan,
two-story buildings as long as a city block created a perimeter that safeguarded basketball courts and
a playground. Pack-appointed Beta nannies were often found in the laundry facilities, while single
Alpha fathers and their teenage sons made heavy use of the work-out rooms. The Winchesters spent
many evenings in the enclosed food court eating slices of pepperoni pizza and ice cream cones when
John was either too tired or too hungover to cook.

On the day Dean’s father never came to pick his sons up from middle school, Garth was there again.
The boys were lovingly moved into a room in the back wing of their old nursery. After four days of
waiting, he packed the boys back up and took them to the Singers, an older Beta couple who became
Dean and Sam’s foster family.

So yeah, when Dean hit 30, his first thought was to register as a volunteer Alpha. He wanted to give
back; pay it forward. Arapaho Pack was considered small based on its population, although it
covered Colorado, Utah, Wyoming and Idaho. Pack Registry was run by the smartest Betas the pack
elders could lure straight from Colorado College and Brigham Young University, and these folks
took it as their personal mission to ensure pack health and growth. They tracked births, matings,
marrages and deaths, as well as monitored secondary gender statistics through mandatory pup
screenings before newborns even left the hospital. But, as Charlie told Dean in one of their many
conversations once the Alpha became active in the Omega Support Services (OSS) database, Pack
Registry personnel treasured their matchmaking duties most of all.

“I think Alphas are the bee’s knees,” Charlie had cooed. “Obviously, you’re the peanut butter to our
jelly, literally the yang to our yin. You’ve got a sacred duty. Did I tell you I roomed with an Omega
at CC? She was the most amazing person, Dean. Seriously, Omegas are just hot! Every last one of
them is unique and dazzling like a diamond. I just felt such a connection with her! So I decided right
then that I was going to do my best to make sure every Omega in my pack was taken care of to the
best of my ability.” Dean was pretty sure that if he could see Charlie’s face, she would have hearts
for eyes. He wondered about how deeply her connection with the Omega in question actually went.
“I mean, without Omegas, the pack would be lost – no artists, no visionaries,” Charlie gushed. “Did
you know that pack births are up 6.2% over last year? And you are going to be a direct contributor to
that! So thank you for volunteering!”

The process, however, was no walk in the park. Dean struggled through a three-page application and
two in-person interviews. Pack Registry conducted a background check that felt like a combination
IRS audit and colonoscopy. Then there was the physical. And the fertility tests. Dean’s eleventh-
grade math teacher called him to wish him good luck after she was contacted to vouch for his
character. That was the thing with the system – you had to be cool with everyone knowing about your
personal life because those folks at Pack Registry didn’t fuck around.

Once approved for service, Dean was immediately plugged into an extensive orientation program.
Sitting in a room with 15 other Alphas watching videos on Omega biology had been a little
uncomfortable, but they all sucked it up and tried to focus on the why’s, not just the how’s. Dean
tried not to come off as too much of a nerd, but yeah, he took notes. This was important shit. Omegas were incredibly complex, physically and psychologically. It was next to impossible for an Omega to conceive if he or she didn’t feel safe, so trust-building was an important part of the curriculum.

Seriously, being willing to have a pup was a huge decision, one that the entire pack encouraged, so a lot was riding on this. Arapaho, like many other western packs, was hit hard by The Great Decline. Alpha males were the only ones who’s genetic code had withstood the fallout and could “propagate the species” or whatever. So truly, no pressure, but if Alphas didn’t get with the program, the pack could literally go extinct. Betas were most plentiful – they were the dominant gene – but even though Beta women caught pups with Alphas, those pups tended to be Betas themselves.

The wild cards in the genetic lottery were the Omegas, God’s insurance plan to keep secondary gender diversity, and the world, spinning. Dean had always considered Omegas to be exotic; apart from Omega Moseley, he’d only known four or five his entire life. It was true that there just weren’t as many of them so they were precious to the pack, but also, Omegas tended to congregate together and with Betas who preferred their company. They were creative, innovative. Their brains worked with meta-concepts, easily identifying the big picture. They gravitated towards the arts, politics and industry – specifically hi-tech. Dean had heard stories from his brother about Omegas he went to college with who would accurately sketch out beautiful bridges on a scratch pad but also jot down the math that would bring those structures to life as quickly as writing out a shopping list for a trip to the grocery store.

So Omegas were important, like fucking pivotal to the pack’s success, but this wasn’t the Stone Age. People had the right to live their lives. So enter Pack Registry. Any Omega who wanted to have a pup just had to give them a call and they did everything possible to help, including making sure that volunteer Alphas treated the pack’s Omegas with the respect and esteem they were due. Every Beta and Alpha had that drummed into their heads starting in middle school sex ed – Omegas deserved our highest regard and were to be protected; there wasn’t a quicker way to get thrown in jail or forcibly expelled from Arapaho Pack than harming an Omega.
Chapter 3

Five Years Ago…

Dean’s first assignment had gone really well, except for the initial nerves. It was understandable, though, because to Dean’s utter horror, he was about to basically offer stud services to one of the most up-and-coming Omegas in the pack, if not the entire country.

Castiel Novak was, at that point, a fairly recognizable name. His Denver-based tech start-up developed impact-resistant solar panels that would soon cover every major street and parking lot in the city’s LoDo district, funneling electricity to streetlights and traffic signals, and reducing the city’s infrastructure expenses. The project would be completed within four years and, if successful, would expand at an exponential rate throughout all of Denver and beyond.

The Omega’s face regularly graced both local papers and national talk shows. And what a face it was. Castiel had a blinding smile he was quick to share with others, and blue eyes that would virtually twinkle when he found something humorous. Which was often. The brunette was wicked smart and had a way of making everyone around him laugh. Dean had watched several of Castiel’s interviews, and every time he was struck by how the people around Castiel couldn’t seem to take their eyes off him. At 5’ 11” he was fairly tall for an Omega, and sported the body of a jogger, or maybe a swimmer. Sure, Omegas generally ran lean, but the secret here (according to People magazine) was Castiel’s devotion to Tai Chi. They also tended to look youthful far longer than their Beta and Alpha counterparts, but Dean knew Castiel was seven years his senior.

Dean’s eyes had nervously swept across the marble lobby of the entrepreneur’s exclusive, upscale apartment building before landing on the older Alpha who manned the lobby’s security desk. After just a bit of posturing, the man huffed his approval at Dean’s ID and letter of service from Pack Registry. Per protocol, Dean next reached out to all of Castiel’s neighbors and introduced himself so folks wouldn’t be concerned about a strange Alpha in their midst. When Dean had finally stared at Castiel’s door long enough to work up the balls to ring the bell, he was pretty sure the man had been waiting on the other side; the door opened at almost the exact same moment Dean pressed the doorbell.

And there was that smile, mesmerizing Dean as intense blue eyes searched his face. He blushed as he offered a hand in greeting. “Dean Winchester, sir. I, uh, I was contacted by Pack Registry…”

“Of course! Please come in. It’s okay for me to call you Dean, correct?” Castiel asked in a deep voice that took Dean a little by surprise. “And please, call me Castiel or Cas. I think we’re going to be past the ‘sir’ portion of our relationship fairly soon.” He paused and then smirked. “Unless that was on your profile and I missed it.”

Dean barked out a laugh. “No sir, I mean Castiel. Cas. It’s just really great to meet you.”

“Well, I feel the same. Have a seat, Dean,” Castiel added, ushering Dean into his living room. “Can I get you something to drink?”

“Sure. A beer would be good. Uh, where should I…” he asked, lifting his duffel.

“Follow me. You can put your things in my room.”

Castiel’s room was about as big as Dean’s apartment. Everything was chrome and glass but perfectly balanced with natural elements. A king-sized bed covered in a light grey comforter and more pillows
than Dean had ever seen in one place sat below a 10’ long framed photograph of Colorado aspens. A lit gas fireplace surrounded by river rock took up the lower half of the opposite wall while a huge aspen bough mantle created a long anchor point for the 52” Smart TV above it. The most stunning feature, however, was the west wall; it was completely glass, capturing the Front Range in all of its snow-capped majesty. It was spectacular. It was overwhelming. Suddenly Dean felt very small.

“Dean?”

He started, snapped out of his reverie by Castiel’s quiet voice.

“You seem…a little unsure?”

Dean swallowed. Cas was about to get the wrong idea, because regardless of the insecurity he knew was leaking from his pores, Dean desperately wanted to be here. “No. I just…” Dean sighed and dropped his duffel by the foot of the bed before turning to face his partner, his Omega for the next four days. “Cas, you know from my profile that this is the first time I’ve been assigned to help with a heat.”

“You’re not ready?” Castiel asked, leaning against the door jamb with his arms crossed protectively in front of his body. Dean thought maybe there was just a hint of disappointment in the other man’s voice.

“I’m ready. Jesus, am I ready. But why do you want me? I, uh, I mean you could have chosen an Alpha with more experience and, uh, how do I say this? More things in common with you?”

Castiel laughed softly and took a few steps into the room. “I picked you because this is my first time too. First time with an Alpha, I mean. I haven’t had a heat in 20 years, Dean. Besides, I liked everything I read about you. Your scores were off the chart. Your compassion and patience readings were in complete alignment with my own. Your background is actually very similar to mine, something I would be happy to share with you, if you like. Come back to the living room and we can talk.” Castiel glanced at the watch on his wrist. “I think we should have another four or five hours before things get…heated?”

Dean couldn’t help but laugh. “Okay, let’s have that drink.”

So Dean got over himself pretty quickly and was able to totally focus on Cas. They talked about their lives and their families. Castiel described an embarrassing interview where no one had bothered to tell him his tie was on backwards the entire time. Dean shared his dream of starting his own construction company. The two men discussed Castiel’s vision of global self-sustained energy and the lack of shows about actual history on The History Channel.

“So, I’m curious,” Dean asked as he set his beer on the glass coffee table in front of him. “Why now, Cas? Seems like you’ve got a lot going on to throw having a pup into the mix.”

Castiel smiled, his expression open and honest, and Dean felt his heart warm a little in his chest just being on the receiving end of it. “Dean, I can tell you that I am incredibly blessed. It took many years and help from very talented people to help me achieve the success that I have. And now, I feel like my company and my life’s mission are blossoming. All the hard work is about to bear fruit. We are on the cusp of something wonderful and magical and that optimism surrounds me. It makes me want to personally bloom and ‘bear fruit,’ as it were.” He leaned back into the sofa and shrugged. “I have a lot to give, and I feel like having a pup and contributing another beautiful soul to this pack will enrich my life in a way that will help me grow even more.”

And Dean believed it too, just looking into Cas’ eyes. It was like the Omega hummed on a
wavelength of positive energy that Dean could feel in his core. They stared at each other in comfortable silence for more than a minute before Dean found his voice again. “Cas, man, thank you for letting me be a part of this. Be part of your, uh, journey.”

“Dean,” Castiel replied, tilting his head and offering a fond smile. “Thank you.”

Three hours later Castiel excused himself to change into soft cotton lounge pants and a t-shirt. Dean followed suit and then the two sat together on the large, “L” shaped white sofa as they reviewed Castiel’s preference list for the third time. The butterflies were almost all gone at this point, but the fact remained that Dean was about to be “on.” He took a deep breath and offered Cas a quick smile. You’ve got this, man.

Soon Dean had Cas leaning back against him, sitting in the “V” of Dean’s legs, as Dean slowly stroked the Omega’s arms. Classical music quietly filled the space as the pair watched the sun set and the lights of Downtown Denver shimmer to life. Dean was a rock and roll kind of guy, but he could appreciate the way the violins and piano rolled together. In fact he almost anticipated the next note. “This sounds familiar. Who is this?” Dean murmured into Cas’ ear. “Anyone I might know?”

“Debussy,” Castiel replied. His breathing had picked up speed and Dean could feel Cas’ temperature rising through his thin shirt. “It’s Clair de Lune.”

Dean hummed a little in response, surprised that he recognized the tune. He stopped his light touches as he realized that the calming music was no longer helping Cas’ composure; the heat was making Cas fidgety and uncomfortable. Remember, gentle suggestions. “Cas. Um, I’m going to take off my shirt now and I’d like you to do the same, if you’re okay with that.”

Castiel nodded and Dean helped him out of his t-shirt. As soon as Cas’ back hit Dean’s cooler skin, the Omega sighed heavily. Dean stroked the older man’s hair to soothe him and whispered soft words as they waited for Cas’ temperature to spike.

When it did, not five minutes later, Castiel all but combusted. There was a reason they called it a “heat.” Cas was suddenly a furnace against Dean and his scent bloomed into this lavender-tinged honey smell that curled around Dean and seemed to surround him like a blanket. He found himself wide-eyed and relying on breathing techniques he was supposed to be sharing with Cas as his Alpha nature clawed its way up. Dean was instantly hard as a rock and slightly panicked by the way his heart thudded so quickly in his chest. He concentrated on keeping his scent neutral until Cas twisted backwards – always let the Omega make the first move – and pulled Dean into a deep kiss.

“Dean,” Cas choked out, his voice even deeper than it had been just moments before. Dean was afraid he might have done something wrong, but when Castiel pulled back Dean watched in amazement as the Omega’s eyes shimmered gold. “Bedroom.”

That was it.

Dean barely registered the trip back down the hallway. All he knew was that they were suddenly naked on the bed, heat radiating off of Cas as he stretched out beside him, and all those pillows were now strewn across the floor. The aroma of Cas’ sweet floral slick, which had started to trickle from the man’s body, made Dean need. Desperately. He struggled to keep calm and steady, being even more desperate to be everything Cas needed and more.

“Ready?” Dean managed to ask through clenched teeth.

“Please, Dean,” Castiel begged.
“How do you want me?”

“On your back. Please.”

Dean could only nod as the Omega pushed him down on the bed and straddled him, and then slowly lowered onto Dean’s achingly hard cock. A low rumbling resonated through Dean’s chest as he closed his eyes and felt Cas’ pliant body encase him, surrounding him with tight, wet heat. Dean could swear Cas’ fertility was palatable. Every brain cell in Dean’s head screamed at him to fill Cas to overflowing with his seed and then lock it in place for as long as possible – minutes, hours even – to make sure it caught. His brain supplied him with a quick fantasy of Cas’ pale skin stretched around Dean’s unborn pup and he groaned with desire.

He opened to see Castiel above him, blue eyes wide and lips parted, panting as he moved himself quickly on Dean’s dick. “It’s okay. You can go slow,” Dean promised, letting his fingers grab onto the muscles in Cas’ thighs. “Take whatever you need.” Cas nodded and paused before letting out a rush of breath and starting again, groaning as he seated himself fully and then rocking in Dean’s lap. His head fell back slightly as his hips found a rhythm that had Dean massaging him from the inside in the most amazing way.

God, Dean had never felt anything like this. The training barely prepared him for the sensory overload of being inside an Omega in heat – Cas’ fevered hands on Dean’s chest and his ass on Dean’s groin, the powerful scent of “home” and “Omega” that sat heavy in his nose and sweet on his tongue. And Dean’s own complete surrender to the man who rode him. He instinctively reveled in providing for Cas, here just for his pleasure, and both pride and satisfaction wafted from his pores. He watched entranced as Cas’ mouth moved with the small noises he made, the sensations he felt playing out without censure across that beautiful face.

Moans and pants and the slapping of skin filled the bedroom. Dean slid his hands up his Omega’s hot, sweaty back and leaned him down onto his chest to kiss him. “You feel so good, Cas. Doing so good,” he muttered into the other man’s mouth. “Can I help a little?” Cas whined lightly and nodded his head, so Dean planted his feet against the mattress and started moving his hips up to meet Cas’ movements. That small change, the shift from allowing to giving, had Dean’s Alpha singing inside. He could feel Cas go boneless in his arms, gasping for breath each time Dean thrust up into him, now deeper and stronger.

“Flip…me…Alpha,” Cas whispered.

Dean responded immediately, easily moving Castiel underneath him and shifting Cas’ calves up onto his shoulders. His strong hands latched onto the heated skin at Cas’ hips as he pulled the Omega in close, curling protectively over him as he rocked deep and insistent, yet gently into the body below him.

“This okay?” he panted. Castiel’s scent answered for him: excited, joyful. “Are you close, sweetheart?” The Omega nodded, a smile stretching his lips as he moaned and exposed his pale, glistening neck to Dean in an unconscious act of submission. Dean gasped out loud at how the slight gesture sent a shockwave of want through him. He let Castiel’s legs slip down so he could lean in tight, letting his lips ghost over Cas’ collarbone. As he inhaled, the Omega’s sweet scent filled his lungs and spurred on his hips.

“Fuck, Cas,” he rasped. “God, you smell amazing! You’re so strong. So beautiful.” Dean felt tingling at the base of his cock as his knot swelled and he growled lightly to himself in frustration. He wanted to hold out for as long as Cas needed him, but everything felt so good; Cas fit around him like a glove and Dean wanted to bury himself inside the Omega but his knot had him frustrated and straining, that perfect connection kept just out of reach.
“Cas, can I knot you?”

If the Omega said no, Dean might actually cry.

“Yes. Dean, yes!”

Dean leaned back to sit on his heels, dragging his partner’s body with him. Two forceful thrusts and he had plunged his knot into Cas’ ass, thrown back his head and howled, shooting cum deep into the Omega’s body. Cas responded in kind, howling softly as his body clamped onto Dean’s cock and he came, shooting a small amount of clear fluid up his own stomach. Dean groaned as Cas’ body squeezed again, milking another orgasm out of him.

They breathed heavily together, euphoria still zinging through them both, and Dean felt…well he wasn’t sure how to describe it. He was exactly where he wanted to be, surrounded by honey and lavender, and wanted.

Accepted.

Complete.

He sighed, green eyes roving Cas’ face and landing on pink lips that looked chapped and in need of kisses. He leaned down, closed his eyes, and lightly grazed his own lips against Cas’ before kissing him fully. Dean rolled them over so Cas could lay on top of him until his knot went down. He grinned up at the ceiling, basking in the scent of sated and happy Omega. Dean couldn’t help but notice how the other man’s skin had started to cool as he trailed his fingers up and down Cas’ back.

“Dean, thank you,” Castiel said sleepily.

The Alpha couldn’t help but chuckle. “Thank you,” he replied, kissing the top of Cas’ head.

They spent the next several days holed up in that beautiful two-bedroom apartment. By the end of the third day, Cas had no qualms about tackling Dean to the floor or the bed or the sofa as soon as his heat flared up. Dean, similarly, had no problem hoisting Cas up and fucking him against a wall, in the shower or across the kitchen table. Cas’ laugh was infectious and Dean did everything in his power to hear it often during their time together. For his part, Castiel encouraged Dean to let out his Alpha more times than not. The sex alternated between gentle and primal, but every time Dean reminded Cas how truly gorgeous he was; how strong and vibrant and sexy; and how much he hoped that he had been good for the Omega.

Dean would always count that June day, five months later, when Cas emailed him a sonogram of their daughter, as one of the happiest in his life.
Chapter 4

Five Years Ago…

OSS had given Dean some time off to process his first heat assistance experience, but they were still a subtle presence. Like when Charlie sent him a “Thank You” e-card with dancing Ewoks along with the phone number and email address of a Pack counselor. He archived it with all the other Pack Registry emails, confident that he was never going to need it. Turned out that he did.

The first three weeks after helping Cas with his heat had left him feeling desperately alone and out of sorts. His work was suffering and Dean found himself up until 2 or 3 in the morning, nursing a bottle of Johnny Walker in front of his TV, for nights on end. He had considered calling his brother, but Sam didn’t need to hear about his big brother’s inability to manage his own shit. It had just been fucking, right? Fantastic and powerfully satisfying, but fucking nonetheless. So why did he feel like he had left a piece of himself behind in Cas’ apartment?

It had been the fourth Tuesday of waking with a throbbing headache and an empty bottle at his feet when Dean suddenly realized that he couldn’t keep doing this to himself. He sat in his truck with the heater on, the gorgeous blue of an early Spring Colorado sky completely lost on him, and tried to eat one of those turkey and cheese sandwiches from the refrigerator section of a Gas ‘n Sip. He was running on five hours of restless sleep per night, way too much coffee, and this nagging feeling that he wasn’t good enough – not good enough for his job, not good enough for his brother, certainly not good enough to be a volunteer Alpha. He needed to quit before they asked him to help another Omega so he wouldn’t screw it up for someone else. He reached for his phone and called Pack Registry.

Charlie picked up after only one ring and could immediately tell something was wrong. “Dean? Tell me what’s going on, sweetie,” she asked soothingly.

“I, uh, I don’t know, Charlie,” he admitted. He put the sandwich on his dash and stared out the windshield at the cars passing by. “I can’t really think straight,” he sniffed. “I feel…I can’t sleep much and, I think I’m probably drinking more than I should.”

“This is about Castiel.” It was a statement rather than a question.

“Yeah,” Dean replied quietly. “It was just sex, right? I mean, Charlie I was sure I could be what you guys needed me to be and be what Cas needed me to be and then go back to being me, but now I don’t know who ‘me’ is,” he rambled. “I-I’ve never felt like this after sex. Shit. You know all this from the application and what-not, and I’m not braggin’ or anything, but, I wasn’t a virgin when I walked through Cas’ door! I should be able to handle this. I took aptitude tests up the fucking wazoo with you guys. I should be…”

“Okay. Dean Winchester, you need to just breathe for a second and hang on. I’m right here, but I’m going to bring another Alpha on the line too because you need to hear this from someone who’s walked in your shoes, okay? And Dean, I’m glad you called me. There’s a reason why we offer counseling, sweetie. What you’re experiencing is normal. It’s not fun, but it’s perfectly normal. Okay?”

After a five-second pause, a new male voice joined the call. “Dr. Feelgood, at your service.”

“Ash, this is Charlie again. Okay Dean, this is Ash. He’s been a volunteer Alpha with us for three years. Ash, Dean here had his first heat assistance call about three weeks ago. It was a very positive
experience, but he’s dropping.”

“Ah,” Ash responded knowingly.

“Dropping?” Dean asked skeptically.

“Yeah, man. Just like what you’re thinking. Uh, I say that but maybe it’s not like what you’re thinking. Let me know if this sounds familiar, okay? So, I have my first heat assistance with this righteous Omega named Hannah, and I’m flying, right? I mean we clicked, and I was her first Alpha, and we spent, like, four days goin’ at it. Frickin’ amazing for both of us. Shit, she was a ballet dancer, Dean. You wanna talk about flexible? Oh God. And her body? Gorgeous! She was like a Degas masterpiece…”

“Ash,” Charlie interrupted. “Can we keep the color commentary to a minimum and stick with the play-by-play?”

“Sure, sure,” the other Alpha conceded, his tone just as carefree as before. “So anyway, I split when her heat’s done but a couple days later I just felt, like, achy. Like there was an itch under my skin, you know? I was irritated all the time and my friends noticed right away that something was off. So I called Pack Registry and they had an Alpha talk to me like I’m talkin’ to you. Here’s the deal: turns out, our instincts tell us to stay with our Omega and protect them. Their bodies are vulnerable right after a heat, you know, and we feel compelled to make sure all that jizz gets the job done. Like to care for them and build a den and make sure that the environment is perfect for them to catch. So when we leave right after, it messes with our biology, man. Our body is telling us we’re, like, being a douchebag Alpha for abandoning our Omega.”

“Huh.” The more Dean thought about it, the more Ash’s words made sense. It wasn’t that he was feeling needy, he was feeling like he shouldn’t have left Cas.

“Yeah, so some Alphas don’t get that compulsion as bad as others, but, you know, they call it ‘dropping’ because it’s like when a sub starts feeling really crappy about feeling really good about the kinky shit they did in a scene with their Dom.”

“I’m sorry, what?”

“You know, ‘50 Shades of Grey,’ dude? Watch it. That Beta, Dakota something? Oh man is she hot!”

“Okay,” Charlie interjected. “Dean, not sure if this actually helped. What are you thinking?”

Dean paused as he collected his thoughts. “Well, uh, makes sense. What Ash is saying sounds like how I’m feeling. So what do I do about it?”

“Well, knowing’s half the battle,” Ash started. “And really, there’s a couple of things I recommend. First off, call the Omega. I bet he or she would love to hear from you anyway. Heat sex is pretty frickin’ intimate, you know. They might need to know you were, uh, affected too. You know, like you’re still thinking about them even though you’re IRL and all.”

Charlie sighed loudly. “In real life.”

“Yeah, in real life. And next, uh, stay in touch. As long as the Omega’s cool with it. Just Skype or text or whatever. Not too much, just so’s you feel like you’re standing by the mother or father of your pup. And, uh, be good to yourself, man. I mean, what do you usually do for fun?”

He considered for a second. It had been a while since he’d sparred with Benny at the gym and they
used to meet every Wednesday night. “I haven’t worked out since I got back,” he confessed.

“Excellent!” Ash replied. “Go to the gym. Get back into your normal routine. Hang out with your friends. Go see your family. Reconnect. You’ll feel a shit-ton better.”

Dean took a deep, cleansing breath and let it out. “Thanks, uh Ash. I’m gonna take your advice. ‘Preciate it.”

“Call back any time, dude,” Ash beamed.

“Yeah, Dean,” Charlie added. “Seriously. Call any time. I know I say this often, but we really do appreciate your service. We want this to be good for you and for the Omegas you help. So. You gonna call him?”

“Mnhmm,” Dean nodded absently before inspiration struck. “Actually, I think I have an even better idea.”

When Castiel walked into the lobby of his apartment building the next evening, Rufus at security stopped him.

“There’s a package for you, Mr. Novak. Need you to sign for it.”

“Really?” Castiel asked. He wasn’t expecting anything, but signed the register with a yawn anyway. He’d been feeling exhausted for the past few days, and this was a nice surprise.

The Alpha came back to the front desk with a medium-sized cardboard box. Cas hummed to himself as he took it, hefting it to guess how much the contents weighed.

“You need any help?” Rufus gruffed.

“Oh, no,” Cas mumbled. “I’ve got it. Thank you.”

Castiel let himself into his apartment and set the box on the kitchen island before heading down the hall, opening up his tie with the intention of shedding his work clothes. He had spent the day in discussions with the local Department of Transportation management team, strategizing about pilot sites that would cause the least amount of impact to traffic patterns.

His head ached. Chamomile tea would be perfect right now.

Once he was safely snuggled in fleece sweats and one of Dean’s thin cotton t-shirts – not that Castiel had taken it, but he had found it under the sofa cushions and hadn’t really tried to give it back – he returned to the kitchen. Keeping one eye trained on the mystery package, he held a blue kettle under the kitchen faucet until it was full and then set it on the stovetop on medium high heat. He grabbed an apple from the refrigerator and took a bite while locating a pair of scissors from his junk drawer. Properly armed, he turned back to the box and gave it a final assessing look before scoring the top and pulling the flaps apart.

He read the card first.

Heya Cas,

I just wanted you to know that I’m thinking about you. I think about you a lot, actually. You’re an amazing person and I’m really glad that I got a chance to get to know you.
The time we spent together was very special to me. You’re very special to me. So even if I wasn’t able to knock you up, just know that if you need anything, and I mean anything, just please call me or text me. Even if it’s just to say “hi.” And if I did get you with pup, and I sure hope I did, I’m here for you and our little one as much as you’ll have me.

I really wish I was with you now, just to make sure that you’re okay and you’re drinking enough fluids and all that crap. Take care of yourself, Castiel, and go change the world. Oh, and here’s some important research I came across that should take your company to the next level.

Yours,

Dean

Something in Cas’ chest kind of relaxed and tension he wasn’t aware he was carrying eased out of his shoulders. He re-read the note three more times, gently rubbing the card stock before guiltily sniffing the paper for a trace of Dean’s scent. It was there, just a hint of sage and sunshine, and it warmed Cas to his core. He smiled as he remembered Dean in his home, the feel of Dean’s hands on his skin. With a sigh, he reluctantly set the card aside and peered into the box.

He laughed out loud as he placed wrapped box sets of *Pawn Stars* and *Ancient Aliens* on the island’s granite countertop.
Chapter 5

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Dean eased his Ford back onto the dirt road. As long as Denver traffic wasn’t too bad, he should be able to make it to the Pack Registry office by 3 pm, no problem. He absent-mindedly reached out for the travel mug that bounced around in the truck’s center console cup holder, barely noticing the lukewarm coffee that flowed down his throat. Thinking about Cas and Claire had him remembering his second assignment.

“Heads-up display. Photos. BenHorseback.”

His son, Ben – all short, dark hair and brown eyes – filled the lower left corner of his windshield and Dean smiled with pride. The toddler sat in front of his mother on the back of a small Chestnut mare. Always the protective Omega, Lisa’s hands were clasped tightly around the boy’s little body and the smile on her face was more of a grimace. Dean grinned as he always did when he looked at this picture. Lisa was so obviously uncomfortable with her little pup on the back of what was probably the tamest horse in all of Wyoming.

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Four and a Half Years Ago…

It had taken several months and three post-assignment debriefs before Pack Registry considered him ready for service again. When the call finally came, Dean was kind of surprised by how excited he was to help another Omega. He wanted to make a really good impression, so he called his brother’s Beta girlfriend for advice. They poured over Lisa Braeden’s bio and then Madison had dragged Dean to the mall for some “special touches” to put the Omega at ease. An hour and a half and several warm pretzels later, they had accomplished their goal – Maddie found the specific floral-scented candles she thought Lisa would respond to the best and Dean scored six mammoth white chocolate peanut butter cups from Rocky Mountain Chocolate Factory.

