Pivot Point

by ElenaRoan

Summary

What if Anna decided to derail the apocalypse by intervening to help rather than trying to make the brothers never having existed.

Notes

Story Name: Pivot Point
Pen Name: ElenaRoan
Disclaimer: Don’t own any of them, written purely for enjoyment.
Warnings:
Summary: What if Anna decided to derail the apocalypse by intervening to help rather than trying to make the brothers never having existed.
Timeline: Season 3
Note: I’m Australian and I can’t bring myself to use USA spelling, sorry.
Prologue: Escape

Only angels knew how to hurt angels and there had been many eons they could practice on the prisoners locked in the prison. Of which she was the latest unwilling resident.

Silver lining though, with the apocalypse not going the way the hierarchy wanted the guards escorting, dragging, her back to her cell after the latest session of torture/reprogramming had reduced to one. She hadn’t broken yet, it was only a matter of time though.

Her escape, when it came, was more luck than any planning on her behalf. The glimpse of door 42 out of the corner of her eye, her guard’s disgusted distraction, and a split second of leverage to her advantage. She dropped him and was through the door before he could sound the alarm, once on earth she was gone to one of the four corners.

It didn’t take long for her grace to heal her up, the first thing she did after that was carve the sigils that would block angels from finding her on her own ribs.

It took a while for her to figure out what to do, her one angel crusade to stop the apocalypse that the hierarchy so foolishly set their hearts on. How was the question though, Lucifer would eventually pester Sam into saying yes it was just a matter of time. Maybe the other angels would manage to pester Dean into saying yes before time ran out but she doubted it. Both brothers were as stubborn as they come, however no one could hold out forever.

Ideas came and went; perhaps removing Lucifer’s vessel, she firmly prevented herself from thinking of him using his name. Perhaps ensuring that those who began and finished the seals never were born in the first place.

Then it hit her, the one place where it could all be pushed aside not by killing but by the opposite.

She took a deep breath; she had one chance at this, and vanished into the depths of time.
Chapter 1: Tipping Point

Cold Oak, South Dakota, 2007.

She made sure to be invisible when she arrived. She knew the day and location but not the exact time. So she arrived early morning and waited, invisible. Through the final deaths, through the final battles, through the hurried and near panicked arrival of those who were just slightly too late. Or so they thought.

Jake ran like a hound of hell was on his heels, and since it was Bobby on his heels a hellhound would have been less focused. That left Dean trying to wake Sam after the knife in the back courtesy of Jake. This was the moment, the slight moment in time when the slide to the apocalypse could be averted with the slightest tap. Within days Dean would make the deal that would put his feet on the path to spilling blood in hell and starting the ball rolling, his death would put Sam on the path to killing Lilith and finishing the slide all unknowingly. Not this time.

Anna dropped the invisibility and moved forward. Dean had a gun pointed at her in a heartbeat.

"Who are you?"

"A friend." He didn’t look convinced, “I can save him. Let me help before it’s too late.”

He still didn’t look convinced but it was the one thing that would bypass the 20 questions, for now. The gun wouldn’t have hurt her, however she didn’t want to waste time and fighting Dean to get her hands on Sam wasn’t something even an Angel could count on winning. He pointed the gun up and she moved quickly.

The damage was fairly straightforward, just in a bad place. A couple of seconds and it was taken care of. A split second decision had her grabbing Dean also, though his reactions almost let him pull out of her reach, and she carved the hiding sigils that Castiel would have carved on their ribs in a few years in the original timeline now and added ones that would hide them from demons just to be sure. Then she let go and stepped back.

Dean instantly had the gun in her face again.

“What the hell was that?” He demanded angrily, so angry he nearly missed Sam waking up.
“Dean? What’s going on?” Sam pulled back and looked from his brother with the gun to the apparent woman staring said gun down calmly.

“She said she could heal you but then she did something else as well.”

“I healed him. Then I gave both of you some protection sigils to hide you from being found. Oh, and I also cleansed what that demon did to Sam, he only hijacked the ability he already had just so you know. There’s powerful…beings that will want to get this rolling again no matter what it takes. They will kill Sam if they can.”

“Not on my watch!” Dean retorted angrily.

“That’s kinda what they’re counting on.” Anna replied apologetically, “they know how far you’ll go to bring Sam back. They want that, they want you to make a deal.”

“What?” Sam looked at Dean.

“I didn’t.” Dean returned, “at least I don’t think I did.”

“You didn’t.” Anna confirmed, “that would have been in a few days if I hadn’t intervened.”

“What’s the strings attached?” Sam demanded.

“No strings. Not unless you count wanting you to keep doing what you do, keep each other alive and avert the apocalypse.” Anna replied.

That got a WTF look from Dean.

“The…the Apocalypse?” Sam asked.

Anna just nodded.

“And what do you get out of this?” Sam asked.

“Maybe everything.” Anna replied, “maybe nothing. I may have just made it so that you never cross my path and save my life in about two years. It’s worth it.”

“Who the hell are you?” interrupted both of them trying to figure out a response to that.

Anna looked over at Bobby, he’d just returned and in true hunter form had a gun pointed at her.

“A friend.” She replied.

“Yeah…right…” the disbelief could almost be heard dripping of Bobby’s reply.

“Well…she did just heal me.” Sam offered.

“Heal you? How?”

“Don’t know.” Sam looked at Dean.

“Don’t know for sure. Sam might have been fine without that light show she put on.” Dean returned.

“He was about a minute from death.” Anna replied calmly, “and even if you’d actually got him to an ER in time and they saved his life that stab severed his spinal cord. He’d have been a paraplegic in the best case scenario.”
Sam shot a surprised look down at his legs and moved them just to make sure.

“What are you?” Bobby demanded.

“You wouldn’t believe me.” Anna replied sadly, “I’ll leave proving that to the others if you still meet them year after next.”

She almost chuckled at the unspoken questions on all three of their faces, “well… I guess it’s time to see whether I’m going to dissolve into nothingness. Keep yourselves safe.”

She vanished.
Chapter 2: Research

“Ok.” Bobby declared, unlocking and marching through. “I’m going to hit the phones, see if I can figure out where army kid and the yellow eyed demon got to. You two…hit the books. See if you can figure out what that girl was and what kinda trouble we’ve got coming.”

“Yeah, would be nice to know what is about to bite us in the arse.” Dean agreed, not that he was particularly looking forward to looking through dozens of dusty books.

“Think we’ll figure that out?” Sam asked, even as the two of them made their way to the bookshelves, “I’ve been wracking my brains trying to think of what she could be since she vanished. Whatever she is isn’t common, and I scoured the lore when I was hunting for a cure for Dean when he got electrocuted. She’s obviously not a reaper; we all could see her. She was right though, about the stab wound, I checked my shirt. It would have gone straight into my spine. And did you hear how she was talking? It sounded like she came from the future, and not just from the future but it sounded like she was risking a grandfather paradox by rescuing us.”

“Reapers also don’t do that lightshow she did when she healed you and whatever that hiding thing she claimed she did to both of us.” Dean returned, “that hurt by the way.”

Sam did a double take at Dean, “I didn’t notice…”

“Probably got lost in the healing of the stab wound.” Dean replied, “wish I knew what she actually did and whether that’s going to bite us in the arse down the line.”

“Maybe it won’t.” Sam replied.

“When has that ever happened for us?” Dean asked in reply.

Sam gave a wordless shrug in agreement, silently acknowledging the rule for their family.

They pulled out a few books and Dean took them over to the table while Sam poked his head into the room Bobby was in to check whether he was on the phone before calling out to him.

“Hey Bobby, you got anything on the apocalypse?”

“The apocalypse?” Bobby replied, turned towards him, “what brought that up?”
“Something the girl mentioned. When we asked about what strings were attached she said none unless we counted continuing to do what we do, stay alive, and avert the apocalypse.” Sam replied.

“Ah hell. Just what we need on top of all of this.” Bobby responded.

“What do you mean?”

“All we need is to be caught in a pissing contest between heaven and hell and all that means.” Bobby stomped past him and dug in a bookshelf for a bit before pulling out a small book and handing it to him. “Here. It’s a more esoteric version of Revelation.”

“Thanks.” Sam replied, looking at it before joining Dean at the table. Bobby stomped back into the other room to continue his digging.

“You want to start with that or with these?” Dean asked.

Sam thought for a moment, “well she did mention the apocalypse specifically. Might tell us what kind of things we’re tangling with, might even give us a clue as to what she is.”

“Well…good as any other avenue of research.” Dean responded.

A few days later all they had was that there was a large spot in southern Wyoming completely free of demon signs but no true clue as to what the woman handing out healing actually was. Not one that made any sense anyway. No hunter, no matter how spiritual, had ever spotted an angel. Yet the entirety of the esoteric Revelation Bobby had pulled out had only covered demons and angels along with a huge list of signs. Sam wasn’t about to have that argument with Dean again, not after the time he’d thought he’d found an angel and it turned out to be the spirit of a priest.

“Whatever she may or may not have been.” Sam started hesitantly, “I wish I knew what to make of her references to Dean making a deal.”

“I didn’t make a deal!” Dean growled.

“Can you honestly say you wouldn’t have if I’d died?”

“I wouldn’t have!”

“Dean, you let something you didn’t even know who or what she was close enough to touch both of us because she said she could heal me.”

“So?”

Bobby glanced between them before heading into the next room and leaving them to it.

“So it’s not that big a stretch to think that you may go for the one thing we know would work, even with the price tag attached.”

Dean glared but before he could retort Sam interrupted.

“Whatever we think or don’t think about the possibility it’s one thing she specifically mentioned and mentioned in the context of the apocalypse. I think we need to be careful.”

“Yeah, yeah. I get it. So don’t die, Sammy, and we won’t have to worry.”

“Even if I do, no deals, Dean.” Sam returned seriously.
“Yeah, yeah.” Dean replied, “hey, what do you think she meant when she said she cleansed you of what yellow eyes did?”

Sam looked uncomfortable, “when I was in that town…yellow eyes came to me in a dream. He showed me what he did when he turned up in my nursery all those years ago.”

Dean waited for a moment, “and?”

“He…well…he…bled in my mouth.”

“He what? Eww.”

“That’s not all.” Sam looked worried, “mum recognised him.”

“She what?”

“Yeah.”

Anything more Sam might have said went by the wayside as a noise outside brought both of them to alert. Bobby also heard it as seconds later he came in from the other room with a weapon.

Hunting through the scrap yard brought them face to face with Ellen moments later. The map she brought explaining the quiet in Wyoming for them and giving them a goal.
Chapter 3: The crypt

The four of them stepped out of concealment behind Jake as he approached the crypt that was his goal.

“Howdy Jake.” Sam announced them, wondering how his former comrade in arms would take his appearance. The military guy knew well how to kill and would have succeeded if whoever she was hadn’t intervened.

“Oh, you.” Jake replied with a shocked look on his face, “You were dead. I killed you.”

“Yeah.” Sam replied with some satisfaction. “I know.”

“I cut clean through your spinal cord, man.” Jake clarified, “you can’t be alive.”

“I know.” Sam replied.

“Oh. Just take it real easy there, son.” Bobby interjected.

“And if I don’t?” Jake returned.

“Wait and see.” Sam answered.

“What, you a tough guy all of a sudden?” Jake asked, obviously feeling sure of himself. “What are you gonna do? Kill me?”

“It’s a thought.” Sam replied, though he was pretty sure Dean might just beat him to the punch. The second Jake had tried, and nearly succeeded, to kill him he had been removed from the “human” list in Dean’s eyes.

“You had your chance. You couldn’t.” Jake returned.

“I won’t make that mistake twice.” Sam replied, the bloodstained hole in his shirt a pointed reminder of what choosing to trust this man cost.

Jake just laughed, clearly not realising the sleeping bear he’d poked.
“What are you smiling at, you little bitch?” Dean asked, if anything even more set on putting a bullet in the military man than Sam.

Jake ignored him and looked over at Ellen. “Hey lady. Do me a favour. Put that gun to your head.”

Sam actually felt the military man’s power reach out to Ellen and it was all he could do not to gasp. Even when Andy had sent the SOS to Dean he hadn’t felt anything like that and it clarified the vague relaxing feeling he’d been experiencing in his head the last few days. It sure brought home to him exactly what the woman had meant when she said that yellow eyes had only hijacked an ability he already had, the blood wasn’t intended to give him the abilities but direct and control them in the way the demon wished and he started to get a glimmer of exactly how difficult that had made his life.

Ellen struggled against it but slowly and surely the gun relocated itself against her will.

Jake grinned and Sam immediately saw how far the person who had once been his natural ally had fallen in the evilness of it.

“See that Ava girl was right,” Jake explained into the silence, “once you give into it, there’s all sorts of new Jedi Mind Tricks you can learn.”

“Let her go.” Sam warned him.

“Shoot him.” Ellen insisted firmly, being a hunter’s widow gave her quite a firm outlook on evil.

“You’ll be mopping up skull before you get a shot off.” Jake replied.

Dean and Bobby looked at each other out of the corner of their eyes while Sam did his best to keep a poker face and wondered if his ability to sense the binds that Jake had put on Ellen meant he could try to break them.

“Everybody put your guns down.” Jake ordered, then glanced at Ellen, “except you, sweetheart.”

Reluctantly they lowered their guns.

“Okay, thank you.” Jake stated before dashing to the crypt door and inserting the Colt.

Dean dived for the gun in Ellen’s hand and as soon as it was pointed somewhere other than her head Sam grabbed the bindings with his mind and tore them asunder. He was surprised how easy it actually was.

Scooping up his gun quickly following it and aimed at Jake even as Dean levelled the gun he’d pulled from Ellen’s now unresisting hand at Jake also. The two gunshots sounded simultaneously.

Jake staggered back, the two brothers were extraordinary shots even in the worst of times and it didn’t take an expert to see the guy was dead even if he hadn’t acknowledged it yet. The crypt lock spun regardless.

The brothers ignored him, except to kick the gun out of his reach so he couldn’t use it before his brain caught up, and looked towards the crypt door.

With a clank the lock stopped spinning.

“Oh, no.” Bobby said, dread in his voice.

“Bobby, what is it?” Ellen demanded.
“It’s Hell.” Bobby responded, already moving away from the door.

Dean leapt forward and grabbed the Colt, half hoping removing the “key” would stop the sequence.

“Take cover! Now!” Bobby yelled and they all dived for cover.

The doors burst open and a swarm of black demon smoke poured forth. The massive devil’s trap struggled to hold them but the sheer concentration ripped up the train tracks, nullifying the best efforts of Samuel Colt.

“What the hell just happened?” Dean demanded as the storm of smoke passed overhead.

“That’s a Devil’s Gate, a damn door to hell!” Ellen shouted in reply.

“Come on, we gotta shut that gate!” She yelled a few moments later, putting actions to words as she left cover and dashed towards the crypt door, Bobby and Sam following close on her heels.

Dean stood and watched the chaos then looked at the Colt that he’d pulled from the door. Checking quickly he could see that last bullet still in the chamber.

“If the demon gave this to Jake…then maybe…” he mused out aloud.

More instinct than senses made him turn around, his reactions as fast as ever as he brought the gun to bear on the yellow eyed demon who’d managed to sneak up behind them in the noisy chaos. Reactions weren’t fast enough as yellow eyes yanked the gun out of his hand before he could fire.

“Boys shouldn’t play with Daddy’s guns.” The demon gloated before tossing Dean across the cemetery and into a headstone. That he didn’t get up again immediately bore mute testimony to how hard the impact was.

The other three strained to get the doors closed again and Sam did a double take as he spotted his brother down and yellow eyes in the cemetery.

“Dean!” He yelled and without another thought dashed towards his brother. Ellen grunted as the assistance left her.

Yellow eyes negligently tossed Sam into a tree before he could get close.

“I’ll get to you in a minute, champ.” The demon called, “but I’m proud of you. I knew you had it in you.”

Sam could feel the bands from the demon’s power holding him in place, way too strong to try to shred them like he had Jake’s control on Ellen. He had a feeling he didn’t want to reveal that particular ability to the demons just yet. Would probably be a good idea not to startle his brother and their friends with it out of the blue also, time enough to talk about the changes when experimenting wouldn’t get people killed.

Dean struggled to get up and made it to his knees before yellow eyes pinned him too.

“Sit a spell.” The demon stated, firmly convinced he couldn’t lose. Stalking towards the older brother he started talking again, “So, Dean, what did you do? I seem to have missed you going to a crossroads. Demons can’t resurrect people unless a deal is made. I know, red tape, it’ll make you nuts. I knew he was gone when he vanished from my radar, though you seem to have accomplished that little trick also. But now Sammy’s back in rotation, there’s only two ways that could have happened and angels haven’t set foot down here in 2000 years so…”
Sam blinked and was glad the demon wasn’t looking in his direction right then to read his surprise. That answered that question, even though it seemed no more likely than the first time he’d considered it.

“Now, I wasn’t counting on that but I’m glad.” Yellow eyes continued, “I liked him better than Jake anyhow. Tell me, have you ever heard the expression ‘if a deal sounds too good to be true, it probably is’?”

Dean smirked, “what deal?”

“Come now.” The demon gloated, “there’s no way one of the feathered flock decided to ignore orders and wander down here to help you out so that leaves going to a crossroads. And just how certain are you that what you brought back is 100 percent pure Sam?”

Dean just smirked at the demon and behind his defiant eyes his mind was putting things together. The one thing they knew for certain was that girl hadn’t been a demon and no deal had been struck, that left few possibilities especially with how confident the demon was that he was right even if he’d missed noticing it.

“After everything you’ve been through.” Yellow eyes continued, gloating, “everything you’ve…you of all people should know that what’s dead should stay dead.”

Dean just smirked at him as he stood, more than happy not to enlighten the demon to the fact that Sam hadn’t actually died. Come close but not crossed that threshold.

“Anyway…” yellow eyes continued again, “Thanks a bunch. I knew I kept you alive for some reason. Until now anyway. I couldn’t have done it without your pathetic self-loathing self-destructive desire to sacrifice yourself for your family.”

Sam winced and made a mental note to talk to Dean and make sure his brother didn’t actually feel that way about himself.

Yellow eyes brought the Colt up and aimed it at Dean.

Sam was a split second from chancing using the abilities he didn’t quite understand or know if they’d be effective in a desperate attempt to save his brother when a spirit materialised behind the demon and wrapped his arms around him, yanking the black smoke out of the meat suit. Sam and Dean both gasped as they recognised their father.

As the two spirits struggled Dean dived for the Colt and when yellow eyes returned to his mean suit and stood Dean already had it aimed and this time the demon couldn’t dodge.

With a clank Bobby and Ellen got the doors closed, turned around and did a double take at the spirit standing there.

The brothers got to their feet not quite sure what to make of the spirit of their father standing there.

He approached, smiled and gave them both looks and gestures of approval before stepping back and vanishing into bright light as the two of them said silent goodbyes to the father they loved despite everything.

Then they turned and regarded the dead meat suit of the demon who had plagued them all their lives.

“Well check that off the to-do list.” Dean commented after a bit.
“You did it.” Sam congratulated him.

“I didn’t do it alone.” Dean replied.

“Do you think Dad really…?” Sam asked, almost amazed he was capable of still being astounded after the last few days and in particular the last few hours. “You think he really climbed out of hell?”

“Well the door was open.” Dean replied, “if anyone’s stubborn enough to do it…it’d be him.”

Sam nodded, “where do you think he is now?”

“I don’t know.”

“I kind of can’t believe it, Dean.” Sam continued, “I mean…our whole lives, everything, has been prepping for this. And now, I…I kind of don’t know what to say.”

“I do.” Dean replied with a smirk before squatting down to address the dead meat suit that still contained the now very dead demon, “that was for our mum. You son of a bitch.”

They headed back to the Impala together.

“What did you make of what he said?” Sam asked thoughtfully.

“Who? Yellow eyes?” Dean replied, continuing when Sam nodded, “he was absolutely convinced it had to be a deal and we both know that didn’t happen. Did you hear what he said about what was the other possibility and why it was impossible?”

“Yeah. You really think it could have been an angel, after all we’ve seen?”

“As good an explanation as any, especially if he was telling the truth about them having orders not to mess around down here.” Dean replied, “she did say she was going to hide us and he was firmly convinced you’d died when you vanished from his radar as he called it. He seemed confused as to why I was off his radar also but I think he put that down to that deal he was convinced I’d made.”

Sam chuckled, “I saw you were quite happy to let him keep thinking that.”

Dean smirked, “what he didn’t know couldn’t hurt us.”

Ellen and Bobby walked up just then.

“Well…” Ellen stated as they reached them, “yellow eyed demon might be dead but a lot more got through that gate.”

“How many do you think?” Dean asked, already starting to plan.

“A hundred. Maybe 200.” Sam replied, also starting to plan. “It’s an army. He’s unleashed an army.”

“Hope to hell you boys are ready.” Bobby stated, “because the war’s just begun.”

“Well then…” Dean stated with a grin even as he put the Colt away, “we got work to do.”

Sam snorted, “that we do. But first, let’s take some time to sort things out.”

“Like what?” Bobby asked.

“How about we have that conversation where we can actually sit down and enjoy a beer while we
chat.” Sam returned.

“I second that.” Dean said.
Chapter 4: Discussion

“So,” Dean said as he handed a beer to Bobby, Ellen and Sam back at Bobby’s place, “that was an interesting chunk of information old yellow eyes handed out.”

“I’ll say.” Ellen replied, “I caught him referring to a deal more than a few times. What did you do, Dean?”

“I didn’t make a deal.” Dean answered, “a girl came out of nowhere, literally appeared from thin air, after Jake stabbed Sam in the back, offered to heal him and threw in some sort of cloaking thing as a bonus. Oh…and said something about cleansing what the demon did to Sam when he was a baby.”

“Oh.” Ellen was quiet for a moment, “what exactly did the demon do to Sam?”

Sam cleared his throat, “yellow eyes showed me when I was stuck in Cold Oak. Took me in a dream back to that night. He bled in my mouth.”

“Oh. That where the psychic thing came from?” Ellen asked.

“No.” Sam answered before Dean could say anything.

Dean did a double take at his brother, “no?”

“Remember she also mentioned that yellow eyes didn’t create the ability, just hijacked one that I already had.” Sam replied, “I think, at least with me anyway, the blood was a way to control and direct it. Ensure it couldn’t be used easily in a different direction to what he wanted.”

“Ok.” Dean replied, perching on a table and regarding his brother, “have you noticed anything?”

“Didn’t at first,” Sam replied, “just a vague relaxing and sense of space.”

“And then?” Dean prompted, certain something had happened.

“When Jake pulled his compulsion crap on Ellen, I…sensed…what he did.”

Ellen froze with her beer halfway to her mouth.
Sam looked down, “I wasn’t sure I could actually do anything about it, not fast enough anyway, so I didn’t dare act while the gun was still pointed at her. When Dean got the gun away from her head I shredded his hold like it was tissue paper.”

“Well,” Dean said after a moment, “that explains how I was able to get the gun out of her hand. Anything else?”

“Could sense when yellow eyes pinned us.” Sam replied, “could feel how strong those bonds were. Doubt I could have shredded them if I tried, and didn’t think it was a good idea to clue the demons into it, they do still think I’m hobbled by that blood after all. Was about to try anyway when he aimed the Colt at Dean, Dad intervened first though.”

“Huh.” Ellen commented and took her interrupted drink.

“I’ll put out some feelers,” Bobby stated, “see if I can get a psychic that can help you sort that out. Don’t want to just blunder around, could run into a minefield that way.”

“Good idea.” Sam replied.

“You do that.” Dean stated, before changing the subject. “I found yellow eyes reasoning behind insisting it was a deal quite…enlightening.”

“So did I.” Sam agreed, “he basically said it was either a deal or an angel and that it couldn’t be an angel since they haven’t set foot down here in 2000 years.”

“And that there were orders up there to stay away.” Dean added.

“A rebel?” Bobby asked, “are they even able to rebel?”

“Lucifer did.” Ellen pointed out, “presumably others can.”

“Why would a rebel help us? And specifically help Sam and Dean?” Bobby asked.

“Beats me.” Dean said, “and I get the feeling it’s nowhere near that simple. When she was talking to us she referred to things in the future as if they’d already happened.”

“Yeah,” Sam agreed, “said that she might have made it so that we don’t save her in about two years.”

“And that she’d leave proving what she was to the others if we still met them year after next.” Dean added.

“Anything in particular she wanted you to do?” Ellen asked.

“Only, quote, keep doing what you do, keep yourselves alive, and avert the apocalypse, end quote.” Sam answered.

Ellen nearly spat her beer out. “Come again?”

“Yeah, that took us by surprise too.” Dean said.

“Especially as, from what she said, a crucial part is keeping Dean from making a deal to save my life.” Sam added.

“I wouldn’t…” Dean started, then stopped and stared at his beer for a moment, “actually…I can’t honestly rule it out.”
Sam sat forward in concern.

“If Sam was dead…” Dean continued slowly, “I don’t know that I could keep going…I’d either make a deal or eat a bullet.”

“Dean…” Sam said softly, nearly forgetting the other two in the room.

Dean gave him a crooked smile, “you were right. Your life was slipping through my fingers and when she appeared and offered to heal you I dropped all my defences. I let her close enough to touch you, and to touch me, I didn’t even keep a gun on her and I had no way of knowing that she was actually going to help, all evidence in our lives says that healing like that comes at one hell of a price if it comes at all. If you were actually gone…”

Bobby caught Ellen’s eye and jerked his head sideways, quickly and quietly the two of them slipped out of the room leaving the brothers alone with the conversation that had just got incredibly personal.

“Dean.” Sam said quietly, “the last thing I would want is for you to exchange your life for mine. Or to join me in death. I want you to have a life if something happens to me. That doesn’t mean I won’t fight like anything to keep something from happening, just if we can’t stop it I don’t want you to feel you have no other choice.”

“You’re all I got left Sam.” Dean replied, “without you I have no life to live.”