The drive to Laramie had been relaxing, absolutely peaceful, but boring as shit. The two-lane highway reminded him of a black ribbon that trailed through sloping fields that rose and fell like the landscape was breathing. The countryside had turned golden for fall; the grass had been mostly tan at that point and the aspens’ leaves had turned a warm yellow or light orange. And the sky. Jesus, they weren’t kidding when they called it Big Sky Country. It looked like Colorado only higher, wider, sometimes even bluer. The biggest excitement had been spotting a herd of 30 or so elk in a valley about 200 yards ahead of him; Dean had turned the radio down so Angus Young wouldn’t spook them.

The miles of asphalt had, in hindsight, actually helped Dean center himself and get mentally prepared. He knew Lisa wanted a pup, that’s why she went off pack-provided heat suppressants and birth control. She was also younger than he was and lived on her own in a rather remote part of the country. Obviously there weren’t many Alphas where Lisa lived, at least not many that fit her needs. Lots of young bucks worked the oil fields and ranches out there, but those guys were too volatile, still getting a grip on their hormones. They knew it, too. Better to be young, screw around with other Alphas or Betas and sew your oats, than to potentially hurt an Omega. They were just too precious. So the young Alphas hung out in “bachelor” packs – males and females rooming together, fighting, fucking, whatever – until they grew up a bit and got serious about their futures.
Just thinking about it took Dean back to memories of his own bachelor pack, a tight-knit group of seven Alphas all bunking in an off-campus house in Colorado Springs. They had a gym with a basketball court and Beta tutors at their disposal. That’s where he had met Benny and Cole, two of his best friends to this day. And Pam. Pam, man, she was a handful; a strong-willed brunette Alpha, feisty, with a sharp wit and a sweet body. Blowing off steam with Pam had been one of his favorite pastimes, even more when she wanted Sam there too.

Because Sam had followed him. The brothers were all the family they had apart from their foster parents, so they pretty much stuck together like glue. Even though he was a Beta, Sam was still so used to his brother and all of Dean’s Alpha buddies, that rooming with them came second nature. Sam had his pick of any college or university he wanted, but he chose to study Mechanical Engineering at Colorado College’s Omega/Beta campus while Dean got his business degree with Benny and Cole at UCCS’ Alpha Center.

Growing up, the younger Winchester had had a rough time reconciling himself with the knowledge that he could never sire pups, but college was a revelation. Hell, all the Beta guys were popular, but Sam was a big man, 6’ 4” if he was a day, with large hands that the Beta and Omega girls couldn’t wait to get on their waists and tits. Even though Sam had those big hands full of sorority sisters and track stars, he admitted to his brother that his favorites were the shy, book-y types. Dean would admit years later that he was hella jealous of all the ass Sam got. After rooming together for a year, Dean had finally stopped being surprised when Sam would slink in at 6:30 in the morning reeking of sex to brush his teeth, shower, and grab a gluten-free granola bar and some Kombucha tea before heading to his campus to make first class.

For being as good looking as he was, Dean had a harder time scoring with the Beta girls because most didn’t even want to chance getting pregnant or knotted by an Alpha who couldn’t control himself. Thank God for his bachelor pack. Nothing was getting them pregnant, boys or girls, so until they were ready to settle down they would get off by fucking each other. Now that was some crazy shit. Bedroom doors left open most nights. Group sex was as common as wanking off in the shower. And those guys had no qualms with letting Sam join in. So yeah, he had gotten an eyeful of his little brother’s not-so-little equipment on more than one occasion. And that one time they had hooked up with Pam, Ruby and Zeke to celebrate the end of finals week had been truly memorable. Dean still had a scar from that night on his right thigh from somebody’s canines.

So anyway, Lisa’s options were limited. She apparently avoided the few local Alphas the best she could, instead preferring to concentrate on her work. As a horticultural artist, she spent Wyoming’s short growing season planting and tending her amazing gardens, which she filled with native wildflower species. Spring and summer would find her communing with the blooms, constantly photographing them from every angle. During the colder months, she would spend hours with canvases, bringing those photos to life in watercolor or acrylic, and then planning out the color combinations she wanted in next season’s garden. It was a constant cycle of imagining, experiencing and then immortalizing nature’s beauty.

The Omega was a beauty herself, a petite brunette with shoulder-length, straight hair and round, chocolate eyes. She managed to keep tanned and toned all year, mostly through gardening and yard work, but also thanks to a stationary bike in her living room and teaching yoga at a little studio twice a week. Lisa was the kind of person who enjoyed peace. Very-small-town life suited her; the geography alone served as a kind of armor to keep unwanted attention away. Pack Registry had found an agent who understood her need for privacy, and thanks to Anna Milton’s expert negotiating skills, the Omega’s art could be found in galleries from Taos to Salt Lake City and even Cupertino.

Once he had entered the town’s city limits, Dean steered his 1967 Impala down South Third, making a left on Ivinson. Historic red brick buildings lined the streets, making it easy to imagine what
Laramie must have looked like 100 years before. He had followed Lisa’s directions and there was no mistaking the fact that he was in the right place; a pale green store front and butter-colored letters announced his destination, The Old Buckhorn Bar and Parlor. His baby’s big block engine rumbled as he eased her into a parking spot between two well-used pick-up trucks.

He found Lisa on a red leather barstool under the watchful glass eyes of two mounted elk heads.

“My folks were pretty surprised,” Lisa had admitted to Dean over a beer inside Laramie’s oldest bar. She had a lock of brown hair tucked behind her left ear and a small patch of light blue paint at her temple. He raised his eyebrows and she laughed. “Babies are notoriously loud, Dean. And stinky. And messy. I am notoriously not any of those things.”

“I would hope not, Lis,” Dean had chuckled, shaking his head as he took another sip of his beer. “You’re not the pup, you’re the parent. You’re the calm in the storm. But your kid’s gonna love playing in the dirt with you.”

She had tilted her head and smiled at him, her eyebrows twitching. “You’re right,” she agreed. “I hadn’t even thought of that.”

“I’ll bet we start to see pups in those paintings too,” Dean had continued. That had earned him a wide grin and a far-away look as Lisa imagined how her art would evolve as she did. He watched her, not bothering to hide his smile. He liked Lisa. She was captivating, but in a down-to-earth way. He had tried not to compare her to Cas, but he couldn’t help thinking about those twinkling blue eyes and the fact that Castiel had been only a week away from his due date. Lisa had picked up on it almost immediately.

“What’s got you looking so dreamy?” she had asked.

Dean had blushed, feeling like a pup caught with his hand in the cookie jar. “I’m sorry, Lis. I’m here, I promise. This is about you and what you need.”

She had frowned and sat her bottle down to glare at him appraisingly. “Dean, I’m not questioning your commitment, I’m curious. And this isn’t just about me. So what’s going on?”

He shook his head and sighed before replying, “Uh, my first heat assistance call was…successful and he’s due any day now, so I’m just thinking about him.”

Lisa had immediately perked up and shot him an amazing smile. “Really? Your first time? Does he have any other pups?”

“Nope, this will be his first. His brother and sister came into town to be with him. I told him to call or text and let me know everything’s okay.” Dean smiled at the table top and fidgeted with his beer bottle before meeting Lisa’s excited gaze. “He’s having a girl.”

“He’s having a girl,” she repeated. “You’re going to be a father, Dean! I’m so happy for you. Will you go see them?”

“As soon as he gives the okay, I’ll be there with bells on. Uh, do you want to see a picture?” he asked sheepishly.

“Yeah!” Lisa had replied. Dean opened his phone and swiped through his photos until he found the sonogram image Cas had emailed. He handed her his phone and Lisa’s eyes got even bigger. “Oh, Dean,” she whispered reverently.

Dean had cleared his throat. He felt the same way every time he looked at that image. “So you’re
really ready for this? Cause I’ve got a 100% success rate at this point,” he joked.

The Omega had handed his phone back and gave him a smirk. “Let’s go make it 2 and 0.”

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Dean didn’t know why he was so surprised, but Lisa had taken control from the get-go. When her heat hit full-on and her eyes blazed gold, the lithe Omega was suddenly barking orders, telling Dean to strip and then pushing him back against her padded headboard and climbing onto his lap.

Lisa’s body glistened with a fine layer of perspiration and her body radiated heat. “Don’t touch until I tell you, Dean,” she growled. He nodded, his eyes wide in wonder as the smell of sugared plums snaked into his brain. Her naked body filled his vision as she straddled him, nipples peaked and at mouth level, so he closed his eyes to avoid temptation, fighting every instinct to reach out and taste. He gasped as her fingers touched his throbbing dick and then she was everywhere, drenched pussy surrounding him, hot hands touching his face, and wet tongue licking his neck. Dean rumbled deep in his chest, panting through his nose as he grabbed onto the sheets and held on for dear life.

“Suck my breast,” she commanded. “No hands, Dean!” Their eyes caught and all he could think to do was open his mouth wide. She let out a pleased hum and leaned her tit right in. Dean mouthed at the soft flesh with abandon, his teeth gently grabbing onto her nipple so his tongue could flick against it. She gasped and arched, enjoying the pleasure/pain. As soon as he released Lisa’s nipple she leaned back, her hands on his knees behind her, and rolled her hips to grind her pussy and clit against his crotch. Dean’s eyes raked up her glistening skin, watching in awe as she worked him over. He rumbled again in satisfaction as she came, head thrown back on a shout, gushing and clenching around his cock.

She was a fucking hurricane.

And Dean was going to go out of his mind if he didn’t get his hands on her hot skin. “Lisa, please!” he begged. “Gotta touch you. Gotta move. Please!” He wanted to come what seemed like hours ago but she kept on fucking herself on his cock, her slick soaking his balls and pooling under his ass. Her firm body was covered in a sheen of sweat and her chest heaved with the effort. “Please, Lis,” he whispered. “Let me fuck you. Let me touch.”

He almost whined out loud when she nodded her consent. Dean’s hands flew to her waist, pulling her body up and flush against him. Her arms whipped around his neck for purchase as Dean used all his pent-up adrenaline to move her up and down his cock, finally thrusting his hips into her. She let out a litany of curses that ended in a crescendo as Dean’s hot breath panted against her chest. It took all of his willpower to keep his movements controlled. She was still Omega, and he could break her easily if he let himself go.

“Lis, ready?” he whispered, his balls drawn tight with need and his knot pushing insistently at her inner lips.

“Yeah!” she gasped. “Fuck, Dean! Give it to me!”

He growled and shoved his knot in deep, pulling her down onto it and she screamed, squeezing and coming again. Dean’s howl filled her room and it felt like every drop of liquid in his entire body pulsed into her over and over. His vision swam a bit and he probably lost a good 20 seconds of his life as he gasped for breath.

He held her close, ignoring their sweat-slick bodies to inhale her sweet scent, and smiled as he felt her body cool. “Jesus,” he murmured against her skin.
“Lisa,” she chuckled, correcting him.

He snickered too, and then let it grow to a full laugh until she laughed as well, squeezing his knot with her pussy and pulling another orgasm out of his overly sensitive dick.

“Shit, you’re gonna kill me,” he moaned.

“Nah, you got this,” she replied, closing her eyes and rolling her shoulder. “How long?”

“25 minutes, tops,” Dean answered, yawning. “You okay?”

“Oh yeah,” Lisa slurred, already feeling the overwhelming pull to rest now that the frenzy of her heat had waned.

“Good,” he responded, sliding them down to horizontal. She smelled content and Dean allowed himself a little bit of self-congratulatory pride. Lisa’s bed was comfortable and her body was soft and relaxed. “I’ll be right here,” he added before closing his eyes.

The familiar tinkling of an acoustic guitar and Crosby, Stills & Nash singing in three-part harmony roused Dean from sleep. He was surrounded in darkness, so it took his tired mind a few seconds to remember why that song was so important. Then it hit him – it was a text from Cas.

He shot up from the bed, squinting to get his bearings and search out his cell phone, a faint beacon from his jeans pocket. In a second Dean was across the room and fumbling with his phone. He typed in his passcode, brought up Messages, and there it was.

Castiel sat in a white hospital bed, his hair plastered to his forehead with sweat, dark circles under his eyes and a tired smile on his lips. He must have been exhausted, actually, because that smile was small and soft, not nearly the kilowatt voltage the Omega was known for. Oh, but Cas’ blue eyes sparkled with love and pride as he looked down at a small swaddled bundle in his arms. Dean zoomed in to see tiny pink lips, a button nose, and little brows that furrowed in sleep all under a shock of dark blond hair. He huffed out a breath in amazement.

The caption read: Her name is Claire Marie Novak, after our song.

“Claire,” Dean whispered.

The bedside lamp behind him clicked on. “What’s wrong?” Lisa asked sleepily.

Dean turned around and smiled big, pride and happiness billowing out around him but he could care less. He crawled back under the sheets and handed Lisa his phone.

“Yes that…”

“Yup. And that’s my daughter, Claire.”

“She’s perfect,” he texted back. So proud of you, sweetheart. Can’t wait to meet her.

He would tell Maddie that it was the Bergamot and clover candles she had picked out that had done the trick when he showed her and Sam the text Lisa sent four weeks later – a pregnancy test with
two dark, solid lines easily visible in a little oval window.

Chapter End Notes

I usually let the story speak for itself, but I want to make sure everyone gets the tone here, because it's pivotal to the story. Think "free love." ; )

P.S. A virtual nickel if you can guess Dean's ringtone for Cas... ; )
Chapter 6

*Four Years Ago…*

D: How’s Princess Claire today?

C: PC is a little on the fussy side :P

D: No way. Most beautiful girl in the world. No fussy

C: Well the most beautiful girl in the world is cutting a tooth. Mucho Fussy.

D: Ha! How r u?

C: Tired, headache. Thank God for bouncy chair ; )

D: Good!

D: Good.

D: Hey, uh, I think a certain Princess has a b’day comin up…

C: True. 1 wk

D: Party?

C: Just family. Gabe and Hester from CA

D: Good!

D: That’s great

Dean sighed. He glanced up as a white terrycloth towel moved across his sight line. The men’s locker room at the YMCA was packed this time of night, the usually oppressive odor of too many sweaty Alphas and Betas thankfully minimized by the center’s admirable HVAC system. Benny had mentioned something about a basketball league, but Dean thought he might go nuts if he put their workout off another day. He needed to get some time in with the punching bag, maybe spar for a bit, and work through this unsettled feeling in his gut.

He was antsy.

It had been three months since he’d seen Cas and the pup. He was trying to play it cool, but ever since the first time he held Claire, all wrapped up in a white cotton blanket like a little burrito, and looked into those watery blue eyes, he felt a small fissure open up in his heart that only filled when he could smell her light jasmine scent. It was heaven and torture at the same time. And now she was turning one year old. How the fuck did that happen?

And to be honest, Dean was a little sad that “just family” didn’t automatically include him.

The phone buzzed in his hand, drawing his attention back to his texts.
C: Dean would you like to come by? I didn’t want to assume.

The ache eased just a bit and Dean found himself smiling.

D: Would love that. Thanks Cas.

D: Ok to bring my bro and his gf? They’re dying to meet Claire.

Dean watched the text bubble open and then disappear. Shit. Was that too much? Am I not supposed to…The bubble came back up.

C: PC will be happy to entertain her uncle and his gf when she holds court next week. ; )

Shaking his head, Dean wondered what he had been worried about. Cas was, well he was awesome. Of course he wouldn’t mind. Dean’s brain brought up a quick memory of Cas with Claire in his lap, the Omega’s fingers dancing on the pup’s tummy as she looked up at him with big eyes and kicked her feet. Dean had chuckled as Cas’ deep baritone spoke in happy, complete sentences to his daughter before teasing her bottom lip with a bottle of formula. Cas made parenting look effortless, inspiring Dean to ask for a turn at feeding Claire too. Cas’ scent of absolute delight had made Dean blush.

“What are you grinnin’ at?”

Crap. “Uh, making plans for next week,” Dean offered, hitting the Home button to clear his screen.

“Oh yeah?” Benny asked, turning to open the locker to his left and cramming his gym bag inside. “Whatcha got going on that’s makin’ you so happy? Hot date?”

“Yup,” Dean said confidently. “Blonde hair, blue eyes, petite little thing. Did I mention her dazzling, toothless smile?”

“Ha!” Benny laughed. “Either you’re gonna visit Cas or you’re dating very senior citizens now. Come on,” he added, clicking a lock in place and nudging Dean’s shoulder. The men made their way out of the locker room and down a hall towards the boxing gym. Jon Bon Jovi and the clanging of weights sounded from their left. “How’s work?” Benny asked.

“Fine. I mean we’re busy. Seriously busy,” Dean replied, making way for two 12-year old boys who jogged past them. “But there’s so much politics.” Benny pushed through a set of glass double doors into a huge, clean and brightly lit workout space, Dean following behind him. Mirrors lined every wall. Two boxing rings were set up, one on either side of the room, and varieties of punching bags either dangled from the ceiling or were held on outstretched metal arms. A handful of 20-somethings skipped rope or stretched in a corner, all with earbuds hanging from their ears.

They headed over to the equipment rack. “Like, get this,” Dean continued, picking up a pair of boxing gloves. “Me, Vic and Christian are all on the same build up in Steamboat because if the deal’s over a mil, Christian’s got to have his name on it. Man that little shit bugs the crap out of me. Plus the little turd keeps his nose in everyone’s business like we’re not peers and he’s overseeing all of us.”

Benny nodded in understanding as they made their way over to a heavy punching bag that hung from the ceiling by a metal chain. He got in position behind the bag as Dean faced it and exhaled, squaring his shoulders. Dean started in on a set of straight punches, alternating his hands, mindful to keep up his guard and turn his hips into each punch. Their conversation stopped as Dean moved on
to five left hooks, swinging his arm in a wide arc to hit the side of the bag, before switching to his right. Once done he shook out his arms and swapped places with Benny in a rotation that they had memorized over a decade ago.

The Cajun rolled his shoulders in preparation. “At least you’re out there,” he commented before settling in a comfortable stance and punching. Dean held on tight and leaned into the bag to offer firm resistance to Benny’s blows. When Benny finished his set, he stood straight and swapped places with Dean again. “I hate doing just Accounts Receivable work. Styne’s is too big for me, brotha. They’ve got so many other accountants that we each only work a tiny slice of the books. I want to see it all move together, you know? The financials of a business is like a livin’, breathin’ thing. I need to see how what I’m doin’ is affecting the entire organism.”

“‘Entire organism,’ huh?” Dean smirked. He was loosening up, feeling better mentally and physically now that he was using his hands and getting his blood pumping. The Alpha set into a series of five low and high kicks, first with his right leg and then his left.

His body went on autopilot, muscles extending in a practiced rhythm, as he thought about his friend’s frustration. Benny was fantastic with numbers; he graduated in the top 10% of his class. It made sense that he wanted to have that 1,000-foot, bird’s eye view of an entire company to make sure his work was correct. Dean trusted Benny with his own personal finances and always took the other Alpha’s advice, because he knew that Benny cared about Dean as a person. He had a way of explaining things, too. He would be great with customers if he ever got a chance to work with them. In fact, Benny’s smarts and Dean’s understanding of construction and project management would make a potent combination that would kick ass, as far as Dean was concerned.

When he finished his set, Dean looked Benny in the eyes. “Hey, you could manage the books for a small company all on your own, right?”

Benny scoffed. “Dean, I could manage the books for a large company all on my own. I may only be concentrating on A/R right now, but trust me; I could turn a mom-n-pop shop to a profitable, medium-sized company in no time – A/R, A/P, payroll, even inventory.” He pushed past Dean to get into position but Dean stood firm, contemplating. “You’re gonna bust somethin’ thinkin’ that hard.”

“Benny,” Dean countered. “Think you can handle a start-up?”

-------------------------------------------------

“Look, Cas is good people. Don’t be all star-struck, okay?” Dean lectured.

Madison nodded her head, her brown eyes round as she took in the understated opulence of the white marble lobby in Castiel’s building. Sam gave her hand a squeeze of reassurance and tried to act cool even though the reality of the situation was hitting home. He was about to meet Castiel Novak. Viable Sustainable Energy Castiel Novak. He should have brought a book or a magazine or a shirt for Castiel to sign.

Dean smiled, scenting the couple’s excitement and anxiety. He remembered how nervous he was the first time he walked through those doors, but for a completely different reason. Then he caught a glimpse of the older Alpha at the security desk and puffed out his chest. This was one of his favorite parts about visiting Cas.

“Winchester,” the guard acknowledged. “You bring a new friend?”

“Rufus, this is my brother Sam and his girlfriend Madison,” Dean answered as he started filling in his name on the guest register.
“I’m talking about that huge, brown thing you got there,” the tall man countered, crossing his arms and jerking his head at the mammoth stuffed teddy bear Dean had in a head lock. A look of boredom and scorn seemed perpetually etched into the 62-year-old Alpha’s face. “You here for Miss Claire’s birthday party?”

That got Dean’s attention. He stopped writing Sam’s contact info and gave Rufus a considering look. “Miss Claire’s birthday party?”

“Yes, you idiot,” Rufus shot back. “You remember her, right? Pretty little thing who got her looks and her manners from her daddy up there?”

Madison giggled behind Dean, amused by the older, prickly guard’s ability to get Dean’s goat.

“Listen old man,” Dean said, unable to hide his smirk as he pointed at Rufus’ chest. “You just stay here and keep all the riff raff away from the birthday cake, got it?”

Rufus leaned forward. “You bring me a slice of that chocolate cake and you got yourself a deal. Youngster.”

Sam let out a laugh.

Rufus lifted his head and stared Sam straight in the eyes. “What are you laughing at, long-hair? I don’t see you with a gift for that sweet pup. You always show up to a birthday party without a present? You’re as bad as this one.”

“Uh,” Sam tried.

“Jesus, Rufus, you’re gonna give him a coronary,” Dean admonished, but he shot his brother a smile over his shoulder before frowning at the guard. “Cool your jets. The bear’s from all of us.”

“Hmm,” the older man groused. “I guess you can go up, then. But I’m watching you, long-hair.” Rufus squinted at Sam as the trio passed by and walked to the elevators. “You could probably do better, miss,” he called out to Madison as the elevator doors slid open.

“You’re probably right, Rufus,” she responded sweetly, “but I think I’ll keep him.”

Dean distinctly heard the guard huff and mumble, “Get a haircut, at least,” as the doors closed.

Claire had reached out for Dean as soon as he crossed over the threshold, and Dean couldn’t help the smile that took over his face. He stepped into Cas’ personal space and wrapped his arms around them both, scenting two of his favorite people with closed eyes. Honey and jasmine filled his nose before winding down to that empty hole in his heart and filling it to the brim. That buzzing, antsy feeling eased away and he felt smoothed out. Centered. Right.

“Hey,” he said softly into Cas’ ear, nuzzling at the Omega’s temple and breathing deeply.

“Hello, Dean,” Cas replied, his happiness an almost physical thing that Dean wanted to snuggle into like a quilted blanket.

They stared at each other, smiling, until a small cough brought his attention back to the fact that they weren’t alone.

“Cas, this is my overgrown brother, Sam and his beautiful-yet-completely-out-of-his-league girlfriend, Madison,” Dean explained, reluctantly taking a step away from his little bubble but grinning at the pup and scooping her into his arms. “Guys, this is Castiel, and this little beauty is
“Princess Claire.”

“Hey there, Princess!” Madison cooed as the baby hid her face in Dean’s neck.

“It’s very nice to meet you both,” Castiel assured them. “Please, come in. Can I get you something to drink?”

“I got it, Cas,” Dean said, heading to the fridge. Claire looked over his shoulder at the newcomers, but as soon as either Sam or Madison attempted eye contact she hid her head again. “Oh, babe, you shouldn’t have!” he teased, pulling a couple of beer bottles out with one hand and turning to set them on the kitchen island.

“Well, if I remember correctly, ‘It’s not a party without beer, Cas,’” Castiel replied, doing his best “Dean” impersonation.

“Uh, the full quote is, ‘It’s not a party without beer and pie, Cas,’” Dean clarified, kissing Claire’s cheek. “Come on, baby girl, I want you to meet your Uncle Sam. You can pull his hair.”

“Rufus says he’d like some cake,” Madison piped up, following Dean over to the couch so she could sit next to the baby. “I’ll be happy to take some down to him.”

“Of course,” Castiel answered. “And thank you, Madison. There’s an old country saying that goes, ‘If Rufus ain’t happy, ain’t nobody happy.’”

Dean chuckled, because that was a true statement. “Where’s the fam?” he asked, sitting Claire down on her diapered rump on his knees.

“My brother and sister should be here soon. They took a cab from the airport.”

“Hmm,” Dean hummed in acknowledgement. He suddenly realized that he hadn’t heard a word from his younger brother. “Sam! Get over here, man. Don’t you want to meet your niece?”

Sam cleared his throat, realizing he was still staring at Castiel with a somewhat stunned look on his face. “Uh, it’s an honor. Really. I’ve heard a lot about you.”

“And I you,” Castiel replied, smiling. “Dean speaks of you often.”

“Yeah, I told him about your ridiculous eating habits and long hair so you wouldn’t scare him.”

“Scare me?” Cas shot back with a grin. “Do I need to remind you that I run a revolutionary, million-dollar start-up that will single-handedly change the landscape…”

“Cas!” Dean chuckled. “I know! I know. Show off.”

“You should show me some respect, Dean,” Cas replied, the smile in his voice evident.

“You have my utmost respect, Cas,” Dean soothed.

“Don’t do that, you’ll just inflate his ego!” a new voice snarked from the foyer. A smiling man with light brown hair and a suitcase strode into the room as a blonde Beta in a grey pantsuit trailed behind him. “Oh, Rufus wants a piece of cake.”

“Yes. I know. Rufus will get his cake,” Castiel promised. “Gabe and Hester, this is Sam Winchester, Claire’s uncle, his girlfriend Madison, and Dean Winchester, Claire’s father.”

“Nice to meet you, Dean-o!” Gabe quipped. “You showed up for the one-year. Very nice, Alpha.”
Dean winced, not sure if Gabe’s comment was a dig or a compliment. “Of course I’m here. Cas and Claire are family.”

Gabe grinned and nodded his head. “I like him, Cassie.”

“Well thank goodness, Gabe,” Castiel shot back, striding over to his sister for a quick hug. “I was so worried you wouldn’t approve.”

“As you should be,” Gabe replied. “I am head of this family…”

“Seriously,” Hester complained. “Could you stop for just one minute, Gabriel? You might actually make a good impression if you keep your mouth shut. Here,” she said, sticking a sucker in front of her shorter brother’s face. Gabe snatched it from her hand and wagged his eyebrows as if he knew that his comment would be rewarded with sugar. He took the opportunity to size up Madison before making a beeline to Sam.

“Uncle Sam, huh? Very patriotic.”

Sam looked down at the energetic man whose eyes twinkled as he smiled around the lollipop in his mouth and decided to fight snark with snark. “It’s better than Uncle Gabe,” he countered. “Has a better ring to it.” He caught Castiel giving him an approving nod and relaxed. “You’ll have to wait in line while Princess Claire meets her favorite uncle.”

“Oh, Sammykins! Touche!”

“Hey, Sammykins,” Dean interjected. “Why don’t you bring your ‘favorite uncle’ ass over here and get some face time with the princess. Cas, you got a towel or something soft I can borrow?”

Sam and Madison flanked Dean as he laid the baby on her back across his lap, smiling when Madison reached over to tickle the underside of her teeny, kicking foot. “Heya, sweetheart,” Dean cooed, looking up as Castiel handed him a soft cotton burp rag. “Your Uncle Sam used to love this when he was a baby.” The room quieted as Dean slowly dragged the soft cloth down Claire’s face, barely touching her with it. Her little blue eyes blinked quickly and she kicked her feet as the cloth brushed against her. Dean rewarded her with a big grin. “Did you like that, Claire Bear? Did that tickle?”

He repeated the motion several times before looking up when he caught the scent of one very happy Castiel. “If you like, I’ll do this to you later,” he offered with a wink.

Castiel laughed and shook his head. “I’ll hold you to that.”

Barely 30 minutes later the huge teddy bear had been safely deposited in the corner of Claire’s nursery, which had been turned back into a guest bedroom for Gabe and Hester’s sake. Castiel had sliced up a chocolate cake that oozed gluten and dairy for the grown-ups, while placing an oversized, matching chocolate cupcake just for Claire on the sacrificial alter of her high chair tray. Madison had returned from running a frighteningly large slice of said chocolate cake down to Rufus, and Claire had been stripped to her diaper and deposited in front of her prize. Everyone had congregated back in the kitchen to sing “Happy Birthday,” at which point Claire shook in excitement and let out a shrill, high-pitched squeak. Dean had immediately dubbed her “pterodactyl baby.”