“Our family, your role as protector, they’re not the be all and end all of who you are.” Sam refuted softly, knowing now without a doubt that yellow eyes had hit the nail on the head when he commented on his brother’s self-loathing and self-destruction. “You’re smart. Never hesitate to do the right thing no matter how much it hurts. You care about the people caught up in all the supernatural crap we fight. You’re an honest to God hero, Dean.”

Dean snorted softly as if he didn’t believe him but smiled and raised his beer to him anyway.

“Well…apparently I’m important enough for someone to want my arse in hell…so let’s keep us both away from any deaths and deals shall we?”

Sam smiled a little hesitantly, more than aware that his brother could easily use humour to try to deflect him, and answered, “sounds like a plan.”
Chapter 5: Warning

Bobby had got Pamela, a lady he swore was the best in the state, there within a day. Dean and Sam had also given Missouri a call for advice also.

Pamela took one look at Sam and immediately started on teaching him how to sense whether a course of action or use of his power was right or wrong before starting in on teaching him how to use the various facets of his power. But however she helped he felt more comfortable asking Missouri when he wanted advice about something or was concerned. Thus it was Missouri who explained that the blood had put a leash on his abilities and in time would have actually damaged them if it hadn’t been cleansed from him, especially if he’d given in to the influence of the blood like Jake and Ava had.

Four days in and there were no demon signs to point them in the right direction for where to hunt down the horde of demons that had broken out. The three of them, minus Pamela who wasn’t particularly interested in the hunting side of things, were sharing some beers while trying to figure out where to look. Ellen had headed out to where Jo was the morning after the Devil’s Gate had opened, she hadn’t liked her daughter being alone when a giant wave of demons was about to break over them.

“Now that’s just weird.” Dean declared, “why so silent?”

Sam missed Bobby’s reply, a subtle pressure was building in his mind that he missed initially and now it was hard to hear and see around it and the accompanying headache. The headache wasn’t the migraine level headaches that used to accompany his visions so he missed exactly what was going on until pictures started flashing in front of his eyes.

“Sam?” he heard distantly then his hearing switched off.

A farm house, family, fields. Then reality bled slowly back in.

“Sam?” Dean was in front of him, hands on his shoulders.

He noticed his hand that had held his beer was empty and thought he’d dropped it until he noticed it off to the side, Dean must have pulled it out of his hand when he realised something was up. He shook his head to clear it and the headache bled away almost as if it was trying to reassure him.
“I thought he wasn’t going to get stuff like this anymore?” Dean snapped at Pamela, who Sam saw had appeared in the room.

“I never said that.” She snapped back, “I said that what he had before would have been distorted. What did you see?” The last was directed at Sam.

“A farm house, a family, some fields.” Sam replied.

“Think you can draw it?”

“I can try.” Sam replied and Bobby handed over a sketch pad and pencil.

As soon as he touched pencil to paper a picture bled out onto the page and he started back from it in surprise.

“What the…”

“Now that’s spooky.” Dean stated and Sam had to agree.

Bobby took the pad back looked at it then looked at Sam. “Well…let’s see what the computer turns up.” He stated before stomping away.

“I’ll get you something for the headache.” Dean volunteered, starting to move away.

“Headache’s gone.” Sam told him softly.

Dean looked at him in surprise, “really?”

Sam just nodded in reply.

“Well that’s an improvement.” Dean stated and Sam agreed.

An hour later Bobby stuck his head in again.

“Found it.”

“You did? Where?” Sam asked.

“Lincoln, Nebraska. Nothing going on right now from what I can tell.”

“Sam doesn’t get visions of nothing.” Dean said.

“We don’t know how much they’ve changed since the blood was cleansed.” Sam pointed out.

“Doubt they’ve changed THAT much.” Dean replied.

Sam shrugged and had to concede that point. Besides, it was their only lead.

Which led to them pulling up to the ordinary looking farmhouse that didn’t appear to have anything wrong until no one answered the door.

With a quick concerned look shared between them they picked the lock and let themselves in.

There was a surprising amount of flies buzzing around but little else to indicate a problem.

Splitting up to search the sound of a TV led them to the family room where a family of three sat on the couch.
“What the hell?” Dean muttered as they didn’t react to any of their entrances. Stepping closer to the nearest he noted that they didn’t look well, he worried that they were dead already but a quick check on their neck revealed a faint pulse. The other two likewise.

“They’re alive.” He called to the other two.

“But they won’t be for long by the looks of them.” Bobby stated. “Sam, go kick the door in then the two of you take off. I’ll call an ambulance.”

“What’ll you tell them?” Dean asked as Sam moved off.

“I’ll think of something. Was passing by and noticed no one in the fields of a farm and got worried or something.” Bobby returned, “now scat.”

Dean nodded and joined Sam outside in the car and headed towards the closest diner. Bobby would be able to figure out where they’d went, the impala would confirm for him exactly where.

Sam was researching on his laptop and Dean was on his third coffee when Bobby finally joined them.

“Well don’t that just beat everything?” Bobby grumped as he sat down.

“What happened?” Dean asked.

“Darndest thing. The ambulance guys said it looked like they were suffering from bad dehydration and malnutrition.”

“With a full kitchen just steps away?” Sam asked in surprise.

“Looks like.”

“Any idea what happened?”

“Beats me.”

The three of them gave their habitual glance towards the door as the chime rang, indicating someone else entering. Bobby perked up at the sight of the couple who entered.

“Isaac? Tamara?” He hopped up and went over to them. “I didn’t know you were in this area.”

“Bobby? What the hell are you doing here?” Tamara asked.

“The darndest thing.” Bobby answered, “we’re still trying to figure it out. Here, join us for a coffee. This is Dean and that’s Sam.” He gestured at his two companions.

Once there were coffees and refills all around and the waitress wandered off the couple looked at them.

“We were listening to the police scanner. There was an odd call up at a farm near here, we decided to investigate. You?”

“Following the vaguest clues we could find and ended up at that farmhouse. When no one answered we went in and found the family in some sort of coma in front of the TV.” Bobby explained shortly, “so I sent the boys off and called an ambulance. Dehydration and malnutrition only a few steps from a fully stocked kitchen.”
“Now that is weird.” Isaac agreed.

After a bit they relocated to Isaac and Tamara’s place, it seemed logical given the cause hadn’t been located.

Sam and Dean watched in amusement as the Hunter couple moved around their place. That was not something they normally saw even when they linked up with other Hunters.

“It’s gotta be some kind of demon.” Dean stated, “it’s like they just sat down and didn’t get back up.”

“If it is a demon attack it’s not like any I ever saw and I’ve seen plenty.” Bobby answered.

“Well, what now? What should we do?” Dean asked.

“Uh, we’re not gonna do anything.” Isaac answered.

“What do you mean?” Sam asked.

“You guys seem nice enough but this ain’t Scooby-Doo and we don’t play well with others.” Isaac answered caustically.

“Well I think we’d cover a lot more ground if we all worked together.” Sam replied, trying to be reasonable.

“No offense. But we’re not teaming with the damned fools who let the Devil’s Gate get opened in the first place.” Isaac shot back.

“No offense?” Dean asked.

“Isaac.” Tamera interrupted, “like you’ve never made a mistake.”

“Oh, yeah. Locked my keys in the car. Turned my washing pink. Never brought on the end of the world.”

Dean laughed humourlessly, “all right. That’s enough.”

“Guys, this isn’t helping. Dean.” Sam interrupted.

“Look, there are a couple hundred more demons out there now.” Isaac interrupted in turn, “we don’t know where they are. When they’ll strike. There ain’t enough Hunters in the world to handle something like this. You brought war down upon us. On all of us.”

“Okay,” Tamera interjected, “that’s quite enough testosterone for now.”

Matching actions to words she pulled her husband from the room, leaving the other three looking uncomfortably at each other.

“Well.” Bobby said after a moment, “let’s get a motel.”

“Good idea.” Sam agreed. Having Dean and Isaac in the same house was probably a wildfire waiting to happen.

They spent the next few days in adjoining motel rooms hunting through the tabloids both in print and online trying to catch a clue as to what was going on. Bobby kept a careful eye on the family still in hospital, not at all willing to chance that whatever had messed with them was going to try messing
with them again even now they’d received assistance.

“All quiet.” Dean complained, “since when do demons keep a low profile?”

“Would be nice to get more of a clue as to what’s going on from boy wonder over there.” Bobby replied.

“I’m not sure that’s something I can really turn on and off, Bobby.” Sam replied.

“Probably a good thing.” Bobby answered, “we’d come to rely on it too much if you could just summon a vision to point the way at will.”
Chapter 6: Fights

When the call came over the scanner about the fight in the department store Sam just knew it was what they’d been chasing.

“Bobby, listen to this.”

“Could be nothing.” Bobby replied, “just people being people. We came here on less though so let’s go check it out. I’ll get dressed up.”

“What about us?” Dean asked.

“You do what you do best. I’ll handle the cops.”

“Won’t they remember you?” Sam asked.

“If they do they’ll have another reason for why I checked on a farm with no workers in the fields.” Bobby returned, already heading to his room to get changed.

Down at the scene the two worked seamlessly together, just like they had for the past few years. If Dean’s vibrant masculinity didn’t draw information out then Sam’s sensitivity did.

Bobby walked in after a bit, looking quite respectable in a suit and tie.

“Looking spiffy, Bobby. What were you, a G-man?” Dean asked.

“Returning from the DA’s office,” Bobby replied, “just spoke to the suspect.”

“Yeah?” Sam asked, “so what do you think? Was she possessed or what?”

“Don’t think so.” Bobby replied, “there’s none of the usual signs. No blackouts, no loss of control. Totally lucid. Just think she really wanted those shoes. Spilled a glass of holy water on her, just to be sure. Nothing.”

“Maybe she’s just some random whack job.” Dean commented.

“If it had been an isolated incident, maybe.” Bobby replied, “but first the family, now this? I believe
in a lot of things. Coincidence ain’t one of them. Did you boys find anything around here?”

“No sulphur.” Sam answered, “nothing, unless you count a feeling that it’s something bad.”

“Well, maybe something.” Dean said and indicated the CCTV camera on the ceiling. “And we need to come up with a code for when your Spidey sense is going off.”

Sam gave a half smile while Bobby went to talk the store manager into letting them see the footage. He not only talked them into letting him see it but also Sam and Dean.

Bobby and Dean watched while Sam operated the computer storing the footage.

“So,” Dean said, “anything interesting?”

“I don’t know, yet.” Sam replied, watching the footage of the suspect and a man who’d just entered intently, “might just be a guy. Or it might be our guy.”

His odd actions while talking to the woman and actually pointing her at the victim certainly said there was something odd going on.

The three of them split up after that, hunting for the man they’d seen on the footage. As Sam walked along he first felt as though he was being watched then as if he was going followed. The sensation abruptly vanished when he turned around.

Later that Dean and Bobby were staking out a bar.

Bobby yawned, “what time is it?”

“Seven past midnight.” Dean replied.

“You sure this is the right place?” Bobby asked.

“No.” Dean replied, “but I spent all day canvassing this stupid town with this guy’s stupid mug and supposedly he drinks at this stupid bar.”

Dean jumped as Sam tapped on the roof as he joined them.

“It’s not funny.” Dean groused as Sam got in chuckling.

“Yeah.” Sam replied then continued, “all right, so John Doe’s name is, uh, Walter Rosen. He’s from Oak Park just west of Chicago. Went missing a week ago.”

“The night the Devil’s Gate opened?” Dean asked, already sure of the answer.

“Yep.”

“Think he’s possessed?”

“It’s a good bet.” Sam replied, “So, uh, he just walks up to someone, touches them and they go psycho or something?”

“Those demons that got out of the gate,” Bobby commented, “they’ll be able to do things we haven’t seen.”

“You mean,” Sam replied, “the demons we let out.”
“Guys.” Dean interrupted, drawing their attention back to the bar where the guy they were watching for was just heading in.

“All right.” Dean said after a moment, “Showtime.”

“Wait a minute.” Bobby cautioned.

“What?” Dean demanded.

“What did I just say?” Bobby replied, “We don’t know what to expect out of this guy. We should tail him ’til we know for sure.”

“So he kills someone and we sit here with our junk in our hands?” Dean asked angrily.

“We’re no good dead.” Bobby returned. “We’re not gonna make a move ‘til we know what the score is.”

“Hey, Bobby,” Sam interrupted almost apologetically, “I don’t think that’s an option.”

“Why not?” Bobby asked and Sam indicated the front of the bar where Isaac and Tamara were just heading in.

“Damn it.” Bobby swore.

“What now?” Dean asked.

“Let’s go.” Bobby replied.

Sam was still watching the bar, he could feel the power building. “We need to get in there. And I think there’s more than one.”

“Ah hell.” Bobby replied.

The three of them dashed over only to find the doors barred and sounds of distress coming from inside.

“Back to the car, now.” Bobby ordered, racing back there himself. No sooner than they were all inside he had the car moving.

“Everyone got holy water to hand?” He demanded as he threw the car into reverse and sped towards the doors. “Grab him if you can, there’s a devil’s trap in the boot.”

Then they were through the doors and piling out of the car intent on rescuing their fellow Hunters. One glance was enough to tell all three that Isaac was beyond rescue.

Sam, as the closest, grabbed Tamera and pulled her protesting towards the car while Bobby and Dean laid around liberally with holy water. Seeing an opportunity Dean popped the boot and grabbed the target demon, shoved him in, and closed it. Then he leapt into the car after Bobby, Sam and Tamera. Soon as he was inside Bobby gunned it and they sped away from the bar.

They ended up at Tamara’s place, they managed to get their demon prisoner into the devil trapped interrogation chair then concentrated on talking Tamara out of returning to the bar, at a decent volume. Dean walking into the middle of the argument after securing the prisoner.

“And I say we’re going back!” Tamara stated.
“Just hold on a second.” Sam tried to reason.

“I left my husband bloody on the floor!” Tamara returned, not at all willing to see reason.

“Okay,” Sam tried again, “I understand that, but we can’t go back.”

“Fine, then you stay.” Tamara replied, “but I’m heading back to that bar.”

“I’ll go with her.” Dean offered, knowing how it felt to not want to leave someone behind even when they were obviously beyond help.

“No!” Sam nearly shouted, “I got a really bad feeling about that.”

He tried to send a message with his eyes to Dean that he knew it was a really bad idea and made a mental note to talk to Dean about that code word Dean had suggested coming up with in the department store sooner rather than later.

Only the fact that Dean knew his little brother as well as he did let him realise Sam was obliquely referring to that developing Spidey sense that made both of them nervous.

“We gotta do something.” Dean replied, signalling back with his eyes to Sam to play along.

“What are you going to do?” Sam demanded, glad that his brother was actually on his side, “you can’t shoot them. You can’t stab them. They’re not going to wait in line to be exorcised.”

“I don’t care!” Tamara yelled.

“We don’t even know how many of them there are!” Sam pointed out, hoping that arguments directed somewhere other than her might get Tamara thinking rationally again.

“Yeah,” Bobby interrupted, “we do.”

Both Sam and Dean looked at him quizzically.

“There’s seven.” Bobby continued, “Do you have any idea who we’re up against?”

“No. Who?” Dean asked, knowing someone had to ask.

“The seven deadly sins.” Bobby replied, “live and in the flesh.”

“What’s in the box?” Dean responded, trying to break the tension. He continued when all three looked at him blankly, “Brad Pitt? Se7en? No?”

“What’s this?” He asked becoming serious again and looking at the book Bobby had.

“Binsfeld’s classification of demons.” Bobby replied, “In 1583, Binsfeld ID’d the seven sins. Not just as human vices, but as actual devils.”

“The family,” Sam mused out aloud putting it together, “they were touched by Sloth. And the shopper.”

“That’s Envy’s doing.” Bobby confirmed. “The customer we got in the next room. I couldn’t suss it out at first, until Isaac. He was touched with an awful gluttony.”

“I don’t give a rat’s arse if they’re the Three Stooges or the Four Tops.” Tamara declared, “I’m gonna slaughter every last one of them.”
“We already did it your way.” Bobby replied, getting in her face. It was time for her to snap out of it or they were all dead. “You burst in there half-cocked and look what happened. These demons haven’t been top side in half a millennium. We’re talking medieval, Dark Ages. We’ve never faced anything close to this. So we are gonna take a breath and figure out what our next move is!”

Unorthodox or not Tamara appeared to actually be listening and Bobby gentled his tone.

“I’m sorry for your loss.”

After a few moments Tamara moved off but it wasn’t for the front door. Dean and Sam shared a look of mutual concern for the Hunter they’d really only just met then they headed after Bobby into the room with the devil’s trap and their prisoner.

Envy laughed, “so you know who I am?”

“We do.” Bobby replied, “we’re not impressed.”

“Why are you here?” Sam demanded, “What are you after?”

“He asked you a question.” Dean stated, backing up his brother, “what do you want?”

Envy’s only response was to laugh until Dean uncorked the bottle of holy water and splashed it in his face.

“We already have what we want.”

“What’s that?” Dean asked.

“We’re out.” Envy responded, “we’re free. Thanks to you, my kind are everywhere. ‘I am legion for we are many’. So me, I’m just celebrating. Having a little fun.”

“Fun?” Sam asked.

“Yeah.” Envy replied, “fun. See, some people crochet, others golf. Me…I like to see people’s insides…on their outsides.” He looked them up and down during the last sentence, leaving no doubt that he was planning something to do to them.

Tamara stepped forward, “I’m gonna put you down like a dog.”

“Please.” Envy taunted and laughed, “you really think you’re better than me? Which one of you can cast the first stone, huh?”

He looked at Dean, “What about you, Dean? You’re practically a walking billboard of gluttony and lust.”

If he’d thought it would disconcert the older brother he was mistaken, Dean knew full well what he liked and had never made any attempt to hide it; it never kept him from doing his job.

Envy turned his attention to Tamara, “and Tamara. All that wrath? Ooh.” He taunted at her as if he had the right to judge. “It’s the reason you and Isaac became Hunters in the first place, isn’t it? It’s so much easier to drink in the rage than to face what really happened all those years ago.”

His words hit home with the Hunter and she got a couple of hits in before Bobby and Dean managed to pull her off.

Envy just laughed, “my point exactly. And you call us sins. We’re not sins man. We are natural
human instinct. And you can repress and deny us all you want but the truth is, you are just animals. Horny, greedy, hungry, violent animals. And you know what? You’ll be slaughtered like animals too.”

The four Hunters stared at him, three with decent poker faces.

Envy looked around as if listening to something, “the others. They’re coming for me.”

“Maybe.” Dean returned with a cold grin, “but they’re not going to find you…because you’ll be in hell.”

The smile bled off Envy’s face as he realised the older brother was dead serious.

“Someone send this clown packing.” Dean pronounced with finality.

“My pleasure.” Tamara responded, jumping on the opportunity to do something, anything, in retaliation for what had already happened that night. Then the Latin rolled off her tongue with practiced ease.

“I don’t think we’re gonna have to worry about hunting them.” Bobby commented to Sam and Dean in the next room.

“What does that mean?” Sam asked, with a bad feeling he knew the answer.

“I think maybe this joker’s right.” Bobby replied, “they’re gonna be hunting us, and they’re not gonna quit easy.

Dean’s first instinct was to tell everyone to make for the hills and he’d do his best to keep them off their backs. But with something powerful after Sam and after him for all he knew there was no way he was letting Sam go off without him even with Bobby to help him. Plus after the lengths Sam had gone to when he’d got electrocuted he had no illusions as to how far his little brother would go to save him.

“We’re outmanned, we’re outgunned.” He commented, “so what do we do? We’ll be dead by dawn if we face them the normal way.”

“If we’re going down, we’re going down together.” Sam affirmed.

“Well let’s not make it easy for them.” Dean agreed.

They all flinched as with a final yell Envy exited to hell.

Tamara walked in from where she’d been exorcising Envy.

“Demon’s out of the guy.” She stated.

“And the guy?” Sam asked.

“He didn’t make it.” She returned emotionlessly.

Then there was just the preparing for the assault to come, holy water being put into flasks, rock salt cartridges prepared for the shotguns, salt lines, various traps laid in preparation. And waiting.
Chapter 7: Battle

It started slow of course, the radio fritzing out and turning itself on.

“Here we go.” Dean commented and Sam had to agree.

There was no movement for a long time. Presumably the demons thought that the electronics acting up would spook them.

The first actual move of the demons was a real low blow. One of them had occupied Isaac’s corpse and used it ruthlessly to undercut Tamara’s resolve.

Tamara, against all her common sense as a Hunter, shoved open the door and attacked the demon who had had the temerity to occupy her husband’s corpse.

With a declaration of “you’re not Isaac.” She staked the offending demon with a stake of Palo Santo. But the damage had been done. In her rush to avenge her husband she’d disrupted the salt line and the rest of the demons rushed in.

One by one the Hunters faced the various demons.

Bobby trapping then exorcising the one that came after him.

Dean facing down Lust, playing along with her wiles until he was in a position to incapacitate her with the help of a bathtub full of holy water.

Sam faced three unfortunately, led by Pride, who certainly liked trying to disconcert Sam with what he thought he knew about the younger brother.

Then a woman burst in, sliced and stabbed all three with a knife that lit them up like Christmas trees. Sam flinched as he felt and saw that the demons died to the blade, he also sensed exactly what the woman was and questions rose in his mind.

Deciding not to clue her in on his knowledge he demanded, “who the hell are you?”

“I’m the girl that just saved your arse.” The blond replied.
“Well I just saved yours too.”

“See you around Sam.” She replied and walked out, ignoring his shouted “wait!”

She was gone when he reached the doorway.

The next day they got rid of the bodies the way Hunters always did; salt and burn. Tamara taking care of Isaac’s body on a Hunter’s pyre while Sam and Dean took care of the rest.

“Think she’s gonna be all right?” Sam asked quietly of Dean as they finished pouring the fuel over the bodies, looking at Tamara standing vigil at the pyre.

“No,” Dean replied, “definitely not.”

Bobby joined them and Dean quipped, “well, you look like hell warmed over.”

“Well, you try exorcising all night, see how you feel.” Bobby retorted.

“Any survivors, Bobby?” Sam asked.

“Well, the pretty girl and the heavy guy.” Bobby replied, “they’ll make it. Lifetime of therapy bills ahead, but still…”

“It’s more than you can say for these poor bastards.” Dean commented.

“Bobby,” Sam questioned, “that knife…what kind of blade can kill a demon?”

“Yesterday I’d have said there was no such thing.” Bobby returned.

“I’m going to ask again.” Dean stated, “who was that masked chick? Actually the more troubling question would be…how come a girl can fight better than you?”

Sam gave a half laugh and a quick check to make sure Tamara was still beyond earshot then looked at them seriously, “I got an even more troubling question bothering me. I could sense what she was.”

“Come again?” Dean said, though he’d caught the glance at Tamara and knew that her presence was the reason why his brother hadn’t mentioned this earlier, “what she was?”

Sam nodded, “so the question of the hour is…why on earth would a demon be killing other demons and pretending to be a good guy?”

“A demon?” Dean asked in astonishment, “that makes no sense.”

“You’re telling me.” Sam replied, “it felt right to play along, pretend I didn’t know.”

“Careful.” Bobby warned, “they can be tricky bitches.”

“How else will we find out what she’s playing at?” Sam pointed out, “or get that blade off her.”

“I don’t like it.” Dean said, “you know that what she’ll say will be part truths at best, right?”

“Yeah.” Sam replied, “I definitely know that one.”

“How’d she find you anyway? Even yellow eyes couldn’t.” Dean commented.

“I’m guessing she followed the seven sins.” Sam replied, “or used old fashioned methods of tracking like tailing someone.”
“Something you’re not telling us?” Dean asked, his knowledge of his little brother cluing him in to something that hadn’t been spoken.

“When we split up after the department store…I felt someone watching me.” Sam answered, “couldn’t spot them though, it was like they took off when I turned around.”

“Which would be exactly what mystery demon would do.” Dean stated and Sam agreed.

“And also,” Sam continued, “if we let out the seven deadly sins…what else did we let out?”

Dean paused in thought before lighting the bodies on fire, “we’ll just have to deal with that when we find out. And anyway, we didn’t LET anything out, we were the only people to go in to try to STOP it. It would be a lot worse if we hadn’t.”
Chapter 8: Children

Dean entered the diner where Sam was working on his laptop, Sam tended to check online sources while Dean preferred hard copy in the form of newspapers and tabloids.

“Hey.” Sam said as he looked up at him, “your coffee should be here soon.”

“How’d you know I was on my way?”

Sam shrugged, “just did.”

“That’s getting real spooky.” Dean commented as he tossed the paper to his brother. Sam picked it up and quickly scanned the indicated article.

“Someone died by falling on a power saw?” Sam looked at his brother.

“Yeah.” Dean answered.

“What else?” Sam pressed, “we’ve chased slimmer leads, sure…but what’s making this one stand out to you?”

“Well…” Dean hedged at first then they were interrupted by his coffee arriving. Sam just waited and after fussing with his coffee for a bit Dean slowly continued, “there’s a lady I used to know, lives in the area.”

The pieces started clicking together for Sam, “and with everything that’s been going on you’d like to make sure this isn’t something we need to deal with.” If his brother remembered this lady’s town of residence, and probably her address too, then she definitely meant something to him. Of course, getting to relive the good times with her would be a nice bonus too knowing his brother.

“Something like that.” Dean admitted.

“Don’t forget to eat something, we can hit the road once you’re done.” Sam replied with a grin, “who’s this lady of yours anyway?”

“Lisa Braeden,” Dean answered, checking the menu, “remember that road trip I took about 8 years ago? You were in Orlando with dad wrapping up that Banshee thing.”
Sam nodded, “the five states, five days thing.”

“Kinda.” Dean admitted, “I spent most of my time in Lisa Braeden’s loft. She was a yoga teacher. That was the bendiest weekend of my life.”