As he watched Castiel lean down to pick some frosting off the floor and wipe the mess onto a napkin, Dean wondered what the man was like as a titan of hi-tech. Did he stride through sterile halls, white lab coat fluttering like a cape, with a small group of hipster interns trailing behind him? Or was he the boss of the boardroom; fancy dark suit and starched white shirt betrayed by a blue silk
tie that always sat slightly askew as Castiel pointed to slides on a screen, pitching the virtues of solar power to four-star generals and senators? Castiel caught Dean’s eye, raising an eyebrow in a silent question as he scented Dean’s strong curiosity. Dean decided that now was as good a time as any to get Castiel’s very knowledgeable opinion about the life change Dean was considering.

“So how did you know when it was time to start your own company?” Dean asked around a mouthful of chocolate cake. He and Sam were leaning against the granite kitchen island while Cas, Madison, Hester and Gabriel sat at the table watching Claire pound her small fist into her cupcake. The baby had chocolate frosting smeared across her little chest, and damn, did she look adorable. Dean was pretty sure that a good portion of the cupcake was in her hair. He beamed when Claire squealed loudly and slapped her high chair tray, sending chocolate crumbs flying.

Castiel smiled fondly at his pup. “It was a funny thing, Dean,” he replied, locking eyes with the other man in a way that made Dean feel like he was the only one in the room. “It wasn’t like I woke up one day and thought, ‘I’m going to quit my job and start my own business.’” Castiel grinned and Dean felt a warmth in his chest push against his ribcage like his body could hardly keep it contained anymore. “However I found myself spending more and more time sketching out these small, interlocking solar discs. I set up weekend meetings with scientists I knew through BASF until I had a prototype. It was all very ‘Steve Jobs, working in my garage,’ until three of the scientists wanted to know when I planned to go into small-level production because they wanted to invest.”

“It must have been an amazing time,” Madison commented.

“Right,” Gabe mumbled to himself, and then explained, “This guy was awesome in the lab, no doubt, and he’s always had that Omega magnetic quality that got him in front of the right people, but he was a mess when it came to getting a business off the ground.” Gabe looked his younger brother in the eye. “I think we all spent many, many days talking Castiel off the ledge.”

“Thank God for Meg,” Hester added. “It’s crazy to say that because she’s like a little devil. But I tell you, as soon as we met her we knew she was the perfect business partner for Castiel. She’s fiercely loyal and smart as a whip. One of the savviest operations managers I’ve ever had the pleasure to work with. She takes no quarter.” The blonde looked at the blank faces around her and sighed. “She takes no prisoners.”

“And the rest is history!” Madison announced.

“The rest is history,” Castiel agreed.

Sam and Madison did get a chance to enjoy the sunset from Castiel’s living room before saying their goodbyes and heading back to Boulder. Gabe and Hester were watching TV in the living room, and Castiel had put the exhausted baby down in her crib, which he had moved into his own room for the duration of his siblings’ visit.

“Stay for a bit?” he asked Dean quietly in the hall.

“Yeah, Cas. Of course,” Dean answered.

Castiel took Dean’s hand and led him back into his bedroom, locking the door behind them. He stepped into Dean’s arms and they held each other, finally alone, as the baby slept. Castiel had missed this – more than he could say. Nothing compared to being pressed against Dean’s chest with his cheek on Dean’s shoulder. Here he wasn’t “on.” He didn’t have the weight of a company’s worth of employees’ financial security, his city’s economic future, and a pack’s expectations on his
shoulders. Here there was safety and true affection and family. And maybe a little more. He certainly hoped so.

The fact was that they hadn’t been intimate since his heat. Sure, they had held hands and hugged like this, taking comfort in being close and scenting each other. And there were many moments when the need to kiss Dean had seemed overwhelming. But neither of them had really talked about what they were to each other yet. Castiel sighed into the strong muscles under soft flannel and thought back to the first time he had been given this gift.

“This is one of my favorite things in the world,” Dean whispered.

Castiel couldn’t have agreed more. “May I kiss you?” he asked the plaid shirt, afraid he wouldn’t be able to take the rejection he might see in those green eyes. Then soft lips were on his, tentative at first. Without thinking, Castiel’s hand crept up to the base of Dean’s neck and gently carded through the short hairs there. He felt Dean’s hum of approval through his entire body. There was a slight parting of lips and the careful lick of permission before Castiel opened up completely and the two men shared their first passionate kiss in over a year and a half. The memory of that first kiss and the physical connection of the one he was currently enjoying slammed into Castiel and he felt his knees give a little quake. He moaned softly and held tighter, afraid he might actually lose his balance if he didn’t.

He smiled as he was slowly moved backwards, knowing Dean was guiding them to the bed behind him. He pulled back but kept walking, murmuring, “I’m so glad you want this. I’ve missed you, Dean. Sometimes the most when you’re right in front of me.”

Suddenly they were still and Castiel feared he had finally said too much. He closed his eyes and prepared himself for the painful words of Dean letting him down easy, putting up walls and establishing boundaries. Instead there were careful fingers tipping his chin up and an explosion of happy relief that Castiel almost literally clung to like a life raft.

Eyes the color of spring leaves searched his own for what Castiel hoped was plainly visible – the absolute truth in those words. Then hungry lips devoured his own and they were moving again, quickly this time. Within three seconds Castiel had been lowered to sitting on the edge of his bed, the Omega inside him thrumming with the pleasure of looking up into Dean’s face from this submissive position. A warm palm rested against his cheek and Castiel instinctively nuzzled into it.

Dean’s rumbled response caught Castiel off guard and he felt that panic whenever his body acted without his permission, this time arousal seeping from his pores. He felt himself get wet and whimpered without thinking. He chanced a glance at Dean, watched the Alpha’s nostrils flare as he caught the scent, and swallowed.

“I want you every minute of every day, Cas. There’s a hole in my heart that only stops aching when I’m with you and the pup. It’s a physical thing.”

Castiel found himself nodding in agreement and smiling, so thankful. That was it. That was just how he felt too.

“Tell me what you need, sweetheart. I want to give you everything I can.”

The Omega leaned forward and heard Dean huff out a quick breath as Castiel rubbed into the denim right in front of him. He looked up, asking for permission with his eyes as his hands hovered over the button on Dean’s jeans. Dean’s expression was priceless – cautious optimism instantly transformed into hopeful desire. The he nodded and Castiel had him exposed in half a second.
“Fuck,” Dean gasped again and then moaned as Castiel wrapped his lips around the tip of Dean’s cock and slid his mouth down as far as he could. He looked up at Dean again and this time felt not one ounce of embarrassment as slick ease from him. Every nerve ending in Castiel’s body tingled with how perfect he felt giving his Alpha pleasure. Then he decided he really enjoyed the sound of my Alpha in his head and swallowed around Dean’s length to show his gratitude for the opportunity to have this man in his life.

“Wait. What about…”

Castiel was single-minded in his determination, taking Dean’s hands and placing them on either side of his head. The broken groan Dean let out would be one of Castiel’s favorite sounds for all eternity. He sucked in a quick breath through his nose and went lax so Dean would completely understand what he wanted. When Dean started slowly thrusting into his mouth, Castiel hummed his approval and reveled in how good he felt right here, with Dean’s scent in his nose, warm and caring hands cradling him, hard length filling his mouth, slight saltiness on the back of his tongue. He lightly held onto the backs of Dean’s thighs and let go.

He was complete sensation, flying as Dean used him with utter reverence, until Dean’s movements picked up speed and Castiel could feel the urgency building in the quivering muscles under his fingers. He needed to feel that power inside him and suddenly Dean’s knot was his sole focus. He tapped the back of Dean’s legs and the man stopped immediately, panting as he held himself still and pulled back. Castiel’s hands flew to his own shirt and he started stripping himself of the clothes that kept him from his goal. Dean pulled him up and started helping Castiel get naked as quickly as possible.

“You’re so fucking good to me,” Dean whispered as he pushed Castiel’s shirt off his shoulders.

“No, this is me being very selfish,” Castiel countered quietly, pushing his pants down and hissing as cold air hit his leaking dick.

“You gonna be nice and quiet, Cas?” Dean teased as he stepped out of his own pants and underwear.

“Call me your Omega, Dean. Please.”

Dean groaned as Castiel grabbed his hand and pulled him into the master bathroom, desperate to get as far away from the pup’s crib as possible. He had the presence of mind to turn on the bathroom fan and create some white noise that would hopefully muffle some of the sounds he knew he would be making within seconds.

“Jesus, Cas!” Dean laughed as they stepped into Castiel’s huge four-person shower. But Castiel got the last laugh as he placed his palms against the tile wall and spread his legs. “Oh fuck,” Dean groaned, stepping close and rubbing his aching cock against the wet and shiny pink furl of Castiel’s hole.

“Dean!” Castiel growled over his shoulder. He was completely exposed here. And he needed this so much. Then the air felt like it was punched from his lungs as Dean eased into him, pushing halfway inside before pulling back and pushing in again. Castiel’s head dropped and he moaned loudly as strong hands clutched onto his hips and carefully pulled him into the cradle of Dean’s pelvis. He panted heavily through the incredible feeling of being physically joined with the man behind him. His Alpha. He was finally, completely…complete.

Castiel smelled his own honey and lavender scent take over the small space of the shower and his dick leaked in response. “Dean?” he whispered. He felt Dean take a deep breath, and then that
amazing cock started moving inside him, and Castiel wanted to cry, it felt so good.

“You my Omega, Cas?” Dean asked lowly, pressing his hand against Castiel’s lower belly to remind him that it was Dean who filled his womb. “I know you are. Your gorgeous body was made for me. For this,” he added, thrusting deeply into Castiel, who fruitlessly curled his toes for purchase on the tile floor as Dean quickened his pace. “Your scent drives me crazy. Jesus, I want to be inside you forever.”

Castiel body rocked without his instruction, moving with the energy of Dean fucking into him, and it was glorious. Dean rubbed against his prostate with every push and pull, sending pleasure zinging up and down his spine. Castiel squeezed against Dean’s cock and the Alpha growled in the back of his throat in pleasure.

“Fuck, you feel so good. Want me to knot you in your own shower, Omega?” Dean moaned, and Castiel imagined that Dean couldn’t stop talking now that he’d been given permission. The thought made him extremely happy, and then he remembered that he had been asked a question.

“Make me come first, then I want your thick knot buried deep, Dean.”

“Shit,” Dean hissed. “Come on just my cock, sweetheart. No touching. Can you do that for me?” Dean leaned against Castiel’s back as he thrust hard and Castiel’s every nerve ending lit up, that primal feeling of being taken making his dick twitch forcefully. He felt Dean’s knot pushing against his rim and the heat and pressure between his hips threatened to crack him open.

“Yes, yes, yes,” he panted, Dean’s thick cock filling him and pushing him closer and closer to release. “Oh God!” he cried. Shit he was so close, just right there, and Castiel teetered on the edge as his body pulled taught with frustration.

“Come!” Dean ordered, and that was all Castiel needed. His Omega obeyed, screams muffled into his left arm as he came so hard he saw stars. Dean shoved his knot in deep and roared into Castiel’s back in a similar attempt to not wake the baby. Castiel shivered with the sensation of being filled with Dean’s come as the Alpha made quick, shallow thrusts and released load after load into Castiel’s willing body.

As they panted together, coming down from the endorphin release, Dean wrapped his arms around Castiel’s middle and kissed the sweaty skin in front of him. “What you do to me…” he sighed. Castiel smiled and hummed in agreement.

Dean slowly walked them both backwards until his back met the tile wall and then gently lowered them both to sitting with Castiel in Dean’s lap, his back pressed to Dean’s chest.

“Will you be okay like this?” Castiel asked.

“Hmm. Yup. Wanna sleep?”

Castiel nodded with the last bits of energy he could muster. He smiled as he felt Dean’s hand brush his hair away from his eyes. It was a sweet and caring gesture.

“Won’t be long,” Dean whispered.

Castiel sighed, happy and sated and wrapped in strong arms, locked tight to the father of his child, and surrounded with what he knew in his heart was love.
Chapter 7

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

I-70 was surprisingly clear and Dean thanked his lucky stars or guardian angel – or maybe Charlie was somehow keeping the lights that regulated traffic onto the onramps at a fiery red to match her hair color – but regardless, Pack Registry’s gleaming, 12-story building came into view faster than Dean had expected. Maybe it was the reminiscing. He pulled into a parking spot at exactly 2:34 pm.

As he stared up at the glass and chrome structure, Dean realized that he had been here only twice before; once for his initial interview and the second time about two and a half years ago. At that point, news of Lisa’s pregnancy had created quite a buzz within Omega Support Services; they rarely had a volunteer Alpha with a 2-0 record right out of the chute. Needless to say, when Ben was born the following August, Dean became very popular at Pack Registry.

“It’s like your Facebook post got a bajillion ‘likes’ over here,” Charlie had explained. “It’s true that you’re relatively new, but a 2-0 record gives a lot of Omegas hope and makes my bosses really happy.”

Unfortunately, the timing couldn’t have been worse. Not long after, he and Benny began meeting in earnest to draw up a business plan for W&L Mountain Chalets, Inc. Plus there were sit-downs with banks and potential suppliers, all while Dean still worked a full-time job. He just didn’t have time like he did before. When he found himself turning down his fourth heat assistance request in six months, Dean felt like a bit of a jerk.

“No,” he had replied. “I really don’t. It’s just, I’ve got a lot going on right now and I can’t spare the time. I know it’s for a good cause, okay? And I want to be there for OSS, I really do. Maybe you could just take me out of rotation for the rest of the year?”

He could sense the Beta’s disappointment in the heavy pause on the phone line. “Of course, Dean,” she answered. “Hey, please don’t get the wrong idea. I’m super stoked that things are going so well for you. I’ll call you in December, okay?”


Son of a bitch if his phone didn’t ring December 1st at 9 in the freakin’ a.m.

“You are nothing if not punctual, Bradbury,” he had chuckled into the phone.

“Good to know, Mr. Winchester,” an unfamiliar female voice replied.

“Uh, sorry,” Dean responded, checking his caller ID as he set his bowl of Cherrios down on the coffee table. Huh. “Pack Registry,” clear as day. He turned the volume down as Danny "The Count" Koker offered some Vegas blackjack dealer only $3,000 for his mustang and sat up straighter on his sofa.

“Nothing to be sorry for, Mr. Winchester. My name is Jody Mills and I am Pack Registry’s Regional Supervisor for Colorado and Utah.”

“Oh! Uh, is there a problem?
“None at all. In fact, I would like to take you out for some coffee. How does your day look?”

Dean’s mind did a quick analysis, no easy feat on a Saturday morning while still in his jammies. If the Regional Supervisor was calling on a weekend to ask him out for coffee, there must be a damn good reason for it. Plus, he didn’t want to get Charlie in any trouble.

“My day looks pretty open, actually. I could meet you in Denver around 10:30?”

“Wonderful. Do you know Pikes Perk on 6th?”

Dean was actually very well acquainted with their Sumatran blend and delicious, oversized cinnamon rolls. “Yup. Everything’s okay, right?” he asked again.

“I promise. I just have a delicate matter that I’d like to talk to you about. I really appreciate you making the time on such short notice.”

“Yeah. Of course. I’ll, uh, see you at 10:30.”

He ended the call and set the phone down on the couch cushion. Well that was strange. It didn’t sound like he was being pulled off the list for being an unhelpful asshole. Of course, they probably had a form letter or automated email for that. No, this was definitely…different. Hmm. Well, if he was going to meet the Regional Supervisor for Colorado and Utah, Dean had figured it would be best to make a good impression. He showered, settled on his best pair of jeans and a dark green cable-knit sweater over a white button-down, grabbed his keys and wallet, and fired up the Impala.

When Dean walked through the doors at Pikes Perk, Jody Mills had smiled over her Vanilla Carmel latte and shook her light brown hair. That man was just as handsome as his profile photo, but she would have recognized him based off of Charlie’s very accurate yet succinct description – effortlessly Alpha with a light sage scent and matching green eyes. Jody was in her early forties and, having spent the better part of 25 years honing her innate talent to read a room, had noticed no fewer than three Beta women and, a little surprisingly, one Beta man, give Dean an interested look. She quirked her head and smirked before schooling her features into a more professional demeanor. She was here on business, yes, but at least her curiosity was also satisfied. It was good to see what all the hubbub was about.

Jody let Dean get his coffee before signaling him over. She stood with her hand outstretched, grinning the moment she could tell he realized she was an Omega herself. “Dean Winchester, I presume.”

“Ms. Mills,” he replied, shaking her hand and smiling at her firm grip. “How are you?”

“Good, Dean. Good. Would you mind taking a walk with me?”

“Uh, sure?” He looked surprised as he took a gulp of coffee and followed Jody back out onto the busy sidewalk. The air was chilly but the sun shone brightly through scattered fluffy, white clouds. Dean glanced around, not surprised to see gloved hands holding oversized shopping bags. He was going to need to do some Christmas shopping himself pretty soon. He turned to catch Jody watching him.

She flashed him a quick smile as she led him down 6th. “Dean, first off, thanks for being so flexible today. I know you requested a break from OSS and we absolutely wanted to honor that,” she commented, taking a sip of her coffee. “I also know we’re being really literal based on your wishes, and I do apologize, but please, hear me out.”
“Yeah, sure,” Dean nodded.

“There’s an Omega in Utah who we have arranged heat assistance for several times over the past four years,” Jody continued. “She’s had a really rough time, Dean. She lost two pups in their first trimesters.” She let that news sink in for a second, watching Dean recall his training. Anyone who had suffered through two miscarriages would struggle with emotional pain, but personal loss like that would be particularly devastating to the Omega psyche.

They rounded a corner, walking in silence, until Jody spoke again. “She had about given up until she saw your profile in June. She was really taken by you and the great work you’ve done…”

The Alpha had scoffed at that one. He still had a hard time equating his heat assistance calls as “great work.” It’s not like he’d built a bridge or donated a kidney, for Christ’s sake.

“Look,” Jody said sternly as she caught Dean’s eye. “Whether you think so or not, the fact that Claire and Ben are healthy and happy new members of our pack is a huge deal. Thanks to you, there’s a beautiful little Omega and a handsome little Alpha in Arapaho, both of whom we know will accomplish wonderful things.” They crossed the street and headed north. “I’m going to be honest here. Lydia’s changed. She’s all business and more aloof than she’s ever been. She comes across almost like an Alpha these days. I know it’s because she’s losing that nurturing side of her nature as she’s internalized her pain.”

Dean sighed, thinking immediately of Sam. There was a time after college when his little brother had met an Omega and had fallen hard. He dated Jess for a few months until one night she told him that she couldn’t see a future with a Beta. It kicked up all of Sam’s pain over not being able to sire pups. Dean remembered quiet nights at bars, watching Sam stare into a shot glass before throwing back whatever the liquor of the evening was without a word. That was the worst part of it; his “talk about your feelings” brother had been unable to vocalize how hurt he was. Thankfully, a week at home with Bobby and Ellen finally got Sam back from the brink. He found his center, and once again came to terms with the fact that there was absolutely nothing he could do about his situation.

When Dean imagined Cas or Lisa actually losing two pregnancies, it broke his heart.

Jody stopped walking, and placed a hand on Dean’s arm, scenting his melancholy. She had forgotten about the Alpha’s high compassion scores. “Hey, it’s okay. I bring it up so you know what you’re getting yourself into if you take this one on. Lydia’s very different from Castiel and Lisa. She’s temperamental, bossy and a bit of a bitch,” Jody admitted. “But she needs our help. Please say you’ll consider this?”

Dean nodded his head wordlessly, then looked behind her and huffed. “Ms. Mills, you are very good at your job.” Behind her, Pack Registry’s glass doors gleamed in the sun.

“Thanks for the compliment, Dean,” she smirked. “Come inside for a minute so I can review the file with you in detail and we’ll talk about dates.”

“…”

“So if Omegas conceive best when they feel safe, we need to make sure Lydia feels a high level of trust with you before you even get there.”

Madison had paced Dean’s living room for the better part of 20 minutes as she scrolled through an article she had up on her tablet. “Trust is all about feeling comfortable with someone. Well, it says here that according to an American Omega Obstetrics Association study in 2011, extended scent exposure prior to copulation contributed to a 58% higher probability of conception in non-mated
Omegas attempting pregnancies. Dean, that’s huge! It says here that the Omegas indicated they felt very comfortable about their partner, making them more receptive.”

“Okay, Nurse Betty,” Dean replied, leaning forward to rest his forearms on his thighs, “what do we do with that information?”

“I recommend that you jack off on a towel and overnight it to Ogden.”

“What?” Sam demanded incredulously. “Maddie, no offense, but that’s offensive.”

“I’ve got to agree with Samantha on this one. This chick’s already ‘almost like an Alpha’ according to the Regional Supervisor. I don’t want to piss her off before I even get there and sabotage the whole trip.”

Madison rolled her eyes. “Okay, how about you go hit the gym and send your workout shirt? Put it in a zippered plastic bag right away. I’ll write up a note to go along with a copy of the article, so Lydia understands what we’re trying to accomplish.”

Dean shrugged at his brother. “ Couldn’t hurt, right?” Sam shrugged right back.

“So what are other Omega-centric ways to create a sense of safety and trust?” Maddie mused. “Hey, why don’t you ask the two Omegas who already trust you?”

“See, now that makes a lot of sense,” Dean said approvingly. He grabbed his phone and smiled as he re-read Cas’ last text, which had included a pic of Claire on Dean’s lap in the Impala. “Hey, a picture of me with Claire would help her get a feel for how trustworthy I am, right?”

“Definitely!” Maddie agreed, her eyes lighting up.

“Hey, Dean,” Sam added, “why don’t you send her a text once a day with pictures of you and your family, or you at work, or whatever? She can get a bead on you and see you in your natural habitat.”

“No dick pics, Dean,” Maddie ordered, wagging her finger at her soon-to-be brother-in-law.

“I’m crushed that you would think that I would do something so vulgar, Madison,” Dean mumbled as he texted Cas for his opinion. “Alright, gather ‘round, family.” The trio huddled together and Dean snapped a group selfie. “ Hand me the file,” he asked, checking for Lydia’s number before typing it into his phone. “Okay. Here goes. ‘Lydia this is Dean in CO. I’m going to text you once a day before my trip. Here’s a pic of me, my bro and his fiancée. I’m on the left.’”

They all stared expectantly at the screen. When nothing came back after 10 seconds the trio looked at each other. “Well, she’s obviously busy,” Madison offered. “She’ll text you back. But you know what, Dean? Do it until she asks you to stop. Okay. Shirt, texts, and pics...”

“Candles?” Sam suggested.

Dean flipped open Lydia’s file again. “ Hmm, says here she grew up in Newport Beach, California.” He looked up at Maddie who was already nodding her head. He sighed in defeat but his eyes were smiling. “I need to get some Christmas shopping done anyway. Fucking Yankee Candle, man!”

Over the course of the next two weeks, Dean sent Lydia a picture of him and Claire, him and Cas and Claire, Lisa and Ben, him and Sam and Maddie bowling, his kitchen, him and Vic at a job site in Telluride, and him and Benny working out. He took a pic of himself on Santa’s lap at the mall and sent it Lydia and Cas. Shit, he even sent her a funny cat meme. Four days into it, she started texting him back more than just a smiley face emoji. On the sixth day, she texted him a pic of his workout
shirt stretched out on one side of her bed. Dean had laughed out loud. It seemed that Lydia was finally warming up to the process.

He had just packed the Coastal Breeze candle into his duffel when his phone chimed.

**Lisa: Good luck in Ogden**

D: Thanks! Hope this works

**Lisa: It was gonna work before you did all the other stuff :)**

**Lisa: You’re something else, Winchester**

D: Right! How’s Ben?

**Lisa: Finger painting you a Xmas card**

D: Awesome!

D: Can’t wait to see it

**Lisa: When she’s knocked up with twins, you better write down all the things you did. Make a handbook!**

D: Dean Winchester, Omega Whisperer

**Lisa: Asshole! :P**

**Lisa: But yeah**

D: You guys coming to CO anytime soon?

**Lisa: How about March?**

D: That would be great!

D: Hey, you want to meet Cas and Claire?

**Lisa: Def, Dean! Set it up!**

**Lisa: Drive safe**

**Dean: Will do. Kiss Ben for me**

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Dean checked the text before walking under a blue neon sign that read “The Cobalt Room.” It wasn’t his normal type of bar – way too investment banker – and he had been thankful for the heads-up from Sam so he could change into a suit and tie at a local Gas n Sip. He spotted Lydia at a small table in the center of the room, arguing with a waiter. Her long legs were crossed at the ankle under a purple sleeveless dress. She caught his scent immediately and looked up, offering him a small smile in recognition as she took her drink and turned her back to the man who brought it.

He took the seat across from her, in front of what he hoped was two fingers of Johnny Walker neat,
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as Lydia gave him a silent appraising look.

“What?” Dean asked with a chuckle.

“You weren’t wearing a suit in any of the pictures you sent,” she replied. “Looks good on you.”

He shrugged and smiled. “Well, I’ve been known to clean up pretty well.”

“Indeed.” Lydia’s eyes twinkled in amusement as she took a sip from something light blue and glowing in a martini glass.

At that moment a young woman in her early twenties approached their table, glancing between the two of them nervously. “I’m sorry to interrupt, but you’re Lydia Cornwall, right?”

Lydia nodded her head and forced a smile. “I am. And you are?”

“Jasmine! Jasmine Bowen! I watch your newscast every evening. I’m studying journalism at Weber State University.” The bubbly blonde looked Dean straight in the eye. “Lydia is such a professional! Did you see her interview with Senator Thompson last week? She really grilled him on the influence lobbyists are having on his job initiative. He was squirming by the time she got through with him!”

“No, I, uh…”

“Well you should!” the woman insisted. She fixed Lydia with a blazing smile and held out a paper napkin. “May I please have your autograph? It would mean the…”

“Certainly,” Lydia replied, cutting the blonde off and taking the pen from her other hand without bothering to ask for her name. “Here you go.”

“Uh, thank you! Thank you…” the young woman said, glancing down at the scrawled signature with a slight frown. “Um, have a nice night!”

Lydia nodded and smiled before turning away as her admirer headed back to her friends.

“That was exciting,” Dean joked.

Lydia rolled her eyes. “And a bit annoying,” she added.

Dean shrugged, a little put off by Lydia’s attitude. “It’s hard being beautiful and famous,” he cracked.

She stared at him before sighing. “I guess I could have handled that a little bit better.”

“Maybe. Not my call, though. So, how was your day? Any big news to report?”

The Omega shook her sandy brown hair and reached out for another sip of her drink. “Councilman is cheating on his wife and Ogden High School has rats in their cafeteria kitchen. So very glamorous,” she smiled wryly. “How about you? How was the drive? Why didn’t you just fly?”

“Me and flying don’t mix. Something about hurtling through space in a tin can. I would much rather drive. Besides, it gave me a chance to put my new truck through her paces.”

“It’s a Ford, right? I thought you were in a meaningful relationship with a Chevy.”

Dean chuckled. “Yes, I am. Thankfully my baby isn’t the jealous kind. Plus, she would much rather stay nice and warm under a tarp versus driving through the snow.” He sat back in his chair and
sipped at his whiskey, scenting Lydia’s confidence; she didn’t give off a hint of concern or apprehension.

The pair smiled at each other. “This feels…good, Dean,” Lydia admitted. "Honestly, the last time I called Pack Registry was over a year ago, and I was really desperate at that point.” She looked down into her glass. “I think it affected the other gentleman,” she added before returning her gaze to him, searching his eyes for understanding.

Dean nodded. “I’m guessing things were a little tense?” He sighed as she tried to smile. “But this feels better, right? I mean, it seems like you feel comfortable with me even though we’re just meeting.”

“I do,” Lydia replied, leaning forward across the small white table. “So, how’re Madison and Sam?”

It was the right thing to say, because talking about his goofy brother was one of Dean’s favorite things to do. “They’re good. Get this. Maddie got tickets to Brewfest so she and Sam are going to be walking around Boulder tasting every frou-frou microbrew I’ve never heard of. Hey! Do you mind if I send them a quick pic of the two of us? This has kind of been a group effort.”

Lydia grinned and scooted closer as Dean reached his arm behind her and pulled her in, placing his hand on her bare arm. Just as Dean clicked the button on his phone to snap the picture, he heard her gasp in his ear and then breathe in deeply. Dean turned to face her, but Lydia just leaned her forehead against his temple.

“You okay?” he asked quietly.

“This isn’t supposed to…”

“Lydia?”

She was breathing quicker now, and Dean noticed her skin warming under his hand.

“Your scent, Dean…” She licked her lips. “I should have another 12 hours at least…”

The smell of heirloom roses suddenly hit his nose and he smiled, helping her to her feet. “It must have been that sweaty shirt,” he teased. “Hey, this is great. You feel okay?”

She nodded into his shoulder. “Gotta go, Dean. Can’t be here.”

“You’re safe, Lydia. I’ve got you,” he murmured, deftly maneuvering her out of the bar. Dean tucked Lydia into his side and looked down. “Did you drive?”

She shook her head, leveling an awed and slightly panicked look his way. “Uber.”

“Okay. Good. You’re gonna be fine. Just get me to your place, okay?”