It was all Sam could do not to burst out laughing, figures something like that would make a woman a fixture in his brother’s mind.

In Cicero Dean dropped Sam off at the motel, they’d agreed that Sam would do some digging online and in local resources while Dean got reacquainted with Lisa and found out from her end whether there was anything to worry about.

Sam frowned as he got out, something wasn’t right but he couldn’t put his finger on it. “Keep your phone on, ok Dean?”

Dean was about to make a smart alec reply until he saw his brother’s expression. “Your Spidey sense acting up again?”

Sam shrugged, “not sure. Not like the other times if it is.”

“Phone will stay with me and on at all times.” Dean said, “I’ll call in an hour. You find anything or something changes, call me.”

Sam nodded.

What Dean expected to find when he got to Lisa’s place he wasn’t sure, especially after his brother admitted to feeling jumpy, but a kids birthday party wasn’t it. Especially an 8 year old’s birthday party. And very definitely especially not an 8 year old’s birthday party who looked and acted like he could be a miniature clone of him.

Lisa excused herself as she spotted another friend and daughter come in, leaving Dean to try to fit in around the suburban adults. He actually felt more comfortable with the 8 year old. When Ben headed off to the jumping castle he decided to hunt down Lisa and ask the question that was forefront in his mind. He’d always used protection, but failures weren’t unknown.

Finding her just as her friend went out the back.

“Hey,” he started hesitantly, “so I met Ben. Cool kid.”

“Yeah.” Lisa replied.

“Yeah…” Dean decided jumping in the deep end was the only way to handle it, he’d never been known for subtlety after all, “you know, I couldn’t help but notice that he’s turning 8.” Lisa looked at him blankly and he elaborated, “You and me. You know.”

Lisa chuckled, “You’re not trying to ask me if he’s yours?”

“No, no, of course not.” Dean responded flippantly, before continuing seriously, “he’s not, is he?”

“What?” Lisa asked, “no.”

“Right.” Dean replied, feeling oddly disappointed, “yeah.”

As he looked out at the kids he noticed the friend of Lisa’s collect the incredibly withdrawn girl and head off.
“Something wrong with your friend?” He asked in concern.

“She’s been through a lot.” Lisa replied, “her ex just died in this horrible accident.”

“Didn’t I just read about that?” Dean asked, “the, uh, power saw?”

“Yeah.” Lisa confirmed, “I guess there’s been a lot of bad luck in the neighbourhood lately.”

“What kinda bad luck?” Dean asked.

Meanwhile Sam set up in a diner and tried to concentrate on his research. He nearly missed the bell on the door ringing but he didn’t miss the feel of the demon girl who was playing at being a good guy. He pretended to be unaware of her until she plopped herself down opposite him.

“Hello, Sam.”

“You’ve been following me since Lincoln.” He stated and made a mental note to talk to Dean about checking for bugs.

She closed his laptop on him and stole one of his chips, “not much gets by ya, huh?”

She looked at the chip she’d just taken a bite out of, “mm. These are amazing. It’s like deep-fried crack. Try some.”

Sam looked at her incredulously, after that comment he wasn’t sure he’d be able to look at chips the same way again especially knowing what she was.

“That knife you had,” he changed the subject, “you can kill demons with that thing?”

“Sure comes in handy when I have to swoop in and save the damsel in distress.” She replied, he was getting tired of that being brought up; he wasn’t as helpless as all that.

“Where’d you get it?” He asked rather than reveal his irritation.

“SkyMall.” She replied flippantly, co-opting his saucer to hold some tomato sauce.

“Why are you following me?” He asked, wondering if she’d actually give a straight answer.

“I’m interested in you.” She replied, apparently she was allergic to giving straight answers.

“Why?” Sam pressed.

“Because you’re tall.” She replied, “I love a tall man. And then there’s the whole antichrist thing.”

Sam felt his stomach turn to ice, “excuse me?”

“You know, generation of psychic kids. Yellow eyed demon rounds you up, Celebrity Deathmatch ensues, you’re the sole survivor.”

“How do you know about that?” Sam asked.

“I’m a good Hunter.” She replied and it was all Sam could do not to snort in amusement at that; she definitely wasn’t a Hunter, “so yellow eyes had pretty big plans for you, Sam.”

“Had being the key word.” Sam pointed out.

“Yeah, yeah, yeah.” She responded, “that’s right. Ding dong, the demon’s dead. Good job with that.
It doesn’t change the fact that you’re special. In that Anthony-Michael-Hall ESP-vision kind of way.”

Making a quick decision Sam decided that there was no way he was letting on the changes in his abilities or even that he still had them, not to the demon pretending to be a Hunter sitting in front of him. If it hadn’t been so public he might have tried to do something about her, send her back to hell or get that knife off her and use it on her but he couldn’t.

“No, that stuff’s not happening anymore.” He stated as convincingly as he could, “not since yellow eyes died.”

“I’m thinking you’re still a pretty big deal.” She replied, “I mean, after all that business with your mum.”

Sam felt like he’d been kicked in the gut, “what about my mum?”

“You know, what happened to her friends.” She responded, then continued when she realised he didn’t know what she was referring to, “you…don’t know. You’ve got a little bit of catching up to do, my friend.” She grabbed his hand and a pen and scrawled her number as she continued, “so why don’t you look into your mum’s pals and then give me a call and we’ll talk again.”

She stood up to leave then turned back around, “and by the way, you do know there’s a job in this town, right?”

She made a dramatic exit without waiting for his reply.

Dean called right then, a little early on his one hour schedule.

“Hello?” Sam answered.

“Dude.” Dean opened, “there is a job here.”

“Really?” Sam asked, suddenly mindful that they probably couldn’t trust the phones with the demon pretending to be a Hunter being able to follow them.

“Yeah, you know that one freak accident we read in the paper?” Dean continued, “turns out there’s four more that never even made the paper. All in this Morning Hill gated community. People falling off ladders, drowning in Jacuzzis all over the neighbourhood.”

“That is weird.” Sam agreed.

“Something’s up,” Dean continued, “something these nice big gates can’t protect them from.”

“Ok, come pick me up.” Sam replied, “and make sure you don’t have anything stuck to your shoe, wouldn’t want to drag anything into the impala after all.”

Dean silently swore, obviously something had happened to make Sam concerned that the phones couldn’t be trusted.

“I think I avoided any doggy doo doo but I’ll double check.” He replied before hanging up. He made a mental note to himself to pick up another couple of phones when he could and went around to the boot to pull out the small cobbled together device that would help him find any bugs if they were there. He swore silently again when the device showed a tracker attached to the car. He decided against taking it off right here, if he was reading Sam’s concerns right then whoever the person on the other end of it was knew about the case or Sam wouldn’t have let him speak of it. Better not to
alert them to having found it just yet.

15 minutes later he met up with Sam and parked the impala.

“Want to take a walk in the park?” He asked, waving his phone at him before tossing it into the car. Sam followed suit with his phone and research stuff, including the laptop.

“That sounds great.”

“There’s a tracker on the car.” Dean reported once they were far enough away and the little device had cleared them of personal trackers, “what tipped you off?”

“Our little ‘friend’ from Lincoln.” Sam replied, “she’s pretending to be a Hunter, had a mouthful to say, and knew why we were here.”

“Son of a bitch.” Dean swore, “I’m going to kill her for touching baby. You ok?”

“She called me the antichrist and seems to think that what yellow eyes did makes me special.” Sam told him uncomfortably, “she also mentioned that yellow eyes did something to mum’s friends. And gave me her number.” He showed him the number she’d scrawled on his hand.

“You think you might be able to turn that,” Dean gestured at the number, “back on her?”

“Once I clear the laptop and phones of any tracers, yeah.” Sam replied, “and assuming it’s not a burner phone.”

“Ok. Let’s get back to the motel and get moving on that.” Dean decided, “come dark I’ll find that sucker on the car and relocate it to something we can use to mislead her. Once we’re bug free we got two things to look into; what the hell is going on in Morning Hill, and what she’s talking about with mum’s friends.”

“Sounds like a plan.” Sam replied, relaxing now that Dean was backing him up, “I let her think the abilities had vanished with yellow eyes death, just so you know.”

“Good call.” Dean agreed, “the less that little bitch actually knows the better.”

“Definitely agree with you there.” Sam replied, “I’m really not liking how much she knows about us.”

“You’re not alone in that.” Dean agreed.
Chapter 9: Mother

It took half the night but Sam managed to establish that the phones and laptop were free of bugs then rig up a tracker using the phone number the demon pretending to be a Hunter had given him.

While he did that Dean scoured through the family records to find out their mother’s friends after having tracked down the tracker attached to the impala and secured it.

Their tasks finished they grabbed some sleep, come morning they both had things they had to do.

The next morning Sam went around to the places there had been unusual deaths in a suit to gather what information he could while Dean hopped on the phone to the friends of their mother trying to track them down. Midmorning he headed out to check on Lisa and Ben, not that Lisa particularly appreciated it. As he was leaving he noticed several kids just standing and watching, a particularly unchildlike behaviour and very similar to the behaviour of the girl that the friend of Lisa’s had collected as she left the party, the friend who’d lost her ex.

He met back up with Sam at the motel room.

“Something’s wrong with the kids in this town.” Dean told Sam as he came back in.

“Yeah,” Sam replies, “tell me about it. What do you know about changelings?”

“Evil monster babies?” Dean asked, it not having been something he had encountered before. Sam had set out the materials to create a couple of flame throwers and Dean absently started work on them as they talked.

“No,” Sam replied, “not necessarily babies.”

“The kids.” Dean stated, “creepy, stare-at-you-like-you’re-lunch kids?”

“Yup.” Sam answered before grabbing an aerial photograph of the community with the various houses circled, “there’s one at every victim’s house.”

Dean took the photo and looked at it with a sinking feeling, they were all over the neighbourhood without any discernible pattern.
“Changelings can perfectly mimic children,” Sam explained further, “according to lore, they climb in the window, snatch the kid. There were marks on the windowsill at one of the kids’ houses. Looked to me like blood.”

“So changeling grabs the kid, assumes its form, joins the happy fam. Just for kicks?” Dean asked.

“Not quite.” Sam replied, “changelings feed on the mum. Synovial fluid. The mums have these odd bruises on the back of their necks. Changelings can drain them for a few weeks before mum finally croaks.”

“And then there’s dad, the babysitter…” Dean hypothesised.

“Yeah, no,” Sam interrupted, “seems like anyone who gets between a changeling and its food source ends up dead.”

“Fire’s the only way to waste them?” Dean asked, holding up the improvised flamethrower he’d been working on.

“Yep.” Sam confirmed.

“Great.” Dean sighed, “now, we’ll just bust in, drag the kids out, torch them on the front lawn. That’ll play great with the neighbours. What about the real ones? What happens to them?”

“According to the lore,” Sam answered, “they stash them underground somewhere. I don’t know why, but if it’s true, the real kids might be out there somewhere.”

“Better start looking.” Dean replied before asking, “so…any kid in the neighbourhood’s vulnerable?”

“Yup.” Sam confirmed.

“We gotta make a stop.” Dean stated. “I wanna check on someone.”

“If the real kids are alive we don’t have time to…” Sam started.

“We have to.” Dean replied.

First stop was at Lisa’s to try to convince her to take Ben out of town. Sam waited in the car while Dean braved the maternal displeasure he’d invoked earlier in the day.

Dean came back to the car at nearly a sprint, “they took Ben. He’s changed.”

“What? Are you sure?” Sam asked.

“Yeah I’m sure.” Dean replied, “I checked his windowsill.”

“Blood?” Sam asked with dread.

“I don’t think it is blood.” Dean replied, “and I think I know where the kids are.”

Starting up the impala Dean drove straight to the house with the pile of red dirt that he’d seen on his initial visit to Lisa’s place on Ben’s birthday.

He scooped up a handful of the dirt and showed Sam.

“Red dirt.” Sam commented thoughtfully, “that’s what was on the window.”
Dean nodded then retrieved the backpacks, tossing one to Sam, “you take the front, I’ll go around.”

Carefully the two of them searched the house.

Following soft noises Dean found several cages, one of which imprisoned Ben.

“Ben?” Dean asked before switching to reassuring, “Ben. It’s okay. I’m gonna get you out of here, okay?”

Sam on the other hand encountered the adult changeling responsible for the kids. His abilities warning him a second before she spoke.

“What do you think you’re doing?”

Sam caught sight of her true form in a reflection as he turned towards her and had no doubt of what he faced.

“This is private property. I’m calling the police.” She declared, perhaps believing or hoping her ruse hadn’t been exposed.

Dean hunted through the cages trying to find a way to unlock them and was surprised to discover an adult locked in one.

“You heard me.” The adult changeling declared to Sam, “get out!”

“Just let me get my bag.” Sam replied calmly, trying to keep her from guessing his knowledge, “I’m going. I don’t mean to cause any trouble.”

Instead of picking up the bag he pulled out the flamethrower and fired it in her direction. Unfortunately she was faster and was gone before it could do anything.

Dean managed to find a crowbar and began breaking the locks, starting with Ben. As he continued along the line of cages Ben was invaluable for reassuring the other kids and getting them moving. Once they were free Dean smashed a window to allow them to get outside. Ben volunteered his jacket to shield against the broken glass then started directing the other kids to exit.

Sam came running up as the kids started climbing up to the window.

“Dean! Dean, there’s a mother.” Sam called.

“A mother changeling?” Dean asked.

“Yeah. We gotta get these kids out.” Sam declared, “quick.”

Dean steadied the kids as they climbed out and pointed out the last cage to Sam, “right there. There’s one more. You gotta break the lock.” He continued as Sam bashed at the lock, “Guess that’s why changeling’s keeping the kids alive…so the mum can snack on them.”

Sam pulled the adult from the cage with as reassuring as he could manage, “come on. I got you.”

One of the kids let out a scream and they saw the adult changeling standing there.

The changeling was stronger that she looked, managing to toss both Sam and Dean around with ease. Dean yelled to Ben to finish getting the kids out while he and Sam concentrated on dealing with the mother changeling. He managed to knock her down, which allowed Sam to get his hands on one of the flamethrowers, aim it, and fire before she had her feet under her again.
It was with some relief when they got the kids back to their homes they discovered that the kid changelings had gone up with the mother.

Dean personally took Ben back to Lisa.

“Ben?” Lisa called when she saw them arrive and Ben hopped out of the back seat, “Ben! Baby are you okay?”

“I’m okay, mum.” Ben reassured her.

“Oh, my God.” Lisa exclaimed in relief, hugging her son to her.

After a moment she put him down and turned to Dean, “What the hell just happened?”

“I’ll explain everything if you want me to.” Dean replied, “but trust me, you probably don’t. Important thing is…is that Ben’s safe.”

“Thank you.” Lisa stated before giving Dean a hug and repeating, “thank you.”

When Dean turned towards Sam his brother stated, “I’m gonna give you guys some time.”

Lisa led Ben inside and Dean followed.

A little while later Ben was bouncing back and Lisa had asked for the explanation she probably didn’t really want.

“Changelings?”

“You know how I never mentioned my job?” Dean replied, “this is my job.”

“I so didn’t wanna know that.” Lisa said and Dean couldn’t blame her, she looked over at Ben and asked, “do you think he’ll be okay?”

“Yeah, I think he’ll be fine.” Dean replied, before turning back to her, “okay, seriously. I mean, you’re 100 percent sure that he is not mine? Right?”

Lisa laughed, “you’re off the hook. I did a blood test when he was a baby.”

“Oh.”

“There was this guy.” Lisa continued, “some barback in a biker joint.” Dean looked at her and she continued, “what? I had a type. Leather jacket, couple of scars, no mailing address, I was there. Guess I was a little wild back then.” She looked back at Ben, “before I became a mum. So yeah. You can relax.”

“Good.” Dean replied, though he wasn’t completely sure he actually felt that way.

“You look…disappointed.” Lisa commented.

For once Dean decided to be completely honest, “I don’t know. Your life, this house, the kid. It’s not my life, never will be. He’s a good kid, I certainly wouldn’t have been unhappy if he had been mine. You should have seen him take charge of the other kids when we were getting them out.”

“Ben mightn’t be yours.” Lisa told him, “but he wouldn’t be alive if it wasn’t for you.”

A little while later her joined Sam in the car.
“So how old is he?” Sam asked.

“Turned 8 just the other day.” Dean replied, “the day we got here.”

“And you swung through nearly 9 years ago?” Sam continued.

“He’s not mine.” Dean answered, “she had him tested when he was a baby.”

“Oh.” Sam replied, “pity. You’re good with kids.”

Dean snorted in reply and Sam changed the subject. “What did you find out about mum’s friends?”

“They’re dead.” Dean replied as he started up the car and headed away from Lisa’s place, “every last one of them.”

Sam was quiet for a moment, “I had a feeling you were going to say that.”

“You going to call our ‘friend’ and see whether she’ll spill some more info?” Dean asked.

“If I don’t she’ll get suspicious.” Sam replied, “don’t want to be alone though.”

“I’d never be comfortable with you facing her alone.” Dean replied, “and not because of you. I don’t trust her in the slightest. We’d better make sure she THINKS you’re alone though.”

Sam nodded.

Later that night he placed the call and she turned up. They were even able to track her all the way thanks to the improvised tracking from where she’d been holed up across town.

“They’re dead.” He told her as she stood in the motel room, “all of them. All of my mum’s friends, her doctor, her uncle. Everyone who ever knew her systematically wiped off the map one at a time. Someone went through a hell of a lot of trouble trying to cover their tracks.”

“Yup.” She replied, “yellow eyed demon.”

“So, what’s your deal?” Sam asked, “you show up wherever I am, you know all about me, you know all about my mum.”

She laughed lightly, “I already told you, I’m just…”

“Oh, right.” Sam interrupted, “right. Yeah, yeah. Just a…just a Hunter. Just some Hunter who happens to know more about my own family than I do.”

She just looked at him so he pushed, “Just tell me who you are.” He wondered what lie she would try this time.

“Sam, it…”

“Just…” he interrupted her again, “tell me who you are.”

“It doesn’t matter.” She replied.

“Just tell me who you are!” He demanded and hoped he wasn’t overacting.

“Fine.” She replied and blinked to the black eyes that declared what she was.

He hadn’t expected her to drop the ruse so abruptly and wondered if he’d given himself away even
as he grabbed for the holy water in his backpack. He was seriously glad that Dean was hidden not far away, at the first sound of conflict he’d be in like a shot.

“Think twice before going for that holy water.” She called to him.

“Give me one reason.” He replied, knowing that Dean would be even more on alert now.

“I’m here to help you, Sam.” She replied.

“Is that some kind of joke?” Sam demanded.

“God’s honest truth.” She replied, “or whatever.”

“You’re a demon.” Sam pointed out, almost glad he didn’t have to pretend he didn’t know anymore.

“Don’t be such a racist.” She returned, “I’m here because I wanna help you. And I can if you trust me.”

Sam wondered if demons could get high because it certainly seemed like she was in orbit.

“Trust you?” Sam asked incredulously, interposing the flask of holy water between them.

“Sam. Calm down.” She stated calmly and he had a feeling that she was a stronger demon than she was letting on.

“Start talking.” He said instead, “all those murders, what was the demon trying to cover up?”

“I don’t know.” She replied.

“What happened to my mother?”

“I honestly don’t know.” She replied, “that’s what I’m trying to find out. All I know is that it’s about you.”

Apparently she could still kick him in the gut with her words, “What?”

She laughed, “don’t you get it, Sam? It’s all about you. What happened to your mum, what happened to her friends? They’re trying to cover up what he did to you. And I wanna help you figure it out.”

“Why would you wanna help me?” He asked.

“I have my reasons.” She replied, “not all demons are the same, Sam. Not all of us want the same thing. Me? I wanna help you from time to time. That’s all.” She moved closer, apparently sure she was winning whatever her game was, “and if you let me, there’s something in it for you.”

“What could you possibly…?”

“I could help you save your brother.” She interrupted and it was all he could do not to blink in surprise. Dean didn’t need saving because there’d been no deal. Apparently the demons hadn’t got the memo and were all convinced that there had been. Apparently their filing system was worse than the government bureaucracy.

With a smile of victory she headed to the exit, “see ya, Sam.” Then she was gone.

Sam waited until his sense of her had faded before moving out of the room and into his brother’s line
of sight.

Dean visibly relaxed as Sam appeared. Quickly he brought the bug detector online and cleared the room.

“You got it?” Sam asked softly once it indicated all clear and Dean raised his phone to show the recording.

Sam let out a breath and flopped into the closest chair.

“You okay?” Dean asked.

Sam nodded, “thought the room was about to become ground zero for a demon fight for a bit there.”

“So did I.” Dean replied before patting him on the shoulder and sitting down opposite him, “damn I’m glad you didn’t have to handle that on your own.”

Sam nodded, “me too. Especially that last slug. Can you imagine what draw it would have had if you HAD made a deal?”

“I don’t even want to think about that.” Dean replied, “it would probably have had us at each other’s throats. You okay after that insistence that it all happened because of you?”

Sam swallowed, “not really. But I figure that’s why she threw it at me, get me off balance and feeling guilty.”

“But don’t feel guilty.” Dean stated, “wasn’t you that did it or even you that wanted to be singled out by them. Was the demon that did it, for his own crazy reasons, you just happen to be one of the victims.”

Sam took a breath and nodded, “let’s get out of here.”
Chapter 10: Rabbit’s foot

“You okay?” Dean asked with a quick glance to the passenger seat.

“Yeah.” Sam replied, “just trying to figure out what she’s playing at. And trying to figure out if hell really has as bad a filing system as it sounds like. How could they not know there’s no deal in place?”

“Well,” Dean replied, “I don’t know about the bigwigs down there, but if I was going to try to make a Hunter think that a demon was on their side I’d make sure the other demons thought that too or at least acted like it, which would mean she’d have no access to hell’s records if they’re even able to be accessed by regular demons.”

“Don’t think she’s a regular demon.” Sam commented, “but I get your point. Though if that’s all the case it raises a troubling point.”

“That this entire thing was planned.” Dean replied, “right down to you being knifed in the back at Cold Oak and me not being able to live with it. If that girl hadn’t intervened…”

He shook his head, “this is a lot more convoluted than we originally thought. I don’t like it.”

“Me either.” Sam agreed, “especially if it was all planned out in advance like it’s sounding.”

Dean suddenly grinned, “I wonder how long they would have given me if I had actually made a deal?”

Sam rolled his eyes, “Dean!”

“Well think about it,” Dean replied, “it obviously wasn’t supposed to be a drop dead now exchange or they wouldn’t have something to dangle in front of you. And if they stuck to the normal 10 years you wouldn’t be desperate enough to take the bait she’s dangling at this point.”

“So probably months, or a year at most.” Sam replied reluctantly, “not something I really want to speculate about, Dean. Something decided to change the timeline to make sure it didn’t happen, which means it could way to easily have been real.”

“And from what she said there’s going to be beings that will want to unchange it.” Dean noted, “but
not much we can do about that, what can we do against something that can hop about the timeline at
will after all?”

Sam agreed silently. Then they were interrupted by a phone call on their dad’s phone alerting them to
a problem at their dad’s lock up storage, which they hadn’t known about, necessitating a course
change.

“Man.” Dean grumbled as the lift took them downwards.

“What?” Sam asked.

“Just dad.” Dean replied, “you know, him and his secrets. Spend all this time with the guy, we barely
even know the man.”

“Well,” Sam responded, “we’re about to learn something.”

Locating the unit they opened it up to take a look. First thing that caught their attention was the
elaborate devil’s trap right inside the entrance. The type laid out with rulers for long term use rather
than the quick spray paint job they usually used.

“No demons allowed.” Sam commented.

“Blood.” Dean pointed out, pointing his flashlight at the blood on the devil’s trap before locating a
tripwire, “check this out.”

Sam followed the wire up to a shotgun set up in a pig skull.

“Whoever broke in here got tagged.” Sam commented.

“Dear old dad.” Dean replied before looking down at the dust again, “I got two sets of boot treads
here. Looks like it was a two-man job. And our friend with the buckshot in him, looks like he kept
walking.”

“So, what’s the deal?” Sam asked as they carefully stepped over the tripwire, “dad do work here or
something?”

“Living the high life, as usual.” Dean quipped in reply.

They started looking around and Dean picked up a dust covered trophy, brushing off the dust he read
out the year, “1995.”

“No way.” Sam exclaimed and came over to look at it, “that’s my division championship soccer
trophy. I can’t believe he kept this.”

“Yes.” Dean replied, “probably the closest you ever came to being a boy.”

Dean spotted a shotgun, moved over to it and picked it up, “oh, wow. It’s my first sawed-off. I made
it myself. Sixth grade.”

While Dean was reminiscing Sam moved towards an area more secure and pushed open the gate.
Dean joined him as he entered.

“Holy crap.” Dean murmured waving his torch around at the collection of weapons, “look at this, he
had land mines. Which they didn’t take. Or the guns. I guess they knew what they were after, huh?”

Sam’s torch beam ran over a series of boxes, “hey, Dean, check this out.” Dean instantly turned and
came over, “see these symbols? That’s binding magic. These are curse boxes.”

“Curse boxes.” Dean mused out aloud, “supposed to keep the evil mojo in, right, kinda like the Pandora deal?”

“Yeah.” Sam confirmed, “they’re built to contain the power of the cursed object.”

“Dad’s journal did mention a whole bunch of stuff, you know?” Dean replied, “dangerous hexed items, fetishes. He never did say where they ended up.”

“Yeah.” Sam returned, “well, this must be his toxic-waste dump.”

Sam’s torch beam found an empty spot, the outline surrounded by dust.

“One box is missing,” He commented, “great.”

“Well,” Dean replied half hopefully, “maybe they didn’t open it.”

Armed with the partial plate from the break in the brothers finally located the car involved.

Letting themselves into the apartment they confronted the two thieves who had no idea what they’d got themselves into. Even if they were doing really well right now.