Lydia nodded dumbly as Dean eased her up into the cab of his new pickup. They spent the next 20 minutes driving with Lydia halfway on Dean’s lap to get her nose in the crook of his neck as she whispered directions. She had hiked her dress up so she could straddle Dean’s thigh, and was slowly grinding down on him, rubbing her damp panties along his leg. It was perfect torture, as far as Dean was concerned; he was assaulted with the heavy perfume of English roses as the heat of her wet pussy soaked through his slacks. He panted through his mouth, trying desperately to concentrate on not slamming his new truck into the car in front of them. He just about swerved into the next lane when she moaned in his ear.
“Fuck,” he swore. “How far?”

“What street…” she gasped, breathing hot air against his ear, and Dean gripped the steering wheel so hard his knuckles turned white.

“Just passed Milton.”

“Two blocks then left. Fourth house on the right.” Her arms had wound around his neck but she had enough sense to keep her head from blocking his view. “Oh shit, Dean,” she panted, moving her crotch against his leg faster. Dean’s right arm shot out around her waist and pulled her tight to him. “God, you smell fantastic. Can’t wait for you to fuck me. Oh! Oh! Dean!” she shouted at the top of the cab, squeezing her eyes tight as she came.

Lydia finally opened her eyes and realized that they were no longer moving. She laughed nervously against Dean’s neck. “I’m so sorry,” she apologized, and then moaned as her temperature finally spiked and her entire body shuddered.

“Let’s get you to a bed and see if we can’t cool you off,” Dean replied.

“Dean,” Lydia whispered harshly. “I like it a little rough. Don’t let my size fool you. I can take it. Okay?”

The Alpha swallowed hard. “Whatever you want, Lydia.”

“Good boy,” she panted and he groaned into her hair. He hadn’t been this hard in a long, long time. “I want you to come inside, strip me down, and then fuck me over the sofa, hard and fast.”

“Yes, ma’am,” he grunted.

If Dean Winchester knew how to do one thing, it was how to follow a direct order.

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“Heads up display. Photos. EmmaBeach.”

Dean took a long look at Lydia’s daughter. Although he had never met her, Emma was all Winchester. In fact, she looked like a mini-Sam as she sat in a diaper on a southern California beach. Her little hand waved a red plastic shovel at the camera and a white cotton bonnet covered her head. He smiled. She was going to be fierce.

Within seconds, Dean's thoughts returned to the reason he was sitting in this parking lot for a third time. He just didn't understand what he was doing here. He was on Cas' mate list after everything that had happened? Dean was flooded with guilt and remorse. He should have apologized to Cas six months ago. Charlie must have added him to Cas' list of who knows how many better Alphas on the off chance that Cas wouldn't notice. Of course Charlie had only heard a little bit of the story that had set Dean up for the hardest and loneliest half year of his life.

Yes, he had fucked up. But that didn't mean he didn't desperately want to be on Cas' list. He took a deep breath and turned off the motor.

_Here goes nothing..._
Thanks for the awesome comments, friends! I appreciate the concern and love how much you're getting into the story!

I am really happy in this universe and want to show you a side of Dean that I think really suits him -- he is caring and loves his family. He helps people. He still has to come to terms with his own insecurities, but when he's working within his wheelhouse, he's easily confident in his abilities. This is a "sharing is caring" environment when it comes to sex and having kids. So what would that be like? Dean has a duty to help Omegas who want to have pups, and the more times he does that, the better life is for those Omegas and his pack. But I hope you also get the sense that those pups aren't necessarily about him, they're for their Omega parent. The degree to which he has interactions and relationships with those Omegas/pups afterwards just helps you see where his heart lies. He's obviously very invested in Cas and Claire. Lydia and Emma are a different story because that's what Lydia wants.

I have one additional scenario that you may have sensed was coming, as well as full-on interview, resolving past hurts, Dean coming to terms with his self-worth, and a surprise! I hope you enjoy.
Chapter 8

“Remember to use the wipe first, and then start. Put the cup directly into the urine stream…”

Dean did his best to not roll his eyes. He had peed in more cups since volunteering with OSS than he had in his entire life beforehand. At least the bloodletting was over. That was his least favorite part. He nodded his head in agreement and reached out for the small plastic cup with “WINCHESTER” handwritten in Sharpie along the side before the CNA had a chance to finish his spiel.

“I’ve got this, buddy. Thanks,” Dean responded.

“Please leave the sample inside the little door to the left of the sink when you’re done,” the Beta added as Dean shot him a quick smile and closed the bathroom door.

Twenty minutes later, Dean found himself in the Maroon Bells Conference Room with a root beer in his left hand and Charlie Bradbury on his right. Between them a small stack of papers loomed, as did Charlie’s Mate List Intake Questionnaire. All seven pages of it.

“Alrighty! First off, glad to see you made it here in one piece,” the redhead chirped. “Now that you’ve got the physical out of the way, we can get down to the nitty gritty. So. How are you, Dean?”

“Good, Charlie,” Dean said with a nervous smile. “I’m real good. Uh, business is going strong. Our current project has had its fair share of ups and downs but…” Dean wrinkled his brow in confusion as Charlie started typing away on her tablet, her fingers dancing soundlessly against the glass. “Uh, we have two more log homes scheduled to start in late spring.”

“Nice. How’s the family?” Charlie asked, never looking up from the screen as her fingers continued to type.

“Things are great there too. We’re all on pins and needles…” Charlie was still at it, and Dean frowned. Weren’t they were just shooting the shit? “Hey, what are you doing?”

“Hm?” she asked, finally making eye contact again.

“Hm?” she asked, finally making eye contact again.

“We’re just visiting, you and me. What are you writing?”

“Oh, I’m taking notes about your responses and your demeanor, which has turned a little prickly. Everything alright?”

“Yeah,” Dean scoffed, barely able to keep the irritation from his voice. “I… why didn’t you tell me that we were starting?”

Charlie shrugged. “Dean, we’ve all been taking notes since you walked in the front door.”

*Oh, fuck!* Dean immediately felt a little sick. Pee Cup Guy was probably writing a scathing assessment about how rude he was. He groaned and put his head in his hands, sucking in a big gulp of air. “Can we please start all over?” he mumbled.

“Sure thing, Dean,” Charlie replied. “How are you?”

He huffed out a quick breath at the absurdity of his situation. “Good, Charlie. I’m just great. How are
“Oh, I’m awesome! Thanks for asking. So when was the last time you talked to Castiel?”

Dean plastered on a fake grin. “About six months ago.”

“Hmm.”

“Hmm? What hmm?”

Charlie leaned her chin into her hand and looked thoughtful. “I guess I was under the impression that you guys talked more frequently than that.”

“Well you know he’s been out of the country, right?”

“Yup. Spain, I believe. He’s got a manufacturer there.”

“Yeah. He and, uh, Claire have been there for a few months.”

“And you guys haven’t been texting or calling each other?”

Dean took a big gulp from his soda, and then stared at the conference table in front of him. “No. I should have, though. I should have called him months ago. Before they left.”

Charlie’s eyebrows shot up but she paused and waited for Dean to elaborate. After three seconds she asked softly, “What happened?”


“You know I can’t tell you that, Dean,” she replied kindly. “Why do you think you don’t have a chance? Castiel told me some great things about you guys and how awesome you are with Claire.”

“Because I really fucked up,” he answered. He scratched the table with his thumb nail before looking at Charlie with pain in his eyes. “I screwed up, and honestly, I don’t even know why I’m on Cas’ list. Don’t get me wrong – I would do anything to be Cas’ mate. He and Claire…I just…They mean so much to me.”

“But Dean, I mean you’re here,” she said with a shake of her bobbed red hair. “Maybe it wasn’t as bad as you think. Seriously, after whatever happened, Castiel specifically put you on a list of people he wants to spend the rest of his life with.”

Dean jerked back. “You didn’t put me on his list?”

Charlie smiled and shook her head. “I wasn’t supposed to say that. Crap.” She sighed. “Dean, I didn’t put you on Cas’ list. He did. So quit beating yourself up and tell me what happened.”

Dean let his confusion get away from him, allowing his scent to sharpen. Charlie couldn’t be right about that, not after what went down. Besides, he really didn’t want to air out all of his dirty laundry here, since the Beta just told him that everything he said would basically be recorded for all posterity. The Alpha shot her a wary look. “I don’t know that it’s something I want you to write down, Charlie.”

She folded her arms and leaned back into her black padded chair. “You know we talk to Cas too, right? I’m going to ask him the same questions about you that I’m asking you about him. Besides, I’m not the enemy, and I don’t chose for Cas. I just collect information and make a recommendation.”
Ultimately, this is his mate list and his decision. Tell me what happened. Maybe I can help.”

Dean took a deep breath and stared at the table again, allowing a chip in the veneer to hold his attention. Charlie was right; it’s not like Cas wouldn’t make his own decision. But it was so embarrassing. He had been such an idiot. What if Charlie recommended that Cas not pick him? What if Charlie recommended that he be removed from the program completely? There was nothing Dean could do to stop the humiliation and panic that permeated the conference room.

“Hey,” the Beta said, placing her hand on Dean’s forearm. “Dean, I just want to help.”

Dean shook his head. He trusted Charlie, and maybe it would be good to finally get this off his chest. He had told Sam and Madison bits and pieces but not the whole story. He exhaled sharply. Fuck it. Best to rip this off like a Band Aid. “I, uh, I got jealous of another guy and acted like a jerk. And then…” he swallowed. “Then I went into rut right in front of Claire.”

“Thanks,” Dean muttered as Charlie handed him another can of root beer and sat down next to him. They had relocated to the courtyard behind the building to get some fresh air and give Dean a chance to collect his thoughts. The pair sat side by side on a wooden bench that faced a huge white marble fountain. On it, a toga-clad woman pulled back an arrow on her bow while what looked like a greyhound stood at her feet. Diana the Huntress, patron saint of Omegas, if Dean remembered correctly. Huh. Apparently trivia he could handle. Stupid fucking Alpha hormones? Not so much.

“I failed him, Charlie. I failed him and Claire and I just, I lost my shit.”

“Start at the beginning,” Charlie prodded.

Dean wiped his hand down his face and leaned forward. “Well first off, there was this Beta with a ridiculous name. Val? Bal! Bal Roche. Tall blond with a snooty English accent and he constantly wore these V-neck t-shirts under a blazer.” He looked at Charlie. “I mean serious douche nozzle. Who wears a deep v-neck t-shirt under a blazer other than Don Johnson on Miami Vice?”

Charlie snorted and shook her head.

Anyway,” Dean continued, “it seems like every time I was with Cas and Claire, the guy either called and wouldn’t get off the phone, even when Cas told him that he was doing family stuff, or he ‘pops by.’ This went on for a couple of months. Cas told me he’s a minority investor, so I get it; the guy’s important.” Dean turned to look her in the face, his green eyes earnest, “but I just got this feeling in my gut, Charlie, that something wasn’t right. And I know Cas can do whatever Cas wants to do. But this Bal dude, he didn’t respect boundaries. And then I notice him standing in between me ‘n Cas whenever he can. And there’s the unnecessary touching.” Dean’s jaw ticked with tension. “A lingering hand on the shoulder… His hand pressed to the small of Cas’ back…”

He sighed heavily and took another drink from the can of soda. “One time I’m visiting, and Bal just pops by again. He’s on the phone with the foreman at the Spain manufacturing facility and he hands the phone to Cas. Well I stand up to take Claire so Cas can talk and Bal…” Dean’s frustration seeped from his pores. “Bal steps in front of me and takes Claire right out of Cas’ arms.”

Dean looked at Charlie, whose eyebrows are so high in surprise that he chuckles, effectively breaking the tension that had ballooned over their bench. “You get the picture. He’s inserting himself into…No, he was trying to take my place. The bastard’s not sneaking around, either. He’s doing it right in front of me.”
“And Cas didn’t say anything?” Charlie asked.

“I brought it up, but you know Cas; he’s assuming the best about everyone and telling me that he’s sure Bal just doesn’t realize what he’s doing. Next thing I know, this guy’s pushing Cas for an extended visit to Spain, with him of course, and says it’s fine for Cas to take Claire too.” He shifts in his seat and looks imploringly at the Beta by his side. “Months, Charlie. He convinced Cas that he and Claire need to be in Spain for four months. I’m not an idiot. A two-week visit is in-depth enough for Cas to get a feel for whatever’s going on at that plant. After that, shit there’s teleconferencing systems that would cost way less than setting up house for months at a time in a foreign country, for God’s sake!”

“I can tell what Bal’s up to, even if Cas can’t,” Dean said ruefully. “He figured if he can get Cas and Claire away from me and away from here for an extended period of time in a strange environment where they’re both relying on him, then they’ll become an instant family. That’s what I’m guessing happened.” Dean put his head in his hands. “They must have come back from the trip and now Cas wants to mate him, so he submitted his mate list. Maybe he put my name on there so it would look like he was being thorough? I don’t know.”

Dean stared blankly at the fountain, watching the water cascade down the sides of the white marble that reminded him so much of the lobby at Cas’ apartment building.

“What about the rut?” Charlie asked quietly.

“Yeah, that was all me. It was the last time I saw Cas and Claire. I came over to take them out for burgers and fucking Bal is sitting right next to Cas on the God damn sofa like he owns the place. But as soon as I walked into that living room, I smelled Cas. I mean I smelled him, like he was about to go into heat. I don’t know if I was hallucinating it or what but there’s Bal sitting next to my Omega and my pup and Cas smells like lavender and honey and fucking heaven, like he’s supposed to for me, Charlie, no one else! And I lost it. I was four weeks away from my rut but suddenly I am seeing red and I growled at Bal, threatened him. Threw him out.”

Dean gulped and looked up at the sky, trying to calm his thoughts. “Claire started crying,” he said quietly. “And Cas’ eyes were as big as saucers. I scared him. My family was afraid of me, Charlie.” Dean laughed at himself, a hollow and bitter sound. “I don’t think Cas had ever seen an Alpha in rut before. I locked myself in the guest bathroom and called Sam to come and get me. Of course he lives in fucking Boulder, so it took an hour and a half for him to show up. Cas had done the right thing and called Rufus at the security desk, and he got Cas and Claire out of there. Man was kind enough to stuff one of Cas’ shirts under the door so I could…so I could sit in the tub and jack off with my nose in that scent…” He broke off with a half-sob.

The despair and loathing coming off of Dean was so strong that it almost burned Charlie’s nose. Her heart broke for him as he sat hunched over, his shoulders shaking with emotion. Dean looked at Charlie and wiped the tears from his face. “It was my shirt, by the way. It was my old AC/DC t-shirt and it smelled like us.” He sniffed and huffed out a big breath. “Sam picked me up and took me home and I spent three days in rut. By the time I was able to apologize, Cas had already left. I texted him a couple of times to say how sorry I was, and Cas was really gracious about it, but he said he had a lot to think about and that he’d call me when he got back. If I had just gone to see him before he left and apologized in person…”

Charlie patted Dean’s knee as they sat in silence under a baby blue sky.

“On the bright side,” she said soothingly, “you did everything right.”

Dean looked at her as if she had two heads.
“Hear me out. You voiced your concerns to Cas. Did you ever yell at him or blame him for anything?” Dean shook his head in reply, almost angry at the implication. “And you never physically hurt this Bal guy, right?”

“No,” Dean sighed reluctantly.

“And when you went into rut right there in the living room, you didn’t touch Cas or Claire. Instead you locked yourself in the bathroom to keep them safe,” she continued.

“Charlie, you’re missing the point!” Dean argued. “The look on Cas’ face…I mean he and Claire were both frightened. I did that!”

“Maybe…just maybe…they were surprised and a little frightened, but – and don’t get mad at me, I’m not just saying this – I’m proud of you, Dean! You handled that situation way better than many other Alphas would have. You protected them.” Charlie sat up a little straighter on the bench and stared at Dean. “That’s the way I see it, at least.”

Sure, there was truth to what Charlie had said, but she was a friend at this point. She was just sugar coating this for him. All of the hopeful optimism from his drive down here was gone now that he had relived the whole incident. Because the elephant in the courtyard, so to speak, was the fact that Cas and Claire had been back for two months without so much as a phone call or a text. That’s what cinched it for Dean. That’s how he knew that there wasn’t a snowball’s chance in Hell that Cas wanted to mate him. His name on that list was just for show; to make OSS happy since they would certainly bring up Dean as a suitable Alpha because of Claire.

Dean swallowed hard. God, he missed that little pup so much. She should be starting kindergarten now.

“Okay, enough with the wallowing,” Charlie said firmly as she stood. “You’re not as screwed as you think you are, Dean Winchester. And here’s the best part. You and I are going back in that conference room, and we’re going to finish your interview and then we are going to schedule your face-to-face with Cas. You, my dear, have an opportunity to set this all right.” The redhead glanced around to double check their privacy before leaning in close to Dean’s ear. “You better not fuck it up.”

An hour and a half later, Dean found himself back in the cab of his pickup, staring at the Pack Registry building once again. Charlie’s interview was only mildly painful after that, with questions about his family, his finances, and his “ten-year plan.” He knew it was all to test his truthfulness, for one, because they were going to run another background check and verify everything he had told her down to his fucking credit score. But also, they wanted to know what Dean’s goals were, and how he was going to accommodate an Omega mate and a pup into his life. Ultimately, though, he felt pretty good about how the talk turned out.

Then Charlie set up his face-to-face meeting with Cas for that Saturday. He had no idea how many other meetings Cas would be going on with how many other Alphas or Betas, and it made Dean’s head throb. Maybe the playing field was huge and Cas had thrown a wide net so OSS would screen all of the potential mates he was interested in. That would make sense because Cas was a really busy man, and besides, who wants to ask someone you have feelings for what they reported on their taxes last year or if they’ve ever been convicted of a crime?

Even more intimidating, though, would be that it was just Dean and that Bal asshole, either because Cas had already narrowed the list down in his mind, or, as Dean feared, Cas was just going through
the motions by putting Dean on the list at all. Dean had to hope that Claire plus Dean’s obviously
deep affection for Cas would count for something in Cas’ eyes, even after his fuck-up. Honestly, he
really feared that after seeing him go all “red eyes,” Cas would pick Bal because he wouldn’t have to
be afraid like that with a Beta. Fucking Alpha biology. Cas already had a beautiful pup and if he
wanted more, he could just reach out to Pack Registry and OSS would be happy to find another
Alpha to knock him up again.

Jesus, just thinking about another Alpha touching Cas had Dean howling mournfully in the cab of
his truck. He thought back to that slip of the tongue with Charlie earlier too, which the Beta had
thankfully not called him on. Talking about Cas like he was Dean’s – like Cas’ heat belonged to
Dean alone – he should have never said those things out loud. That’s not how this worked. That’s
how mates talk. That’s how…

*I love him.*

Suddenly, everything was crystal clear. And Dean was truly fucked.
Dean was startled out of his epiphany by his cell phone as, “Ho, ho, ho, Green Giant” poured through his truck’s speakers. He quickly hit the call accept button on his steering wheel.

“Sam, I love Cas.”

After a second’s hesitation, Sam replied, “Uh, yeah?”

“I’m serious.”

“Uh, yeah,” Sam chuckled. “Sorry, Dean. You’ve just figured this out?”

“Uh, yeah,” Dean parroted back sarcastically. “What the hell do you mean? I’m telling you I love Cas. Like, love love. Like, spend the rest of my life with the guy, love.”

Sam sighed softly into the phone. “That’s awesome, Dean. I’m really happy for you. Have you told him?”

“Nah, I just figured it out, like three seconds ago,” Dean answered with a huff. “Uh, I’m on his mate list.”

“What? Dude, that’s awesome! So you guys are talking?”

“Well that’s the weird part. No. I haven’t talked to Cas since…you know.”

“Huh,” Sam offered. “But you’re on his list?”

“Just finished my interview at Pack Registry. Got the face-to-face with him on Saturday.”

“Wow. How’d it go?”

“Good. I mean it started off rough but it got better. I, uh, I told Charlie about what happened. So she knows. She thinks that I can fix this, since Cas put me on his list.”

“Really? Hey that’s good news Dean!” There was a heartbeat of silence. “You think that Bal guy’s on it too?”

“Yeah,” Dean sulked. “He’s gotta be. I’m wondering if Cas put me on as a formality, you know. ‘Cause of Claire.”

“Hmm, I hear ya. But I don’t know, Dean. You guys have this bond, man. I mean it’s been pretty obvious to me and Maddie that you’ve loved him for a long time. And it’s not just one way.”
Huh. Dean felt his cheeks flush. How is it that his brother and sister-in-law knew he was “obviously” in love before he did? And they thought Cas loved him back? How did he miss that? Dean was never shy about the fact that he cared deeply for Cas and Claire. He just figured that was the Alpha in him; when they were all together, he felt centered and “right” because he was protecting his own little pack. Dean knew he was blessed because Cas was so understanding, keeping Dean involved in his and Claire’s life when ultimately, Cas was Omega and Dean had no claim on him. Nevermind that Cas was fucking amazing, and talented, and a next-level genius, and so out of Dean’s league it wasn’t even funny.

He pulled himself away from his own thoughts and realized that his brother must have needed something, since he was the one who had called. “Shit! I’m sorry, dude. Everything okay?”

“Everything’s fine, Alpha,” Sam laughed, and Dean couldn’t help the eye roll. “Just wanted you to know that Bobby and Ellen are coming in on Saturday, so we’re gonna do dinner Sunday night.”

Dean smiled. Damn, the last time he’d seen his foster parents was at the wedding. They were both in their 70s now and doing well, thank God. Bobby was a little grouchier in his old age, but Ellen still smoothed out the sharp edges of his personality. She may look like your everyday grandma with all the silver in her light brown hair, but she was no one’s fool, and certainly not her own husband’s. However, if Dean played his cards right, he could probably sweet-talk her into making a…

“So, apple pie. Ellen promised.”

“That is the best frickin news I have heard this afternoon,” Dean admitted. “You guys want me to bring anything?”

“Just yourself. Oh, maybe some…”

“Johnny Walker,” both men said at the same time. Sam’s chuckle filled the cab of the truck.

“You got it, man. See you all on Sunday. And call me if anything happens.”

“Like we wouldn’t call you if Maddie went into labor. You’re number one on the phone tree. See you later, jerk.”

“Sunday, bitch.”

Dean hung up the phone and wiped his hand down his face before physically shaking his head to clear the cobwebs. He took a deep, cleansing breath and let it out. The only thing that had kept him sane over the last six months was about to make her grand appearance, ergo the soon-to-be grandparents coming to town. Dean would be lying if he said he wasn’t anxious as hell. Maybe a quick peek would calm him down.

“Heads-up display, photos, QuinnSonogram.”

Fuck, these things are so life-like now, it’s almost spooky.

Dean gazed in awe at the sepia-toned, 3D modelled rendering of his proudest achievement to date.

It hadn’t started out as a call from Pack Registry, but it was a call for help. Seriously, Dean should have known something was up, because first off, there was pie. Any time his pseudo-vegan, paleo gluten-free brother not only invited him over for a steak dinner but hinted at pie for dessert, a flashing red light went off in Dean’s head. Curious about Sam’s level of desperation, he asked what kind.
“Bourbon Pecan,” Sam answered quickly. “Madison made it herself.”

Okay, now something was most certainly up, because Maddie was in on it too. His little brother’s wife was one hell of a nurse; she worked neo-natal at Children’s Hospital in Broomfield, which had her on crazy shifts half of the time. She was also one hell of a cook, but usually only at Thanksgiving. And it was January. So what the fuck?

Dean hummed as he considered his options. “Do I need to bring my own legal counsel to this dinner?”

“No, asshole,” Sam chided him. “Just, uh, bring yourself. We wanna run something by you. See what you think.”

“I think Bourbon Pecan pie means you want something pretty bad, Sammy,” Dean countered slyly.

“Don’t call me that, Dean. Seriously. I’m a grown man.”

“Who pie-bribes.”

“Whatever. See you at 6, jerk.”

Well the pie had been outstanding, so Dean sat back in his chair – his hands folded on his belly at the kitchen table – and looked at the two nervous faces across from him. Madison and Sam had shared small, conspiratorial smiles laced with anxiety throughout dinner. Usually, he’d be the one to prolong their agony just for shits and giggles, but that pie had been awesome so he decided to be kind.

“Lay it on me. What are you two cooking up over there?”

Madison glanced at her huge husband before shaking her long, chocolate brown locks and leaning forward to rest her chin in the palm of one of her hands. She blinked warm brown eyes at Dean and flashed him a smile. He had to keep himself from laughing. “Dean, remind me. How many pups have you sired?”

Dean frowned slightly. She knew the answer to this question. “Three. Three beautiful pups. Why?”

“Who pie-bribes.”

“Whatever. See you at 6, jerk.”

“Lay it on me. What are you two cooking up over there?”

He paused and squinted at his sister-in-law. “I’m up for making as many as Pack Registry needs me to, Maddie. It’s a sacred duty that I take very seriously.” Yeah, something is seriously up, here.

“Dean,” Sam piped up. He casually wrapped an arm around the back of Madison’ chair and rubbed his wife’s arm. “For us. Would you make a fourth for us?”

Dean blinked, and then tilted his head as a smile played on the corner of his mouth. “You bribed me with Bourbon Pecan pie so you could ask me to sire a pup for you? Dude you don’t have to bribe me for that! Shit! Of course I would. I would be honored to help you guys have a little Winchester!”

Dean’s smile only grew as he considered what his brother was asking. “Wow. You guys wanna have a pup! That’s…that’s awesome!” He paused and looked at the both of them. Maddie’s cheeks were pink and her eyes practically twinkled with happiness as she looked up at Sam, who squeezed her shoulder. When Sam leaned down to kiss her, Dean asked, “I’m guessing you want me to go to the hospital or something and jack off in a cup?”

“Actually,” Maddie said, and there was this little nervous giggle that Dean had never heard from her before as she trained her eyes back on him, “we were thinking about doing it the old fashioned way.”
“Uh,” was about all Dean could get out as he processed that statement. He sat forward and put his elbows on the table. “Let me get this straight…”

“I want you to fuck my wife, Dean.”

He must not have heard that right. Dean screwed up his eyebrows and looked between the two of them. “Say that again, please.”

“Dean.” That was Madison, looking at him like he was the sexiest man-eating shark she had ever seen, equal parts arousal and healthy apprehension. “Let me make this perfectly clear. Sam and I have talked about this a lot and we want you in our bed, fucking me with your big Alpha cock and breeding me with a Winchester pup. What do you say? I understand you boys have already done this a time or two, back in the day.”

It was completely silent around the little table for about three seconds.

“Holy shit, Maddie,” Dean gulped. “I think you just gave me a boner!” He shot his brother a panicked look. “Dude, you told her about…”

“Dean, she’s my wife. She knows everything about me.”

“Okay, but she also knows everything about me too!?”

“Not everything,” Madison replied. “Although I understand there’s a story about you and Rhonda Hurley that Sam won’t…”

“Sam, I swear to God, I will fucking kill you in your sleep!”

“Focus, Dean,” Sam shot back. “You in?”

Am I in?

The thought of being able to give this to Sam – to give this to the two of them – stunned him for a second. He knew they were completely and totally devoted to each other. Dean thought for a moment about how hard it must be for his sister-in-law to hold other peoples’ pups every day as they struggled into this world, knowing that she would never hold one of her own. But as far as Dean knew, they never fought about it. In fact, the only time Sam mentioned not having pups as a problem for his relationship was when he called Dean the week before he proposed, a drunken mess, blubbing on about being selfish and wanting to chain Madison to him even though she could have a happier life with an Alpha who could give her lots of little Maddies. Dean had told him that he was an idiot, and that Madison loved him (for reasons Dean couldn’t understand), and that Sam wasn’t allowed to decide what was right for her. Then he told his little brother to go get the best thing that had ever happened to him and that life would figure itself out.

He took a moment to look Madison in the eyes and gave her a small smile. He imagined her round with the pup he would put there; a nephew or niece, even though it would actually be his. He would be able to help raise his own kid. Not only that, but he would see two of his most favorite people happy because of something as easy to give as this. To give them a family.

“Uh, yes,” he replied. “I’d like to make sweet, sweet love to your beautiful bride and put a little pup in that gorgeous belly of hers. God, you guys! Fuck, yeah!” Dean swallowed and shook his head, and then looked at them both with concern in his eyes. “Promise me things won’t get weird.”

Maddie rolled her eyes. “Austin Powers, Dean?”
“Levity, Madison. I’m trying to lighten the mood so I can stand up without embarrassing myself.”

“Sweetie, I don’t think you’ve been paying attention.”

Dean leaned back. What? “Now? You want to do this now?”

Never one to mince words, Madison stood up and started to unbutton her blouse. Dean’s eyes shot to his brother, only to find him smirking at Dean before locking on his wife’s hands as they traveled south, exposing first her neck, and then the swell of her lightly tanned breasts as they peaked above the white lace edge of her bra. She leaned over to give Dean a front-and-center view of her cleavage and he couldn’t help licking his lips. He looked up at Madison who smiled and winked.

“I love you, Madison Winchester,” he said solemnly.

“Come on, tiger. Show me what you’ve got,” she laughed, then grabbed her husband’s hand and started down the hall to their bedroom. Dean almost tripped over his chair to follow.

“Sit,” Madison demanded, pointing to a chair in the corner of the bedroom. Dean almost stumbled over his chair to follow.

“Can I, uh…” Sam shot Dean a look as Dean pointed to the outline of his hard cock inside his boxer briefs. Sam nodded, and Dean couldn’t help a small groan as his underwear hit the floor and his hand found his dick.

Madison knelt on the bed, still in her bra and panties, while she helped Sam get out of his clothes. Her hands skimmed across her husband’s firm chest before dipping into his pants to stroke him. She looked to Dean and gasped softly as she caught a glimpse of him working his cock.

“Don’t worry, baby. I won’t let him hurt you,” Sam’s teased. And then he massaged her tits, squeezing her nipples through the thin fabric barrier. “Alright, Alpha,” he called out to his brother. “How do you wanna do this?”

Dean licked his lips as he soaked up the scene in front of him. “Get her nice and loose for me Sam. At least two orgasms. I want that beautiful body of hers open and relaxed. And Sam, you don’t come in her, just me. You need a rubber?”

“Nah. I got it.”

Madison squeaked as Sam pushed her so she flopped on her back on the bed. He leaned over her and pulled the cups of her bra down to expose the hardened nubs of her nipples and immediately set to sucking the left one as his large hand massaged the one on the right. Dean watched her body convulse as Sam pinched her right nipple then rubbed it between his finger and thumb. Madison panted through the competing pleasure and pain sensations as she grasped onto the bed sheets in a valiant attempt to stop squirming.

“God, you’re amazing,” Sam purred, sliding down on his side so he could still get his mouth on her while his other hand trailed down her stomach and under the lace panties that were somehow still on her hips. He slid two fingers into her wet pussy and she moaned so loudly that Dean felt a bead of pre-come escape his dick.

“You look so good, Maddie,” Dean told her, his eyes practically devouring the two of them on the bed together and trained on Sam’s busy fingers. He planted his feet wide and stroked the pre-come down his shaft and up again. “Shit. You nice and slick, sweetheart? Sam’s gonna do you right. Get you off a couple of times for me. Can’t wait to see you come.”
“Oh, yeah,” Madison panted from the bed, her eyes closed as she rocked her hips onto her husband’s fingers.

“Get rid of the panties, Sam. I wanna watch.” The younger Winchester was happy to oblige. He spread Maddie’s thighs to give Dean a better show, before his talented fingers began alternating between finger fucking his wife and massaging her clit.

“Come on, Sis. Come for me,” Dean ordered. He inched to the edge of his chair, getting as close as he could to them while still following instructions, his hard cock at full mast in his hand.

Madison moaned loudly and squirmed. “Fuck, Sam. Oh God!” she yelled as she bucked her hips up and ground against Sam’s fingers. Sam hummed his approval into her neck as Madison came, her cheeks flushing scarlet as she arched off the bed. As soon as she collapsed back down, Sam’s mouth was on hers for a passionate kiss. Within a few seconds she opened her eyes and grinned, then looked over at Dean. His eyes were locked onto hers; his smile of approval would have made her blush if her cheeks weren’t already red from exertion.

“Perfect,” Dean complimented. “Can I get a little closer?”

She crooked her finger in a “come hither” motion as she pushed Sam’s head down to her crotch. “Oh yeah, baby,” she groaned and closed her eyes as Sam’s tongue licked a hot, wet stripe from the bottom of her pussy lips to her clit.

Sam looked up as the bed dipped to see his brother lean down to suckle against Madison’s breast, his other hand reaching out to fondle the one he wasn’t currently teasing with his tongue. Sam raised his head. “Tell him what to do, baby,” he told her. “Big Alpha loves it when chicks boss him around.”

Dean growled around Madison’s tit and Sam actually chuckled before diving back to the ambrosia that was his wife’s pussy. Maddie took the opportunity to pull a little roughly on a handful of Sam’s hair on Dean’s behalf.

“Dean. Straddle me and put that big dick in my mouth while Sam fucks me,” she ordered. Dean rumbled his approval and moved into position, but Madison wasn’t done. “Sam, come on me, baby. Dirty me up.”

“Jesus,” Dean grunted. “Didn’t know your sweet wife had such a dirty mouth, Sam.”

“Just wait till you get your cock in it,” Sam smirked. He surged up to his knees, his big hands grabbing Madison’s hips and pulling her onto his dick. He slid all the way into her wet pussy with a smooth thrust that had her gasping. It was the perfect opportunity for Dean to tilt his hips down and slip his hard cock right between her parted lips.

Dean leaned one arm against the wall for support and cupped Maddie’s face with the other, smiling down at her as he started a rhythm that offset what Sam was doing behind him. “So good,” he praised her. “Just relax. God, you are so beautiful. Her lips look perfect around my cock, Sam.”

Sam groaned as Maddie squeezed around his girth at Dean’s compliment. “That’s my girl,” Sam replied. “Your pussy feels so good, baby. Dean, you’re gonna love fucking her.”

Dean smiled as Madison closed her eyes and moaned, feeling her go lax under him. “Can you come like this?” he asked. She opened her eyes and gave a quick nod. “Good. Let go. Let us make you come again, filling you up from both ends.” He kept his movements shallow enough for her to enjoy the feel of him on her tongue but not worry about anything more. She alternated between sucking against his head while rubbing the underside of it with her tongue and just relaxing her mouth so
Dean could do what he wanted. It was the perfect combination, keeping him hard and aroused without pushing him towards an orgasm.

He stroked her cheek as she panted around him until her body jerked and her eyes shot open. Dean felt Sam shift behind him and pick up the pace, all the while tremors started wracking Maddie’s body. A wicked grin spread across Dean’s face. “He’s rubbing your clit too, isn’t he?” Madison could only look up at him with wide eyes as Sam chuckled behind him. Dean pulled back a little so she could breathe without panicking and watched her screw her eyes up tight. “No, Sis. Let go. Let it take you. Breathe.”

Maddie stared right into Dean’s green eyes as gasped for air around his dick, her entire body rocking from Sam’s efforts. Her eyes started to roll back, so Dean pulled out completely as she screamed out Sam’s name and squirted against his cock.

“Fuck, yeah, baby. So fucking wet,” Sam grunted, and then pulled out of her. That was Dean’s cue. He swung his leg off of Maddie, careful not to kick Sam behind him. A groggy Madison tilted her head forward to watch as Sam leaned forward over his wife, jerking his swollen dick until his come spurted over his hand and dripped onto her heaving stomach. He rubbed his seed into the skin over her lower belly as she purred in contentment.

“Water?” she mumbled. Dean smiled and trotted off to the kitchen as Sam leaned down to kiss her. She took a gulp from the bottle her brother-in-law brought back and then flopped against the bed, flinging her arms wide. Dean crawled onto the bed between her legs and just rubbed her smooth thighs as she smiled at him through her post-orgasmic buzz.

“You ever been knotted, Maddie?” he asked softly.

“Nope,” she replied, looking at Sam quickly. “Is it gonna hurt?”

“It might a little,” Dean admitted. “Gonna stretch you pretty good. That’s why stud muffin over here got you all loosened up for me. But that’s the best way to make sure this works. I can come in you without knotting you, but you won’t get as much, uh…”

“I get it, Dean. It’s good. Let’s do this.”

“That’s my girl,” he said encouragingly. “We’ll be tied for about 20 minutes or so, but it will be more like spooning, okay? Flip over; head down, ass up.” Dean smacked her butt, and Maddie let out a surprised yelp before laughing. He nodded at Sam to get up by his wife’s head as he stroked himself back to full hardness with one hand and ran the other up and down her spine.  “So fucking beautiful,” he said softly and leaned down to kiss her ass. He watched her shiver as he kissed Sam.

Dean slowly eased himself into her halfway before pulling back and then fully sheathing himself. Fuck, she was so wet and warm. Her pussy felt snug around him, soft like velvet against the heated skin of his cock. She moaned into her husband’s mouth as Sam continued to lay claim to her, sliding his tongue against hers while Dean languidly moved in and out. Dean slipped a hand to her belly, thinking about the pup he wanted to put right there, and kept the other on her hip, holding Madison steady as her legs trembled. He caught Sam’s eye as he placed light kisses on Maddie’s nose, and was blown away by the look of gratitude on Sam’s face.

“Thank you,” Sam mouthed.

Dean nodded and smiled, instantly humbled as the mood in the bedroom shifted to reflect that they were no longer just fucking; both he and Sam were making love to Madison in their own way. Hopefully Dean’s seed and Sam’s love would fill her up. Without a doubt, all three of them would
be forever connected after tonight, whether she caught or not.

“I love you,” Sam said quietly in her ear.

“Love you,” Maddie replied.

“You doing okay?” her husband asked.

“Oh yeah,” she gasped with a little laugh. “His cock feels amazing, Sam. He’s so big. Never felt so full.”

Dean groaned and picked up his pace, spurred on by Madison’s words. “Gonna fill you up, Maddie. Breed you up good. Put a pup right here,” Dean promised, curling his fingers against the soft skin of her tummy. “You want that, don’t ya? Want me to pump you full and lock it in. Make sure you catch.”

“Oh fuck, Dean,” she groaned. “Please? Please. Want to feel you come inside me.”

Both men swore. “Do it, Dean,” Sam begged.

“Getting close,” Dean grunted. His hips had a mind of their own and he felt the tell-tale tingling as his knot started to fill. Dean sucked on his pointer finger real quick then pushed the wet digit against his own cock and wiggled it into Maddie’s pussy as he continued to thrust into her, faster now as his orgasm started building. She cried out and started panting hard, but Dean kept on gently pushing against her walls, stretching her a little more so his knot wouldn’t be such a shock. Knowing that this was going to hurt her soured his scent just a bit, but he shook it off. Maddie was ready for this.

“Gonna knot you,” he panted, a last warning.

“Yes! Do it!” she yelled.

Dean pulled his finger out, grabbed Madison’s hips and shoved hard, forcing his knot into her. He heard her scream, but the blood rushed in his ears and he roared as he came. Dean’s hips continued to make small, quick thrusts as he spilled into her body. When he finally stilled, he stroked her back before leaning his hand down to the bed and maneuvering them both to the mattress with Dean as the big spoon. Sam lay down in front of Madison and brushed the hair back from her face as Dean pulled her close to his chest.

“That was amazing,” he muttered.

“You did so good, baby,” Sam assured her, kissing her nose and closed eyes. “Squeeze,” he added.

Maddie giggled tiredly and then clenched her pussy, forcing another orgasm and more come from Dean’s cock. He groaned and shuddered behind her.

“Dick,” Dean complained into her shoulder as Sam laughed.

“We should probably do this again in the morning,” Sam said.

Maddie hummed in agreement and then yawned loudly. “In the morning,” she added.

Chapter End Notes
Hi. So this is the threesome chapter in that Dean and Sam share Madison. Per previous chapters, we know that the bros have done this before. So does Maddie. Here's the why: Sam and Madison ask Dean to sire a pup for them the "old fashioned way" (hello story title!). The tone is sexy and fun and Sam is included the entire time. THERE IS NO TOUCHING BETWEEN THE BROTHERS. They are there to please Madison and hopefully, knock her up because Sam and she want a family. If this is not your thing, I totally understand and I'll see you in the next chapter. The takeaway is that it works and Maddie is expecting. ; )
Chapter 10

The sun had almost completely descended behind the Front Range, casting the mountains in a soft purple that always made Dean feel patriotic. He pulled his truck into the left side of a two-car garage and turned off the motor. Like a magnet, his eyes were drawn to the large, blue tarp that protected his pride and joy as he headed into the townhouse.

While news of the upcoming dinner with his foster parents and looking at his niece’s sonogram picture took away some of the stress of the day, Dean’s mood was still somber. He couldn’t bring himself to face the brightness of the kitchen so he left the light off, instead heading straight for the fridge and a bottle of Coors. He twisted off the cap and tossed it into the trash as he stepped into the living room, toeing off his boots as he strode to the oversized, tan sofa that took up at least half of the space.

Dean tossed his keys on the coffee table and sat, thoughtful. He placed his cell phone in front of him and stared at it as he took a long drink from the cold beer in his hand. The small black device challenged him, its blank screen daring him to do something – call, text, throw the little fucker against the wall – anything. And he was tempted; his fingers itched to call Cas now that he had something more to say than “I’m sorry.” Charlie had even encouraged him to reach out and confirm his face-to-face (not a date, not a date) but before he could, Dean had to get a grip on where he would take his “future mate.” He huffed out a deprecating breath at that one, shook his head and drank a little more.

Whatever they were, Cas had his reasons for not calling Dean since he and Claire came back. Dean could torture himself with his own ideas and it would be a fast trip straight to hell. For example, it probably took two months just to write down the names of 72 Alphas and Betas Cas wanted to interview for his mate list. Maybe he was picking out china patterns with Bastard-zar. Perhaps he was purposefully putting distance between himself and Dean since Cas planned to mate anyone other than him.

Then again, it might be that Cas was just busy with work because he was trying to get a handle on his business after being away for so long. Maybe (God forbid) he had to go to California because Gabe or Hester needed him. Hmm. The longer he thought about it, the easier it was to imagine some fairly probable reasons that had nothing to do with him.

But, what if Euro-Bal had been so pissed at Dean for throwing him out that he took it out on Cas and never went to Spain at all? What if Cas had been too proud or pissed or whatever to tell Dean about it and instead spent four months juggling a problematic supplier and a five-year-old in a foreign country where he didn’t know the language? What if Cas had lost the manufacturer because of him, lost funding because of him, and had spent the last several months desperately trying to keep his company from going belly up and putting 16 hard-working employees out on the street? Shit, shit, SHIT!

He took a long draw off the beer bottle and wiped his hand down his face. How could he be so fucking self-centered? How could he lose control like that and order Bal out of Cas’ home? He was acting as self-righteous as the other asshole, doing just what he had accused Bal of, which was behaving like he owned the joint. Like Cas’ place was his. Well, more accurately, like Cas was his. Fuck, he had screwed this up so badly. It was no wonder that Cas hadn’t spoken to him in months.

Except Cas put him on that goddamn list.

Seriously, it just made no sense. In two days Dean had a face-to-face with the man he now was
positive he couldn’t live without to talk about mating, for Christ’s sake. In the back of his mind, Charlie whispered, “Castiel specifically put you on a list of people he wants to spend the rest of his life with.” Dean sighed and leaned back into the couch. Maybe he should just take Charlie’s advice to heart, run with what he knew, and take this opportunity for what it was – a chance to show Cas what kind of a mate he’d be. Dean could do some honest-to-God talking, which, okay, he absolutely hated, but if it meant making sure Cas knew that he and Claire could trust him, were everything to him, then it would be worth it.

That was it. In a moment of absolute clarity, Dean Winchester decided not to act like an angst-ridden teenage girl by throwing a prom-sized pity party, and to man-the-fuck-up. He was going to prove to Castiel Novak that he could be a better man, a better Alpha for him and their pup. By the time he was done, Dean would not only tell but show Cas why he was destined to be his mate. In return, hopefully Castiel would tell him what had happened over the past six months.

Dean put the beer bottle on the table and picked up his phone.

“Alright people, this is ‘go’ time.”

Dean paced his brother’s living room, shooting determined looks at Sam and Madison as they nodded in agreement. He hadn’t slept well at all, was going mostly on black coffee and his share of the dozen donuts he brought with him for this morning’s family brainstorming session, but thankfully his brother and sister-in-law seemed even more focused and determined than he was.

Maddie was all in, evident from the way her eyes had narrowed in concentration as she rested her folded arms across her belly. She had her game face on – bless her – and Dean easily felt 57% more confident than he had when he’d parked in the pair’s driveway. He knew he was asking a lot of them, considering that Madison was two weeks away from her due date and joked about having her own gravitational pull at this point. She was as comfortable as 38 weeks would allow her petite frame, bolstered with pillows as she absent-mindedly nibbled on Cheerios.

And Sam was no slouch. He got how important this was to his brother and his attention never wavered as Dean all but wore a path in their brown flecked carpet. Well, mostly. He couldn’t help but periodically steal glances at his wife; Dean didn’t blame him one bit.

The Alpha glanced out the picture window as he turned, his attention pulled by the tree-lined sidewalk and cheerful bungalows that lined the opposite side of the street. Without thinking, he stopped in front of the TV, which Sam had put on mute as soon as Dean had knocked on their front door. A blonde woman in yoga pants jogged past, pushing a navy blue stroller as her pony tail bobbed behind her.

Claire.

Just the thought of his daughter firmed his resolve. He wanted this. He wanted his family together. He was desperate to hear the trilling of little girl giggles from the bathtub down the hall. He needed his Omega in his arms every morning and snuggled into his side every night. He wanted to worship that amazing man with the dark bed-head and azure eyes, celebrate his every victory and soothe the worries that wrinkled the space between his expressive eyebrows. Fuck the 72 other Alphas and Betas, and fuck the t-shirt-and-blazer-wearing douchewad who thought he deserved his Cas. Cas was so much better than that ass wipe. Cas deserved the Nobel Peace Prize. He was Mother Fucking Teresa and Bal Roche was gum on the bottom of Cas’ shoe.

“I don’t deserve him,” he muttered. Then he turned and faced the rest of his family and straightened,
“But by God I will do everything I can to make him the happiest son of a bitch on this planet.” Dean sighed. “I’ve got one chance, guys. Help me not fuck this up.”

“I know!” Madison started, excitement lighting up her eyes.

“Jack off on a towel…” Sam finished and then flinched as his wife smacked his shoulder. “Sorry! I couldn’t help it!” he laughed.

“Asshole!” she shot back and rolled her eyes. “Dean, not to sound crass, but Claire is your ace in the hole. They are your pack. I think your face-to-face should show Cas how much you value not only him but Claire too and what you’ve built together.”

“She’s right Dean,” Sam nodded. “This isn’t just about Cas, it’s about both of them.”

“What? Like Chucky Cheese?” Dean asked, his feet moving him again, this time back across the living room towards the kitchen.

Madison was agreeing. “In concept. Sam’s right. But you also need some ‘Cas time,’ don’t you think, Sam?”

“Yeah, like Act I is the three of you, then an intermission, then Act II is just the grownups and your chance for a heart-to-heart with Cas. Think about things that he really enjoys, Dean. Someplace where you can talk, because you’ve got a lot of explaining to do, and so does he. Claire shouldn’t be there for that.”

“Hmm.” Dean liked the plan. “Would you guys watch her? After the intermission?”

“Of course. Cas wouldn’t have a problem with that, would he?” Madison asked.

“You guys have watched her before,” Dean replied. “I can’t imagine he would, but of course we’ll ask him. Shit, I hate Chucky Cheese.”

“Dude, go to a park or something,” Sam countered.

“Playground?” Madison chimed in. “Wait! Sam, there’s a Fall Festival in Montrose! Dean, it will be perfect! Walking hand in hand, drinking apple cider. I bet they’ll have face painting.” She struggled to get up off the couch as Dean strode to her, holding out his hand. “Let me go to the bathroom. Sam, baby, where’s your laptop?”

“I’ll get it,” her husband offered, standing himself. “Dean, grab some water from the fridge and I’ll be right back.”

They split off into three different directions.

Six Months Earlier…

A cool, light rain greeted Castiel as he and Claire walked out of Barcelona-El Prat Airport, and instinctively he snuggled the sleeping toddler closer inside his tan trench coat. Bal had kindly grabbed their suitcases and settled them into a black town car. He promised to meet up with Castiel at the plant in the morning, to which Castiel nodded, before the older man slapped the car’s roof and stepped away from the curb.

Twenty minutes later, troubled blue eyes watched the streets morph from industrial to residential. He
tried to avoid it during the long flight, but Castiel’s thoughts invariably circled back to two days prior and a side of Dean he had never experienced before. He could clearly see his caring Alpha, always so gentle with him and Claire, only with angry red eyes as aggression rolled off him in waves. Dean had growled at poor Bal, yelling threats at the Beta who had the good sense not to argue and just go. Castiel’s heart filled with sadness as he remembered how Claire had whimpered and cried in his arms.

He could scent the driver’s concern and looked up to see the older Beta casting worried glances at him through the rearview mirror as the dark sedan meandered through the peaceful neighborhood of Gracia. Castiel sighed and shrugged an apology before returning his attention to the window as they made their way to the house he had rented, his best attempt to create a homey atmosphere for the next four months.

Bal knocked on his door the second night. Castiel opened a bottle of Valdemar Inspiración and they had talked over steaks and veggies while Claire watched Frozen in the living room. The memory of Dean’s outburst hung in the air between them, so Cas took a deep breath and apologized once again for the other man’s behavior. Bal’s face twisted into grimace as he warned Cas about getting involved with hyper-sensitive Alphas who could drop into rut without notice and be a danger to him and Claire. The comment had Castiel bristling, but he had decided to remain tight-lipped about the incident. He really didn’t have much to offer by way of an explanation; in fact, Castiel was still confused at how everything had gone down.

Castiel cleared the table and washed the dinner dishes before joining Bal and Claire on the sofa. He was slightly surprised when the Beta picked Claire up and placed her on his lap. After a few minutes, Bal swung his arm across the back of the couch, where his fingers brushed lightly against the back of Cas’ neck. He shivered, feeling a heavy sense of deja vu. Then Claire asked if she could have a reindeer instead of a puppy for Christmas, which led to a fifteen-minute explanation about the fact that while reindeer may be better than people, they make difficult house pets. Unfortunately, by the end of the movie Castiel felt itchy and anxious, so he cut the evening short, wishing Bal a good evening, and put his little girl to bed.

That night, the house had been quiet and still, which made Castiel even more uncomfortable. Every so often a small noise would catch his attention and he couldn’t quite tell if it was the wind outside or just the house breathing. With a sigh, he swallowed down three ibuprofen and started brushing his teeth, letting the repetitive nature of the task lull him into thought.

I miss Dean. Castiel wished desperately that he knew what had happened to trigger the man. He had known Dean for five years now and Dean had never acted like that – like the stereotypical Alpha Cas’ mother had warned him about. Castiel spit out his toothpaste, rinsed and then padded barefoot over to the bed. He propped himself up and grabbed a book from the bedside table but found his mind wandering after only two paragraphs.

He’s a good man. They shared a daughter together, but more than that, they had a connection that had steadily grown into something that to Cas was profound. He didn’t want to imagine his life or Claire’s for that matter without Dean’s presence. But now, Castiel felt uncertain.

Dean had taken a disliking to Bal months ago, and honestly, Castiel really hadn’t put much weight into Dean’s unease. In his mind, Bal was an important investor, someone who shared his vision. He was an ally. He chalked Dean’s concerns up to the Beta’s uncanny ability to interrupt their time together, which, granted, was sometimes frustrating. But Bal had assured him that he understood the importance of family time and was only calling or stopping by because an issue warranted Cas’ immediate attention.
Maybe I’ve been fooling myself, he thought as he rubbed his eyes. Cas had never had reason to question Dean’s opinion before; maybe the Alpha was seeing something that he hadn’t. So Castiel set his book aside and considered the last few months, and when he did, one incident in particular came to mind. Castiel had mentioned his plans to join Dean for a movie on a call with Bal, and as they stood in line to get popcorn and Junior Mints, suddenly his name was being shouted across the lobby. There was Bal, holding onto the hand of a 10-year-old boy, saying that the movie sounded like such a good idea that he had offered to take his nephew to see it. Bal had ended up sitting to Castiel’s left, quietly talking to him during lulls in the dialog, while Dean leaked irritation next to him. He had offered a reassuring squeeze on the knee, which Dean took as a consolation prize.

At the time, he had thought it mildly funny when Dean joked about Bal having a crush on him. What Dean didn’t realize was that people felt drawn to him his entire life. He was Omega. His pheromones were biologically programmed to send out a “notice and protect me” scent that had Betas and Alphas alike standing a little too close and being overly helpful. Castiel had tried to explain it to Dean, but Dean insisted there was more to it than that.

Had Dean been right?

Thinking back, it was clear to Castiel that not long after Dean had walked into his apartment that afternoon, something had snapped. The man was agitated and breathing heavily within minutes. Then he was ordering Bal out of Castiel’s home and while it mostly pissed him off, Castiel had to admit that there was a small, embarrassing part of him that preened at the way Dean had taken control. Possessiveness had never been an issue between them. So in hindsight, as Castiel reflected on it, something was obviously going wrong.

When he had walked in, Dean was obviously annoyed but that wasn’t too surprising. After only a few minutes though, his entire demeanor changed. Dean had started exhibiting all the characteristics that Castiel had read about that indicated rut. He wasn’t an expert, but Cas was fairly certain that wasn’t normal rut behavior. First off, in the five years they had known each other, Dean had never fallen into rut like that. He had mentioned once or twice that his rut was due and he would be out of communication for a few days. In fact, Cas remembered Dean complaining of symptoms that he said were sure precursors of his rut during a phone call once. All of this indicated to Castiel that Dean almost always knew when his rut was coming and avoided Cas and Claire. Why would he have offered to meet for burgers if he was about to rut at any second?

Perhaps Dean was ill. Hopefully not, but maybe there was a medical explanation. Castiel slid off his bed and made his way out to the living room, flipping on the kitchen light and starting a pot of tea. He wasn’t about to diagnose Dean over the phone, and he certainly didn’t want to embarrass him. I need more information, he thought, firing up his laptop. The good news was that research was practically Castiel’s middle name.

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Castiel’s time was filled with almost daily meetings with the manufacturing company’s CEO before spending hours in the lab with four of the friendliest scientists he had ever had the pleasure to meet. He worked relentlessly with R&D to identify what compound had created the problem, and then developed an alternative using a new resin from Rotterdam. Cas and Juan Carlos, the company’s Chief Operations Officer, re-worked the implementation process, rolling the change out over a 10-day period they nicknamed “El Huracán.” It was exhausting and exhilarating and incredibly rewarding.

Juan Carlos was 32 and also an unmated Omega. His short, sun-bleached hair talked to years spent surfing Barcelona’s pristine beaches as a teen, and he had a warm, friendly smile that always made
Castiel felt at ease. Juan Carlos’ passion and outgoing nature mirrored Castiel’s own and the two became fast friends. In fact, they seemed to spend as much time together after work at each other’s homes as they did at the plant. Whenever Juan Carlos came over, Claire would grab his hand as soon as he walked through their door and tell him all about her day while Castiel whipped up dinner.

Barely three weeks had passed when the Spaniard had looked over his bowl of paella and asked, “Are you and Bal involved in a relationship?”

“Oh no,” Castiel had chuckled. “Why do you ask?”

“I’ve noticed the way he looks at you, tio. I was just curious.”

“Really?” Castiel realized that he finally had another set of eyes that might see his situation more clearly than he could. “How does he look at me?”

Juan Carlos’ smile fell a little bit. “Honestly? Like no one else should be looking at you. Sometimes he seems almost…I don’t know the best word. Hungry?”

For some reason, those words chilled Castiel to the bone and he just stared at his new friend. “Hungry?” he whispered.

Juan Carlos reached out a reassuring hand. “No, no, I must be using that word wrong, Castiel. He is your friend, I am certain. I thought perhaps you were more than that, but obviously, I was mistaken. No pasa nada. No worries.”

But now, Castiel was worried. That night, his thoughts returned to Dean, and he spent four hours online searching for medical reasons that would bring on a premature rut. He ended up with a list of five compounds that would trigger an Alpha and a pounding headache. He wondered how he could possibly ask Dean if he had been exposed to longenberry extract or had been around anyone with a fungal infection. He jotted down some notes with a reminder to follow up with Gabe the following week and finally went to bed.

Spring in Barcelona brought warm breezes; clear, blue skies; and a small rash that Castiel couldn’t seem to shake. Juan Carlos had recommended a quick check up with his own doctor, but Bal, who had up until that point spent two to three evenings a week with Castiel and Claire, talked him out of it. Castiel decided to just soldier on, as they were thankfully ahead of schedule. Returning home was the light at the end of the tunnel, the shimmering oasis just out of grasp that kept him pushing forward even on those days when the itch on his neck and chest bothered him to the point of distraction.

It was a Tuesday. Castiel had just taken another ibuprofen to ease the ache on his skin. Sunlight poured in through the windows of his borrowed corner office, which normally would have had him closing his eyes and basking in its comforting rays. Not today. Today was Tuesday and Castiel was just irritated, physically and mentally. He still hadn’t reached out to Dean, but Gabe’s reports had Castiel more and more disheartened. As it turned out, there were easily 14 different compounds that could trigger spontaneous Alpha rut, each with its own side effects. Castiel found himself staring off into space as he tried to imagine how Dean would have come into contact with any of them. It seemed more and more like perhaps Dean just wasn’t who Castiel thought he was. People changed all the time, and Castiel hated to admit it, but maybe this was a blessing in disguise.

He pushed back from his desk and stood, needing to stretch his legs and clear his head from these gloomy thoughts. This was as good a time as any for a break, so Castiel left his office and headed
towards the center of the building. The plant itself had been a surprise. While he had imagined a hulking mass of dreary metal, instead he had discovered two large compounds – one where the manufacturing took place and another filled with smiling Betas who acted as administrative and sales personnel. Both of these areas were joined by a covered walkway that stretched over a large atrium filled with Kermes oak, Mediterranean dwarf palms and artichoke flowers. The company had installed numerous benches and outdoor furniture so employees could enjoy the weather on their breaks or lunches. It was a lovely spot that was rarely empty.