When Sam glanced at the rabbit’s foot sitting on the table he got an extreme sense of danger, the sense that Pamela had worked so hard to make sure he had. Without even thinking about he seized the item with his mind, physically grabbed the box sitting open and mentally shoved the rabbit’s foot in before slamming the box closed. The fight abruptly turned against the two thieves.

Sam looked at Dean and shared a confused shrug before just leaving with the box. They left the pair alive and returned to the lockup to store the curse box again.

“We need to up the security on this thing.” Dean commented as they replaced the padlocks, with the strongest ones they could find, and reset the traps.

“We can ask Bobby.” Sam commented.

“That’s an idea.” Dean agreed before asking, “so telekinesis now?”

Sam blinked before realised that was exactly what he’d done, “guess so. I just reacted when I felt the danger pouring off that thing.”

“Huh.” Was Dean’s only comment.

A phone call later turned up the information that Bobby had created the boxes. He said he’d upgrade the security and they swung by his place to give him a copy of the keys.
Chapter 11: Elizabethville

The brothers worked at replenishing their supernatural ammunition while Bobby worked on the colt. He’d made a quick trip to John’s storage room to check and upgrade the security with a side trip into destroying the items that he’d dug up destruction rituals for, including the rabbit’s foot that had been stolen initially.

“Hey.” Sam called to Dean.

“Hey, what’s up?” Dean replied.

“Might’ve found some omens in Ohio.” Sam replied, “dry lightning, barometric pressure drop.”

“That’s thrilling.” Dean replied sounding anything but.

“Plus,” Sam added, “guy blows his head off in a church and another goes postal in a hobby shop before the cops take him out. Might be demonic omens.”

“Or it could just be a suicide and a psycho scrapbooker.” Dean replied.

“Yeah, but it’s our best lead since Lincoln.” Sam responded.

“Where in Ohio?” Dean asked.

“Elizabethville.” Sam replied, “it’s a half-dead factory town in the rust belt.”

“There’s gotta be a demon or two in South Beach.” Dean complained with a sigh.

“Sorry, Hef, maybe next time.” Sam responded before looking at Bobby, “how’s it going, Bobby?”

“Slow” Bobby replied grumpily.

“Man, I tell you, it’s sad seeing the Colt like that.” Dean commented.

“Well…only thing it’s good for now is figuring out what makes it tick.” Bobby replied.

“So what makes it tick?” Sam asked.
Bobby’s only response was a look.

“So if we wanna go check out these omens in Ohio think you can have that ready by this afternoon?” Dean asked.

Sam laughed as the look from Bobby got turned on his older brother.

“Well,” Bobby responded sarcastically, “it won’t kill demons by then, but I can promise you it’ll kill you.”

“Allright.” Dean responded with a laugh before asking, “our little ‘friend’?”

“Nearly the exact opposite direction, if she has her phone on her.” Sam replied.

“And your Spidey sense?”

“That there’s something there.”

“Ohkay.” Dean replied before heading to the exit, “come on. We’re wasting the daylight.”

“See you, Bobby.” Sam said as he followed his brother.

“Hey,” Bobby called before they actually left, “you boys run into anything, anything, you call me.”

They both nodded in answer before continuing on their way.

Arriving they first checked in with the local priest, pretending to be insurance investigators.

“There’s not much left for the insurance company.” The priest told them apologetically, “it was a suicide. Saw it myself.”

“Well, this shouldn’t take long, then.” Dean replied calmly.

The priest led them to the back of the church and indicated the overlooking balcony.

“That’s where Andy did it.” He stated, “it’s the first time I’d seen him in weeks. Used to come every Sunday.”

“When did he stop?” Sam asked, he was just playing along. He knew exactly what he was talking to but didn’t want to tip him off.

“Oh, probably about two months ago.” The priest replied. “right around the time everything else started to change.”

“Change how?” Sam asked.

“Oh,” the priest replied reluctantly, “let’s just say this used to be a town you could be proud of. People cared about each other. Andy sang in the choir. And then one day he just wasn’t Andy anymore. It was like he was…”

“Possessed?” Sam asked, wondering if he’d try pointing the finger elsewhere.

“You could say that.” The priest agreed, “gambled away his money, cheated on his wife, destroyed his business. Yes. Like a switch had flipped.”

“Father,” Sam cautiously asked, “did you know the man who killed those folks in the hobby shop?”
“Sure, Tony Perkins.” the priest replied.

“Tony Perkins.” Sam echoed.

“Good man.” The priest commented.

“Would you say that his personality suddenly changed one day too?” Sam asked.

“I never thought about it that way but…” the priest replied, “yes. About the same time as Andy, about two months ago.”

Sam looked at Dean and his brother smoothly took over, “well, thank you, Father. Appreciate your time.”

Sam waited until they were out of the church before commenting, “two months ago was when the Devil’s Gate opened.”

“You thinking it’s a couple of demons got into those two?” Dean asked, noting almost absently that Sam was being very cautious.

“No.” Sam replied.

“No?” Dean looked at Sam a little alarmed, “something you’re not saying?”

“Priest’s a demon,” Sam replied with certainty.

“You’re shitting me.” Dean complained.

“Normally demons can’t enter sanctified ground.” Sam noted.

“Unless they’re strong,” Dean replied.

“Which means we gotta watch and make sure we know what we’re dealing with before acting.” Sam acknowledged, “he’s way too public to act right now anyway.”

Dean looked at him silently then gave the church a wary look before getting in the car and driving them to a motel.

They were just getting set up in the ridiculous room when another Hunter wandered out of the room across from them.

“Richie.” Dean stated with a chuckle when he spotted him, “I don’t believe it.”

“Hey, Dean Winchester, right?” Richie replied.

“Yeah.” Dean confirmed.

“Yeah.” Richie echoed as a tall blond girl joined him and he obviously fumbled for an explanation, “oh, um. This is my sister, uh…Cheryl.”

“Hey.” ‘Cheryl’ said.

“Hi, Cheryl.” Dean replied as Richie pulled out some notes.

“Here.” He stated, handing them over to the girl. She took them and walked off without a word.

“Well,” Richie fumbled again, “you know, stepsister.”
Dean rolled his eyes, “Come on in. This is my brother, Sam.”

“Hey, how you doing?” Richie asked as he entered.

“Not too bad.” Sam replied.

“Yeah.” Richie replied.

“How do you two know each other?” Sam asked, sure it was going to be an amusing story.

“You were in school.” Dean replied shortly.

“It was that succubus in Canarsie, right?” Richie said, ignoring the shortness of Dean’s reply.

“Yeah, yeah.” Dean confirmed.

“Oh, man.” Richie elaborated, “you should have seen the rack on this broad. Frigging tragedy when I had to gank her.”

“Whoa, whoa,” Dan interrupted, “wait. Who…? Who killed her?”

From Dean’s expression Sam was sure he could guess who had really taken out the succubus. Dean gave every impression of being distracted a pretty girl but there was a reason he’d been able to take out Lust herself and Sam had no doubt that his brother could have handled a succubus without breaking a sweat.

“I remember your ass was toast until I showed up.” Dean continued.

“I forgot what a comedian this guy was.” Richie claimed.

“Richie,” Dean stated, “I told you then, I’ll tell you again. You’re not cut out for this job. You’re gonna get yourself killed.”

Richie ignored him and pulled out his ringing phone even as Dean spoke. Instead of responding he answered the phone.

“Talk to me.” Richie answered as he moved off then turned around to Dean, “FYI, Winchester. Words hurt.” Then went back to the phone, “Yeah. No, it’s not a good time, baby. Later.”

Dean rolled his eyes not at all subtly then asked once the goofy Hunter got off the phone, “so you find anything in town anyway?”

“Oh, no, I got nothing.” Richie replied, before realising they were having two different conversations, “wait, you mean as in demons and whatnot?”

“Yeah.” Dean replied.

“Yeah.” Richie responded, “no, I got nothing.”

“Typical.” Dean stated, “what about your sister back there?”

“Oh,” Richie replied, “honestly? She definitely had the devil in her. But she wasn’t no demon. You know what I’m saying?”

“Right.” Richie said after Dean just looked at him, “seriously, church guy, hobby-shop guy, they were lunch meat by the time I got there. Maybe they were possessed, but I can’t prove it.”
“We got some leads to chase up,” Sam commented, not that he was going to tell this Hunter; he didn’t want the guy killed after all, “you know. Let’s just say that demons are possessing people in town, you know, raising hell…”

“Why would a demon blow his brains out?” Dean interrupted, fairly sure Sam was trying to distract Richie.

“For fun?” Richie suggested, “you know, he wrecks one body, moves to another. Like taking a stolen car for a joyride.”

“Anybody left in town that fits the profile?” Dean asked, “nice guy turned douche, still breathing?”

“There’s Trotter.” Richie answered.

“Who’s that?” Sam asked.

“He used to be head of the rotary club.” Richie replied, “then people say he turned bastard all the sudden. Brought in the gambling, the hookers. He practically owns this whole town.”

“You know where we could find him?” Sam asked.

“Oh,” Richie replied, “he’ll be at his bar in a few hours.”

It didn’t take long for them to locate the bar.

“I thought this was some boarded-up factory town.” Dean commented as they left the Impala.

“It is.” Sam replied, then amended, “or at least it’s supposed to be.”

“Well,” Dean said with obvious enthusiasm, “what are we waiting for? Let’s do some research.”

Sam finally got his brother to the bar where they ran into Richie again.

“Oh Richie, look at you.” Dean commented.

“Hey.” Richie answered.

“Bringing satin back.” Dean continued.

“Oh, you like this?” Richie asked, “try Thai Silk. Canal Street. You have to pay $300 for threads like these, easy. Of course, to me? Forget about it.”

“How much is ‘forget about it’?” Sam asked.

“Ah, forget about it.” Richie replied then pointed behind them, “that’s Trotter over there. He sits there all night. Can’t touch him.”

“So, what do we do now?” Sam asked, he glanced at Trotter then subtly shook his head at Dean.

“Don’t know about you guys,” Dean replied, “but I’m gonna do a little investigating with that bartender.”

“Easy.” Richie interrupted, “me and her, we got a little something-something lined up for later.”

Sam glanced at the bartender and tensed.

“Yeah, right.” Dean replied to Richie sarcastically.
“Stings, don’t it?” Richie taunted him.

“Until we figure out the bad guys it might be a good idea to stick close.” Sam tried telling him carefully.

“Come on, live a little Sam.” Dean told him light heartedly.

“I don’t know about you, Dean,” Sam replied cautiously, “but I could really go for some pie right about now.”

Dean’s smile became forced as he registered the code phrase they’d come up with, the first time Sam had needed to use it.

“Well, that’s easily rectified.” Dean replied, replicating the light hearted tone from earlier so convincingly that only Sam could tell he was acting, “let’s go find an eatery.”

“You go ahead,” Richie stated.

“Might be a good idea to stick together.” Sam said, though he wasn’t looking forward to trying to convey the information to Dean in code.

“Nah,” Richie replied, “I’m good.”

He wandered off into the crowd and Sam sighed in frustration. Dean looked at him with hidden concern behind his flippancy then jerked his head to the exit. Sam followed him out.

Once they were clear of any possible eavesdroppers Dean turned to Sam.

“Not Trotter?”

“He’s clean.” Sam confirmed, “of possession anyway, can’t rule out influence like with the Sins though.”

Dean nodded in acceptance, “so who tripped your Spidey…arg…the bartender?”

“Yes.” Sam confirmed, “sorry Dean.”

“Just our luck.” Dean sighed, “anyone else?”

“Not that I saw.” Sam responded, “aside from the priest anyway.”

“Okay.” Dean replied unhappily, “now we just have to figure out how to keep Richie from going off with her. There’s no way he’s prepared to tangle with a demon that came out of the Gate.”

“I know.” Sam returned, “that’s why I tried to convince him to stick with us. Not that I was looking forward to trying to explain what I’d picked up in code.”

“Well,” Dean stated, “let’s go get a feed and see whether anyone else pops up on your radar.”

“Good idea.” Sam agreed, “here’s hoping we’re only dealing with the two.”

Just as they reached the food place two shots rang out.

“Shit.” Dean swore and dashed to the bar door, blocking Sam from entering while he checked what had happened. After a look he moved to the side and pulled Sam with him, “guy just shot someone then himself.”
“Damn.” Sam sighed, “neither of the demons were directly involved though. They’re both gone.”

“Both?” Dean asked, “the bartender too?”

When Sam nodded Dean had another quick look inside to verify that the meat suits were also gone. Then something occurred to him.

“Shit. Where’s Richie?”
Chapter 12: Smoke and Mirrors

Multiple calls later they had no more idea where he was than when they started, all the calls were ringing out.

“How many times I gotta tell Richie he’s gonna get in trouble?” Dean complained.

“Dean, you’re assuming he’s missing.” Sam tried reassuring his brother, not that it was particularly working given he was worried himself, “I mean, maybe he just bailed.”

“He’s a moron.” Dean replied, “I mean he’s a sweet moron, but he’s not a coward. He wouldn’t just bail. I gotta go find him.”

“All right.” Sam responded, “any ideas where to start?”

“He did say he was going to meet up with the bartender,” Dean said, “and she disappeared at the same time. I’ll start there.”

Sam instinctively knew he didn’t mean talking to the apparent woman, “I’ll keep an eye on the two candidates.”

Dean nodded before unobtrusively moving off. An hour later he returned, his expression a mask over simmering anger that only Sam had a chance of recognising.

“They haven’t left.” Sam told him as he sat down.

Dean nodded shortly, “I hacked his GPS.”

Richie wasn’t with him, which left two possibilities.

“Hospital or pyre?” Sam asked softly.

“Pyre.” Dean replied shortly, “and laid a trap. I’m going to snap her, wait half an hour and follow with the other.”

“Understood.” Sam responded, “be careful. Keep your phone on so I can track you if I need to.”
Dean nodded, put on a carefree expression and headed for the bar. He managed to piss off the prostitute trolling for clients in record time and attracted the attention of the bartender.

“Did I just see you strike out with a prostitute?” She asked with a laugh, “how’s that work?”

“Just told her I had a thing for the bartender.” Dean replied, unleashing his charm, “it was pretty easy.”

“Who says the bartender’s available?” She flirted back.

“That’s a good question.” Dean replied, gesturing vaguely about Richie’s height, “got something going with some guy about yay tall, wears a sweat suit?”

“Who?” She asked, nearly faking ignorance perfectly.

“No?” Dean stated, “my mistake. What do you say you and me grab a drink after your shift?”

“I say,” she replied, “why wait when we can go right now?”

Dean just smiled and accompanied her out of the bar, Sam watched them leave unobtrusively. He already had a tracker up just in case. He noted almost absently that their little ‘friend’ had apparently made a visit to Bobby.

The demon in the bartender’s body led him down into a basement.

“Looks like the maid’s day off.” Dean quipped, she came back into view looking as if she’d noticed something missing, “everything okay?”

She turned around to him and took off her coat, coming close enough to give him a quick kiss on the lips.

“Make yourself comfortable.” She told him before heading further into the area.

Dean watched her progress carefully, speaking up only when she was far enough in, “oh, I forgot to mention. Richie was a friend of mine.”

She turned around to look at him. All flirting and charm had vanished from his face, now the Hunter was the only thing apparent.

“When I realised I could track the GPS in his cell phone,” Dean continued, “I swung by earlier. Gave him a proper burial. It’s better than rotting in some skank’s basement.”

Anger suffused her face and she jumped at him, only to hit an invisible wall before she got to him. Dean crouched down and revealed the Devil’s trap hidden underneath the rug. He’d taken the time to create one of the more complex longer term traps. Given that these two demons were likely ones that came out of the Gate he wasn’t taking any chances.

“Oops.” He said insincerely, “isn’t that a buzz kill? Sorry, sister, but you’re going back to where you came from.”

He pulled out the book of exorcisms he carried with him and opened it. Sam knew all of them off by heart, he still needed the book. He was thinking he should get Sam to drill him in them, you never knew if there was going to come a situation where having it memorised would be the only way to get it sorted.

“I don’t think so.” She stated even as Dean started reading out the exorcism.
Without even speaking she summoned a storm in the room that tore pages from the book and then brought the roof of the access stairway down. She even managed to crack some of the concrete underneath but it didn’t get far enough to impact the devil’s trap.

Dean swore silently, figures he’d be up against a demon who could do something like that. He looked back at her and she smirked at him.

“What are you laughing at, bitch?” He groused, “you’re still trapped.”

“So are you.” She returned, “bitch.”

Sam wouldn’t be too long but he wasn’t just going to sit around and wait for his brother. Dean lit a candle and started hunting for any pages that had survived, making a mental note to talk to Sam about that drilling sooner rather than later.

“Lost something?” She asked smugly.

“All you demons have such smart mouths.” Dean retorted.

“It’s a gift.” She replied.

“Yeah, well.” Dean responded, “let’s see if you’re smiling when I send your arse back to hell.”

“Without your little exorcism book?” She taunted, “hey, go ahead.”

He gave it a good shot but he just simply didn’t have it memorised, not like Sam did.

“Having a little trouble there, sport?” She asked.

Dean tried again.

“Nice try,” she taunted, “but I think you just ordered a pizza. Guess you should’ve paid more attention in Latin class.”

“I don’t know what you’re smiling about.” Dean replied, “you’re not going anywhere.”

“And apparently,” she replied, “neither are you.”

“Yeah,” Dean replied, “but I got somebody coming for me and, uh, he did pay attention in class.”

“Oh, right, Sam.” She responded, he didn’t like that she knew enough about them to say that, “everyone says he’s the brains of the outfit.”

“Everyone?” Dean asked with a good show of disconcertion, his brother’s intelligence didn’t intimidate him. They had different strengths and they meshed with each other quite effectively.

“Sure,” she replied, “you Winchester boys are famous. Not Lohan famous, but, you know.”

“Well, that’s flattering.” Dean responded, “I’ll be sure to let Sam know when he gets here.”

“If he shows up first.” She stated.

Dean hoped that Sam would take care of the demon in the priest before it came down to that. He just looked at her like he didn’t know what she meant.

“What,” she gloated, “you thought I was flying solo? Shouldn’t underestimate, Dean. It might be the
death of you. You can give me hard eyes all you want but the fact remains, we just have to wait and see who shows up first. The cavalry or the Indians.”

Meanwhile back at the bar Sam contemplated the problem of priest. Dean’s plan was good as far as it went but Sam had a bad feeling about possibly bringing reinforcements for the one Dean was trying to bring down. Slipping outside he located a secluded area and set up a trap before returning inside and seeking out the priest.

“Father?” He asked respectfully, or at least with the semblance of respect.

“Not where you expected to find me?” He asked with amusement, “like it or not, you go where your flock is.”

“I guess so.” Sam replied, “uh…Father? Were you here when the guy shot someone then himself earlier?”

“No, actually.” The priest replied, “I’d stepped out and gone back to the church. You?”

“We were just outside.” Sam replied, “I keep wondering if I could have helped if I’d been in here.”

“He made his own choice, son.” He replied, “you couldn’t have done anything.”

“Could…could we talk?” Sam asked.

“Sure we can, son.” The priest replied, “would you prefer one of the booths?”

“How about a walk outside?” Sam suggested.

Once outside he managed to wander the priest into the trap. The priests own spell work couldn’t do a thing to stop him from reciting the exorcism from memory. The meat suit collapsed bonelessly, which told Sam the man had been dead for a while.

With a sigh he relocated the body to the church and made it look like he was at prayer before heading towards the rendezvous with his brother. With a frown he noted that their little ‘friend’ was now in town. Whatever game she was playing could wait, he needed to check on his brother.

He was cautiously moving around the house when Bobby stepped out of the shadows.

“Bobby?” Sam asked quietly, “what are you doing here?”

“Your little ‘friend’ insisted you needed help.” Bobby replied before handing over the Colt, “here.”

“Thanks.” Sam replied, taking it, “Dean’s around here somewhere along with a demon girl.”

“Great.” Bobby replied, “I take it it’s too difficult for you to stay in contact?”

“Sam?” A faint voice came from a short way away, down on the ground.

It took Sam just a moment to locate the small grate, “Dean? What’s going on?”

“She destroyed the book on exorcisms and collapsed the stairway ceiling.” Dean told him, “she’s trapped in a Devil’s trap though.”

“Okay. Bobby and I will try finding the stairway, here.” He slid the Colt through the bars to him.

“Thanks!” Dean replied then asked, “why’s Bobby here?”
“Seems our ‘friend’ decided we needed help.” Sam replied.

“Oh.” Dean responded, “okay.”

He dropped back down into the basement proper and a few moments later they heard the Colt’s gunshot.

“It works!” Dean called up.

Sam just shook his head then located the caved in stairway.

“Let me.” Their ‘friend’ interrupted as Sam and Bobby tried to figure out how to clear it.

Both of them looked at her distrustfully but allowed her to move past and use her strength to move the rubble.

“You’re welcome.” She told them sarcastically before vanishing into the night.

Dean rolled his eyes before looking at the other two, “shall we go?”

Back at the motel they grabbed some food and sat down to compare notes.

“So how’d our ‘friend’ turn up here?” Dean asked after making sure there were no bugs.

“She turned up, helped me fix the Colt then insisted you were in danger.” Bobby explained, “since we’re still trying to bleed her of information I figured I’d play along.”

“Good call.” Dean agreed, “especially if she knew how to fix the Colt. Exactly how powerful a demon would she have to be to have that knowledge anyway?”

“Good question.” Sam agreed, “why’d she think she needed to apparently ride to the rescue also?”

“Well,” Dean replied, “I haven’t got rid of the tracker she stuck on Baby, figure knowing we know she’s tracking us is better than having to check every time and clueing her in that we know. Figure that she knew who set up shop here, that they were strong and figured she could do her knight impression. Without Sam being able to spot demons we’d have been fumbling, we’d probably have thought Trotter was the possessed guy.”

“Yeah,” Sam agreed, “and usually the last place you expect to find a demon is in a church.”

“Which says they were powerful all by itself.” Bobby noted.

“What did happen to the priest?” Dean asked.

“I exorcised him shortly after you left with the bartender.” Sam replied, “had a bad feeling about bringing him there also to isolate him. Meat suit was dead, had been for a while. I put him in the church and maybe they’ll think he just passed away while in prayer.”

“Well, that works.” Dean stated, “and while we’re on the topic of the bartender. She had quite a mouthful to say.”

“Yeah?” Bobby asked, “like what?”

“Well for one, yellow eyes name was Azazel.” Dean replied, “and apparently the plan was to have Sam as the general of the demon army.”
“What?” Sam asked, “in what reality would I have gone along with that?”

“Maybe the one in which you actually played along with that death match thing the bastard set up.” Dean replied, “which wouldn’t have happened without some drastic changes. So maybe little blond pretend knight in shining armour is the backup plan.”

“That’s comforting.” Sam said sarcastically.

“Yeah, I’ll say.” Dean agreed.

“Well, I’m heading home.” Bobby declared, “swing by when you have time.”

“Will do.” Dean replied and Bobby left.

Sam and Dean were packing up when Sam felt the presence of the demon approaching. He quickly signalled Dean silently into the bathroom and his brother grabbed his phone, a weapon, and slipped out of sight.

Their little demonic ‘friend’ let herself in the room and Sam wasn’t real happy about her apparently not even needing to pick the lock.

“Leaving so soon?” She asked, “we haven’t even had a chance to celebrate.”

“Yeah, well,” Sam replied, “you can celebrate without me.”

“You’re not gonna get all pouty on me now, are you?” She taunted, “come on. You defeated two demons today.”

“Maybe you don’t care,” Sam returned, “but four humans died today too.”

“Sam,” She replied with almost plausible sympathy, “you know what happens when demons piggyback humans. They leave them rode hard and put up wet. Chances are she would’ve died a slow, sticky death. Chances are the two of you did her a favour.”

“Did her a favour?” Sam asked incredulously, hoping that Dean wasn’t about to start or already blaming himself for the bartender’s death, “you’re a cold bitch you know that.”

“Yeah,” she returned, “and this cold bitch has saved your arse a couple of times now.”

He would argue with that, they certainly hadn’t needed her assistance this last job despite what she apparently thought or was trying to convince him of. He picked up the Colt just in case.

“Some respect might be nice.” She continued, “especially if you want me to help you out with Dean and his little problem.”

“You know,” Sam replied, carefully phrasing it so as not to tip her off, “you keep dangling that, but you still haven’t said exactly what you’ll do.”

“Everything in its own time, Sam.” She replied and Sam translated that as she wasn’t actually going to do anything but just wanted him to think she would. Not that there actually was anything he needed her help with since there was no deal hanging over Dean’s head, “but there’s a quid pro quo here. We’re in a war.”

“Right.” Sam returned, “but for some reason you’re fighting on our team. Tell me, why is that again?”
“Go screw yourself, that’s why.” She snapped in reply.

“I see.” Sam replied.

“I don’t have to justify my actions to you, Sam.” She continued, “if you don’t want my help…fine. Then give me the gun, and I’ll pass it on to someone who will use it.”

“Maybe I’ll just use it on you.” Sam stated calmly, cocking the gun and aiming it at her. He wondered how she would react now.

“Go ahead,” she replied with surprising apparent nonchalance, “if that makes you happy. It’s not gonna do much for Dean, though.”

She was playing that card again he noted and again wondered at the filing system of hell. He was very tempted to end the charade, but a gunshot in a crowded motel would attract way too much attention.

“So,” she continued with a surprising amount of self-assuredness, “what’s it gonna be? Hmm?”

He decided to let her think she’d won this round and removed the Colt from aiming at her.

“Ahh.” She said in satisfaction, “that’s my boy.”

That nearly made him shoot her all on its own.

“This won’t be easy, Sam.” She continued, “you’re gonna have to do things that go against that gentle nature of yours. There’ll be collateral damage. But it has to be done.”

“I don’t have to like it.” Sam replied, again picking his words carefully to give the impression of saying what she wanted to hear.