As Castiel strolled across the walkway, he glanced down and noticed his new friend and Bal sitting on a wicker sofa. While Juan Carlos seemed engrossed in conversation with Maria, Bal stretched his arm across the back of the couch and touched the back of Juan Carlos’ neck in a gesture that Castiel instantly recognized. The Omega twitched, then happened to look up and catch Castiel’s eye. He offered a quick wave, which Cas returned with a smile. Perhaps Bal’s affections were shifting. He wondered how Juan Carlos felt about that.

A short while later, Castiel was back at his desk and engrossed in output reports. The day seemed to fly by after that, and three hours later he stepped out to use the restroom only to hear raised voices. He instantly recognized Juan Carlos in the mix and quickened his pace. As he rounded a corner, he was stunned to see his friend being confronted by a tall woman with a pile of red hair pinned in a messy bun on top of her head. Her teeth gleamed in an almost feral grin as she ran a crimson fingernail down Juan Carlos’ cheek. Immediately, the COO’s scent soured and Castiel could tell the touch was unwanted. He strode up to the pair and was shocked to see the redhead lean in close and breathe deeply, scenting the Omega in an almost possessive way.

“How may I help you?” Castiel asked loudly. Juan Carlos caught his eye and shot him a concerned look as the redhead turned her attention to Castiel. Her smile only widened.

“How many Omegas do they have here? So delicious…” she replied in English, her voice heavily accented and now dripping with condescension. Her scent hit Castiel’s nose strongly, a pungent garlic that had him instinctively taking a step back. Desire flashed in her eyes and Castiel froze, not wanting to incite her chasing instinct.

“Castiel?”

Thank God! Castiel looked behind him to see Balthazar walking towards the small group. At that point the woman’s scent changed quickly and a snarl ripped from her throat. Behind her, Juan Carlos’ eyes widened. This situation was spiraling out of control quickly.

Balthazar stopped in his tracks, and if Castiel hadn’t known better, he would have thought a small smile tugged on the Beta’s lip before he schooled himself. The woman quickly placed herself in front of the Omegas, as if daring Balthazar to challenge her. A bead of sweat slowly slid down the side of her face and her breathing became ragged. Castiel watched in confusion as the woman widened her stance to make herself seem even bigger, classic Alpha posturing that Castiel had read about often in his recent studies.

And then it hit him, and the hairs on Castiel’s back stood up straight as he glanced from the stranger in front of him to Balthazar.

Juan Carlos scented his shock immediately. “Castiel?” he whispered.

What were the odds? What was the likelihood that this exact scenario would play out again weeks later in this little building, a world away? Miniscule. The same players, though, except…

Castiel looked over the red hair, not even concerned about the fury that poured off the impressive
Alpha who thought she was staking her claim to two unmated male Omegas, and projected fear and distress. Inside, though, his heart soared in relief. He slowly walked backwards towards the exit staircase that he knew was around the corner, grabbing Juan Carlos’ hand and pulling him along.

Balthazar would have to handle the Alpha.

And Castiel had to come up with a plan.

“I think this is a great idea, Dean,” Madison called out. Sam sat next to her on the sofa and turned on the TV.

The trio had spent the day planning the perfect not-date, and Dean had to agree. Thank God he was able to get reservations for Saturday night. In fact, everything was coming together perfectly, and now that all of the arrangements had been made, his stomach had stopped clenching into a ball of anxiety and instead grumbled in hunger.

“Thanks for all of your help,” he replied. “Hey, can I have some of this chicken?”

“Yeah,” she said. “But bring me an apple. And use the corer/slicer. And put some peanut butter in a dish, too.”

Dean rolled his eyes behind the safety of the refrigerator door. “Yes, your highness.” He grabbed an apple and closed the fridge before rifling through various drawers in search of the infamous corer/slicer, whatever the hell that was.

“Dean,” Sam yelled.

“You want an apple too, princess?”

“Dean, get in here.”

“I’m in the middle of preparing your wife’s snack, man. What do you…” Dean’s voice trailed off as he stood behind the sofa, his jaw dropping in surprise. The screen showed a very familiar face being forcibly pushed into the back of a police cruiser.

“Authorities have arrested Balthazar Roche today in a drug scandal unlike any we’ve seen before,” the correspondent claimed. “Roche, known by many for his support of Denver entrepreneur Castiel Novak’s solar energy initiatives,” and at this point Cas’ smiling face flashed in the top right corner of the screen, “was charged with what can only be described as drugging Omegas.”

Madison gasped, her hands reflexively covering her mouth in surprise, and Sam actually swore out loud.

Dean’s panic flooded their living room, and both of them turned to face him. Dean’s mind raced, his thoughts a jumble of fear and anger. That slimy asshole had been drugging Omegas? Who the hell did something like that? Did he drug Cas? Oh God! A noise he never heard himself make before, pained and strangled, passed his lips as the newscaster continued. “Roche had been working with a group of ultra-traditionalist Betas to develop a drug that would counteract the blockers many Omegas use, sending unwitting men and women into a state of low-level heat.”

“Fuck,” Dean whispered, dropping the towel in his hands.

The screen morphed into a shot of three men and a woman being handcuffed and escorted from a
building. One of the men angrily shrugged off an officer and faced the news camera that was obviously trained on him. “Omega choice has caused global population numbers to plummet!” he screamed. “We’re going extinct on principles from before the Great Decline! Omegas must be bred, whether they like it or not, or we will die out like the dinosaurs!”


“The scheme was uncovered after months of undercover work spearheaded by none other than Novak himself.”

“Cas!” Dean’s heart may have actually stopped beating. He forced himself to breathe and ran back to the kitchen table, fumbling for his cell phone. “What did you do, you stupid, brave fucking hero?!” he cursed. At that moment his phone lit up and Dean dropped it like it was about to bite him. As he leaned down to pick it back up, Castiel’s face and name were emblazoned across the screen.

“Cas?” he shouted into the phone, staring at Madison and Sam’s shocked faces.

The most beautiful voice replied, deep and gravelly and very definitely alive and well.

“Hello, Dean.”
Chapter 11

Everything kind of went fuzzy as a jumble of thoughts raced through Dean’s head, all at about the same time.

He’s okay. He doesn’t sound drugged. There’s no sirens in the background. He must be okay.

Dean’s heartbeat slowed down in relief. His legs felt like lead, though, and he sank onto one of the wooden chairs around the kitchen table. The hand not holding the phone immediately covered his eyes as a dull, throbbing pain lit up behind his left eye.

But did that motherfucker hurt him?! Is Cas in the hospital? Is he hooked up to monitors? Is he in pain?

Anxiety ripped out of Dean’s pores, adrenaline spiking through his bloodstream and making his chest feel like it was entirely too small to hold his rapidly beating heart. In his mind, he saw his beautiful Cas laid out in a white, sterile hospital bed with tubes and wires tethering him to beeping machines that barely kept him alive. He vaguely registered a high-pitched whining noise before he flashed on that smug, condescending asshole with his blond hair and Italian leather shoes. Dean remembered the last time he saw Roche, his arm along the back of Cas’ white couch while Claire sat playing at the monster’s feet, just inches away from danger.

“Dean?”

I’m gonna tear that bastard’s fucking heart out. If he touched Cas, I’m gonna break every finger on both of his hands. I want to watch his face as I strangle the…

He was panting now, anger making Dean short of breath as his mind raced with various scenarios, all ending in creative ways he was going to kill Balthazar Roche with his bare hands. He growled low in the back of his throat, pleased with the idea of pummeling that smirk right off the Beta’s face.

“Please, Dean. It’s alright. Can you…can you calm down a little?”

A hand tentatively touched his shoulder and Dean literally jumped in his seat, staring blankly into his brother’s very concerned face while Cas’ voice came over the phone again.

“We’re okay, Dean. Claire and I are fine. Please, just breathe in and out, Alpha.”

With a quick sob, the haze receded. He did as directed, breathing in until the horrible charred scent of his stress and anger had Dean wrinkling his nose in disgust. He looked into his brother’s eyes again, then searched for Madison, finding her huddled under a blanket on the sofa, just the top of her head and worried, brown eyes visible as she watched Dean come back to himself.

“Sorry,” he whispered to both Cas and Sam before swallowing. God, his mouth felt like a desert. He tried again. “Sorry, I… Castiel Novak, you tell me right now; are you safe?”

“Yes, Dean,” a relieved voice answered. “Claire and I are at LAX. We’re about to board for Denver but I saw the news footage on CNN and knew it was finally okay to call you.”

Dean sighed heavily. “Thank God,” he mumbled as the pressure behind his eye translated into a stabbing pain that almost took his breath away. “Did he…” Dean paused, trying to figure out exactly what he wanted to ask and the best way to ask it, knowing that the other man was in a crowded airport with no privacy. He lowered his voice. “Sweet…um, Cas, did he hurt you?”
The silence that answered him was enough to set Dean’s gut clenching.

“Yes and no, Dean,” Cas replied quietly. “But what matters is that right now, I’m fine and it’s over. I am so sorry that I couldn’t talk to you, but the FBI was adamantly that I have no communication with anyone until we had all the evidence we needed to put them away.”

“Okay.” Dean took in another deep breath that was slightly less shaky that the one before it. “Cas, I… I just need to see you, okay? And make sure you’re alright. And…and I need to apologize to you, too. Then I’ll get out of your way, I swear, and let you find your mate. I don’t know if you even still want to have an actual face-to-face with me, what with everything that’s going on right now, but if I could just see you and Claire, even if its…”

“Dean, stop right there.”

The Alpha swallowed harshly, the lump in his throat a boulder, rough and hard, and shot a look of terror across the living room. Sam caught it and held it in his own “I can’t hear what’s happening on the other side of the conversation but it’s going to be okay, Dean,” gaze. The older Winchester held his breath as he waited for Cas to tell him that the mate list was a ruse, that it was just a joke or a ploy or somehow part of the undercover operation, and that Castiel had no intention of mating anyone, least of all him.

“Of course I want to see you…”

Dean closed his eyes and exhaled, wondering if he would be able to survive this roller coaster of a phone call without having an actual aneurism.

“I want to explain all of this to you. You have nothing to be sorry for, Dean. I’m the one with an apology to make.” In a hushed voice, he added, “I’ve missed you, Dean.”

A balm of peace floated over Dean and for the first time that evening, a small smile tugged at the corner of his mouth. “Me too,” he replied. “I-I’ve missed you too.”

Maybe, just maybe, there was a teeny, tiny chance that Dean would get to spend the rest of his life with Drug Ring Toppling Castiel Novak. No, Double – O…mega, Bad Ass Castiel Novak. He silently laughed at his crazy brain and the now completely unbidden but certainly appreciated vision of Cas in a black tux with a white rose in his lapel, his arms crossed as he leaned against a door jamb. Dean’s scent must have cleared because Maddie stopped hiding under the blanket to shake her head and smile at him.

“More importantly,” Castiel continued, his voice more confident, “Princess Claire wants to see you. Tell Sam that Gabriel has a dozen ‘World’s Best Uncle’ mugs strategically placed around his home.”

Dean chuckled, the heavy feeling of 40 pounds of fear and anger on his shoulders lifting, as he shook his head. “I’ll see you Saturday, Cas. You and Claire up for a drive to Montrose? There’s a Fall Festival. Thought it would be nice to walk around.”

“Sounds perfect, Dean,” Castiel responded. Dean counted the smile in Cas’ voice as a personal victory. “Saturday it is. How about 9:00 am at the house?”

“Great. Okay then.” Even though Dean didn’t really have anything else to say, it just felt so good to know exactly where Cas was after months of wondering. A tinny voice in the background called out flight information, but Dean ignored that, focusing instead on the fact that the buzzing bees under his skin had finally slowed down, and he could hear Cas breathing lightly into the phone. Dean soaked it up, eyes closed, letting the rhythmic sound of Cas inhaling and exhaling, steady and safe, wash over
him. “I kinda don’t want to hang up, Cas,” he admitted.

“I know, Dean, but they’re calling our zone. I’m sorry. We’ll see you Saturday.”

“Yeah. Bye, Cas,” Dean replied. He tapped the red phone icon and took a deep, cleansing breath as his headache finally faded away.

“He’s okay.” Sam confirmed. Dean nodded as he stared vacantly at the dark screen in his hand. “And you’re gonna see them both on Saturday?” his brother pressed. Again, Dean nodded.

“Why were you laughing?” Madison asked.

Dean looked up and smiled. “Double – O…mega, Bad Ass Castiel Novak,” he chuckled, shaking his head at his own stupid joke.

“Oh my…” Madison laughed, her eyes squeezing shut as a huge grin lit up her face. “You are such an idiot!”

“I got to build sand cassels, Poppa. In actual sand! It was white sand, too. Really white. Daddy got me a pink bathing suit with Anna and Elsa on it. And I had to wear sunscream when we were at the beach. Cause I’ll burn, Poppa. And no one wants a Crispy Claire.”

Dean laughed out loud, smiling down at his daughter as she pulled slightly on his hand. He glanced up at Cas who’s eyes literally twinkled as he tried not to giggle. “Who told you that, Claire Bear? Was it Daddy?”

“No, One Carlos said so, Poppa. He’s my best friend in Spain. He’s like me and Daddy. Only when he says ‘Kristoff’ he says it like this, Poppa: ‘Kreestove.’ It’s so funny! That’s my favorite. Oh! Can I have a candied apple, Poppa? Pleeeeese?” The little girl dropped Dean’s hand and skipped over to the front of a Rocky Mountain Chocolate Factory shop, pressing her little painted nose to the window. Her eyes tracked the rows of garishly red, sugar-coated treats hungrily before she turned to look over her shoulder as the two men followed, shaking their heads.

This day couldn’t have been more perfect if Dean had special ordered it from Amazon. Seriously, every clichéd picture or description of early fall surrounded the three of them, and Dean was not-so-secretly enjoying the hell out of it.

Montrose, Colorado reminded Dean so much of Laramie that he had immediately thought of Lisa and Ben and how at home they would feel here. Trees that had just begun to turn shades of light yellow and crimson lined the main drag. Everywhere you looked there were either bales of hay or pumpkins. Or pumpkins on bales of hay. Sometimes apples too. The street had been cordoned off for the festival so folks could stroll down the center of the road and enjoy the food stands and children’s activities. The trio had just left the face painting booth, where Claire’s little face had been transformed into a fairly adorable kitten.

It was a brisk 50 degrees outside, perfect leather jacket weather. He caught Castiel’s reflection in the candy store’s window and smiled at the pink tint on his cheeks. God, Cas looked like he stepped out of a fashion magazine; his dark hair was perfectly mused from the breeze and a cream-colored, ribbed knit sweater sat high around his neck. Dean’s eyes tracked to the tan–and-grey scarf that hung loosely down his chest, the exact match to his tan trench coat. Dark rinse jeans, and brown loafers, and fuck if Abercrombie and Fitch could have done any better. Castiel Novak was simply stunning. No two ways about it.
And Dean Winchester was the luck SOB standing next to him, thank you very much.

“You are awesome,” he silently mouthed at Cas’ reflection. The Omega’s cheeks turned just a shade pinker as he shook his head and rolled his eyes.

“Claire, did you have any fruit or vegetables today?” Castiel asked, diverting attention away from himself.

“Daddy, a candied apple is a fruit!” she argued.

“Covered in candy, Claire, otherwise it would just be an apple on a stick, which I would much prefer at this point.”

“What about apple cider? That’s a fruit, right?”

“No, Claire. How about this. You eat a salad or veggies with lunch and we can all share a candied apple later?”

“Share? But Daddy, I can eat a whole one. I know I can.”

“Okay,” Dean interrupted. “Let’s work on lunch first. I’m so hungry; I could eat a Tyrannosaurus Rex. Where can I get a dino burger, Claire?”

“Poppa, there’s no dino burgers in Colorano!”

“What?” Dean replied, taking her little hand in his and gently steering her away from the tempting glass window. “I’m pretty sure I saw dino burgers somewhere around here. I think it was this way.” As they continued down the street, Dean felt a warm palm slide against his empty hand and strong fingers intertwine with his own. He turned to smile at Cas and found himself within inches of a stubbled cheek, the barest hint of sweetness and lavender tickling his nose. Faint as it was, it still sent a shiver down Dean’s spine.

“Hey there,” he said quietly, green eyes searching blue. He wouldn’t even have to stretch to kiss the other man’s lips. In fact, at this point the pull to do it was so strong Dean had to hold himself back. They weren’t there yet. It felt like, as easy and as right as this was, he hadn’t earned the kiss yet. But he would. Later.

“Hey,” Castiel replied with the same soft smile Dean remembered from his favorite picture of Claire’s birth. Fuck, he wanted to taste those lips, gently run his thumb across that plush mouth and trace that smile. He settled for squeezing the grown-up hand in his.

“Are you gonna kiss?” Claire asked loudly. “Cause, I wanna kiss too, Poppa.”

And there was the full-on, gorgeous, toothy smile that crinkled up Cas’ eyes. “Claire, you can have as many kisses as you want,” Dean promised, scooping up his little girl and kissing the only paint-free spot he could find on her forehead. “But I’m so hungry; I may just nibble on your ears.” He made loud nom-nom noises that had Claire squirming and shrieking in his arms.

“How about a buffalo burger instead of a dino burger, Poppa?” Castiel asked.

“I’ll settle for a wooly mammoth burger,” Dean answered. “Lead the way, Daddy.” Castiel raised a brow, which Dean countered with a wink.

Fucking perfect day.
Castiel loved Colorado in the early evening. He loved it even more in the front seat of one particular black ‘67 Chevy Impala. He breathed in deeply, letting the car’s leather smell swirl in his nose, along with its owner’s warm sage scent, which permeated every inch, and thought of how much he’d missed this. In his mind’s eye, Castiel envisioned Dean’s baby as an extension of the Alpha himself; sitting in this front seat was like being wrapped in Dean’s arms, and being surrounded by shiny black metal made him feel safe and protected.

He gazed out the car’s windshield at the sun as it sank behind the mountains, transforming the sky into three different shades of blue. Oranges and pinks caught the underbellies of half a dozen wispy clouds, and he thought that a canvas containing this specific evening sky would come across as too perfect, as if the painter was trying too hard.

There had been a moment when Castiel had thought that he would never be able to find his way back here. Gabriel had saved him, this he firmly believed, because without his brother’s help he would have never gotten in contact with Special Agent Cain. Together, they would have never been able to identify the other fanatics Balthazar had been working with. And without Agent Cain, Castiel would have never made it out of Spain unharmed. There were so many other “nevers” that Castiel really didn’t want to think about. He sighed, thankful, and closed his eyes as Dean’s hand slid across the front seat and under his own, curling their fingers together.

“You okay?” Dean asked, glancing away from the evening traffic on Colfax to scan Cas’ face.

“More than okay, Dean,” Castiel answered. He had so much to be thankful for, including the hard work and perseverance of his team. He smiled and looked over at the man behind the wheel. “May I show you something?”

“Sure, Cas.”

“Take a left on University and head to the Botanical Gardens, please.”

Dean gave Castiel a quizzical look but did as instructed. In the eight minutes it took to pull into the landmark’s parking lot, the sun had almost completely set and the sky had turned to light navy. Cas stepped from the car and stretched, watching as Dean mirrored his movements. They faced each other over the top of the Impala until Castiel folded his forearms on the warm metal.

“Look down,” Cas ordered playfully, smiling as he watched Dean scan the paved ground beneath them.

“Are those?”

“You are standing on the first full test site.”

“Shit, Cas!” Dean exclaimed, turning in a circle. He squatted down to run his hand over the marvel that was one of 437 interlocking hexagonal solar cells. “The lines are lights?!”

“Pretty clever, aren’t they? The cells collect sunlight and convert it immediately into electricity. Some are programmed to use that electricity to turn on white lights that create the parking lot lines while others power the overhead streetlights. All surplus electricity is funneled to that transformer, which controls power for the entire Botanical Gardens complex. It’s fully self-sustained at this point and off the city’s grid.”

Dean rose and, shaking his head in wonder, walked over to where Castiel leaned against his car. He stood beside Cas, and nudged his shoulder with his own, pride and admiration evident in his scent.
“You are amazing,” he said softly. “You are truly amazing, Drug Ring Toppling, Sustainable Energy Castiel Novak.”

Castiel chuckled. “I’m thankful, Dean. So very thankful.” He leaned his body against Dean’s and breathed in deeply. They stood there for a few seconds as Castiel took in the culmination of the last 10 years of his life’s work, thinking of all the incredible people who labored so diligently to make his dream a reality. Slowly, he realized that Dean’s scent was turning slightly sour. His blue eyes shot to Dean’s, scanning the Alpha’s face for the cause.

“You deserve to be with someone as amazing as you are,” Dean said quietly as he stared out at the parking lot. “You know, I had such big plans for tonight. I was all set to show you how much I can change and how good a mate I’d be for you, but I see now how selfish that was.” He finally made eye contact with Cas, dejection written plainly on his face. “The best thing for you and Claire is…”

“You, Dean,” he cut in. “The best thing for me and Claire is, without a doubt, you.” He stared disbelieving at the man beside him. How could Dean even think that… “Wait, you don’t think you deserve to be – ”

“No, Cas, I don’t.” Dean pushed himself away from his car and took two large steps away before turning back to only be shocked by Castiel’s stunned reaction.

“How can you, for a second, think that…You make me feel brave, Dean, in a way no one ever has. I feel like I can do anything as long as you’re with me!” Then realization dawned. “Oh shit, it’s the list, isn’t it? Dean…” Castiel walked right into the other man’s space. “You are the only person on my mate list. The only one. I didn’t know how to really reach back out to you after so much time had passed, and I hadn’t communicated with you at all for months. I knew that I had abandoned you and that you must have thought such terrible things about me, so the best way I could tell you how much you meant to me was by asking you to be my mate. I know it was very presumptuous of me, but…”

“Stop. Just hold on.” Dean’s head was reeling. There’s no way he heard that right. “I’m the only person on the list?”

“Oh for God’s sake! Of course you are! What did you think? That I knew 50 other Alphas or something?”

“Um…72?”

Castiel’s eyes bulged out of his head. Then it all clicked. Dean’s insecurity and his willingness to walk away from him and Claire. “Dean,” he whispered, reaching out to wrap his hand around the back of the Alpha’s neck and draw their foreheads together. “I am so sorry. The mate list should have brought you comfort. I was trying to tell you that I wanted to be bonded to you only, forever. But it did the opposite, didn’t it. Please forgive me.”

“I love you, Cas.”

“I choose you, Dean. Body and soul, I choose you.”
Chapter 12

Castiel took a moment to soak in the ambiance around him. He loved everything about this place. He loved its rich history as a Denver landmark. He loved the mahogany wood paneling and warm lighting. He loved the white tablecloths and small, flickering candles. He loved how intimate it felt here, even with other diners at their own small tables. Most of all, he loved that when Dean wanted to prove himself a worthy mate, wanted to make his best impression, he had picked the one restaurant that always made Castiel feel at home.

The pair sat at a small table at Christo’s, his favorite steak house. Honestly, he was still reeling from their conversation at the Botanical Gardens. It had been such a perfect day, and then to finally get the confirmation that he had so hoped for – that Dean wanted to be his mate too, loved him – frankly, Castiel was almost giddy with relief and joy.

While he was still riding that endorphin wave, the butterflies in his stomach reminded him of how important tonight was, on so many levels. Using the décor as a cover, Castiel avoided eye contact for a little longer, sweeping his eye around the room in a decidedly useless attempt to get his thoughts and emotions under control before his scent gave too much away. Castiel had to wonder when they would make that ultimate physical commitment. Would they forge the bond and mate tonight? His mouth went a little dry at the thought.

He had initiated this, truly, and just as he had explained; his commitment to joining with Dean was absolute. And yes, he was a grown man, but mating was something Castiel had been imagining for the better part of 25 years. It was a supreme act of trust, both physically and emotionally. It would be painful. It would be humbling, requiring him to express the most submissive parts of his nature, those that he normally compartmentalized. And once it was completed, Castiel would be forever connected to Dean in a way that only Alphas and Omegas could be. Not the rainbows-and-unicorns fairy tale that gushed from most romance novels, but the always-know-what-you’re-feeling-can’t-live-without-you intensity that had many of his secondary gender forgoing the experience entirely. It was practically spiritual. He felt a little queasy at the thought of exposing himself like that until he caught Dean’s green, curious eyes.

The issue ultimately was one of trust, and it was imperative that Dean trusted him as well as firmly believed that Castiel trusted Dean with everything – with his life, with his daughter, with their future.

But Castiel owed Dean some answers. That was a given. So he tried to school himself before his own nervous anticipation and arousal got the best of him because Dean had asked him a question, and he knew that they had to get through this before they could really start enjoying their evening.

“Are you sure you want to hear all of it?” Castiel asked. “Why don’t I give you a high-level overview instead?” He stretched a hand across the table and placed it on top of Dean’s, giving it a reassuring squeeze.

“Whatever you want to share is fine,” Dean replied. His eyes fell to their two hands on the table and a contemplative look crossed his face, before his attention returned to the man across from him.

Castiel could tell that the Alpha wanted to say more, wanted to hear all the gory details, but he needed Dean to remember tonight as one of the best nights of his life. He wanted to fill in the missing pieces and to apologize for everything Dean had gone through. It really hadn’t been fair, and Castiel was determined to make it up to him.

He looked up as a waiter set two glasses of water and two lowball tumblers of Johnnie Walker Blue
in front of them. He smiled his thanks and then returned his gaze to Dean.

*Where to begin?* Castiel took a deep breath and let it out, forcing a small, nervous smile. “Basically, they had developed a scentless, numbing topical agent. When placed on the scruff of an Omega’s neck, it flooded the bloodstream with just enough luteinizing hormones to neutralize blockers and convince the body that it was about to go into heat. It also included a scent enhancer designed specifically to incite Alpha olfactory receptors. The intention was for any Alpha in the area to pick up the scent and then experience an immediate sympathetic rut response.” He paused before continuing. “They intended to increase the number of Omega pregnancies through rape, Dean, just to boost the population. It was truly a horrific plan.”

This next part was so very important for Dean to understand. Castiel lightly rubbed his thumb across Dean’s knuckles. “Please know that *you* have nothing to apologize for,” he said quietly. “You were being manipulated on a cellular level. You were being drugged just like I was, and even then you were, well you cared enough about us that you realized you were losing control and you locked yourself away. That was so…” Castiel sighed. He couldn’t even think of the right word. “I can’t thank you enough for that, Dean. A weaker Alpha might have gone completely off the rails, even with his own child in the room.”

Dean just nodded his head and took what Castiel noticed was a healthy gulp of whiskey.

He sat back in his chair and reached for his own drink. “I don’t think they had any concern for the emotional ramifications; what it would do to an Omega’s psyche to experience that and then carry a pup conceived that way. The drug took choice away from both parties, but the FBI classified it as an Omega drug because Omegas were the ones who came in direct contact with the substance. Also, the laws against harming Omegas are much tougher. Baltha… the group would be more harshly punished if they were convicted of assaulting Omegas.”

“But you figured this out in Spain? He was still drugging you in *Spain*?”

Castiel grimaced and looked down at the white linen tablecloth in front of him. “The day that I saw him dose Juan Carlos and a female Alpha went into rut over the both of us just like you did, everything was so hauntingly familiar. I knew Balthazar had to be behind it; he was the common denominator. The first thing I did was have Juan Carlos take me to his doctor so we could both have blood drawn and the backs of our necks swabbed to hopefully pick up traces of the chemicals I was certain Balthazar had put there. We determined that I was having an adverse reaction to the drug, which was why I had broken out in a rash. The ibuprofen I took kept the luteinizing hormones or LH too low to trigger any Alphas.”

“Thank God,” Dean muttered, concern wafting off him as he channeled his frustration by spinning his whiskey glass in slow circles.

“I believe that as a test subject, when I no longer responded to the drug, Balthazar felt compelled to figure out why,” Castiel added. He returned his gaze to Dean, whose eyebrows were scrunched together in irritation. Thankfully, salads magically appeared, allowing Castiel to take a break from his story and enjoy the food. Dean, however, had no qualms about continuing their conversation.

“How did the FBI get involved?” he asked.

The Omega nodded his head as he finished his mouthful. “Gabriel,” he replied, wiping his mouth with the red cloth napkin in his lap. “I had the test results sent to him. We used code words.” Castiel couldn’t help but chuckle. “We thought we were very clandestine. Gabe called us ‘super cool spies.’ Anyway, he got the proof to the FBI and they assigned Special Agent Cain to the case. Gabe set our lab to the task of identifying the drug’s components, looking for markers that would identify where
they had been manufactured. Those manufacturers then provided the names of the group’s members who had purchased the ingredients. Plus we had the video of Balthazar caught in the act.”

Dean visibly swallowed and closed his eyes, trying to calm himself. Castiel scented Dean’s warm sage start to char and then clear. It was obvious that Dean was really trying to not let his emotions get away from him, so Castiel gave him a warm smile and whispered, “Thank you.”

“What video, Cas?” Dean countered.

That had been the most dangerous part of the entire operation, but Agent Cain had been adamant that it would be pivotal for conviction. So Castiel and Juan Carlos had set up two hidden cameras in Castiel’s living room, one in the bookcase behind the sofa and one right next to the TV receiver in front of the sofa. Castiel kept up his ibuprofen regimen and after three visits, finally caught Balthazar making his familiar stretch before lightly tapping the back of Castiel’s neck. The video clearly showed a small red splotch appear within seconds of Balthazar’s touch.

“It was very simple. Just a hidden camera.” Castiel ignored Dean’s surprise and just kept talking. “I sent the tape to Gabe and he got it to Agent Cain. The evidence was pretty damning, but they needed me to keep up the charade until they could get the others identified. Then they lured Balth back to the states and took down the entire group.”

“Did they send someone to protect you?” Dean probed. He scooted closer to the table and leaned in. “I mean this guy is dosing you, dosing Juan Carlos, what’s to keep him from pulling the same shit with other Omegas at the plant? Any Omegas, actually?”

Protect me? Castiel squinted and cocked his head to the side as he parsed Dean’s comment again. “Well, the FBI did work with local police to put a tail on Balthazar, but Dean, I may not have an Alpha’s…” he waved a hand in front of Dean, “musculature, but I didn’t need protection from him.”

Dean shook his head, like he was shaking away a stupid thought. “No, I just meant, what if he’d figured it out and came after you?”

“Omega or not, I am just as capable of defending myself as you are.” Castiel couldn’t help but get prickly about this point. He was no damsel in distress. Hell, neither was Juan Carlos or any Omega, for that matter.

“Yeah,” Dean conceded. He looked up at Castiel. “I’ve got no doubt about that, Cas. Doesn’t mean I’m not still pissed that the FBI put you in harm’s way. It was risky. This guy was a fucking menace; he had no qualms about drugging you, for Christ’s sake! I just think about him sitting on your sofa with Claire playing right there...”

Well, now Castiel understood. “I would have been worried about you in the same situation,” he admitted. “Look, I really want you to know that the past few months were very difficult, but being a part of the team that put a stop to something this insidious…it was an honor. Every hardship was worth enduring. I hope you agree, because not being able to tell you or even talk to you – keeping up the charade that I considered you dangerous – was torture. I’d like to imagine that it was hard on you too, and for that I apologize.”

“You’d like to imagine...Trust me, Cas, it was hard on me. But you don’t need to apologize. What you did was amazing. I’m so proud of you. Pissed. Frustrated. But very proud of you.”

“Thank you, Dean. Have I answered all of your questions?” Castiel asked. He looked up to see their waiter approaching behind Dean with two delicious looking plates in his hands.
“Yeah,” Dean answered with a small smile.

“Good, because our dinner’s here.” Two seconds later an absolutely mouth-watering ribeye was placed gently before him. He looked back at Dean, happiness shining in his eyes. “This is my favorite meal.”

“I know, babe,” Dean replied, genuinely glad to have put the grin on Castiel’s face.

“And I am very appreciative that you brought me here,” Castiel continued before actually moaning over his first bite of perfectly medium rare steak.

Dean chuckled. “Dude, you’re gonna get me all hot and bothered if you keep appreciating that steak like that.”

“Mission accomplished, then,” Castiel shot back with a wink. “It really has been a perfect day.”

“It’s not over yet,” Dean promised as he took a bite of his Porterhouse. “Damn, this is more delicious than I remember.” Castiel stared at him, trying to figure out what else might be on the menu besides a fantastic meal. “Nuh uh,” Dean said, shaking his head and pointing his fork at Cas. “No guessing. Just eat.”

“Hmm,” Castiel replied. “Guess I’ll just have to wait, then.”

After dinner, Dean suggested that they take a stroll to settle their stomachs, so they bundled up and hit the sidewalk. Castiel caught Dean’s profile as they walked and found it hard to stop staring. Dean loves me, he thought. This amazing, caring, handsome man loves me. It was almost like reconnecting with a high school sweetheart, although Castiel knew that was a bit of an exaggeration. It had only been six months. But truly, he had spent almost all of that time thinking he had lost Dean forever. He slipped his hand into the other man’s and squeezed, intending to never lose him again. Dean smiled and winked at him.

They had barely started talking about Claire’s new kindergarten class when Castiel was surprised to be ushered past a bouncer and into a doorway. The space opened up quickly and he realized they were in a fairly large country western bar. Rough-hewn wood lined the two-story-tall interior walls, allowing for a fake balcony to circle the entire space. Two bars occupied the far corners with awnings that made them look like covered wagons, but the sprawling, half-full dance floor in the center of the bar captured Castiel’s attention. Directly across from it, a raised stage sat empty save for a microphone and a few bar stools, but it was the only really empty spot in the place. Every available inch of carpet bustled with happy men and women dressed in plaid and Stetsons. Dean maneuvered them to a vacant table for two against the north wall.

“Where are we?” Castiel asked, unwinding the scarf from his neck and looking around at his unfamiliar surroundings.

“Dean-o!”

Dean gave Castiel’s hand a squeeze as he waved at a slender man with an unusual haircut who made his way through the club to get to them. The two slapped each other on the back and laughed. Alpha, most certainly, Castiel thought. He looked expectantly at Dean, who quickly made introductions.

“Ash, this is Castiel. Cas, this is Ash.” Castiel took the other man’s offered hand and shook it firmly with a smile. “I first met Ash through OSS right after I, uh, met you. Then about a year or so ago, I ran into him and he told me about his club.”
Well, Castiel was delighted to meet a friend of Dean’s, particularly an Alpha who had been vetted by OSS. “Castiel Novak. It’s a pleasure to meet you, Ash,” he offered. At that moment the sound system roared to life, and Florida Georgia Line flooded the club, garnering some appreciative hoots from the bar. “Your club is wonderful!” Castiel yelled over the music.

“Thanks!” Ash responded with a grin. He turned to Dean and punched him in the arm. “Wow, man, you brought a real celebrity! Hey, can we take a selfie for my social media sites? Real quick?”

Dean looked over at Castiel who shrugged but smiled in acceptance. The three men grinned and crowded together as Ash held his cell at arm’s length to snap the shot. He fiddled with the phone and then shook back his long hair. “Hey, uh Castiel,” Ash smiled. “I just want to say thank you for, you know, taking those bastards down. Dean’s told me that you’re an all-around righteous dude, but I just gotta say thanks. I know a lot of great Omegas through OSS and the thought of anyone drugging my friends…it just gets my hackles up, you know? Makes me furious. And you cracked the whole drug ring.” Ash shook his head in admiration. “You know what? I’m gonna buy you a drink!”

“You own the place, Ash,” Dean chastised.

Castiel reached out a hand and clapped it against the other Alpha’s arm. “Ash, thank you. I appreciate the support and the offer.”

“Yup, he’s a keeper,” Ash laughed. “Unlike this guy,” he added, shoving at Dean. “Ungrateful. That’s what he is. Hey, let’s get this thing going before there’s a mutiny.”

Castiel tilted his head in confusion but Dean just scowled at Ash’s back before taking a fortifying breath and offering Castiel a weak smile. “Don’t mind him. Here, have a seat. I’ll, uh, I’ll be right back.” Dean then took off after the bar owner yelling, “Hey, asshole!”

Shrugging in amusement, Castiel slid his rear over a stool and focused his attention on the dance floor. Most of the men and women shuffled around in a circle, but a few of the more daring or maybe more experienced dancers were twirling around each other. Some even changed positions so they both faced front for a few steps before they returned to a standard dancer’s pose. He found himself tapping his foot and swaying to the beat, smiling at the fun the dancers were having.

A cold beer appeared on the table in front of him. “You having a good time?” Dean shouted.

“Definitely!” Castiel replied loudly, reaching for the drink. “What was that all…”

“Do you dance? I should know that, right?”

Castiel smiled behind his beer. “I do. Do you? I don’t believe we’ve ever been dancing before, Dean.” His eyes twinkled mischievously before he realized that he had only seen male and female couples. Denver was certainly progressive, but a country bar wasn’t necessarily the best place to test that theory. “Are you sure this is the place for it, though?”

“It’ll be fine,” Dean replied, nudging Castiel’s arm and nodding towards two men in jeans and cowboy hats who danced onto the wood floor. Another pair of men followed, and Castiel couldn’t help but sigh in relief, happy that yet another potential problem wouldn’t affect their night.

“So what’s next?” Dean asked. Castiel replied with a questioning face. “With your solar cells? What’s the next project?”

And that led to an animated, 20-minute conversation about his company’s plans to focus on converting city-owned parking lots into solar energy collection sites. Dean asked such insightful questions that Castiel couldn’t help but feel even more connected to the man. He leaned forward
when he was interested in what Castiel was explaining. His hand was warm and comforting on Castiel’s knee under the small high-top table. Every micro-expression on his face conveyed exactly what he was thinking, all completely earnest and engaged. If it was possible, Castiel was certain that he was falling even harder.

“Hey?”

“Hmm?” Castiel replied.

“You zoned out there for a second. You okay?”

Castiel stared at the expressive eyebrows, raised in concern, then those stunning eyes and strong jaw. “God, I love you,” he answered quietly. Dean smiled in response as Castiel leaned forward across the table. “You are so ridiculously handsome, Dean. It’s just not fair. And you care. You care so much about me, about Claire, about your brother, and your work. I can’t…” He shook his head. “I can’t wait to spend the rest of my days with you.”

The pair stared at each other, grinning, until a sharp whistle sounded from somewhere on the other side of the bar and the DJ’s voice rang out. “Okay, we have a special request this evening, folks. A little off our normal playlist, but grab a partner!” The sound of ocean waves rolled through and Castiel started as Dean pulled him off his barstool and led him to the mostly-empty dance floor. A woman’s voice sang out as Dean took Castiel in his arms and looked at him with a mix of excitement and anxiety.

“Two-step, Cas, but, um, you okay with following?”

Castiel laughed and nodded his head. “Of course, Dean! I can follow as well as, oh!” And they were moving, Dean pushing him back as what Castiel was sure was not a country song played.

“I will never forget you,” the singer crooned. “You will always be by my side. From the day that I met you, I knew that I would love you till the day I die.”

Castiel’s mouth turned up in a smile as he looked around and then into Dean’s eyes. It occurred to him that Dean hadn’t been at all surprised when the song came on. “Did you request this?” he asked, curiously.

“You will always be by my side, till the day I die,” Dean sang back in response.

Oh my God! Castiel blinked in shock. Dean was serenading him! He had arranged this just for him! Then a driving drum beat kicked in and Dean moved Castiel’s arms to either side of the Alpha’s neck and placed his hands on Castiel’s hips, encouraging Castiel to swing them a little as they danced. It was an easy pace, and moving together like this was fantastic.

“Cause once upon a time you were my everything,” Dean sang, his green eyes happily searching Castiel’s. “It’s clear to see that time hasn’t changed a thing. So what in this world do you think could ever take you off my mind?”

Dean had picked this song because the words conveyed how the Alpha felt about him, Castiel just knew it. And the words were perfect! He couldn’t remember the last time he felt so overjoyed. The energy in the song coupled with Dean pushing him along felt like the Alpha was stalking him in slow motion. And Dean knew what he was doing, all of it, down to the way he was asking Castiel to trust him by leading them around the dance floor. Castiel felt the skin under Dean’s thumbs tingle as his Alpha purposefully squeezed one of his favorite erogenous zones, and Castiel panted in surprise.

He was fighting a losing battle to tamp down his arousal. He caught the refrain again and mouthed
the words back to Dean. “From the day that I met you, I knew that I would love you till the day I
die.” Dean’s face just lit up and Castiel could feel the man’s chest rumble in approval through his
arms.

“Feeling it, loving it, everything that we do. And all along, I knew I had something special with
you,” Dean sang, his eyes still smiling. He paused, and then finished with, “I can't hide my
connection with you.”

As the lyrics repeated, Castiel hung his head back and closed his eyes, baring his throat for Dean. He
felt himself give in to the driving beat and the sexual tension building between them. Why didn’t they
do this before? They should have been dancing like this for years! He came back to himself as Dean
pulled him incrementally closer and the heat of their bodies caused the fresh, grassy smell of Dean’s
scent to snake its way to Castiel’s brain. He could feel himself starting to get wet, his cock twitching
as he imagined Dean pushing him back against a wall, sliding his leg between Castiel’s thighs. He
panted, lust clouding his eyes as they locked onto Dean’s with laser focus.

Dean’s nostrils flared as he caught Castiel’s scent. The carefree nature of their dance turned serious
as Dean leaned in. “And I will never want much more, and in my heart I will always be sure,” he
sang. “That I will never forget you. And you'll always be by my side ’til the day I die.”

They were both breathing heavily, barely moving anymore as the music wound down. Castiel slid
his hand up behind Dean’s neck and squeezed, a clear signal that he wanted Dean’s mating mark on
his own nape. “Want you,” Castiel whispered. “Only you, Dean. Make me yours.” An almost
wicked smile graced the Alpha’s face and he nodded. “We need to leave now,” Castiel added.

“Yes.” Dean agreed. “We absolutely do.”
Chapter 13

If you’d asked, Dean would have been hard pressed to think of a time when he’d ever left a bar faster.

He was pretty sure he half-dragged a laughing Castiel out of Ash’s place so quickly that the guy was still trying to put on his scarf as Dean pressed him against the cold metal of the Impala’s passenger-side door. The laughing stopped, though, when Dean caged Cas between his arms and rocked his hips against the Omega’s jean-clad pelvis. He watched in smiling satisfaction as blue eyes slipped closed, and a stuttered moan and spicy sweetness engulfed his senses.

He was such a goner for this man.

Dean was fairly certain that Cas’ anxious scent change before dinner was more about mating than explaining the whole “Spain” shit-storm. Therefore, Dean’s number one priority, now that they were both completely amped up, was to take such good care of Cas that he would never forget this evening. Dean would do whatever Cas wanted to help him feel in control, because when he handed that control back over to Dean to actually do the deed – complete the ritual – it had to be with the least amount of fear possible. Dean wanted him begging, desperate and wanting, filled with anticipation and desire. Only then would Dean let his inner Alpha loose, mount his mate, and bite.

Just the thought of bonding with Cas on such a crazy-intense level and committing himself completely to the man he currently had pinned to his car was turning him on so much. He wanted to smell their scents tangle to make something new and uniquely theirs. He couldn’t wait for that antsy buzz he felt when they were apart for too long to transform into a tingling sensation that let him know when Cas was near. He knew in his mind that Cas was “it” for him; now Dean wanted to make it tangibly real, to write it on his own skin and let Cas feel that connection in his very bones so he would know without a doubt that he was treasured, honored, and adored.

But he sure as hell wasn’t going to do it in the parking lot.

Dean peeled himself off of Castiel and guided him into the car. Once they were both safely inside with the heater on, he pulled Cas across the bench seat and snug up against him, a move so smooth that it hit number six on the top ten reasons why he kept the car in the first place. “Okay,” he murmured into Cas’ ear, dipping his nose for an unadulterated hit of horny Omega – floral and sweet but rich with desire so it wasn’t saccharine, but instead earthy…organic. And wasn’t that a bitch, because he had sworn that Sam was the only Winchester who would ever use that word in a complete sentence. Speaking of which…

“I gotta call Sam and Maddie and see if they can keep Claire. That okay with you?”

“Wait,” Cas replied, grabbing onto Dean’s wrist like a drowning man grasping a lifejacket. His blue eyes raked over Dean’s face as he struggled to regain his composure. “Dean, I want you so much. I want to be yours entirely,” he explained in that deep voice that was honestly making Dean’s toes curl. “But I’m being selfish. If we do this, your scent will change. You know that. Omegas won’t respond to you the same way anymore and I don’t want to be the reason that you stop helping others. I don’t want you to resent me for…”

“Okay, that’s crazy, Cas, and you know it,” Dean cut in. His lips latched onto Cas’ jaw and slid slowly over to the Omega’s chin, where he found his teeth gently scraping against the light stubble there. “I will never resent you. I think I’ve done the pack proud. Done my duty.”
Castiel tried to nod in agreement but Dean rubbed his cheek against the other man’s until his lips were back, tracing the shell of Castile’s ear. Dean grinned as he felt Cas’ chest moving quickly against his own, hoping and praying that the intoxicating smell of Cas’ pheromones and slick would embed itself into the leather seats so Dean would smell this for days.

“It’s time I concentrated my efforts on helping one very special Omega. Besides, if you want to, Cas, we can have more pups. But only if you want.” Dean scooted them to the center of the front seat and effortlessly manhandled Castiel onto his lap before pressing his mouth against the pink, parted lips in front of him. Castiel groaned and tipped his head to give Dean room to sweep his tongue inside the sweetness of Cas’ mouth. They sat like that, committing to each other via deep, passionate kisses, knowing that this was the moment that their lives had changed. Right now, with Cas’ slick warming Dean’s thigh and Dean’s arms around Cas’ hips, they had reached an understanding.

Dean would be Cas’ Alpha, and his alone. Castiel would be the only Omega Dean would ever want, would ever knot, from this day forward. Everything from here on out was just a technicality, but there were important rites to complete, all the same.

“Make the call,” Castiel whispered.

Dean rumbled in response, anticipation permeating the car as a light sheen of perspiration broke the surface of his skin. He basked in the pleasure of knowing how in tune they were. Suddenly, his hair was being yanked and his throat exposed, and Dean just about lost his ever-loving mind. Plush, hot lips left a trail of wet kisses down Dean’s neck, and he moaned so loudly he was almost embarrassed. His dick, on the other hand, sprang to attention and would have saluted the fucking flag if it wasn’t currently being uncomfortably squashed by the metal zipper of his pants.

“Baby, I need you to think about what you want, okay?” Dean begged. He fumbled with his phone and decided that calling his brother would take more brain power than he was capable of at this point. “Wanna make this perfect for you,” he panted, leaning his head back so Cas could continue swirling his absolutely sinful tongue against that singular spot where Dean’s neck and shoulder joined. After a few more seconds of absolute bliss, Dean valiantly attempted to concentrate enough to send his brother a text.

D: He said yes

D: I’m only one on his list

D: Can u kelp Claire

With no immediate response and arms that felt like lead, Dean let the hand that held his cell fall against his thigh.

Cas was sucking on his earlobe now, but took a quick break to ask, “Will you chase me?”

“Oh God, yeah,” Dean gasped. His cock twitched at the thought of stalking Cas, following a trail of honey and lavender down that long, carpeted corridor to Cas’ front door. “I, uh, I won’t be rough. Unless you want me to?”

The phone buzzed in his clenched fist and Dean struggled to remember why he cared. Something about Sam and…oh shit, his baby girl! He peeked down at his side.

Sam: That's fantastic dude! You were worried for nothing!

Sam: Can’t believe you thought there would be like 72 As and Bs on his list! And Balth was
“Not rough but, um, traditional?” Cas explained.

Dean blinked, ripping his attention from Sam’s commentary back to the hot mouth that currently sucked against the sensitive skin at the top of Dean’s shoulder. Cas’ voice continued, husky and full of want. “Will you claim me? Take me where you catch me?”

The one arm still slung around Cas’ body squeezed and Dean instinctively gripped tighter, holding on for dear life as Cas’ words threatened to actually stop his heart. “Fuck, Cas, that’s all I want.” he confessed on a groan. “Old school. Traditional. Not rough. Never take advantage. I’m gonna…wait a sec, sweetheart. Let me get Sam and Maddie on board, k?”

Cas nodded and leaned back, giving Dean some space as he quickly typed in the all-important question.

D: can Claire stay wit u

Dean immediately went back to kissing Cas, plundering his mouth with a single-minded purpose. Shit, Cas wanted him to give chase! God, that was so fucking hot! He imagined catching Cas and tossing him over the sofa or pulling him down and taking him on the floor in the kitchen. His cock was hard enough to punch a hole through his jeans right now, what with filthy thoughts rolling through his head and Cas’ ass wriggling against him.

Sam: Dude are you drunk? Your texting sucks

Nothing like a brotherly insult to bring your head slamming back to the present. Dean’s brain kicked in like a generator during a blackout, with a sudden burst of lucidity that cleared the hormone haze.

D: ANSWER THE FUCKING ? I HAVE A LAP FULL OF CAS RIGHT NOW AND UNLESS U WANNA SEE VIDEO, SAY U CAN KEEP CLAIRE!

Sam: Jeez man! Chill! We got it.

Oh thank God! Dean couldn’t hold back anymore and his hips thrust against the weight on his dick. Cas moaned in response and then pulled back, staring wildly at Dean. That must have been too close of a call, because Cas slid off Dean’s lap and leaned against the passenger door, trying to calm down by putting physical space between their bodies. Smart man.

“I’m going to make a call too,” Cas grunted before pushing himself out of the car.

Unwelcome cool air rushed in, virtually slapping Dean in the face. He shook his head and watched Cas stand and compose himself before fishing his own cell phone out of the pocket of his trench coat.

Sam: Wait, you’re gonna do it tonight?

Dean sighed as Cas turned his back to the car and took a few steps away. It felt like torture, every second of it. He glanced down, read Sam’s text, and frowned.

D: Yeah, we’re gonna go all the way.

D: You’re a freakin teenage girl, u know that?
Sam: Do it right, man.

Sam: Dean mated. Never thought I’d see the day ; )

Sam: You get to tell Ellen and Bobby. Bring Cas to dinner. Get PC then.

D: Ok will do

Crap, he was really gonna do this. He should be freaking out. He should be nervous and anxious and freaking the fuck out. But instead, as Dean watched Cas stretch his neck to the left and right, all the Alpha felt was how right this was. After everything they had been through, together and apart, there wasn’t a doubt in Dean’s mind that this was the right decision.

D: Thanks Sam

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Castiel walked around to Baby’s trunk, deeply inhaling cold, mountain air to calm his rapidly beating heart, and dialed the front desk at his apartment building. His feet had him pacing as the line rang.

A gruff voice answered on the second ring. “Elysian Fields, Rufus speaking.”

He swallowed and looked across the street. It seemed that neither the late hour nor the cool temps kept the people of Denver from strolling up and down the sidewalks of their home town. He wondered if this was just another night for them; just another dinner or just another trip to the liquor store. Or maybe, like himself, this was a night to be remembered. Dinner celebrated a 25th wedding anniversary. A bottle of champagne commemorated a new job. Or a mating...

“Hello? Mr. Novak, you there?”

“Yes, Rufus, I’m sorry. I’m here. I, uh…” Crap. He was really going to do this. Castiel admitted to himself in that moment, that he really never thought he would be mated. Never thought he would find someone who would fit into his life as seamlessly as Dean had. He had found the perfect Alpha — the perfect man.

“Everything alright, sir?” the security guard asked, his voice tinged with concern.

Castiel closed his eyes to calm his nerves. It didn’t help. “I need to reserve Basement 2, please,” he replied quietly.

There was a substantial pause on the line. “Hmm. Winchester?”

“Yes,” Castiel answered, smiling.

“‘Bout time,” the older man huffed quietly. “Okay. One second…Mr. Novak per protocol, I have a few questions I need to ask.”

“Go ahead, Rufus.”

“I need your security code, sir.”

“987,” Castiel replied, giving the code for a mating request made voluntarily and without duress. If he’d said “111” instead, Dean would have been tazed and restrained as soon as he walked through the lobby’s double glass doors.
“The other party’s last name.”

“Winchester.”

“What time will you need the room?”

“We should…let’s say 10:15.”

“It’s free. Any additional instructions?” Rufus asked.

“Can you clear the hall on my floor please and unlock my door?”

Another pause. “Gonna make a run for it?” Rufus chuckled.

Castiel laughed back and shook his head. “I’m not so old that I can’t give a good chase.”

“Oh, no doubt there, Mr. Novak.”

“Rufus…” Castiel chided.

“Beg your pardon. Castiel. Just didn’t pin you as being old-fashioned like that.”

“Are you snickering, Rufus?”

“Oh no. You’d know if I was snickering. M’Sure you’ve got this covered, but Princess Claire’s on a sleepover or something?”

“She is. Thank you for thinking of her,” Castiel affirmed.

“Okay then. Take the elevator down to B2, and then enter your PIN in the keypad. There’s a big locker with your apartment number on it. You can both put your things in there. The combo’s the same as your PIN. Hit the green button and give a consent statement before you leave. No hanky panky in my elevator, Castiel. And you better make sure you clear the hall. I don’t need that on my security cameras.”

“Oh ye of little faith,” Castiel challenged.

“As Claire used to say, ‘Fly like the wind, Bullseye!’” Rufus laughed. “Congrats, Castiel. That’s a good alpha you got there.”

Yes. He is. Castiel smiled and agreed.

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It wouldn’t be fair to say that Dean was speeding. He was moving just a bit faster than the flow of traffic, sure. And he wasn’t weaving, per se, just adeptly avoiding slower cars. Besides, yellow lights were just a warning, and the mating fantasies that kept running through his head were going to kill him where he sat if he didn’t get them both back to Cas’ apartment immediately. It was more of a medical emergency, really.

“I want you to live with us as soon as you’re able,” Cas announced to the windshield before swallowing and slowly turning his head to check Dean’s reaction.

Dean grinned and shot a quick look at the man in his passenger seat. “That can be arranged.”

The speedometer inch ed up by three more miles per hour.
Castiel cleared his throat. “I, uh, I would love to expand our family, Dean. Would you?”

Dean nodded, his smile growing even wider. “Absolutely, Cas. Can’t wait to take care of you while you’re carrying our pup. Wanna rub that lotion on your belly and feed you Sprite and crackers,” he chuckled. The picture of an exhausted Castiel in a hospital bed flashed before his eyes and he sighed. “I want to be there when the baby’s born.”

He watched Cas blush through a look of complete adoration and thought again about how lucky he was.

Okay, now he was definitely speeding.

The pair made a beeline through the lobby as Rufus squinted and glared at Dean over the reading glasses that perched on his nose.

“Take good care of him!” the security guard barked as the pair stepped into the single elevator against the far wall.

“I will,” they both answered, before looking at each other and laughing.

They held hands on the quick trip down, nervous excitement almost a cloud inside the small space. Cas led them to a heavy, metal door with an industrial numbered keypad. “No retinal scan?” Dean asked with a smile.

Castiel shook his head and grinned, pulling the Alpha into an unassuming space that resembled a health club. The walls were painted a subdued grey and a bank of metal gym lockers took up most of two walls. Castiel started looking for one with his apartment number painted at the top. When he found it, he quickly opened the lock and the door. When he turned to find Dean, the taller man was walking in a slow circle, taking in his surroundings with a perplexed look on his face.

“We can, uh, strip down here and put our clothes in the locker.” Dean’s startled expression was reason enough to continue explaining. “We can keep our boxers on. That’s probably a good idea. Um, the building is very Omega friendly, so they have protocols for this kind of thing.”

“Well I’d hate to rip your sweater to shreds,” Dean smiled. He sauntered into Castiel’s personal space and wrapped his arms around the other man. “You look like you belong on the cover of GQ.”

“Thank you,” Castiel replied, glancing down at his brown loafers at the compliment. He cleared his throat and shot Dean a cheeky grin. “I don’t want anything to slow me down when I beat you to the door.”

“What are you insinuating, Cas?” Dean asked playfully, gently pulling the cream cable-knit sweater over Cas’ head, causing the Omega’s dark hair to spike up in different directions. See, this was another reason why he loved Cas. After knowing each other for five years, they could banter back and forth like this effortlessly. He wondered if they’d end up that old mated couple that finishes each other’s sentences.

“I’m insisting that I’m faster than you think,” Cas answered with a wink, quickly divesting Dean of his shirt. “You’ve got your work cut out for you, Alpha.”
Dean grabbed Castiel’s belt loops and yanked their hips together, wringing a gasp of surprise out of the other man as he freed Cas’ belt from its confines. Castiel took the opportunity to slip off his loafers and kick them to the side, at the same time catching a strong whiff of warm sage. He almost purred in response. This was Dean excited and aroused and it was heady. He leaned in close as his fingers worked on the button and zipper of Dean’s jeans. “I’ve promised Rufus there will be nothing compromising on his security cameras, and I’m a man of my word.”

Dean smirked at the thought of holding Cas naked in front of one of those hall cameras and flipping Rufus off. He took a step back to watch Cas strip himself of his jeans and found himself so caught up in the scene in front of him that he only remembered at the last moment that he needed to do the same. God, his cock was going to kill him if they kept this up much longer. They stood facing each other, wearing nothing but dark cotton boxer briefs and knowing smiles. Without breaking eye contact, Dean stretched out his arm and slammed the locker door closed, making Cas startle. “We’ll see about that, Mister Novak,” he breathed against Cas’ ear.

Castiel smiled slowly and threaded his fingers through Dean’s. “That’s Drug Ring Toppling, Sustainable Energy Castiel Novak to you,” he snarked in response. “Come on, Alpha.” He pulled Dean along behind him to a small computer screen directly to the left of the door, and pressed a green button. Their images appeared on the screen and a red light turned on at the top of the monitor. Castiel looked over his shoulder at Dean before addressing the computer. “My name is Castiel Novak and I am willingly taking Dean Winchester as my mate.”

Dean leaned in front of Cas and cleared his throat. “I’m, uh, Dean Winchester and I am willingly taking Castiel Novak as my mate.” He looked questioningly at Cas, who chuckled and pushed the green button again, turning off the recording.

He turned and looked Dean in the eye. “This is it,” he declared.

“This is it,” Dean agreed. He reached out and ran his fingers through Cas’ dark hair in a fruitless attempt to tame it. “Hey, before we get too out of control, I just want to say thank you.”