“No.” She agreed, “you wouldn’t be Sam if you did. But on the bright side I’ll be there with you.”

Sam barely kept himself from gagging at that statement.

“That little fallen angel on your shoulder.” She continued, obliviously, “see you around Sam.”

She let herself out. Again Sam waited until her presence faded from his senses before stepping into the bathroom and his brother’s line of sight. He stayed there while Dean quickly cleared the room of any bugs before returning.

“You okay?” Dean asked, his brother looked positively green, especially with his fist held against his mouth like it was.

Sam took a long controlled breath, “feel kinda sick. Did you hear what she said? How she said it?”

“Got it recorded.” Dean replied as he moved past, patting his brother’s shoulder reassuringly as he did, and wet a face washer in the sink before handing it to him. Sam pressed it to his face, the cool helping to calm and settle him.

“Thanks.” He said softly as he handed it back, he’d never thought of himself as having a weak stomach before.

“No problem.” Dean returned, “I’m not sure I’d have been able to keep my lunch if I’d had that directed at me.”
Sam snorted a half laugh, “not sure how I managed not to. Though we do have some idea of what she’s trying to accomplish now.”

“Yeah.” Dean agreed, “she wants you a harder, harsher person than you are. So we’re just going to have to make sure she doesn’t get it.”

Sam nodded, knowing it was only possible with his brother’s help. If he was alone to navigate these waters killing her would be his only hope.
Chapter 13: Grimm and Boats

Chapter Notes

Story Name: Pivot Point
Pen Name: ElenaRoan
Disclaimer: Don’t own any of them, written purely for enjoyment.
Warnings:
Summary: What if Anna decided to derail the apocalypse by intervening to help rather than trying to make the brothers never having existed.
Timeline: Season 3
Note: I’m Australian and I can’t bring myself to use USA spelling, sorry.

Chapter 13: Grimm and Boats

Sam looked up at Dean as he came out of the bathroom, he’d been keeping track of events in Elisabethville after their exit to make sure there wasn’t any repercussions they’d need to get taken care of. The priest had been found, as expected, the next day and was presumed to have passed away peacefully while in prayer. There hadn’t been an autopsy even. The bartender had been found just the previous day.

He’d also almost religiously been keeping track of where their demonic ‘friend’ was, or at least the phone attached to the number she’d given him was. Unfortunately the main thing it confirmed was how fast the demon could travel and he didn’t particularly feel like dealing with more of her seduction attempts in the near future, he still felt sick thinking about what she’d said and was glad Dean hadn’t played the recording for him; he wasn’t sure he’d have been able to keep from puking without the focus of keeping up the façade.

There was a reason they were camped in a motel only a few towns over from Elizabethville after all instead of at Bobby’s. He may have been able to keep from thinking about the attempted seduction from their demonic ‘friend’ while awake, he couldn’t keep it out of his dreams and one incidence of waking up gagging in the impala’s passenger seat had been enough to convince Dean to take a breather at the next available motel even if nothing had actually come up. He’d had the impala on the side of the road so fast that Sam doubted there’d been any risk to the car’s interior even if something had. Not that Sam had been fooled by the joking threats from Dean for if he messed up the interior, his brother was far more concerned that there was something going on with him.

“They found the bartender.” Sam commented, “dead by broken neck, which they’re presuming is from the ceiling collapsing, and they can’t figure out why someone would shoot a corpse so are putting that down to accident.”

“Huh.” Dean responded, “good to know.”

And it was good to know, he’d wondered if they’d have been able to save her if he’d just waited for Sam to get down to the basement, now they knew she was already dead.

“Found any jobs?” He asked.

“Maybe,” Sam replied, “apparent werewolf attack. Two dead, one survivor.”
Dean did a quick calculation, “hope it’s not too far, the full moon isn’t far off.”

“Maple Springs, New York.” Sam replied.

“Okay.” Dean stated, “let’s go.”

In Maple Springs they interviewed first the survivor then the coroner, which perplexingly ruled out the werewolf possibility. It didn’t tell them what it was though.

“Your Spidey sense picking up anything?” Dean asked.

Sam shook his head, “nothing beyond a vague sense of…wrongness.”

“So not a demon?”

“Doubt it, I’ve kinda got familiar with that feeling over the past few weeks.”

“Okay.”

The next clue happened when a woman escaped from an elderly lady, who had slaughtered her boyfriend, by shoving her against the stove. Her report of seeing a young girl sent them to the elderly lady’s cottage and turned up EMF by the window where the girl had been seen.

As Dean could have picked it was Sam who put it together and told them they were after a ghost with a penchant for the original Grimm Brother’s stories.

Eventually they tracked it to the comatose daughter of the doctor at the hospital who’s own story resembled that of Snow White.

One of the hardest things they’d ever done was talking him into letting his daughter go.

Shortly after Sam dug up a story on a lady drowning in her own home and they left with relief.

“You look tired.” Dean commented on the way, “you not sleeping still?”

“Don’t want to mess up the car,” Sam tried to deflect.

“That nightmare?” Dean asked, “we can stop at a motel if you need.”

Sam shook his head, “someone’s life may depend on us getting there. I’ll survive.”

Dean glanced at him with naked concern on his face, “we need to do something about that.”

Sam shrugged, “only time will get it out of the forefront of my memories, you know that.”

“Next time I see her I’m gonna shoot her.” Dean promised darkly.

“If you do that we’ll never find out what they’re trying to do to me.” Sam pointed out reasonably, “and without knowing that we’re not going to be able to make sure to avoid it.”

“Because we’re doing such a great job of protecting you from her so far.” Dean snapped, “how many times you nearly lost your dinner so far?”

“I haven’t been keeping track.” Sam replied, nearly surprised he could be so calm. He could almost feel the worry burning in his brother and knew Dean wasn’t angry at him. Dean’s instinct to take out any threat to his little brother wasn’t finding a target this time and was flailing around loose.
“I’ll survive.” Sam repeated. He knew his brother had conceded the argument when Dean huffed out a sigh.

Arriving a quick interview with an elderly lady called Ms Case turned up some interesting information; namely that her niece had seen a disappearing ship, that someone called ‘Alex’ was working the supernatural side of things, and that she was incredibly attracted to Sam.

“What a crazy old broad.” Dean commented once they were away from her house, amusement aside he could hope this would distract his brother from the demonic seduction attempt and that nightmare would fade into the past.

“Why, because she believes in ghosts?” Sam asked, deliberately avoiding what was obviously tickling his brother’s funny bone.

Dean laughed, “look at you sticking up for your girlfriend, you cougar hound.”

“Bite me.” Sam returned sarcastically.

“Hey, not if she bites you first.” Dean responded, “so who’s this Alex? We got another player in town?”

“Maybe, maybe not.” Sam returned, “doesn’t change our job.”

“We’re thinking ghost ship, right?” Dean asked.

“Yeah.” Sam replied, “not the first one that’s been sighted apparently either.”

“Really?” Dean asked.

“Yeah, every 37 years, like clockwork, reports of a vanishing three mast clipper ship out in the bay.” Sam responded, “and every 37 years, a rash of weirdo dry land drownings.”

“So whatever’s happening is just getting started?” Dean asked.

“Yeah.” Sam answered.

“What’s the lore?” Dean questioned.

“There are apparitions of old wrecks sighted all over the world.” Sam replied, “the S.S. Violet, the Griffon, the Flying Dutchman. Almost all of them are death omens.”

“So what happens?” Dean asked, “you see the ship, then a few hours later you pucker up and kiss your arse goodbye?”

“Basically.” Sam confirmed.

“What’s the next step?” Dean asked.

“Gotta ID the boat.” Sam replied.

“Shouldn’t be too hard.” Dean responded, “I mean how many three mast clipper ships are wrecked off the coast?”

“I checked that too, actually.” Sam answered, “over 150.”

“Wow.” Dean replied in surprise.
“Yeah.” Sam agreed.

“Crap.” Dean complained and Sam wordlessly agreed.

They walked back to the car. Or rather where the car used to be.

“This is where we parked the car, right?” Dean asked with alarm starting to appear in his voice.

“I thought so.” Sam confirmed.

“Where’s my car?” Dean asked.

“Did you feed the meter?” Sam asked.

“Yes, I fed the meter.” Dean replied, his voice going up in volume, “Sam, where’s my car? Somebody stole my car?”

“Hey, hey, calm down, Dean.” Sam told him, his brother appeared to be getting overly worked up. Dean wasn’t known for being subtle though.

“I am calmed down.” Dean returned, nearly yelling, “Someone stole my…”

Sam looked back over at his brother as the sentence was cut off and his guts clenched as he noticed Dean was near hyperventilating. This wasn’t just Dean being loud, this was his brother near panic and actually in trouble. He instantly went to his side, lending physical support to his normally unshakable older brother.

“Whoa, Dean.” He said, trying to sound calm, “hey, hey, hey, take it easy. Take it easy.”

A strange voice intruded, “the ’67 Impala? Was that yours?”

“Have we met?” Sam asked.

“Not personally.” The lady replied, “you cost me quite a lot of money a few weeks ago. Bela Talbot. I specialise in obtaining rare artefacts for discriminating buyers.”

“The rabbit’s foot.” Sam concluded.

“What did you do to my car?” Dean demanded.

“I’m sorry, I had that car towed.” Bela answered.

“You what?” Dean demanded again.

“Well, it was in a tow-away zone.” She replied blasély.

“No, it wasn’t!” Dean replied.

“It was when I finished with it.” She replied.

“What the hell are you even doing here?” Dean demanded, “revenge for us preventing your thugs from stealing a cursed item from us?”

“A little yachting.” She answered flippantly.

“You’re Alex.” Sam figured out, “you’re working with that old lady.”
“Gert’s a dear old friend.” Bela replied.

“Yeah, right.” Dean commented, “what’s your angle?”

“There’s no angle.” She replied, “there’s a lot of lovely old women like Gert up and down the eastern seaboard. I sell them charms, perform séances so they can commune with their dead cats.”

“And let me guess.” Dean said, “it’s all a con, none of it’s real.”

“The comfort I provide them is very real.” Bela responded, starting to walk off.

“How do you sleep at night?” Sam asked incredulously.

“On silk sheets,” Bela replied, turning back to them, “rolling naked in money. Really, Sam. I’d expect the attitude from him. But you?”

“You don’t know me.” Sam replied.

“You do know what’s going on here.” Dean interrupted, “this ghost ship thing, it is real.”

“I’m aware.” Bela responded, looking uninterested, “thanks for telling Gert the case wasn’t solved, by the way.”

“It isn’t.” Dean pointed out.

“She didn’t know that.” Bela replied, “now the old bag’s stopped payment and she’s demanding some real answers.”

She sighed, “look, just stay out of my way before you cause any more trouble.” She paused then continued, “I’d get to that car if I were you before they find the arsenal in the trunk.”

She turned and walked away calling over her shoulder as she did so, “ciao.”

“Can I shoot her?” Dean asked after watching in silence for a moment.

“Not in public.” Sam answered, not sure if he was disappointed or not.

It took the rest of the day to retrieve the impala and arrange a place to stay.
Chapter 14: Catch

Chapter Notes

Story Name: Pivot Point
Pen Name: ElenaRoan
Disclaimer: Don’t own any of them, written purely for enjoyment.
Warnings:
Summary: What if Anna decided to derail the apocalypse by intervening to help rather than trying to make the brothers never having existed.
Timeline: Season 3
Note: I’m Australian and I can’t bring myself to use USA spelling, sorry.

Sorry this is a little late, I’m not feeling well.

Chapter 14: Catch

The next morning they heard the news that there’d been another drowning overnight.

Arriving it was quite satisfying to be able to use their fake ids to interrupt Bela’s interview of the brother of the victim.

Talking to the brother they noted that he had a lot of details about the ship, which turned up the information that both of them had seen the ghost ship. And thus told them who the next victim would be, now was just the trick of protecting him.

Which, of course, Bela didn’t agree with. Of course that didn’t dissuade them, not that the surviving brother cooperated and because he ran instead of letting them protect him he drowned in his own car. A fact that Bela wouldn’t be shy about rubbing in.

Driving away Dean finally broke the silence, “you wanna say it or should I?”

“What?” Sam asked.

“You can’t save everybody, Sam.” Dean replied flatly.

“Yeah, right.” Sam replied, not sure what Dean was getting at, “so what, you feel better now or what?”

“No, not really.” Dean responded.

“Me neither.” Sam agreed.

“You gotta understand…” Dean started.

“Lately I feel like I can’t save anybody.” Sam interrupted. And it was true. Only four of the victims of the coma girl’s fascination with the Grimm brother’s stories had actually survived. Both of the possession victims hadn’t survived and quite a few others had died that they still didn’t know whether had been influenced by the demons or not. And then there was what their demonic ‘friend’ wanted with him.
“Dean, stop the car.” He barely got out before he gagged.

“Sam?” Dean exclaimed, alarmed, even as he pulled the impala over fast. Nothing more came up than the last few times.

“You weren’t even asleep that time.” Dean noted from beside him as he sat half out of the car, quickly checking his temperature and not sure if he was relieved or concerned that Sam wasn’t running a fever. At least with a fever there was something to combat.

“Sorry.” Sam mumbled.

“I don’t want an apology,” Dean replied, “I want to know what’s going on in that head of yours.”

“Every time I dream of or think about what that demon wants…” He didn’t finish as he gagged again.

Dean rubbed Sam’s back soothingly as he frowned thoughtfully.

“She came out of the Gate, didn’t she?” He asked quietly once Sam was calm again.

Sam nodded silently.

“We already know she’s downplaying her strength, right?” Dean continued, “what if she has that influencing trick that some of the other demons that came out of the Gate have. What if this is your body trying to reject it like it would a poison, only because it’s not quite physical you’re not able to expel it.”

Sam frowned as his tired mind processed what his brother had suggested. If they supposed that was right how would they check for it. It would be a poison to the mind rather than the body so any test would have to be mental. A form of meditation perhaps. Leaning back carefully he stilled his mind and focused.

Slowly, painfully slowly it came into focus. A nebulous field that hovered around, trying very hard to insert tendrils into his mind, especially to try to make him sexually attracted to the demon pretending to help them. He nearly gagged again before focusing and carefully digging the tendrils out then sweeping away the hovering field.

Taking a deep breath he brought himself out of the meditation.

Dean was crouched near him now, watching him worriedly.

“Dean, you’re a genius.” He said wearily.

“I am?” Dean asked, “how so?”

“You were right.” Sam replied, “I found it and dug it out. The discipline Pamela drilled into me was preventing it from actually getting a hold but not from affecting me altogether. It was trying to make me sexually attracted to her, which is why I nearly puked every time that came up.”

“So…” Dean paused for a moment considering, “how do you feel now about her trying to seduce you?”

He was ready to move quickly if needed, but it wasn’t.

“Like I need a shower.” Sam replied, for the first time in days not gagging at the slightest thought of it.
“Great! You’re cured. Now get back in the car and let’s get going.” Dean replied, the joyful relief was easy to hear in his voice, before he returned to the driver’s side and resume their trip to their lodgings.

Sam was asleep by the time they got there, Dean nearly didn’t have the heart to wake him but trying to carry him, especially as a fireman’s hold was the only way he could move his giant of a brother, would wake him anyway and he’d be stiff if he left him where he was so waking it was. Though it was only awake enough to put one foot in front of the other as Dean steered, he was out like a light as soon as he was deposited in the bed. Dean chuckled, stripped off his brother’s coat and shoes, checked the defences, then went to bed himself.

Next morning it was only with coffee that Sam was able to focus on the book on shipwrecks, which Dean was more than happy to supply him with. Research was not Dean’s forte, especially at the rate they needed to go this time, though he could do so if needed he found it hard to sit still long enough for it to be worthwhile.

A knock interrupted them and of course it was Bela.

“So. How’d things go last night with Peter?” Was one of the first things she said. Both of them glared at her, “that well, huh?”

“If you say ‘I told you so’ I swear to God, I’ll start swinging.” Dean told her seriously.

“Look,” Bela replied, “I think the three of us should have a heart-to-heart.”

“That’s assuming you have a heart.” Dean replied.

“Dean, please.” Bela said with not a hint of entreaty in her voice. “I’m sorry about what I said before, okay? I come bearing gifts.”

“Such as?” Sam asked with a sigh.

“I’ve ID’d the ship.” Bela replied before pulling out a zippered folder.

Both of them watched her warily wondering what she had planned as she started handing out photos.

“It’s the *Espirito Santo*.” She stated, “a merchant sailing vessel. Quite a colourful history. In 1859, a sailor was accused of treason. He was tried aboard ship in a kangaroo court and hanged. He was 37.”

“Which would explain the 37 year cycle.” Sam noted.

“Aren’t you a sharp tack?” Bela replied, almost like she was praising a pet and it was all Sam could do not to roll his eyes, “photo of him somewhere. Here.”

She pulled out an old photo and handed it to them.

“Isn’t that the customer we saw last night?” Dean asked Sam.

“You saw him?” Bela interrupted.

“Yeah.” Dean replied, “that’s him, except he was missing a hand.”

“His right hand.” Bela stated.

“How did you know?” Sam asked.
“The sailor’s body was cremated but not before they cut off his hand to make a Hand of Glory.” Bela explained.

“A Hand of Glory?” Dean asked before finishing with a laugh, “I think I got one of those at the end of my Thai massage last week.”

“Dean, the right hand of a hanged man is a serious occult object.” Sam explained, “it’s very powerful.”

“So they say.” Bela said.

“And officially counts as remains.” Dean noted.

“But still none of this explains why the ghost is choosing these victims.” Sam commented.

“I’ll tell you why.” Bela said, “who cares? Find the hand, burn it and stop the bloody thing.”

“I don’t get it.” Dean stated, “why are you telling us all this?”

“Because I know exactly where the hand is.” Bela replied.

“Where?” Dean asked.

“At the Sea Pines Museum as a macabre bit of maritime history.” Bela replied, “but I need help.”

“What kind of help?” Sam asked distrustfully.

Neither were particularly fond of the idea, especially Sam since he would be paired with the elderly lady who was so enamoured of him.

Later that night Sam shot a ‘watch your back’ look at Dean before leaving to collect his clingy ‘date’. Dean wasn’t sure who had the better deal, he was sure that Bela had something other than taking care of the ghost planned.

Much to his surprise it actually went pretty smoothly. Well, until he went to pull out the prize afterwards and found that Bela had somehow managed to swap it out without him noticing, a rather impressive feat that he didn’t feel like congratulating her on.

Sam look at him and half smiled.

“Don’t say it.” Dean grumbled.

“Just be glad we peeled that demon haze crap off my mind, it cleared up my extra senses.” Sam replied with a grin and pulled out the sought after hand, “I sensed it in her handbag and thought I’d snag it before she disappeared.”

“You are a genius.” Dean stated, “now let’s get out of here before she notices.”

He matched words to actions and sent the impala speeding away from the museum. As he did so Sam brought him up to speed on what he’d found out linking the victims.

It took a bit to find a secluded area they felt comfortable enough to salt and burn it that they could be reasonably sure Bela wouldn’t also find before they were done so it was much later that they returned to where they were staying. To find Bela waiting for them.

“I take it you’re going to complain about us doing what we set out to do and save lives?” Dean
demanded caustically.

“No actually.” Bela replied, “you may have done me out of a good deal of money but I rather value my life higher. You did burn it, right?”

“You saw the ship.” Sam hypothesised.

She nodded, “did you burn it or not?”

“Wow,” Dean replied, “you know, I knew you were an immoral, thieving, con-artist bitch. But just when I thought my opinion of you couldn’t get any lower...”

“What are you talking about?” Bela asked.

“We figured out the spirit’s motive.” Sam explained, pulling out a photo from the pile, “this is the captain of our ship the one who hung our ghost boy.”

“So?” Bela asked.

“So they were brothers.” Sam stated, “very Cain and Abel. So now our spirit, he’s going after a very specific kind of target. People who’ve spilled their own family’s blood. See first there was Sheila, who killed her cousin in a car accident. Then the Warren brothers who murdered their father for the inheritance. And now you.”

“Oh, my God.” Bela mumbled.

“So who was it, Bela?” Dean asked, “hmm? Who’d you kill? Was it daddy? Your little sis, maybe?”

“It’s none of your business.” She replied softly.

“No.” Dean said, “right. Well, have a nice life. You know, whatever’s left of it.”

He moved away and grabbed his coat, he certainly wasn’t going to tell her they’d already burnt the damn thing, “Sam. Let’s go.”

“You can’t just leave me here.” Bela said, standing up, “if you haven’t burnt it yet then burn it.”

“Watch us.” Dean replied.

“Please.” It was the closest they’d heard to her begging in the short time they’d known her, “I need your help.”

“Our help?” Dean asked, “now, how could a couple of serial killers possibly help you?”

“Okay, that was a bit harsh I admit.” She scrambled to apologise, “but it doesn’t warrant a death sentence.”

“What did you do, Bela?” Sam asked quietly.

“You wouldn’t understand.” Bela replied, “no one did.”

Sam’s eyes narrowed as something he couldn’t quite define tingled on the edges of his senses.

“Never mind.” Bela stated. She would have said more except Sam interrupted her.

“Lucky for you, we already burned it.”
“Then why didn’t you say so?” She demanded.

“Because you’re an idiot who puts money above lives.” Dean told her, “because if Sam hadn’t snagged it out of your handbag you’d have sold the only thing that could have saved you and many others. And we probably couldn’t have done a thing to stop it. Because you were greedy. So thank your lucky stars we didn’t actually wait to burn that thing to ash, because if we had that ghost might have claimed one last victim.”

“Maybe think before you betray the people who might just save your life next time.” Sam added.

She left then but returned the next day with $10,000 for each of them as a way to settle her debt. Sam had a feeling she hadn’t learnt her lesson.
Chapter 15: Vampire Trouble

Dean was studying the map of deaths and disappearances while Sam tapped away on his computer. They knew it was vampires but the patterns didn’t seem quite…mature.

Dean grumbled as his phone rang, he didn’t recognise the number, then answered on speaker.

“Hello.”

“Hi, Dean.” Bela’s voice came through the phone and he shot a look at Sam.

“How did you get my number, Bela?”

“Hey, where are you?” She asked without answering him.

He paused and looked at Sam who nodded warily, “Albany, New York. Why?”

“Thank you, Dean.” Bela replied and hung up.

“If that brings something dangerous to us I’m going to shoot her.” Dean grumbled.

“Better now than when we’re not expecting it.” Sam replied, “be on your guard.”

“You too.” Dean returned before bringing up the phone log and handing it to Sam, “think you can do something with this?”

Sam glanced at it and grinned, “if that’s her normal phone, yeah.”

He pulled over the laptop and set up tracking on the number, a few moments later both phones beeped as they got the update on the apps Sam had set up so they could access the tracking while on the move.

“Great. Now if only we could track these vampires as easy.” Dean commented.

Almost as if summoned the police scanner crackled to life.

“Ask and you shall receive.” Sam commented ironically as they listened to the information coming
over the airways.

Dean grabbed his machete and headed for the door, “let’s go.”

One hunt through a warehouse, anonymous call to an ambulance, one captured recently turned vampire, and they were out of the area with the police no more clued in than before.

The vampire was still out of it, the dose of dead man’s blood Dean had given her still keeping her out. He had another on hand as a precaution though.

“Well, now I know what vampires feel like.” Sam commented.

Dean looked at him a moment, “when were you going to tell me you could tell the difference between monsters with those extra senses of yours?”

“This is the first non demon or ghost we’ve dealt with since they started.” Sam pointed out, “I was expecting to be able to sense those, vampires I wasn’t since they’re physical. Be interesting to see if other types show up too.”

“You have an odd definition of interesting.” Dean replied with a sigh, every new winkle in the new abilities his brother was gaining were more than a little disconcerting.

“It’s going to happen regardless.” Sam responded with a sympathetic smile, “I figured it’s better to just roll with it, however disconcerting. If I don’t it could bite me in the arse, it could bite you in the arse.”

Dean considered his brother’s words for a moment, “you know, I never thought I’d say this…but I’m glad you’re the one dealing with that. I’d never be able to be so Zen about it.”

Sam laughed then nodded at the vampire, “she’s waking up.”

Sure enough a few moments later she opened her eyes.

One not very illuminating interrogation later they knew she thought she was on a drug high, had the name of the club it had occurred at, the name of the vampire, and took care of the young vampire.

Investigating the club however didn’t show any vampires in current residence.

“That was a big fat waste of time.” Dean complained.

“Three blonds have gone missing, including Lucy.” Sam explained patiently, “all last sighted here. This is the hunting ground…”

Sam frowned slightly and looked around, something was tickling at the edge of his perceptions.

“Hey.” Dean said and pointed at a man leaving with a blond girl.

As soon as Sam’s locked onto him his senses confirmed the guess and he nodded at Dean.

Moving quickly they interrupted the man before he could infect his companion. Sam got the girl to run away while Dean traded blows with the vampire. Dean was the best Hunter Sam knew but sometimes being the best isn’t enough and the vampire managed to send him to the ground. He didn’t stick around though, running away as quickly as he could. Sam ran to Dean’s side rather than pursue.

“Dean!”
Dean grunted but got to his feet with a bit of help from Sam, then took off running after the vampire, “I’m good. Come on.”

Sam joined him but they ran into Gordon and his friend first. Dodging the gunfire all he could think was they didn’t have time for this.

Temporarily sheltered Dean considered the situation, Gordon’s target the last few times they’d met had been Sam, which crystallised his choices instantly.

“All right, run,” he told Sam, “I’ll draw them off.”

“What?” Sam exclaimed, “no, you’re crazy.”

Dean ignored him in favour of aggressively charging the two Hunters and then getting out of the area through the most awkward spot to pursue that he could find. Sam rolled his eyes as he swore silently then went in the other direction, Dean would have his head if he didn’t capitalise on the advantage he’d bought even if Sam wanted to hand Dean his head for being so reckless. One followed Dean while Gordon came to investigate their temporary hiding spot.