Castiel tilted his head quizzically.

“You are the best thing that’s ever happened to me, Castiel Novak. I plan on spending the rest of my life proving that to you.”

Castiel smiled, his expression warm. “I look forward to it.”

They padded back down the hall in bare feet and squeezed each other’s hands as they waited for the elevator to open. Dean took a deep breath to steady his nerves.

“This is really happening.

As they stepped inside, Dean pulled Cas to him, pushing the other man’s back against the elevator wall and kissing him hard. He hitched one of Cas’ legs up and used the extra space to grind his very thankful cock against Cas’ cotton-clad dick.

Castiel Novak is going to be my mate.

Taken off guard, Castiel threw his arms around Dean’s neck for balance, overcome by Dean’s sudden manhandling. He desperately rutted back, the wet spot on the front of his briefs a true testament to how badly he wanted this too. Dean let out a small sob of gratitude and continued to suck on Cas’ tongue and thrust against him, working them both into a near-frenzy. This part was pivotal. He had to get Cas’ adrenaline going because if he was going to chase the love of his life
down a 100’ corridor, he was going to make damn sure said love of his life would take off like a rocket. He pulled his mouth off of Cas, flipped him around so they were back to front with Cas facing the elevator doors, and sucked on the scent glands at the back of the Omega’s neck hard enough to immediately leave a bruise.

Castiel went wild, howling loudly and thrashing against Dean, whose strong arms secured him tightly to his chest. As he pulled in deep lung fulls of Dean’s scent, Castiel’s brain fed him a clear picture of a Kansas prairie, with tall grass swaying in the breeze. His pulse beat so loudly in his ears that he barely heard the crickets chirping at his feet. To his left he saw two cottonwood trees, their green leaves shimmering in the summer sun. The smell of warmed sage hoovered thickly in the air.

He struggled against Dean, painting his Alpha’s scent-ladden sweat all over his back and transforming the scene in front of him into even more vivid detail. Instinctively, Castiel knew that his mission was to run – to beat his Alpha to their den. He had to prove himself worthy; that he was fast and agile and an asset to the pack. He would win the chase, but then let his Alpha claim his prize. Suddenly his eye line was lower, as if he was on four legs not two. He heard a strange rumbling noise and then a well-worn path through the grassland opened up in front of him.

So he ran.

Wind whipped through his fur as he sprinted across the prairie, the dirt soft against his paws. His Alpha growled behind him, spurring him forward, but he wasn’t worried, not yet. He was built for this. His lithe body and strong thighs easily carried him along. Excitement and joy raced through his veins as he loped across the grass, his long strides quickly chewing up the distance. Up ahead, a sunbeam cast warm light on the entrance to his den. He was almost there! He was going to make it! But then loud panting right behind him struck fear straight to his heart. He could NOT let his Alpha catch him! He had to prove his worth. So Castiel poured every ounce of strength he had left into his legs and he ran.

His heart pounded in his chest and his muscles ached as he desperately fought for breath. Pressure at his back as his Alpha reached out for him caused him to yelp and jump, right into the den’s opening. He skidded across a slick surface, maybe it was a puddle or a creek, and he struggled for purchase. A loud noise sounded behind him and he jumped over an earthen berm and scurried into a corner, positioning his back to the safety of the den’s wall.

He crouched down and panted, desperate to fill his lungs and calm himself, but his smile was wide. He was victorious! He had shown his Alpha that even though he may be smaller, he was quick and cunning, just as an Omega should be. Castiel raised his head as his beautiful mate came close, breathing heavily himself and smiling just as widely.

“I am so proud of you,” his Alpha said. “You are perfect for me. Strong and fast and stunning.” His mate sat down ten feet in front of Castiel and whined softly, entreating him to come closer.

Castiel knew this was the moment when he would have to decide. He could stay safe and solitary, with his back to the den’s wall, or he could come forward, give himself up and let himself be taken. He could pledge himself to his Alpha, be forever connected, and find a completely different kind of safety where he was never alone and his pups would always be protected. He could let himself be loved and cared for. He stared at his beautiful Alpha, muscles shiny with sweat, and saw only love and admiration in those sparkling green eyes. The decision was easy.

Castiel stood and walked towards him, anxious to nuzzle at his neck and take in more of that glorious scent.
“I love you,” he heard. Castiel felt cooler and realized with a start that he was standing in his living room with Dean at his feet, gently stepping him out of his boxer briefs. A trail of warm slick coated the backs of his thighs and he felt a little woozy, but in a “three shots of whiskey” way – tipsy and warm on the inside. Then Dean had him in his arms, and Castiel hummed in happiness as Dean’s hard and hot flesh found the perfect spot against his hip.

“I love you,” Dean repeated softly, then lifted Cas into a bridal carry with a grunt and hefted him onto the white, “L” shaped couch so he faced the back of it. Castiel reached out to grab hold of the padded fabric as Dean spread his knees and stood between them.

*Oh God, this was it!* Castiel felt his heart thumping quickly again and panic flooded his system. He gripped the back of the sofa so hard his knuckles turned white. Fear of the unknown and of the pain of a mating bite took over and he shook, wishing desperately that he was a stronger man. Then Dean’s warm skin pressed against him and a strong hand grabbed the back of the sofa next to his.

“Oh God, this was it! Castiel felt his heart thumping quickly again and panic flooded his system. He gripped the back of the sofa so hard his knuckles turned white. Fear of the unknown and of the pain of a mating bite took over and he shook, wishing desperately that he was a stronger man. Then Dean’s warm skin pressed against him and a strong hand grabbed the back of the sofa next to his.

“Submit, so I may give myself to you, body and soul, now and forever;” his Alpha whispered in his ear, his voice thick with emotion. Silent tears fell down Cas’ cheeks as he nodded, and Dean reached out with his other hand and firmly pinched the skin at the scruff of Castiel’s neck.

In that moment, the world…just…slowed…down. All the muscles in his body stilled and a sense of complete calm washed over him. Dean was there. His Alpha, to whom he owed everything, held him firmly and it was a joy to submit to him. Tension left him, panic vanished, and Dean easily slid inside, filling and stretching every nook and cranny in his body. It was euphoric. He could feel Dean thrusting into him, slow and steady, and Castiel swore he felt it all the way down to his toes. He didn’t need to move or match his partner, try to impress him or take the lead. Dean was in control and he was ecstatic to give that over. It felt so amazing to let go, so he did, finding absolute pleasure in the pure sensation of Dean making love to him.

**Mating him.**

He opened eyes he hadn’t realized he’d shut and even though he couldn’t move at all, he could feel everything. Dean was breathing hard against his neck, causing the fine hairs there to stand and goosebumps to sprout up all over his shoulders. Dean was making these deep, rumbling sounds that only confirmed to Castiel that this amazing Alpha was powerful – the only mate for him. And his cock…Lord, Castiel wanted to write sonnets about how Dean lit him up from the inside, an exquisite fullness that threatened to split him open but at the same time felt perfect, just perfect. Dean was rocking into him so hard now that Castiel’s entire body jostled with each thrust and his own dick felt impossibly hard. Every nerve ending was pulling tight and something had to give because he couldn’t go on like this – it was just too much. He needed something. God, Dean had to help him. He had to do something.

And then sharp teeth grazed the back of his neck and Castiel keened loudly.

*Searing pain.* A sharp, stabbing pain that sliced into him. Castiel screamed from it and tried desperately to escape, but Dean had snaked an arm under Castiel’s chest and held him tight. Then Dean’s knot stretched him to the point of breaking as it thrust into Castiel’s body and everything exploded. His every molecule, every atom just went nuclear as his orgasm swept through him, and he imagined himself like a star going supernova, his own destruction marked by one final, titanic blast.

He vaguely registered Dean howling behind him as a tingling sensation cascaded from the top of his head down to the soles of his feet. It felt as if someone had doused his burning form with water, or maybe he had been baptized, and everything he had been, all his fears and insecurities, were being washed away. All of it was true, or none of it; but it didn’t really matter. What did matter was Dean,
to whom he was connected, now and forever. His Alpha continued to claim him both inside and out, filling him with his seed and adding his saliva to the wound he had created.

Exhausted and overwhelmed, Castiel continued to twitch like he was being tapped with tiny jolts of electricity. He finally gave in to the white fuzziness that seeped into the edges of his vision and let himself drift away.
Chapter 14

Chapter Summary

Thanks so much for letting me get this out and reading it and commenting and kudoing! You guys are really awesome-sauce.

There’s a singular moment almost every morning when Dean Winchester had an extremely important decision to make. In that split second between asleep and awake, he could either pull his pillow tighter to his chest, or he could stretch and open his eyes. You’d think that such a pivotal decision would be placed in the competent hands of his cerebral cortex, but most mornings, Dean’s brain and his bladder duked it out, giving him the opportunity to weigh the day. If he could convince his bladder to stand down, he could steal another 10 to 15 minutes of blessed sleep and roll back over. When he remembered that Benny had filled his dance card bright and early, he let his bladder win, gave in and cracked an eyelid.

But he wasn’t about to just jump from the warm haven of his memory foam mattress and greet the day, either. He was no Disney princess being serenaded by cartoon bluebirds and woodland creatures, for Christ’s sake. Most mornings when bodily functions prevailed, Dean would still throw his brain a bone, usually by calling up his entire to-do list in excruciating detail – call customers, wrangle MS Project to update milestones and timelines, buy laundry soap, look for an email from the lumber supplier, check in on the other half of the Winchester family tree...

But this morning, as he drifted into consciousness, a third voice made its presence known. Brain and bladder quit their bickering and waited as new data poured in through a filament invisible to the naked eye but as strong as the heartbeat that vibrated through it.

*Lub dub. Lub dub. Lub dub.*

*Mate.*

*Safe.*

*Asleep.*

Dean smiled to himself and, without opening his eyes, scented the air. Prairie summers filled his nose and he could almost see the bright colors of wild honeysuckle mixed among a field of purple-tipped flowering lavender and Russian sage. Calm and contentment flowed over him like a lazy summer stream, and Dean imagined himself resting on grassy banks, listening to the water as it barely moved around smooth river rocks while the sun warmed his face. All of this was thanks to the nearly six feet of sleeping Omega currently huffing small, warm breaths against the back of his neck. Cas’ peace was now Dean’s peace, and Dean had never felt anything like it.

Last night.

Jesus, last night was a revelation. Bits and pieces flooded Dean’s memory in bright flashes. First, Cas’ scent had exploded in the elevator, immediately taking on a heady, almost fermented tinge that Dean knew meant Cas had found his vision. The new scent threaded its way into Cas’ slick, nature’s Alpha homing beacon, and there wasn’t a damn thing Dean wanted more in this world as his brain...
fizzled to static and his Alpha surged in response. He remembered feeling almost feverish before perspiration broke out all over his body, allowing him to mark Cas’ skin with his own scent as he struggled to keep the other man close.

One singular thought ran through his head. *Mine. This one is mine.*

Then the elevator doors slid apart and Cas was off. Dean had a full second to watch his mate’s back muscles ripple before his instincts had him springing into action. In that moment, Cas had been as much prey as prize. Dean had never seen anything more graceful than Cas racing down that hallway, all power and speed but sinuous like a huge jungle cat. Dean was pretty sure his lupine ancestors would be pretty pissed by that comparison, but fuck if it wasn’t the most accurate description he could come up with. It was almost as if Cas’ feet never touched the carpet. And every fiber in Dean’s body *wanted* him; there had been no holding back or letting Castiel win.

Dean had almost gotten him too. But even though he hated losing, his Alpha had been overjoyed with his Omega’s success.

Because his mate kicked *ass.*

Shit, he was so glad that Cas had wanted to run. It took a lot of guts to be that vulnerable, to allow yourself to be compromised in front of someone who could literally kill you, not that Dean would ever be a threat. Still, he was amazed and humbled that Cas showed him such trust. Honestly, they could have sat on the white sofa and calmly discussed where Dean should bite like they were picking a movie on Netflix. But not Double O… No, not his *mate.* His amazing, trusting, fucking-sexy-beyond-belief, strong, brilliant mate. Castiel Novak didn’t do anything half-assed. He gave himself completely to Dean, allowing himself to tap into an experience so primal it was coded into his beautiful Omega DNA.

Dean sighed, remembering Cas shaking just a little bit as Dean made the pledge. Those were an emotional couple of seconds for him too, no joke, because those words meant a lot. He first learned them in his high school Pack Studies class. When he’d asked his foster father about it later, he remembered how Bobby had gotten a thoughtful look in his eye. The old man had been mighty proud that Arapaho’s pledge called on its Alphas to give themselves to their Omegas, not demand obedience from them. He explained that because he was a Beta it wasn’t really his thing, but that Dean would be damn lucky if he ever got to experience that with an Omega mate. Bobby had, like always, been absolutely right.

And then Cas had consented. Dean had been blown away by the man’s submission; it had been breathtaking. Cas had responded so perfectly that his calm became Dean’s calm, allowing him remain in control, slow his movements and absolutely worship Cas. His Omega had needed him physically, his scent had clearly communicated that, and Dean was compelled to live up to his promise. So he gave himself to Cas entirely, and Cas’ body took what belonged to him, easily stretching around Dean’s cock like a silken glove. When Cas clinched around him and shattered, pulling Dean with him and into the void, Dean would have sworn that everything he was poured into his mate and Cas claimed it all as his own.

He only wished that his bite hadn’t been so obviously painful. Dean opened his eyes and ever so slowly rolled over so he was facing Cas, who looked so much like a damn angel that Dean hesitated to wake him. *Oh well.*

“Cas.”

“Cas.” Dean reached out and gently pet his mate’s side, slowly running his flat palm from ribcage to thigh.
“Hmmm?” Castiel hadn’t moved a single muscle. At first Dean thought maybe he had imagined the sound.

“Um, roll over? I need to see it.”

“Hmmm,” Cas replied, still as a statue.

“I know you’re in there,” Dean chuckled, dragging his hand back up the way it came. “Please?”

Sleepy blue eyes met Dean’s. “You’re concerned.”

Dean merely nodded.

Castiel rolled over, baring his back to Dean who found himself unable to keep a small whine down. Cas’ pale skin puffed around the puncture marks Dean had left behind, and bruising already cast a mauve tint to the area. It looked fucking painful, and Dean found himself caught between two powerful emotions: Alpha pride at marking his mate so well and intense guilt over causing Cas such agony. He swallowed roughly.

“I’m okay,” Cas said quietly.

Dean slid his arm beneath his mate’s neck and scooted closer. His heart hurt as he scanned the area intently, taking personal responsibility for every raised and angry mark. How could he have not realized the pain he had caused? He felt his eyes sting.

“I’m so…”

“It’s perfect, Dean. Don’t apologize for this. NEVER apologize for this.”

Dean let out an unhappy sigh, closing his eyes in defeat. It wasn’t fair that Cas had to suffer. He wished he could have taken that burden himself. Repentant lips brushed over the mottled skin, wishing to ease the discomfort now. Much to his surprise, Castiel moaned in a decidedly “I’m not in pain” kind of way. Dean paused, wondering if he was reading this right, because just looking at that bite should cause Cas considerable agony. So he repeated the gesture, this time placing light kisses slowly over the area.

Mate.

Safe.

Slight pain. Arousal.

Dean froze while his mind attempted to parse this new language of emotions expressing themselves directly into both his rational mind and nervous system. It was like he knew what Castiel was thinking and he felt what Castiel was feeling simultaneously. As Castiel felt and thought them. Did he mention feeling what Castiel felt? Because Castiel was definitely feeling like he wanted more of what Dean was currently doing.

Dean’s mouth flooded with saliva and he licked over the bite with a long, slow drag of his tongue. In the split second before Cas gasped his name, Dean felt Cas’ heart rate speed up, felt his breathing quicken, felt his cock begin to fill, and his brain surge with endorphins. His own brain scrambled to process all of this new information, leaving him panting and confused. But never let it be said that Dean wasn’t a subscriber of the scientific method. Hesitantly, he pressed an open-mouthed kiss to the mark and gently pushed his tongue against the bruise, only to instantly feel a desire so strong that he could only describe it as a deep pulsing low in his gut. Really low. Like more in his pelvis.
Dean’s eyes flew open as Cas moaned again and the scent of his slick filled Dean’s nose. *That’s not… Did I really just feel…*

*Well, in for a penny…* Dean sucked against his handiwork and his brain literally *screamed* at him.

**MATE.**

**SAFE.**

**NEEDS YOU! INSIDE! NOW! FUCK! FILL! INSIDE!**

Dean groaned long and loud, shuddering as his eyes squeezed tight against the onslaught of demands and sensations, only to realize that he was already rutting his hard cock (when had that happened?) into the crease of Castiel’s ass and breathing heavy against his back.

“Cas?!” he managed to choke out.

**MATE.**

**SAFE.**

**NEEDS YOU! NEEDS YOU! NOW! FUCK! DON’T STOP! INSIDE!**

“Yes!” Castiel begged “Dean, please!”

“Got that!” Dean panted.

**MATE.**

**SAFE.**

**NOW! NEEDS YOU! INSIDE! FUCK! DEEP! NOW!**

Dean rolled Cas onto his belly and sucked hard on the purpling bruise as he angled his hips over the curve of Cas’ ass. He felt his mate shouting into the pillow under the onslaught, the body underneath him jerking as Dean’s cockhead slipped across the wet pucker of his hole. Then that initial resistance gave way to welcoming smoothness that hugged him tight, and finally he was inside his mate, burying his dick as far into the clutch of Cas’ body as he could.

**MATE.**

**SAFE.**

**FULL. RELIEF. MOVE! MOVE! NOW!**

Dean huffed in surprise and his hips rocked almost without his say-so into Cas. He blinked, desperate to clear the fog and mentally pull himself back just a bit. *Fuck, this was intense! God, Cas felt so unbelievably amazing around him.*

Warm velvet encased him as he continued to thrust into his mate, and it was heaven. There was no way to describe how right it felt. How perfect this was. On top of that, his body continued to respond to what Cas felt while responding to what he felt and it was just, sensory overload. Underneath him, Castiel sobbed and panted. He turned his face away from the pillow to pull in a huge gulp of air. “Heaven…Perfect…Bliss,” he whispered.

Dean slowed down. “Baby, can you…”
“Love you, too,” Dean whispered. Suddenly everything clicked into place. If he was feeling what Cas felt, then Cas was obviously feeling what he felt. Which made Cas feel even more, which made him feel even more.

“Oh God,” he mumbled into Cas’ shoulder. Every single one of his nerve endings tingled as he registered a ridiculously stupid feeling of loss. He missed his mate. Needed to see him, to lose himself in those liquid blue eyes. Cas whined beneath him.

Dean raised himself up and slowly pulled away from Cas, even as his mind and body fought him every inch of the way. He sat back on his heels, panting like he’d run a marathon, grabbing onto his own thighs for dear life. Castiel rolled onto his back, the long lines of his torso stretching as he slid a leg to the other side of Dean’s crouching form.

The Omega’s eyes were wet and his voice was thick as he caught his breath. “It can’t be this… intense…forever, right?” he gasped. “I don’t think my heart…can take it.”

All of Dean’s words apparently got up and left him as he stared, transfixed and overwhelmed by the beautiful sight of Castiel’s chest, shoulders and cheeks painted a rosy pink, and his dark hair damp with sweat and tears. He reached out for a pillow and thought he would gladly die like this, drowning in the deep sea blue of his mate’s eyes. Cas lifted his hips as Dean slid the pillow beneath him, never once breaking the gaze.

If there was a God above, He would allow Dean to spend the rest of his life right here, memorizing every inch of the smooth skin below him, just barely dusted with fine hairs.

Thank you. Thank you for being here, for being my mate. Let me show you how much…

Dean leaned over and licked a slow stripe up Cas’ cock, pausing to suckle on the tip, shivering as Cas dug his head into the bed and arched his back. God, he wanted all of Cas. He closed his eyes and loosened his jaw so he could slowly take his mate entirely into his mouth and further, not stopping until the curly hairs at the base of Cas’ cock tickled his nose. He swallowed around Cas’ length and reveled in the gurgled noises his attentions dragged from his mate.

Mate.

Safe.


Dean hummed in agreement before releasing Cas’ dick and moving up his body. Finally they were kissing, Dean melting into it as Cas’ tongue licked against his own. He was lost and floating until Cas’ hands cradled his face and held him steady, then powerful thighs and strong calves were pulling him in, urging him closer.

They both groaned as Dean slid home, their foreheads touching. Every last bit of Alpha strength went into keeping himself propped up so he could watch Cas fall apart beneath him.

“More,” Cas pleaded quietly.
“Shhh,” Dean replied. “So good, Cas. Let me…”

Castiel moaned like he couldn’t keep the sound in anymore, a deep whimpering noise that steadily rose in pitch and speed, gathering momentum as Dean kept a steady pace. He smiled a little in response, loving the virtual death grip his mate had on his biceps, imagining the finger-sized bruises that would dot his upper arms. Then his dick started to throb at the base, knot swelling, and he had to be inside – completely inside Castiel – right this fucking second.

“Shit! Shit, Dean!” Of course Cas felt it, but Dean couldn’t stop now if his life depended on it, and he fucked deep into Cas, plunging his knot inside the Omega’s rim. “Oh, God!” Castiel shouted. Suddenly every muscle clamped down tight and Cas came, warm and slick between their bellies. The surge of ecstasy jolted through Dean, who was helpless against the tidal wave of emotion and vice-like grip squeezing around him. He roared into Cas’ chest and let go, his orgasm powerful enough to sweep him away. But Cas held him tight, inside and out, milking his cock of every drop. Somehow Dean knew from now until the day he died, his body belonged to Cas. It was an honor and a privilege to give.

----------------------------------------------

Dinner wasn’t awkward. Not really. There was a lot of smiling down at mashed potatoes and sideways glances, and a few furtive eyebrow bounces. The sound of cutlery against dinner plates seemed booming in the silence, and Dean was sure he caught Maddie elbowing her husband in the ribs as the two of them stifled giggles. Bobby just stared at everyone in turn, Castiel included, for extended periods of time, hoping that someone would crack and just spill the beans.

Claire had picked up on the strange vibe early on, seeing as how she and her Granma had been talking about whether it would be more fun to go grocery shopping with Olaf or Sven before her parents showed up, and now no one was talking at all. She stared at Cas and then Dean alternatingly for a good 30 minutes before wrinkling her nose in confusion.

“Daddy, you smell funny,” she proclaimed to the table.

Well that was one way of addressing the elephant in the room.

So it was a toss-up – Ellen’s eyebrows nearly flying off her forehead or Sam sputtering iced tea across the table. Of course in Dean’s opinion, Cas’ sudden beet red complexion and scent of utter embarrassment was the clear winner in the Most Embarrassing Response to Being Called Out Post-Mating by Your Young Daughter contest. Hands down.

“Idjits,” Bobby muttered to himself. The old man slammed his hands down on the table and stood quickly, causing his wooden kitchen chair to skitter back a few inches in shock. He pointed at Claire, who was close to tears at her grandpa’s sudden movements, and stared Dean down. “You gonna tell her what’s really goin on here?”

“Grandpa!” Ellen scolded, exercising her God-given right to turn that stare right back on her own husband. She inclined her head back towards the abused chair to skitter back a few inches in shock. He pointed at Claire, who was close to tears at her grandpa’s sudden movements, and stared Dean down. “You gonna tell her what’s really goin on here?”

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Dean gulped and squeezed Castiel’s knee under the table. “Yes, Grandma,” he replied, giving in to a small smile, which Ellen begrudgingly returned. It would be impossible for her to stay upset in the face of such wonderful news, even if the morons around her couldn’t figure out how not to scare the
bejeezus out of a little girl in the process.

Surprisingly, it was Castiel who spoke next. “Claire, remember how when we were in California, we talked about asking Poppa to come live with us?”

Dean’s head jerked towards Cas, confusion and delight warring for dominance on his face. To his credit, Cas remained solely focused on his daughter.

“Oh!” Claire gasped, clapping her hands together. She turned to face Dean. “Poppa, Daddy and I want you to make us pancakes every morning. Will you make mine with chocolate chips? Daddy says that I have to have blueberries in my pancakes every other time. And can you make us burgers for dinner? Daddy says that burgers are special and we should only have them once a week. Will you make burgers for us once a week?”

Six pairs of eyes swung over to Dean. Sam, the turd, chimed in. “Yeah, Poppa. Burgers are special and you should only have them once a week.”

Dean curled his arm around his daughter and flipped Sam off in a quick gesture that only half of the table saw, including Maddie, if the snort from her end was any indicator. “Claire, I would love to make you and Daddy pancakes every morning. You wouldn’t mind if I put my clothes in your closet and used your rubber ducky when I take a bath, right?” he grinned.

“Poppa you’re too old to use my rubber ducky!”

“What?!” Dean cried, and exaggerated look of shock on his face. “Claire, I have three rubber duckies in my tub!”

“Don’t leave them, Poppa! You have to bring them! Plus all of your cookies. And your toothbrush!”

“Well, I wouldn’t want the duckies to get lonely. Or my cookies. Good idea, Princess.”

Claire slipped out of her chair, crawled under the table and then appeared at Dean’s side with her arms raised. Four voices let out their own little “aww,” as Dean scooped her up and rubbed his nose against hers.

One voice sounded more like an “Oh!”

“Maddie?” Sam asked, turning to look at his wife as shock and horror swept across her face.

“Maddie. You okay?” Dean added, jostling Claire to one side so he could see his sister-in-law more clearly.

“Just…” she started. She rose to her feet with a wild look in her eye then squeezed her eyes shut in embarrassment. “I’m so sorry…”

“What is it, dear?” Ellen asked, chancing a glance downward. Her suspicions were confirmed as a small puddle started to form.

“I couldn’t hold it,” Maddie whispered before her hands covered her mouth. She turned to make a waddle/run to her bedroom but Castiel stopped her with a gentle hand on her shoulder. He offered her a small smile.

“Winchester pups tend to come a little early,” he said softly. “But you probably have time to get cleaned up while Sam gets your bag to the car.”
“What!” Sam nearly shouted. “Did your… Is it time? Are you…”

“Slow down, Sam. It’s gonna be fine,” Dean reassured him. “Where’s your bag, Maddie?”

“Hall closet,” she answered dazedly. Then suddenly she was Mrs. Neo-Natal Nurse, back straight, head held high, completely in charge. “Okay, so my water just broke. I’m going to rinse off real quick and then Sam and I will head to the hospital. You all can stay and finish dinner, if you like, and Sam can text you updates.”

“Oh no!” Ellen replied. “I came here for a baby and I’m not going to miss it! Bobby, let’s get these dishes cleared away while they get ready, then you can go get the car.”

“Dean brought the Impala, Ellen,” Cas offered. “I’m sure we can all fit, even with the car seat.”

“Well they may not want to stay the whole time, Cas. Probably better if we took separate cars. That way no one’s stuck at the hospital.”

“You can always leave the Impala with Bobby and Ellen and we can Uber back home.”

Somewhere in the background, a shower was running.

“And put the car seat in some stranger’s car? That could take forever. No let’s just each drive. Bobby, what kind of car did you guys rent?”

“They wanted to give me some piece of crap Kia until I told them that they could shove that little tin can right up their…”

“Grandpa!” Ellen yelled. “There are ladies present!”

Bobby ducked his head before offering a look of apology to Castiel.

“Grandpa, we have a big teddy bear cookie jar at home, and any time Daddy says a bad word, he has to put a quarter in it!”

“That’s a very good idea, Claire,” Ellen piped up from the kitchen. “I think Grandpa needs a teddy bear cookie jar just like that!”

Bobby rolled his eyes and sighed. “I’m a grown man,” he grumbled quietly, “and if I want to say ‘crap’ I’m gonna say ‘crap,’ little girl present or not!”

“Grandpa, I’m a lady! Granma just said so!” Claire pointed out.

Maddie emerged from her bedroom in grey sweatpants and a Broncos sweatshirt, her hair pulled up in a messy bun. Sam followed behind her, a floral bag in one hand and his wife’s purse in the other.

“Ellen, I am so sorry about all of this!”

“Please! Madison, I am a grandma twice over this weekend! I haven’t seen this much excitement since you two got married!”

The two women locked eyes, and Ellen gave Madison a wink. “Now you two get out of here! We’ll be right behind you. Don’t you birth that baby before we get there!”

Maddie flung her arms around her mother-in-law’s neck and whispered “thank you!” before stepping over to Cas and doing the same thing.
Castiel laughed in response. “It’s going to be fine. You’re going to be fine,” he said soothingly as he rubbed Maddie’s back. She pulled back and sniffled then pointed a finger at Dean. She wanted to say something funny and smart. Then she wanted to thank Dean over and over, but that would be awkward, probably. So she just sighed and stared at him instead.

Dean took a step into her personal space and held her close before kissing the top of her head. He looked down at her and smiled. “Big day, Maddie.”

“Big day, Alpha,” she smiled back.

“Okay!” Dean announced. His smile was so big it threatened to break his face. He gave his mate a wink and then huffed out a breath at Sam. The two held an entire conversation without talking and in about three seconds. And then Dean squatted down to address his little girl. “Sweetheart, you ready to meet your cousin Quinn?”

“Yeah Poppa! Let's go!”

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