Soon as he was sure he wasn’t being followed Sam returned to their lodgings hoping to find Dean already there. He wasn’t. It took way too long for Sam’s comfort for Dean to come through the door.

“There you are.”

“Yeah, sorry. I stopped for a slice.” Dean joked in reply.

“Nice move you pulled back there, Dean, running right at the weapons.” Sam growled, the wait had only increased his concern for his brother.

“Well, what can I say?” He replied with the light hearted confidence that scared Sam sometimes, “I’m a bad arse.”

He turned to Sam with a grin but the still visible fear in his brother’s expression sobered him.

“So I guess Gordon’s out of jail.” He continued in a more serious vein.

“Uh, yeah, I guess so.” Sam replied, “you know, how the hell did he know where to find us?”

Dean thought for a moment then rolled his eyes, “Bela. Remind me when I see her next that I said I’d shoot her if that phone call bit us in the arse.”

He pulled out his phone and called her, switching to speaker almost automatically, she answered almost immediately, “Hi, Bela.”

“Hello, Dean.” She replied in that carefree tone she always used.

“Question for you.” Dean continued, “you called me yesterday. It wasn’t to thank me for saving your arse, was it?”

“No. Gordon Walker paid me to tell him where you were.” She admitted cheerfully.

“Excuse me?”

“Well, he had a gun on me. What else was I supposed to do?”

Dean rolled his eyes, if he’d paid her then she didn’t care about the gun. Especially as Gordon
wasn’t the most subtle of Hunters.

“I don’t know, pick up the phone and tell us that a raging psychopath was dropping by?”

“I did intend to call. I got side tracked.” She replied as if that made it okay.

“He tried to kill us!”

“I’m sorry. I didn’t realise it was such a big deal.” She replied blasély, “after all, there are two of you and one of him.”

“There were two of them.” Dean told her.

“Oh.”

“Bela, if we make it out of this alive the first thing I’m gonna do is kill you.”

“You’re not serious.” For the first time she actually sounded uncertain.

“Listen to my voice and tell me if I’m serious.” He didn’t wait for her reply and just hung up.

“I don’t know about you, but I wasn’t expecting the danger heading our direction from that phone call to be Gordon.” Sam commented, “since when did she go from artefacts to information dealing?”

“Well Gordon isn’t the most subtle of Hunters, I’m guessing she was telling the truth about the gun.” Dean replied, “but I’m also guessing she’s the one who talked him into paying for it.”

“That vampire’s still out there, Dean.” Sam commented to Dean much later as they sorted out what they were going to do.

“First thing first.” Dean replied.

“Gordon.” Sam concluded, his brother did tend to have tunnel vision when things threatened him.

“About that. When we find him or if he finds us…” Dean said.

“Yeah?” Sam asked when his brother went silent.

“I’m saying. He’s not leaving us a whole lot of options.” Dean pointed out.

“Yeah, I know.” Sam agreed reluctantly, “we gotta kill him.”

“Really?” Dean asked, worry sparking in his gut, had that mental messing of their demonic ‘friend’ had more effect than either of them had thought? “Just like that? I thought you would’ve been, like: ‘no, we can’t, he’s a human, it’s wrong.’”

“No, I’m done.” Sam replied seriously, “I mean, Gordon’s not gonna stop until we’re dead. Or until he is. I don’t have a death wish, especially with the consequences. We gave him a chance to walk away already, he won’t. It’s time for him to wear the consequences of his decisions.”

Dean’s phone rang then and after glancing at the number answered grrouchily.

“What?”

“I don’t like it when people hold grudges against me.” Bela announced without preamble from the other end of the call, “and more to the point I’d rather you didn’t kill me. So I went ahead and found
Gordon’s exact location for you.”

“You’re a hundred miles away. How…”

“Hello. Purveyor of powerful occult objects. I used a talking board to contact the other side.”

“And?”

“Warehouse. Two stories, riverfront, neon sign outside.”

“Thanks.” Dean replied sarcastically.

“One more thing.” Bela said, “the spirit had a message for you: ‘leave town, run like hell, and whatever you do don’t go after Gordon.’ For whatever that’s worth.”

Dean looked at the phone for a moment after hanging up.

“Okay. That was different.”

“We going to listen to that spirit?” Sam asked.

“And turn our backs on not just one but two problems?” Dean responded, “much as I don’t want you anywhere near Gordon we can’t just walk away.”

Sam nodded, “we need to be on our guard though. We’ve already been caught flat footed once.”

“Agreed.”

The warehouse was surprisingly easy to find.

Sam looked at Dean as they approached, “vamp’s in there.”

“How many?”

“Only sensing the one.”

“Okay. Why do I have a feeling that our two problems just became one larger problem?”

“Because we were following Gordon and found the vamp?”

“That would be it.”

Entering cautiously they found the vampire they’d chased away from the girl at the club. Two decapitated women hung in front of him and there was some odd equipment off to the side that Dean pointed out to Sam. The vampire appeared oblivious to their presence yet both of them knew that couldn’t be possible.

“Go ahead.” The vampire said, “do it. Kill me.”

Sam frowned, was the vampire seriously asking for death? He knew that there was no way they’d be turning him down, he wasn’t trying to abstain from drinking human blood, he was actively making more and actively hunting humans. While he could respect those who fought the blood lust he would not give any leniency to one who was actively following it.

“What happened here?” Sam asked.

“Gordon Walker.” The vampire replied, “I never should have brought a Hunter here. Never. I just…I
just wanted some kind of revenge. So stupid, exposing him to my family.”

“Oh, yeah, you’re such a family man.” Dean told him.

“You don’t understand.” He responded.

“I don’t wanna understand, you…” Dean said.

“I was desperate.” The vampire interrupted him, “have you ever felt desperate? I’ve lost everyone I ever loved. I’m staring down eternity, alone. Can you think of a worse hell?”

“Well, there’s hell.” Dean replied.

“I wasn’t thinking.” The vampire continued, “I just…I didn’t care anymore. Do you know what that’s like? When you just don’t give a damn?”

He started moving towards them as he spoke and Dean brought the machete up in warning and preparation.

“It’s like…it’s like being dead already.” The vampire continued, “so just go ahead. Do it.”

While Dean had been talking to the vampire Sam had moved over to inspect the bodies.

“Dean.” Sam called after noting something disturbing about them, “head wasn’t cut off, it was ripped off. By someone’s bare hands.”

“Dixon?” Sam said after a silent moment, “what did you do to Gordon?”

Dean shared a worried look with Sam as he reached the same conclusion as his brother. Gordon was now a vampire.

They returned to where they were staying and tried to locate where the former Hunter could be after beheading Dixon.

“Man, I must have checked three dozen motels, empty buildings, warehouses.” Dean complained as he came back in.

“Yeah, me too.” Sam replied, “big city.”

“It’s like a giant haystack. Gordon’s a deadly needle.” Dean responded, “we’re running out of daylight. Without the sun slowing him down…”

“Yeah, he’ll be unstoppable.” Sam agreed.

“Yeah.”

“Hey, uh, give me your phone.”

“What for?”

“Well if Gordon knows our cell numbers he can use the cell signal to track us down.” Even as he spoke he took the SIM out of his own phone. They’d have to rely on the computer tracker to keep track of Bela and their demonic ‘friend’.

“Oh, yeah.” Dean conceded and handed his over, “nice.”
"Yeah." Sam returned.

The phones disabled Dean wandered over to window. His thoughts crystallising, Gordon was after Sam. He wanted Sam safe.

"Sammy, stay here," Dean ordered.

"What?" Sam asked in confusion, "where are you going now?"

"I’m going after Gordon." Dean stated, collecting the Colt and a few other items.

"What?" Sam looked at Dean incredulous. Keeping him here wasn’t going to keep him safe if Gordon came looking, the former Hunter didn’t forget how to track just because he’d become a vamp.

"Yeah, you heard me." Dean replied with finality, he didn’t want to argue about this.

"Well, not alone, you’re not." Sam told him.

"Sam, I don’t need you to sign me a permission slip, okay?" Dean responded, “he’s after you, not me, and he’s turbocharged. I want you to stay out of harm’s way. I’ll take care of it.”

"Well Dean, you’re not going by yourself. You’re gonna get yourself killed.” Sam replied.

"Just another day at the office.” Dean replied, “a massively dangerous day at the office.”

Sam rolled his eyes and tried a different tack, “I’m no safer here than by your side. Gordon didn’t forget how to track just because he became a vampire. We have a better chance of both surviving if we work together.”

Dean swore. He hadn’t forgotten that just had convinced himself he could protect Sam if he left him behind. He reminded himself consciously that this was not a normal vampire they were dealing with.

"We can hole up here, cover our scent. If he comes here we’ll be on our turf. Better chance that way. We can renew the hunt tomorrow during daylight.”

"Here’s hoping he’ll let us.”

They set up as defensively as they could and waited. It was too dangerous to sleep so they stayed awake, keeping watch, drinking coffee.

Dean’s burner phone rang.

Sam raised an eyebrow at Dean; his brother wasn’t careless, especially when in a dangerous situation. Therefore it wasn’t his brother who had given out the number.

“Did you give the number to anyone?” Sam asked to confirm.

“ Nope.” Dean replied as he dug it out, glancing at the number he didn’t recognise it and answered, “hello.”

“Dean.” Gordon said from the other end.

“How’d you get this number?”

“Scent’s all over the cell phone store. Of course, I can’t smell you now. Where are you?”
“I guess you’ll just have to find us, won’t you?”

“I’d rather you come to me.”

“What’s the matter, Gord-o? You’re not afraid of us, are you? We’re just sitting here. Bring it on.”

“I don’t think so.”

Dean frowned as he heard a brief moment of quiet then another voice was on the other end of the call.

“Please, please.” It was a woman, crying.

Dean swore silently. The bastard was using the knowledge that they were Hunters against them, he knew they couldn’t leave an innocent in danger.

“Factory on Riverside off the turnpike.” Gordon stated, “be here in 20 minutes or the girl dies.”

“Gordon, let the girl go.” Dean demanded, he saw Sam’s eyes widen in alarm.

“Bye, Dean.” Gordon replied, ignoring him.

“Gordon, don’t do this. You don’t kill innocent people, you’re still a Hunter.” Dean told him, barely able to believe someone who had lived as a Hunter could do that.

“No.” Gordon replied, “I’m a monster.”

He hung up and Dean swore inventively.

“How…”? Sam asked incredulously.

“Because he doesn’t believe acting like a monster is a choice rather than a consequence of someone’s nature.” Dean replied angrily, “you showed me that it is a choice. Hell, you showed both us that and he still doesn’t believe it.”

They entered the warehouse cautiously, weapons at the ready. Sam frowned as he registered there were two vamps making themselves known to his senses. He tapped Dean on the shoulder and signalled ‘2’ to him. Dean nodded in acknowledgement.

They heard faint sounds of distress, presumably the girl Gordon had taken, and moved towards it.

Sam pulled up short as he laid eyes on the girl tied up. Dean pushed past him.

Sam grabbed his shoulder before he could approach the girl and looked at him regretfully.

Dean looked back at him in confusion then his knowledge of his brother kicked in and he knew what his brother was indicating.

Dean sent him the silent Hunter sign for vamp.

Sam nodded sadly. Dean mouthed some swear words in reply then he signalled ‘2’ pointed at Sam and tapped his temple. Sam nodded in the direction he was sensing the other vampire.

The lights suddenly cut out. Dean swore and pulled Sam closer.

“How did you figure that out?” Floated out of the darkness.
Sam could feel the vampire moving and pulled Dean in the opposite direction. The longer they could stall the better as it gave their eyes a chance to adapt to the dark. Something Gordon didn’t need to worry about. Dean felt around and pressed the Colt into Sam’s hand, with his senses he had a far better chance of shooting the former Hunter in the dark than Dean did. Sam passed the machete back to Dean in exchange. Hand to hand fighting effectively blind had been one thing that their father had made sure they were proficient in, though it was never easy.

“Why?” Sam called back, “she did nothing to you.”

“Because I’m a monster.” Float back.

“Don’t talk like you don’t have a choice.”

“I don’t.”

“Yes, you do, Gordon.” Sam called back, continuing when the former Hunter remained silent, “so this is really the way you wanna do it, huh?”

“Damn right I do.”

Sam kept manoeuvring them away from where he could sense Gordon, Dean squeezed his arm in concern. Sam tapped the silent signal to wait on guard back to him.

“You have no idea what I faced to get here.” Gordon continued out of the dark, he’d obviously chosen this warehouse for the lack of ambient light filtering in for Sam’s eyes weren’t adapting fast enough, “I lost everything. My life. But it’s worth it. Because I’m finally gonna kill the most dangerous thing I ever hunted. You’re not human, Sam.”

“That’s where you’re wrong.” Dean replied before Sam could say anything.

“I gotta hand it to you Sam.” Gordon replied, “you got a lot of people fooled. But see, I know the truth. I know what it’s like. We’re the same now, you and me. I know how it is walking around with something evil inside you. It’s just too bad you won’t do the right thing and kill yourself. I’m gonna. Soon as I’m done with you. Two last good deeds: Killing you and killing myself.”

Gordon launched himself at them then. Sam still couldn’t see him but his other senses told him right where he was and almost without needing to think about it he brought the Colt up and fired. He felt the vampire that was Gordon snuff out of existence and he lowered the Colt with a sigh.

“You got him?” Dean asked.

“Yeah.” Sam confirmed, “let’s find the light switch.”

It took a bit but a few stubbed toes later they found the switch and made their way over to the young vampire. With a sigh Sam pulled the gag off.

“Please help me.” She begged.

“We know what he did to you.” Sam told her, “we also know that you don’t have to give in to it. You can’t survive without blood now, but you don’t have to drink human blood, you don’t have to kill. Can you do that?”

She nodded eagerly and Sam shot a look at Dean before untying her. He’d handed the Colt back to him once the lights were back on.
The girl massaged her wrists for a bit, then snarled and jumped at Sam. Dean shot her before she even connected.

Sam sighed despondently.

“Sorry Sam.” Dean said softly.

“We knew there was always a chance she couldn’t fight it.” Sam said sadly.
Chapter 16: Christmas?

Yet another non-descript motel room. Sam was more just going through the motions of searching for another case instead of really wanting one. It bothered him more than he wanted to admit that they hadn’t been able to save any of those taken by the vampires.

Dean deposited a coffee on the table in front of him.

“Up for a job?” Dean asked, he’d been trying to avoid a case until Sam was up to it. His brother tended to take cases with a high death count badly at the best of times.

Sam sighed, “what’s up?”

“Locked house, vanished without a trace.”

“Where?”

“Ypsilanti, Michigan.”

“Okay.” He got up.

“You sure?” Dean asked.

“You wouldn’t have brought it up if lives didn’t depend on it, so…”

“Okay.”

In Ypsilanti they dressed up as FBI agents, questioned the family, and investigated the house.

“Find anything?” Dean asked as they headed back to the car.

“Stockings, mistletoe, this.” Sam handed over a tooth.

“A tooth? Where was this?”

“In the chimney.”

“No way a man fits up a chimney it’s too narrow.”
"No way he fits up in one piece."

"Alright so if dad went up the chimney…"

"We need to find out what dragged him up there."

"Your Spidey sense picking up anything?"

"Nothing."

"Well that rules out demons, ghosts, and vampires."

"Yeah."

Back at the motel room they’d taken in town the only research Sam had turned up that sounded remotely likely was the anti-Santa. However something just felt…off…about it.

Dean turned up that he was the second person to vanish and both people who had disappeared had visited a place called Santa’s village. The last thing he was going to do was dismiss Sam’s feeling.

The Santa on duty seemed to match the descriptions but it still didn’t seem right so they kept poking around. The unseasonable weather tickled at the edge of Sam’s mind but he couldn’t place it.

"You want to take the chance?" Dean asked him as they watched the Santa make his way to his trailer.

Sam frowned, “something feels off. Let’s check with Bobby and do some more research. Maybe we’re getting thrown off by the time of year.”

"If that’s you saying you want to celebrate Christmas this year all you gotta do is ask."

"What? No.” Sam gave him an odd look before heading back to the car.

They headed back to the motel, did some more research, and grabbed some sleep. The next morning Dean went to get breakfast while Sam checked on things.

“Well there’s been another one.” Sam told Dean as he returned with breakfast.

“Awesome.” Dean sighed, “eat then we’ll go.”

A short while later they were interviewing the family dressed as FBI.

“So that’s how your son described the attack? Santa took daddy up the chimney?” Dean asked.

“That’s what he says, yes.” The upset mother confirmed.

“And where were you?” Dean continued.

“I was asleep.” She replied, “and all of a sudden, Al was being dragged out of bed, screaming.”

“Did you see the attacker?” Sam asked gently.

She shook her head, “it was dark and he hit me. He knocked me out.”

“I’m sorry. I know this is hard.” Dean told her sympathetically.

“Yeah.” Sam agreed, “um…Mrs Caldwell, where did you get that wreath above the fireplace?”
Dean looked around at it confused.

“Excuse me?” She asked.

“The smallest thing can be relevant.” Sam hedged.

She answered and they left.

“Wreaths, huh?” Dean said as they headed back to the car, “sure you didn’t wanna ask her about her shoes? I saw some nice handbags in the foyer.”

“We’ve seen that wreath before, Dean.” Sam replied calmly.

“Where?”

“The Walsh’s. Yesterday.”

“I know. I was just testing you.” Dean replied and Sam rolled his eyes.

Back at the motel room Sam checked in with Bobby.

“Well, we’re not dealing with the Anti-Claus.” Sam confirmed once he hopped off the phone.

“What did Bobby say?” Dean asked.

“That we’re morons.” Sam replied, “he also said that it was probably meadowsweet in those wreaths.”

“Wow. Amazing. What the hell is meadowsweet?”

“It’s pretty rare and it’s the probably most powerful plant in pagan lore.”

“Pagan lore?”

“Yeah. See, they’d use meadowsweet for human sacrifices. It was kind of like a chum for their gods. Gods were drawn to it, they’d stop by and snack on whoever was the nearest human.”

“Why would somebody be using that for Christmas wreaths?”

“It’s not so crazy as it sounds, Dean. I mean, pretty much every Christmas tradition is pagan.”

“Christmas is Jesus’ birthday.”

“No, Jesus’ birthday was probably in the fall. It was actually the winter solstice festival that was co-opted by the church and renamed Christmas. The yule log, the tree, even Santa’s red suit, that’s all remnants of pagan worship.”

“How do you know all that? What will you tell me next? Easter bunny’s Jewish?” Dean complained, “so you think we’re dealing with a pagan god?”

“Yeah, probably Holdenacar, god of the winter solstice.”

“And all these Martha Stewart wannabes buy these fancy wreaths.”

“Yup, it’s like putting a neon sign on your front door saying: ‘come kill us.’”

“Great.” Dean sighed.
Sam looked down at the book in his hands that he’d just picked up, “huh. When you sacrifice to Holdenacar, guess what he gives you in return?”

“Lap dances, hopefully.” Dean returned flippantly.

“Mild weather.”

“Like no snow in the middle of December in Michigan.”

“For instance.”

“Do we know how to kill it yet?”

“No, Bobby’s working on that right now. We gotta figure out where they’re selling those wreaths.”

“Think they’re selling them on purpose? Feeding the victims to this thing?”

Sam sighed, it was a definite possibility, “let’s find out.”

It took a bit but they managed to track down the shop that sold them, which in turn told them that a local lady by the name of Madge Carrigan had made them and given them to the shop for free.

“So this is where Mrs Wreath lives, huh?” Dean asked sarcastically when they arrived at the house decorated profusely with Christmas decor, “boy can’t you just feel the evil, pagan vibe?”

“No.” Sam replied seriously, “I got a feeling that pagan gods are a little too powerful for my senses to pick up.”

Dean sighed as his attempt at levity fell flat and made his way to the door.

The couple who answered the door were overly cheerful and sickeningly sweet. They played their cover of searching for a wreath similar to one they’d seen until they could walk away.

Back in the motel room Dean made stakes while Sam chased more information.

“I knew it. Something was way off with those two.” Sam exclaimed and Dean looked up from his whittling.

“What did you find?”

“The Carrigans lived in Seattle last year where two abductions took place right around Christmas. They moved here in January. All that Christmas crap in their house wasn’t boughs of holly, it was vervain and mint.”

“Pagan stuff?”

“Serious pagan stuff.”

“So what Ozzie and Harriett are keeping a god hidden underneath their plastic covered couch?”

“I don’t know. All I know is we gotta check them out. So what about Bobby? He’s sure evergreen stakes will kill this thing, right?”

“Yeah, he’s sure.”

They went back after dark and broke in, eventually finding the basement. A rather grisly basement,
with all the evidence they needed to know that the couple were involved in the abduction and murders.

The wife managed to sneak up on Sam and attacked.

“Sam!” Dean reacted as soon as he heard the fight. The husband intercepted him and knocked him out.

Sam was pinned and being choked but wasn’t out yet.

“Gosh, I wish you boys hadn’t come down here.” The wife said.

In his struggles the torchlight played across both their faces and Sam abruptly knew they weren’t hunting for one pagan god but two, then everything went black.

They woke up tied to chairs, back to back.

“Dean?” Sam called through the headache, “are you okay?”

“Yeah, I think so.” Dean replied, battling a headache of his own.

“So I guess we’re dealing with Mr and Mrs god.” Sam commented, “nice to know.”

“Yeah.”

“Oh, and here we thought you two lazybones were gonna sleep straight through all the fun stuff.” The wife chortled as she came in with her husband.

“And miss all this?” Dean asked flippantly, “no, we’re partiers.”

“Isn’t he a kick in the pants, honey?” The husband said, “you’re Hunters, is what you are.”

“Yeah, and you’re pagan gods.” Dean replied, “so why don’t we call it even and go our separate ways?”

“What, so you can bring back more Hunters and kill us? I don’t think so.” The husband replied.

“Maybe you should have thought of that before you went snacking on humans then.”

“Oh, now, don’t get all wet.” The husband responded.

“Oh,” the wife said, “why, we used to take over a hundred tributes a year. And that’s a fact. Now, what do we take, what, two, three?”

“Hardy Boys here make five.” The husband said.

“Now, that’s not so bad, is it?” The wife continued.

“Well you say it like that, I guess you guys are the Cunninghams.” Dean quipped back.

“You better show us a little respect.” The husband stated.

“Or what?” Sam asked, “you’ll eat us?”

“Not so fast.” The husband said, “there’s rituals to be followed first.”

“Oh, we’re just sticklers for ritual.” The wife enthused.
“And you know what kicks off the shebang?” The husband continued.

“Let me guess. Meadowsweet.” Dean replied, “oh, shucks, you’re all out of wreaths. I guess we’ll have to cancel the sacrifice.”

“Oh, don’t be such a gloomy Gus.” The wife retorted, bringing out some dried garlands and placing them around their necks, “there. Oh…don’t they just look darling?”

“Good enough to eat.” The husband agreed, “alrighty-roo, step number two.”

He approached Sam with a blade and bowl.

“Sammy.” Dean called in alarm.

“No.” Sam protested.

“Sammy!” Dean called again.

Sam cried out in pain as the husband sliced a cut into his arm and collected the blood in the bowl.

“Leave him alone, you son of a bitch!” Dean yelled.

“You hear how they talk to us?” The husband asked with a laugh, “to gods? Listen, pal, back in the day, we were worshipped by millions.”

“Times have changed.” Dean told him angrily.

“Tell me about it. All of a sudden, this Jesus character’s the hot, new thing in town. All of a sudden our altars are being burned down and we’re being hunted down like common monsters.” The husband replied.

“But did we say peep? Oh, no, no, no, we did not.” The wife continued as they added ingredients to the bowl, “two millennium. We kept a low profile, we got jobs, a mortgage. We…what was that word, dear?”

“We assimilated.” The husband answered.

“Yeah, we assimilated. Why, we play bridge on Tuesdays and Fridays. We’re just like everybody else.”

“You’re not blending in as smooth as you think, lady.” Dean told her.

“This might pinch a bit, dear.” The wife told him, ignoring what he’d said, and proceeded to bleed him too.

Dean reacted to the pain and Sam tried to look back at him at the cry.

“You bitch!” Dean exclaimed.

“Oh, my goodness, me.” The wife exclaimed in apparent outrage, “somebody owes a nickel to the swear jar. Oh, do you know what I say when I feel like swearing? Fudge.”

“I’ll try and remember that.” Dean replied angrily.

“You boys have no idea how lucky you are.” The husband told them as he approached with a pair of pliers, “there was a time when kids came from miles around just to be sitting where you are.
“What do you think you’re doing with those?” Sam asked.

“You fudging touch me again, I’ll fudging kill you!” Dean growled.

“Very good.” The wife told him, completely missing the sarcasm.

She bled Dean again and collected the blood while the husband spread out Sam’s fingers while he protested and pulled off a nail.

The husband inspected the nail, “oh-ho. We’ve got a winner.”

The two added the blood and nail to the original bowl.

“What else, dear?” The wife asked.

“Well, let’s see. Fingernail, blood. Oh, sweet Peter on a Popsicle stick. I forgot the tooth.” He laughed and picked up the pliers again.

“Oh, dear.” The wife said.

“Merry Christmas, Sam.” Dean said ironically.

Sam wasn’t up to replying verbally just yet and just grunted.

The husband came around to Dean with the pliers, “open wide and say ‘aah’.”

Dean struggled but couldn’t prevent him from forcing open his mouth and inserting the pliers.

The doorbell rang before he got a grip on a tooth though.

“So are you gonna get that?” Dean asked when they hesitated, continuing when the doorbell rang again, “you should get that.”

Reluctantly the two put away the pliers and bustled out to the door.

The brothers wasted no time freeing themselves then setting up to trap them in the room when they re-entered.

Dean jammed his door shut and joined Sam.

“What do we do now? The evergreen stakes are in the basement.” Dean asked.

“Well we need more evergreen, Dean.” Sam answered and looked around, the Christmas tree caught his eye, “I think I just found us some more.”

Between them they shoved the sideboard across to block the door and raced to the tree. Breaking off a couple of branches they had makeshift stakes. The quiet alerted to the couple having escaped the room and moments later they were attacked.

Trading several blows they eventually managed to stake the two of them.

Catching their breaths afterwards Sam looked at Dean, “merry Christmas.”

Dean huffed a half laugh, “let’s get a drink.”

“I hear you on that.”
Chapter 17: Suburban Magic

“Coffee’s ready.” Sam commented as Dean came through the door with breakfast.

Dean rolled his eyes and retrieved it. If it had been anyone else to make it, it would have been cold.

“We got anything?”

“A woman died after having all her teeth fall out.”

“Where?”

“Sturbridge, Massachusetts.”

“Okay.”

Once they got there they posed as CDC. Dean interviewed the husband while Sam looked around.

As he hunted through the bathroom Sam became aware of a little spot of...something. It didn’t fit the feeling he’d got from any spirit or creature he’d encountered so far. It wasn’t until he found the hex bag that he knew what it was he was sensing. He swore silently, stuffed it in his pocket, and exited the bathroom.

Dean finished up the interview and they both left.

“Dude seem a little evasive to you?” Dean asked as they headed for the car.

“I don’t know.” Sam replied, pulling out the hex bag, “I was under a sink pulling this out. Hex bag.”

Dean took it, “oh, gross.”

“Yeah. There are bird bones, rabbit’s teeth. This cloth is probably cut from something Janet Dutton owned.”

“So we’re thinking witch.”

“Uh, yeah, and not some New Age Wiccan water dowser either. This is Old World black magic,
Dean. I mean, warts and all.”

They hopped in and Dean turned to Sam, “I hate witches.”

Sam huffed a laugh.

“Always spewing their bodily fluids everywhere.”

“Pretty much.”

“It’s creepy. It’s downright unsanitary.”

“Yeah. Well, someone definitely had it out for Janet Dutton.”

“Yeah, someone who snuck into that house and planted the bag. So what are we thinking, looking for some craggy old Blair Bitch in the woods?”

“Nah, could be anyone. Neighbour, co-worker, man, woman. That’s the problem, Dean, they’re human like everyone else.”

“Great how we gonna find them? Especially if your Spidey sense can’t pick them.”

“This wasn’t random. Someone in Janet Dutton’s life had an ugly axe to grind. Find the motive…”

“We find the murderer.”

“Yeah. And, uh, I can sense the bag.”

“Well at least that’s something. Think it’ll extend to those using it?”

“I wouldn’t bet on it.”

They drove off. Time to start surveillance. They started with the bereaved husband, Paul, the most likely person to be the perpetrator or the next victim.

Nothing seemed out of the ordinary to start with, the man was eating a meal.

Sam frowned as something tingled at the edge of his senses.

“Dean.”

“What?”

“Not sure…”

Then the guy all but fell out of the car, apparently choking.

Dean swore, gunned the car over, and bolted from the car, Sam hot on his heels. Dean went to assist Paul. He didn’t even need to tell Sam to check the car, he was already moving towards it using all the senses at his disposal.

He located the hex bag and burnt it as fast as he could. Paul stopped choking.

“You okay?” Dean asked.

“What the hell is happening to me?” Paul asked.
“Someone murdered your wife. They’re trying to kill you.” Dean told him.

“That’s impossible, there’s no way.” Paul insisted.

“If we hadn’t been following you, you’d be a doornail right now.” Dean pointed out, “now who wants you dead?”

Paul stuttered.

“Come on. Think.” Dean pressed.

“There’s a woman…”

“Okay, a woman? Okay.”

“An affair. A mistake.” Paul stuttered, “she was unbalanced, blackmailing me and I put an end to it a week ago.”

“What’s her name?” Sam asked.

“Wha…what could she have to do with…?” Paul asked.

“Paul, what is her name?” Dean demanded.

He told them.

They drove to the woman’s house as fast as possible. When they broke in they found her dead from apparent slashed wrists.

“That’s a curve ball.” Dean commented.

“Yeah.” Sam agreed.

Dean went to investigate the body while Sam gravitated to where he could sense that little ‘hot spot’ he was beginning to associate with the hex bags.

“Three per wrist, vertical.” Dean commented, “she wasn’t fooling around.”

“About that.” Sam commented, showing him the bag then gestured to the spell working ingredients around, “but it does look like she was the one behind Janet and Paul’s attacks.”

“Another hex bag? Come on.” Dean complained, turning around and nearly running into the dead toothless bunny hanging there, “oh God! Frigging witches. Seriously, man, come on.”

“Guess we know where she got the rabbit’s teeth.” Sam commented.

“Paul sure knows how to pick them. It’s like Fatal Attraction all over again.”

“Yeah.”

“And why does the rabbit always get screwed on the deal.” Dean looked at the rabbit again, “poor little guy.”

Sam tossed the hex bag to Dean who opened it to find ingredients including razors.

“Looks like we got a hit, huh?” Dean mused, “little witch on witch violence?”
“I guess.” Sam agreed.

Dean pulled out one of his burner phones and called in the dead body to emergency services while making a mental note to discard it before too long.

“Why are witches ganking each other?” He asked even as he pulled the battery and SIM out then shoved them in his pocket.

“I don’t know. But I think maybe we got a coven on our hands.”

“Yeah. And time to go, they won’t be long.”

They let themselves out, carefully resecuring the door, and slipped off.

Next morning they returned to the neighbourhood hoping to spot something off.

Sam frowned slightly as he saw the lady gardening, placing many of the herbs she was working on as unseasonal. He walked towards her and Dean shadowed him.

“You must have a green thumb.” He commented by way of introduction.

“Excuse me?” She asked, looking up.

“Getting these herbs to grow out of season like this. It’s quite impressive.” He continued, then pretended he just realised he’d forgotten something and reached into his jacket pocket for one of his IDs, “I’m sorry. I should have introduced myself first. I’m Detective Bachman. This is Detective Turner.”

Dean also flashed his ID, “Hiya.”

“We’re following up on Amanda Burns’ death.” Sam continued, “going around the neighbourhood talking to her neighbours and stuff like that.”

“But didn’t she…? I mean, she killed herself, right?” She replied and both of them noticed the change in track.

“All suicides are investigated as homicides just in case.” Sam hedged.

“We heard you were friends with the deceased is that right?” Dean continued.

“Yeah, I guess so.” She answered.

“Do you have any idea about her practices?” Dean asked watching her carefully.

“I’m sorry. What kind of practices?” She replied after a pause.

“Well see her house was littered with satanic paraphernalia.” Sam told her.

“A regular black Sabbath.” Dean added.

“No. That…” She stuttered, “but she was an Episcopalian.”

“Well, then we’re pretty sure she was using the wrong Bible.” Dean replied with a chuckle.

“Elizabeth.” Another woman interrupted and they turned to see the two women approaching, Sam barely keeping his poker face with regards to the short haired brunet, “are you all right?”
“I’m fine.” Elizabeth replied, “uh, Renee, these are detectives. They say Amanda was…she was practicing…”

“Sorry, detectives,” Renee interrupted, “you can tell that Elizabeth is a little upset.”

“Of course, Miss…?” Dean replied.

“Mrs Renee Van Allen.” She stated carefully as though the name should mean something to them. All it meant was to the brothers was them sticking the name in the ‘possible witch’ column in their mental notepads, “would you like me to spell it for you?”

“I’ll get by, thanks.” Dean quipped in reply.

“This Amanda business has been hard for Liz, for all of us.” Renee continued.

“Yeah, I mean, you think you know a person…” The lady Sam knew was a demon piped up.

“Well, I guess we all have secrets, don’t we?” Dean replied.

The silence stretched for a moment then Sam broke it, “Well, thanks. We’ll be in touch.”

“Have a nice day.” Dean echoed and followed his brother away from the three women.

“Bye.” The demon said and it was all Sam could do not to make a face.

They reached the car and hopped in.

“Great.” Sam complained, “witches and now a demon.”

“What!?” Dean demanded, pausing in his starting of the impala.

“Short haired brunet.” Sam answered briefly, “drive, I’m going to meditate.”

Dean swore but started the car and headed away from the neighbourhood.

It didn’t take long for Sam to establish that there was no demon haze around either of their minds. Not long to his perception anyway, they were more than halfway to the motel and Dean threw him a worried look as he stirred.

“We’re clear.” Sam told him, “that one either can’t or chose not to use any sort of influence power.”

“Regular or out of the Gate do you think?” Dean asked.

“Don’t know, assume Gate.” Sam replied.

“The other two? I’m already sold on that Elizabeth chick.” Dean asked, “you see that victory garden of hers? Belladonna, wolf’s bane, mandrake. Not to mention that flinch she threw when we mentioned the occult.”

Sam looked through the information they had on the people in that neighbourhood, “Well, she’s definitely had a good run lately. Gone up a few tax brackets, won almost too many raffles. The kind of thing black magic always helps with.”

“Yeah.” Dean agreed.

“Looks like Mrs Renee Van Allen has won every craft contest she entered in the past three months.”
Sam continued.

“A regular Martha Stewart, huh? Except for the devil worship.” Dean commented, “I’m thinking that was the coven we met back there, minus one member.”

“Amanda was clearly going off the reservation. Think they killed her to keep up appearances?” Sam asked.

“Seems like an appearance kind of crowd.”

“Yeah.”

“If they killed a nutjob, should we, uh, thank them or what?” Dean asked.

“They’re working black magic too, Dean. Then there’s that demon in the mix. They need to be stopped.”

“Stopped like ‘stopped’?” Dean asked, “they’re humans, Sam.”

“They’re murderers. And murderers of a type that no police force would arrest or be able to even if they could connect the dots. Do you think they’ll just stop if we ask nicely?” Sam answered, not much liking their options especially as he had a feeling the witches were just pawns, “I don’t know of a way to remove their powers permanently, do you?”

“Burn, witch, burn.” Dean agreed with both levity and sadness.

Abruptly the impala stuttered and Sam sensed the presence of their demonic ‘friend’.

“Shit, what’s she doing here?” Sam muttered.

“Who?” Dean asked as the car spluttered to a halt.

“Our little demonic ‘friend’.” Sam replied as said demon appeared in the road.

They hopped out of the car.

“What are you doing here?” Sam asked.

“Sam, listen to me, there’s no time.” She replied without preamble.

“And you are?” Dean asked, standing next to the impala.

“What are you talking about?” Sam asked warily on the heels of his brother.

“Ruby. And you have to get out of town.”

Dean pointed the Colt at her, “and we should trust you, why?”


“Why? I don’t understand.” Sam asked.

“Hey, hot stuff. We can take care of a few kitchen witches, thanks.” Dean told her.

“I’m not talking about witches, you jackass. Witches are whores.” Ruby returned, “I’m talking about who they serve.”
Sam paused as if he was doing the mental math in his head before answering when in reality he’d figured it out nearly instantly since he knew there was a demon involved, “demons. They get their power from demons.”

“Yeah.” Ruby confirmed, “and there’s one here. Now.”

The one thing Sam knew he wasn’t going to say to that was ‘I know’ given he couldn’t have known without his senses.

“What, you mean besides you?” Dean asked.

“Sam, it knows you’re in town. It’s gonna come. And it’s more than you can handle.”

“Oh, come on. What is this, huh?” Dean asked, “please tell me you’re not listening to this crap.”

Sam would have been worried if he couldn’t see the concern in his brother’s eyes and knew he was playing the role to protect him from Ruby’s suspicion.

“Put a leash on your brother, Sam, if you wanna keep him.” Ruby snapped.

“Dean, look, just chill out.” Sam played along.

“No. No!” Dean replied, “she’s messing with your head. God knows why. That’s who they are.”

There was more than a little truth in that sentence, given what they’d discovered from her last visit and dealing with that on top of what they already had on their plate was annoying to contemplate.

“I’m telling you the truth.” Ruby claimed.

“And I’m telling you to shut up, bitch.” Dean responded.

“I’m sorry, why are you even part of this conversation?” Ruby demanded.

“Oh I don’t know, maybe because he’s my brother, you black-eyed skank.”

“Oh, right. You care about your brother so much. That’s why you’re checking out in a few months, leaving him all alone?”

Dean barely restrained himself from a jab at hell’s filing system.

“You really don’t know what you’re talking about.” He replied instead, “so how about you just shut up.”

“Let me save him since you won’t be here to do it.” Ruby declared.

Dean rolled his eyes before uncocking the Colt, “I’m not going to waste a bullet on the insane. Now shut up and get out of here.”

He turned away, Sam glanced at him, when he glanced back she was gone as was all sense of her presence.

Sam rolled his eyes and signalled silently for a bug sweep, which Dean was happy to do, pulling out the little device he was never without now.

Once he cleared them except for the tracker still stashed carefully in the impala’s boot he looked at Sam and commented sarcastically, “awesome.”
“If this gets anymore convoluted I’m going to need a mind map.” Sam complained.

“I’ll say. And why are they so convinced I made a deal? I think I’d KNOW if I’d made one. It’s not something that happens accidentally after all.”

“Beats me.”

“Well, let’s get back then you can check if we need to squeegee our minds again.”

“Sounds like a plan.” Sam agreed, though he wasn’t looking forward to another meditation session, they could be tiring.

The impala started up again now her disruption had stopped and they resumed their journey.

Once back at the motel Dean did a quick scan for bugs just in case then plopped down on the bed.

Sam sighed wearily, “just let me grab a shower then…”

He felt something activate, wrapping bands around his brother who groaned.

“Dean!”

“Ow! Sam, something’s wrong.”

Sam tried to grab the bands with his mind but they were slippery and he couldn’t get a grip.

Dean nearly fell off the bed in pain, vomiting up blood as he did so.

Sam changed tack and found the other end of the bands; the hex bag. Snatching it out he burnt it as fast as he could. The bands evaporated.

Dean groaned as he sat up, “thanks.”

“Sorry I took so long. The power bands were…slippery…for want of a better description.”

“You tried to shred them?”

Sam nodded.

“It’s gotta have been the coven.” Dean commented.

“Which means we don’t have much time, they’ll know the spell misfired.” Sam noted.

“Help me up, we need to get to the car.”

Sam pulled Dean to his feet then they got back into the impala and flew back to the neighbourhood.

Getting there Dean glanced around at the various houses, “where?”

Sam pointed at the house the demon was in. They burst in on the three women gathered around a makeshift altar.

They all reacted with various responses of alarm, one the two brother’s knew had to be feigned.

Dean aimed the Colt at the short haired brunet, Sam covering the other two with a more normal gun.

“You missed.” Dean told them.
“What are you doing?” Renee demanded, “you’re insane. Get out.”

“Get away from the altar.” Sam ordered, “I’m not inclined to be merciful to people who just tried to kill my brother.”

“What? We weren’t hurting anyone.” Elizabeth replied.

“We don’t even know your brother.” Renee added.

“We were just getting Renee a lower mortgage rate.” Elizabeth tried to explain.

“Is that how it works?” Dean asked directly to the woman they knew was a demon, Tammi, “they think it’s one thing and you’re directing it in a different direction?”

She tried to bluff her way out then realised she couldn’t confuse the brothers and revealed herself.

“Nice dick work, Magnum. I’m going to have to hide the hex bag better next time, was sure you’d be unable to find it.”

Dean shrugged and fired, only to have her slow then stop the bullet. Dean swore silently.

“You’re in a lot of trouble, Winchesters.” She said almost gloatingly.

With a negligent wave of her hand she tossed them both into the wall and pinned them, knocking their guns out of their hands in the process.

“Tammi, what’s wrong with your eyes?” Elizabeth asked.

“Tammi, what are you doing?” Renee asked on the heels of that question, apparently not realising the danger she was in.

Dean swore silently and looked over at Sam, a slight head shake from his brother told him Sam didn’t think he could break either of them free.

“Renee, shut your painted hole.” Tammi replied, apparently done with playing along with the upper class wives image.

“What?” Renee spluttered, “I will…you can’t…not in my house, Tammi Benton.”

Tammi looked at her and with another negligent wave of her hand snapped the snobbish woman’s neck. Elizabeth screamed.

“Look, you got us. Let the girl go.” Dean stated.

“Wait your turn, young man.” Tammi replied, she turned her attention back to Elizabeth who whimpered.

“Shh. Lizzie.” Tammi said, “it’s okay.”

“You’re not Tammi.” Elizabeth said. Dean rolled his eyes, real quick on the uptake this girl.

“No, but I’m wearing her meat.” Tammi replied, “I had to break the ice with you girls somehow.”

“You killed Renee.”

“Renee, Amanda.” Tammi confirmed, “that’s what happens to witches who get voted off the island.”
“Who are you?” Elizabeth asked.

“Funny story, actually.” Tammi replied with a laugh, “remember all those dark, demonic forces you prayed to when you swore your servitude? Just who did you think you were praying to?” 

“This…this isn’t…it can’t be.” Elizabeth stuttered.

“Oh. What did you think it was? Make believe? Positive thinking? The Secret? No. It was me. You sold yourself to me, you pig. All I had to do was bring one good book to book club and you ladies lined up to kiss my arse.”

Apparently demons weren’t immune to the need for evil guys to monolog. Unfortunately as far as Sam and Dean were concerned it didn’t seem to be giving them any advantage.

“No.” Elizabeth cried, “no. We didn’t know.”

“Oh, yes, you did.” Tammi refuted, “you knew every step of the way and now your ever-living souls are mine.”

She turned at looked at the brothers, “comments? Questions?”

They stayed quiet and she continued.

“The Winchester brothers, wow. Right here in our little town. You know, my friends and I, we’ve been looking for you.”

“Why?” Sam asked, “oh, right, because I’m supposed to lead some piss-poor demon army.”

“No, not at all.” Tammi replied, “you’re not our messiah. We don’t believe in you. But there’s a new leader rising in the west. A real leader. That’s the horse to bet on, Sam. The one who’s gonna tear this world apart. Thing is, this demon…it doesn’t like you very much. Doesn’t want the competition.”

She decided to up the torture on both of them, “nothing personal. It’s a PR thing. So bye-bye.”

She started pushing them both through the wall.

Elizabeth gasped but she was in no more of a position to do anything than the brothers.

Then the door was kicked in and Ruby strode through.

“Wait.” She called.

Sam and Dean shared a look.

“Please.” Ruby continued, “I just…came to talk.”

“You made it out of the Gate.” Tammi noted, “impressive. It was a bitch of a fight, wasn’t it?”

“Doors out of hell only open for so long.” Ruby replied.

“What do you want, Ruby?” Tammi demanded.

“I’ve been lost without you.” Ruby replied and both brothers tensed; was this the betrayal they’d both been expecting to happen at some point? “Take me back. That’s why I led the Winchesters here. They’re for you. As a gift.”
It didn’t feel right to either of them; she’d obviously been playing a long game, this was way too early to reveal her hand.

“Really?” Tammi asked.

“Let me serve you again.” Ruby said, “I’ve wanted it. I’ve wanted you for so long.”

“You were one of my best.” Tammi replied.

Ruby had got very close to the demon in Tammi during her speech and suddenly she tried to stick the demon killing knife in the other woman, who caught it before she could get close.

“But then again, you always were a lying whore.” Tammi said before disarming her. Ruby went for hand to hand, not doing very well for the most part but holding her own.

When Tammi collected a fire poker to use on Ruby Elizabeth took the opportunity to dash into the next room.

“You really telling me you threw in your chips with Abbott and Costello here?” Tammi asked the prone Ruby.

“We’ve been here before haven’t we?” Tammi taunted Ruby and pulled her into sitting position then looked up at the brothers, “she didn’t tell you? Pretty mortifying I guess. She was one of mine. I turned her out a long, long time ago. Ruby, here, was a witch. Of course that was when you were human.”

Tammi dropped her on the ground again, “oh, didn’t want your friends to know that all those centuries back you sold yourself to me? Embarrassing, I guess. But don’t worry, love. No secrets where you’re heading, remember?”

She started speaking an incantation, one obviously intended to send Ruby back to hell.

While Tammi taunted and fought Ruby Elizabeth did something in the next room, they couldn’t see what but Tammi suddenly reacted, coughing up blood and pins. She lost control of the power pinning Sam and Dean and they dropped heavily to the floor.

Tammi made a fist and something heavy fell in the next room.

The distraction had been enough, Dean snatched up the knife and stabbed Tammi, leaving it in her. She lit up like a light show and Sam felt her snuff out of existence moments later.

Sam joined him on his feet and Ruby peeled herself off the floor.

The brothers collected the fallen weapons.

“Go.” Ruby told them, “I’ll clean up this mess.”

They decided not to look a gift horse in the mouth and left.

They made it back to the motel and checked for bugs yet again.

“Want to rest?” Dean asked.

Sam shook his head, “gotta squeegee first.”

“Okay. By the way, am I misinterpreting but were you not able to sense the hex bag before it
“No, I couldn’t.” Sam confirmed as he sat down on the bed and sank into meditation.

There was haze around his mind again and he dug it out and swept it away again. There was also a haze around Dean’s mind, apparently trying to drive a rift between them.

He braced himself and dug that out as well. It was more difficult than doing it around himself and he felt like he was cross-eyed when he brought himself out of the meditation.

With a groan he covered his eyes.

“Sammy? You okay?” He felt Dean’s hand on his shoulder.

“That…” he swallowed, “was difficult. Um…Dean?”

“Yeah?”

“Bathroom please…I think I’m gonna puke.”

“Okay, up you get.” Dean hoisted him to his feet and guided him into the bathroom and lowered him to his knees in front of the toilet, “okay, toilet in front of you.”

Still keeping his eyes squeezed shut he used his hands to orientate himself over it.

Dean left him briefly to wet a face washer then laid it over his neck. Then he frowned and placed a hand on his forehead.

“Shit, you’re burning up.”

“Not surprised.” Sam returned before heaving.

“Easy, easy.” Dean rubbed his back as he spat, “talk to me Sammy.”

“Wasn’t just me this time.”

“Peeling that crud off me hit you for six?” Dean demanded.

“Was harder. Couldn’t leave it there. Was trying to drive a rift between us.”

“I see.” Dean checked his temperature again, “at least it seems your temperature is coming down. How are you feeling?”

“Calming down. Sorry about this.”

“Hey, not your fault. Think you’re done?”

Sam nodded, opened his eyes and looked up at Dean, “I can see straight again.”

He flushed the toilet and Dean helped him to his feet. Moving to the sink he rinsed and spat then splashed his face.

Dean was still hovering and he checked his temperature again when he turned from the sink.

“Nearly back to normal. I’m not liking how hard this hit you.”

“Couldn’t be avoided. Can’t let that stuff get a hold.”
“Will this happen every time?”

“Maybe. But if it does it’s necessary. Doesn’t knock me down for long anyway.”

Dean sighed, “okay. Get some rest. I’m going to grab a drink.”

Sam nodded and headed for the bed while Dean headed to the vending machine. As he was heading back the lights started fritzing.

Dean swore silently as Ruby appeared in the carpark.

“So the devil may care after all. Is that what I’m supposed to believe?” He quipped while being pissed off inside that Sam probably had to go through the crap he’d just done all over again.

“I don’t believe in the devil.” Ruby replied.

“Wacky night.” Dean responded, “so let me get this straight. You were human once. You died, you went to hell, and became…” he gestured at her.

“Yeah.” Ruby replied.

“How long ago?” Dean asked.

“Back when the plague was big.”

“So all of them, every damn demon…they were all human once?”

“Every one I’ve ever met.”

“Well, they sure don’t act like it.”

“Most of them have forgotten what it means. Or even that they were. That’s what happens when you go to hell, Dean. That’s what hell is. Forgetting what you are.” She turned and moved away from him.

“A philosophy lesson from a demon. I’ll pass, thanks.”

“It’s not philosophy. It’s not a metaphor. There’s a real fire in the pit agonies you can’t even imagine.”

“No, I saw Hellraiser. I get the gist.”

“Actually, they got that pretty close. Except for all the custom leather.”

She turned back, “the answer is yes, by the way.”

“Sorry?” Dean asked, he certainly didn’t have any question that could have been answered by that but he could take a guess what she was getting at. Trying to throw him with a reference to the non-existent deal again.

“Yes, the same thing will happen to you. Might take centuries but sooner or later, hell will burn away your humanity. Every hell-bound soul every one turns into something else. Turns you into us. So, yeah. Yeah, you can count on it.”

Dean considered his reply carefully, there was no way he was going to let on that there was no deal, at least not while she thought there was, “you can’t actually do anything, can you?”
She made a good show of being regretful, “no.”

“Why did you tell Sam that you could?”

“So he would talk to me.” She replied, “you Winchesters can be pretty bigoted. I needed something to help him get past…”

“The demon thing?” Dean interrupted, “it’s pretty hard to get past.”

“Look at you…trying to be all stoic. My God, it’s heartbreaking.”

“Why are you telling me all this?”

“I need your help.”

“Help with what?”

“With Sam.”

Dean rolled his eyes.

“The way you stuck that demon tonight…” Ruby continued, “that was pretty tough. Sam’s not there yet. You need to help me get him ready…for life without you…to fight this war on his own.”

She started to walk off.

“Ruby.” Dean asked, “why do you want us to win?”

She looked back at him, “isn’t it obvious? I’m not like them. I don’t know why. I…I wish I was, but I’m not. I remember what it’s like.”

“What what’s like?”

“Being human.”

She left then.

Dean had to admit she spun a good story, he didn’t believe her in the slightest of course. And he hoped that if she’d done anything to him this time that it wouldn’t be too bad if left until morning, he didn’t have the discipline training that Sam did to fight it off.

Returning to the room Sam was already asleep and there was no way he was waking him and telling him that he needed to squeegee his mind again. Not now, not after it had hit him for six earlier. Maybe after he’d actually slept he’d be up to it again.

Next morning he made sure breakfast was waiting for Sam when he woke up.

“How are you feeling?” He asked once Sam had finished.

“Much better.”

“Good.” Dean looked thoughtfully at his brother before continuing, “let’s give that a chance to digest first.”

Sam frowned, “okay, what’s wrong?”

“Ruby stopped by while I was on my way back from getting a drink.”
Sam swore, “okay, let me look at you.”

“After that digests a bit. Don’t want you losing the benefit.”

“We mightn’t have time, Dean, that sort of thing sinks into the unconscious mind faster”

“Good thing I didn’t sleep then.” Dean returned.

“You didn’t sleep?”

Dean shrugged, “I was worried that might be the case. Think there’s a chance I can learn something that’ll protect my mind from that crud?”

“Maybe, I’ll need to check with Pamela.”

“Okay. Good.”

“Good. Now let me check.”

“But…”

“It hit me for six in part because I was tired and I was peeling it off you after I’d already peeled some off me, which isn’t easy in itself. So let me look.”

Dean sighed, “fine.”

Sam took himself into meditation and the haze swam into view. Carefully he peeled it off him then brought himself out of the meditation.

He grunted in pain and brought his hand to his head.

“Sammy?” Dean was by his side in an instant. Checking his temperature he found it elevated again.

“I’m okay.”

“You don’t look it.”

“Maybe not, but I’m not about to toss my cookies. Now what did she talk to you about? As well as putting more into that rift she’s trying to form she was trying to get you to trust her.”

“Well aside from admitting she wouldn’t be able to help with any deal if there had been she wanted me to help get you ready to continue the fight once I’m gone. Oh, and confirmed that every demon used to be a human. Said that the reason she’s helping us is she remembers what it’s like being human. Tried throwing me a curveball by telling me that I’d become one.”

“Yeah, well, you’re not going to hell so you don’t need to worry about that.” Sam replied, hopping up and heading towards the kitchenette, “Coffee?”

“I’ll get it.” Dean interrupted, moving past Sam and waving him back to the bed.

Sam rolled his eyes but let his brother be the mother hen he needed to be. Dean returned a few moments later with coffee for both of them, handing one to Sam he checked his brother’s temperature again and was satisfied to find it back to normal.

“You know, just because she remembers being human doesn’t mean it’s a good thing. The people who end up in hell aren’t exactly what you’d call righteous.” Sam pointed out, then frowned as
something tickled on the edge of his memory. Something he’d read maybe.

“True.” Dean agreed watching his brother with concern, “what is it?”

“Something I can’t quite remember.” Sam replied, “I’ll track it down later.

“We’ll take the rest of the day here, I’ll get some actual sleep and you can recuperate.” Dean decided and Sam didn’t argue.

Chapter End Notes

Dang I feel like I'm being so mean to Sam just because this happens to be being posted on his birthday.
Chapter 18: Dreamscape

While his brother slept Sam had checked in with Pamela, Dean would be so happy to hear that he’d have to join Sam in his daily meditation…not. He’d checked on the tracking, noting with relief that Ruby was now across the country, and checked on the coverage of the aftermath of the battle with the coven. Ruby had burnt the house to the ground, if she was smart she’d have given the fire investigators a logical start point like the candle chandelier. So far it didn’t seem to be drawing attention their way.

He’d managed to track down that reference to a righteous person and now had a feeling he knew what the goal was with trying to get Dean to make a deal.

He was just surfing the various news sites and drinking coffee when he felt the pressure and headache that now signalled a vision. He put the cup down quickly.

“Dean.” He could barely even hear his own voice and any response from his brother was drowned out as the vision took over his senses.

Bobby in a bed. The outside of a hotel. A hospital. A university.

Dean was holding his shoulders and looking at him anxiously when his senses returned to him.

“Shit. Dean, call Bobby.” Sam said even as he shook his head to clear it and the headache.

Dean didn’t bother with questions just grabbed his phone and started dialling. One by one he made his way through the various phones that Bobby had, each one rang out.

Sam swore and pulled up the tracking program to find out where Bobby was.

“It doesn’t mean he’s in trouble.” Dean tried saying reassuringly, though it was obvious even to an observer that he didn’t think so himself.

Sam pulled over the notepad and pencil and caused the scenes to appear.

"I’m not taking that chance with that combination of scenes.” Sam said, showing Dean.

“I still think that's spooky.” Dean told him even as he got up and started packing their stuff back into
They kept trying his phones even as they headed towards where the tracker said his phones were, which wasn’t at his home in South Dakota.

Dean’s phone rang and he swore as he glanced at it and didn’t recognise the number.

“Hello?”

Sam looked over at him, he didn’t have a good feeling about this.

“Yes, this is Mr Sniderson.” Dean continued.

Sam was watching and didn’t miss his brother’s face falling as he listened to whoever was on the other end.

“What?” Dean asked, followed rapidly by, “Where?”

Another pause, “thank you, we’ll be there as soon as we can.”

Dean hung up, “Bobby’s in hospital in Pittsburgh.”

Sam swore, “what’s wrong?”

“Coma.”

“Damnit, shouldn’t the vision have given us more warning?”

“We’re a day ahead of where we could be otherwise, that’s going to have to be enough head start.”

It still felt like it took too long to get to his side.

“So, what’s the diagnosis?” Sam asked once they’d arrived and his doctor had arrived.

“We’ve tested everything we can think to test.” The doctor said apologetically, “he seems perfectly healthy.”

“Except that he’s comatose.” Dean pointed out.

“Mr Sniderson, you’re his emergency contact. Anything we should know? Any illnesses?” The doctor asked.

“No, he never gets sick. I mean, he doesn’t even catch cold.” Dean replied.

“Doctor, is there anything you can do?” Sam asked.

“Look, I’m sorry, but we don’t know what’s causing it so we don’t know how to treat it. He just… went to sleep and didn’t wake up.” The doctor replied.

They headed to Bobby’s motel room to try to figure out what was going on. If the medical establishment were clueless then it probably meant it was supernatural in origin. They let themselves in and looked around.

“So, what was Bobby doing in Pittsburgh?” Sam asked.

“Unless he was taking an extremely lame vacation…” Dean replied.
“I mean, he must have been working a job, right?” Sam mused out aloud.

“Well, you think there’d be some sort of sign or something, you know? Dean responded, both of them started poking around trying locate any sign of him working a case, “research, news clippings. Or a frigging pizza box or a beer can.”

Sam wandered over to the closet and opened it, immediately his eyes caught on something stuck on the wall at the back.

“How about this?” He called, switching the light on then pushing the clothes out of the way.

“Good old Bobby, always covering up his tracks.” Dean commented running his eyes over the accumulated research.

“You make heads or tails of any of this?” Sam asked.

Dean frowned then pulled one of the pieces of paper off the wall, this one about a flower, “‘Silene capensis’, which of course, means absolutely nothing to me.”

Sam looked over the rest, “here, obit.”

He pulled the article off the wall, “Dr Walter Gregg, 64, university neurologist.”

“How’d he bite it?”

“Um, actually, they don’t know. They say he just went to sleep and didn’t wake up.”

Dean grabbed the article out of his hands to look at it, “that sound familiar to you?”

“All right, um…so let’s say Bobby was looking into the doc’s death. You know, hunting after something…”

“That started hunting him.” Dean finished.

“Yeah.” Sam agreed.

“Alright. Stay here, see if you can make heads or tails of this.”

“What are you gonna do?”

“Look into the good doctor myself.”

Sam started methodically sorting through the information while Dean headed to the university. The university in Sam’s vision spookily enough.

Dean worked his way from the lab assistant to the known experimental study participants.

Sam froze in the middle of sorting the sheets as a sudden sense that something was wrong hit him. It took him a minute to get his breath back then he yanked out his phone and called Dean.

“What’s up?” Dean answered and Sam let out a sigh of relief, and Dean’s voice took on a worried tone, “did something happen?”

“I just got a sudden sense that something was wrong.” Sam explained shakily.

“Okay. You finished with his papers?”
“Not yet.”

“Okay, you finish up. I’ll go to the hospital. Meet me there when you’re done.”

Sam felt his breath catch again, in his fear he hadn’t thought that it could be Bobby in trouble.

“What if…” he started.

“Then I’ll call you.” Dean promised.

“Okay.” Sam agreed.

Hanging up he reapplied himself to sorting through the research, the lack of a phone call from Dean upon reaching the hospital reassuring in itself. A quick text from Dean saying he was there and everything was okay also helped. A longer text followed with what he’d dug up at the university.

Once he was done he headed to the hospital and found Dean by Bobby’s bed.

“How is he?” He asked.

“No change. What you got?” Dean answered, getting up.

“Well, considering what you told me about the doc’s experiments Bobby’s wall is starting to make a hell of a lot more sense.”

“How so?”

“This plant, *Silene capensis* is also known as African Dream Root. It’s been used by shaman and medicine men for centuries.”

“Let me guess. They dose up, bust out the didgeridoos, start kicking around the hackey.” Dean said.

“Not quite. If you believe the legends it’s used for dream walking.” Sam corrected, “I mean, entering another person’s dreams, poking around in their heads…”

“I take it we believe the legends?” Dean asked.

“When don’t we? But dream walking’s the tip of the iceberg.”

“What do you mean?”

“This Dream Root is serious mojo. You take enough of it with enough practice, you can become a regular Freddy Krueger. You can control anything. You could turn bad dreams good, you could turn good dreams bad.”

“And killing people in their sleep?”

Sam nodded, “for example.”

They looked at Bobby not really liking the implications.

“So let’s say this doc was testing this stuff on his patients, Tim Leary-style.” Sam suggested.

“Somebody gets pissed at him, decides to give him a little dream visit he goes nighty-night.” Dean continued.

“What about Bobby?” Sam asked, “I mean, if the killer came after him, how come he’s still alive?”
“I don’t know.” Dean admitted.

“So how do we find our homicidal sandman?” Dean asked when they headed out from the hospital.

“Could be anyone.” Sam noted.

“Yeah?” Dean asked then answered himself, “yeah, anyone who knew the doctor and had access to his dream shrooms.”

“Maybe one of his test subjects?” Sam suggested.

“Possible. But his research was pretty sketchy. I mean I don’t know how many subjects he had or who all of them were.”

Sam huffed a half laugh.

“What?” Dean asked.

“Any other case, we’d be calling Bobby and asking him for help right now.” Sam replied.

“You know what? You’re right.” Dean said, catching Sam’s attention.

“What?” Sam was confused.

“Let’s go talk to him.”

“Sure, I think we might find the conversation a bit one-sided. I sure haven’t developed telepathy as far as I know.”

“Not if we’re tripping on some Dream Root.”

“What?”

“You heard me.”

“You wanna go dream walking inside Bobby’s head?”

“Yeah, why not? Maybe we could help.”

“We have no idea what’s crawling around in there.”

“How bad could it be?”

“Bad.”

“Dude, it’s Bobby.”

“Yeah, you’re right.” Sam said finally, getting Bobby back was worth the risk, “one problem, we’re fresh out of African Dream Root. So unless you know someone who can score some…”

The knowledge of that washed over Dean’s face, but it wasn’t an expression of despair but one of resignation.

“Crap.” He mumbled.

“What?” Sam asked.
“Bela.”

“Bela? Crap.” Sam sighed, “you’re actually suggesting we ask her for a favour?”

“I feel dirty thinking about it, but yeah.” Dean replied then turned and led the way out of the hospital.

They headed back to the motel room where Dean called Bela, who promptly refused to help.

They were trying to make sense of the doctor’s notes when there was a knock on the door.

Dean walked over to the door to check who it was then rolled his eyes and opened it, “Bela. As I live and breathe.”

“You called me. Remember?” She replied as she entered.

“I remember you turning me down.” Dean noted.

“Well, I’m just full of surprises.” She replied, “I brought you your African Dream Root.”

She handed the jar to Dean, “nasty stuff, and not easy to come by.”

“Why the sudden change of heart?” Dean asked suspiciously.

“What, I can’t do you a little favour every now and again?” She asked.

“No, you can’t.” Dean replied, “come on, I wanna know what the strings are before you attach them.”

“You said this was for Bobby Singer, right?” Bela asked, Dean nodded, “well. I’m doing it for him, not you.”


“He saved my life once.” She replied, “in Flagstaff.”

Sam and Dean shared a look.

“I screwed up and he saved me, okay? You satisfied?” She told them apparently annoyed.

“Maybe.” Dean replied.

“So when do we go on this little magical mystery tour?” Bela asked.

“Oh, you’re not going anywhere.” Dean replied walking over to the safe and putting the jar inside, “I don’t trust you enough to let you in my car, much less Bobby’s head. No offense.”

“None taken.” Bela replied.

Dean came back in the room and Bela accurately read his expression.

“It’s 2am. Where am I supposed to go?” She asked.

“Get a room.” Dean replied without sympathy, “they got the Magic Fingers, Casa Erotica on pay-per-view. You’ll love it.”

She turned and stalked out.
Sam silently signalled for a bug sweep while he checked the tracker that showed Bela moving down the hallway outside.

“Clear.” Dean called.

“We saved her life and she turned up the next day with 10 grand for each of us, and that was after we’d prevented her selling what she wanted. There’s no way she’d just let a ‘debt’ hang like that.” Sam pointed out.

“So what’s she after?” Dean asked.

“No idea. But let’s be on our guard.”

“Definitely.”

Sam headed into the kitchenette and made up two cups of the herbal infusion. Returning he handed one to Dean and sat down on the other bed.

“Should we dim the lights and synch up *Wizard of Oz* to *Dark Side of the Moon*?” Dean quipped.

“Why?” Sam asked, some of his brothers references were completely out of left field.

Dean looked at him baffled, “what did you do during college?”

He went to take a drink and Sam stopped him, pulling out some of Bobby’s hair that needed to be added first. Then they both drank.

At first it didn’t seem like anything had happened. Then they heard the patter of rain.

“Hey, when did it start raining?” Sam asked.

Dean moved over to the window and opened the curtain.

“When did it start raining upside down?” Dean corrected.

He turned back to Sam and the room changed. They both looked around perplexed.

“Okay, I don’t know what’s weirder, the fact that we’re in Bobby’s head… or that he’s dreaming of *Better Homes and Gardens*.” Dean commented.

“Wait.” Sam said, “wait a sec. Imagine the place without the paint job. More cluttered, dusty, books all over the place.”

“It’s Bobby’s house.” Dean realised.

“Yeah.”

“Bobby?” Dean called.

Sam started to wander into the stairway then paused and looked around, it felt like someone was watching, though he couldn’t be sure his abilities would work the same way he was used to.

“Bobby?” He called softly, then looked at the door. “Dean.”

Dean looked at him.

“I’m gonna go look outside.” Sam told him.
“No, no, stay close.” Dean protested.

“Dude, I’ll be fine. Just look around in here.” Sam replied, “look, we gotta find him.”

“Don’t do anything stupid.” Dean told him worriedly.

Sam went out the front door and was surprised to step into sunshine. He was looking around perplexed when the door slammed behind him.

He tried the door and swore silently when it was locked.

“Dean!” he called but got no answering reply, he tried banging on the window through which he could see his brother but Dean didn’t react. He headed out into the garden cursing at dream logic.

Inside Dean opened the door into the kitchen and moved through it calling for Bobby. In the corridor just beyond he heard some odd noises then a voice from the closet.

“Who’s out there?”

Dean cautiously approached the closet door, “Bobby, you in there?”

“Dean?” Bobby called in reply.

“Yeah. It’s me. Open up.”

A rather battered Bobby opened up the door.

“Hey.” Dean said.

Bobby moved past him and looked around cautiously.

“How the hell did you find me?” Bobby asked.

“Sam and I got our hands on some of that Dream Root stuff.” Dean replied.

“Dream Root? What?” Bobby asked and it was Dean’s turn to curse dream logic.

“Dr Gregg, the experiments?” Dean asked hoping to jar his memory.

“What the hell are you talking about?” Bobby demanded, the lights started fritzing and Bobby headed back to the closet, “hurry.”

Dean grabbed hold of him, “whoa, whoa, whoa, what’s going on?”

“She’s coming.” Bobby replied.

“Okay, you know this is a dream, don’t you?” Dean asked.

“What are you, crazy?” Bobby asked.

“It’s a dream, Bobby, none of this is real.”

Bobby pointed beyond him, “does that look made up?”

Dean turned around to see a woman who should be very dead from the number of stab wounds in her chest walking towards them. The closet door slammed and Bobby tried desperately to open it.
“Bobby, who is that?” Dean asked.

“She’s…she’s my wife.” Bobby replied.

Outside Sam wandered through various flower beds not seeing anyone.

Inside the apparition of Bobby’s wife asked, “why Bobby? Why did you do this to me?”

“I would rather die myself than hurt you.” Bobby answered.

“But you did hurt me. You shoved that knife into me. Again and again. You watched me bleed. Watched me die.”

Dean moved to Bobby’s side and shook him slightly, “Bobby, she’s not real.”

“How could you?” She continued.

“You were possessed, baby. You were rabid. And I didn’t know what I know now. I didn’t know how to save you.” Bobby answered.

“You’re lying.” She replied, “you wanted me dead. If you’d loved me, you would’ve found a way.”

“I’m sorry.” Bobby told her.

“Come on.” Dean said, grabbing Bobby and pulling him away. Letting him continue to act out his nightmare wasn’t helping anything. He pulled him into the next room and closed the sliding doors in her face.

Outside Sam wandered past the clothesline. The attack came out of the blue and he barely reacted in time but his telekinesis kicked in and he deflected the blow. The entire landscape bowed slightly when he did and the man with the bat looked at him horrified for a moment before assuming an arrogant stance.

“Who are you?” Sam asked.

“Who are you?” The stranger counted, “you don’t belong here.”

“You’re one to talk. You’re in my friend’s head.” Sam returned.

“You got a poor choice in friends. This is self-defence. He came after me. He wanted to hurt me.”

“Maybe because you’re a killer.”

“You should be nicer to me. In here you’re just an insect. I’m a god.”

“I’d beg to differ, given your reaction to my defending myself.”

Sam looked at him and concentrated, deliberately using his telekinesis to push him out of the dream. He hoped it would leave him with a headache; the guy was trying to kill Bobby and had attacked him.

Inside Dean held the doors closed while trying to convince Bobby, “I’m telling you, all of it. Your house, your wife, it’s a nightmare.”

He grabbed a nearby wire and tied the doors closed.
“I killed her.” Bobby said.

“Bobby! This is your dream that you can wake up.” Dean insisted, “I mean, hell, you can do anything.”

“Just leave me alone. Let her kill me already.” Bobby told him.

Dean finished tying them closed and grabbed Bobby, “look at me. You snap out of this now. You gotta snap out of this now. You’re not gonna die. I’m not gonna let you die. You’re like a father to me. You gotta believe me, please.”

Somehow it got through to him.

“I’m dreaming?” Bobby asked.

“Yes. Now take control of it.” Dean demanded.

Bobby concentrated almost disbelievingly and the sounds from the other side of the door stopped. Dean went over, untied the doors and opened them to reveal she wasn’t there.

“I don’t believe it.” Bobby said.

“Believe it.” Dean told him, “now would you please wake up.”

Abruptly they sat up awake.

“That was different.” Sam commented, “I take it you found Bobby?”

“Yeah. He should be awake too.” Dean replied, hopping up to grab his stuff and head to the hospital, “did you find anything?”

“Mr Freddy Krueger himself.” Sam replied, also grabbing his things.

“What?” Dean turned to him, “did he hurt you?”

“He tried. Telekinesis works real well in someone else’s dream by the way. I ejected him.”

“Be careful you don’t turn into Freddy Krueger yourself then.”

“Not planning to, wandering around my own dreams are odd enough without wandering around someone else’s.”

Dean headed out the door, Sam went to follow him but a vague feeling made him retrieve the Colt from the safe first.

Arriving at the hospital Bobby was indeed awake.

“Hey, Bobby.” Dean asked as they were going through the doctor’s research with him when Sam had ducked out to get coffees, “that, uh…that stuff, all that stuff with your wife? That actually happen?”

“Everybody got into hunting somehow.” Bobby told him reluctantly.

“I’m sorry.”

“Don’t be sorry. If it weren’t for you, I’d still be lost in there. Or dead.”
Dean nodded in acceptance.

Bobby wasn’t finished, “thank you.”

Sam came in with the coffees.

“Figured out Mr Freddy Krueger yet?” He asked as he passed them around.

Bobby picked up a photo and showed it to them, Sam recognised him as the guy who’d tried to use a baseball bat on him in the dream.

“His name’s Jeremy Frost. Full-on genius. Hundred and sixty IQ. Which is saying something, considering his dad took a baseball bat to his head.” Bobby told them, “injury gave him Charcot-Wilbrand, he hasn’t dreamt since.”

“’Till he started dosing the dream drug.” Dean guessed.

“How’d he know how to dig up your worst nightmare and throw it at you?” Dean asked.

“He was rooting around in my skull. God knows what he saw in there.” Bobby replied.

“How’d he get in there in the first place?” Sam asked, “isn’t he supposed to have some of your hair, your DNA or something?”

“Yeah.” Dean echoed the question.

“Yeah.” Bobby confirmed, “before I knew it was him, he offered me a beer. I drank it. Dumbest frigging thing.”

Dean’s face fell, “oh, I don’t know. It wasn’t that dumb.”

Sam swore silently, “Dean, you didn’t.”

“I was thirsty.” Dean replied.

“That’s great, now he can come after either one of you.” Sam complained, “wait a sec…was that about a minute before I called you?”

“Yeah, why? Wait…your feeling?” Dean replied.

“That makes sense now.” Sam sighed, “we’d better go see if we can find him.”

“Dorm?” Dean asked, standing up.

“Best place to start.” Sam agreed, heading for the exit.

“We’ll be right back, stay awake.” Dean said, following his brother.

It didn’t take long to get to the university and then up to his dorm room. Sam wasn’t sure what he expected; a fight, him already fled, a trap. It wasn’t what they got though.

The young man was sprawled on his bed lifeless, dried blood around his nose.

“Note to self; ejecting a dream walker from someone’s dream kills them.” Sam said softly.
“You okay?” Dean asked.

Sam sighed, “not like it wasn’t going to happen anyway. If I’d known a way to clip his wings I would have, but it’s not like we could have cut off his supply of Dream Root. I didn’t know that ejecting him would kill him, but it also wasn’t something I knew wouldn’t happen either. He was trying to kill Bobby, he’d already attacked me. He’d already killed the guy who introduced him to Dream Root. He didn’t have to do any of that. But it doesn’t mean I’m happy he’s dead.”

Dean nodded then glanced around, “let’s go before someone notices.”

“Well?” Bobby asked as they came back in.

“Guy’s dead.” Dean told him.

“Hope you kept it quiet.” Bobby said.

“Didn’t need to.” Sam told him, “turns out ejecting a dream walker from someone’s dream kills them.”

“Dean was with me, so what did you do, Sam?” Bobby asked.

“He attacked, I defended myself with telekinesis. It works a little differently in someone else’s mind apparently. Then I kicked him out of your head. I didn’t know it would kill him.”

“It was going to happen one way or another.” Bobby pointed out, “at least this way is as a result of his own actions and doesn’t point the finger at you.”

Sure enough the paper the next morning had a story about the student found dead in his room from a stroke. It took another couple of days for the doctors to be satisfied that they weren’t going to find anything and release Bobby, Bela hanging around the entire time.

They took one last trip back to the motel room to collect their stuff.

“Any idea why Bela’s still hanging around?” Sam asked.

“Nope. Don’t know, don’t care.” Dean replied.

“If you ask me what’s weird is why she helped us in the first place.” Bobby said.

“Well she said you saved her life in Flagstaff.” Sam told him.

“Flagstaff was an amulet. I gave her a good deal.” Bobby replied.

“Figured she had something else going on. What we don’t know.” Dean commented.

“You boys better check your pockets.” Bobby suggested.

“Not literally.” He added when they checked their jacket pockets.

Dean’s face fell and he went to the safe, it was empty.

“That explains why she’s still hanging around.” Sam commented, pulling the Colt out from his back, “I had a bad feeling.”

“Warn me next time.” Dean told him, “now stick that back in and let’s go before she decides to give you a hug.”
“Gladly.”

They grabbed their things and were in their cars before Bela could come out of her room.

“Did I imagine that death glare as we left?” Sam asked.

“Nope.” Dean answered.

They drove in comfortable silence for a while.

“Hey.” Dean broke the silence, “did you ever talk to Pamela?”

“I did actually. Pamela said that you can get at least some defence against that crud by joining me in my daily meditations.” Sam replied.

“Awesome.” Dean sighed.
Chapter 19: Time and Again

Dean’s alarm startled him awake and he sat up with a start to ‘Heat of the Moment’. He took a second to get his bearings before glaring at Dean.

“Rise and shine, Sammy!” Dean crowed, it wasn’t often he got to startle his brother. They’d arrived late last night chasing a story about a vanished person and Sam had fallen asleep as soon as his head hit the pillow.

“Dude. Asia?” Sam asked, still more than half asleep.

“Oh you love this song, and you know it.” Dean replied.

“Yeah, and if I ever hear it again, I’m gonna kill myself.”

Dean turned the volume up, “what? I’m sorry. I can’t hear you.”

Sam rolled his eyes then dragged himself out of bed.

A short while later with breakfast on the way they pulled out the documents they had on the disappearance.

“All right, so this professor…” Dean started.

“Dexter Hasselback was passing through town last week when he vanished.” Sam elaborated.

“Last known location?” Dean asked.

“His daughter says he was on his way to visit the Broward County Mystery Spot.” Sam replied.

Dean picked up the tourist brochure for the attraction, “‘where the laws of physics have no meaning’?”

Anything Sam might have replied was interrupted by the waitress bringing their coffees and dropping the hot sauce bottle, which smashed on the floor.
“Sam, you know joints like this are only tourist traps, right?” Dean said later after they were done with breakfast, “I mean, balls rolling uphill, furniture nailed to the ceiling. The only danger is to your wallet.”

“I’m just saying there are spots in the world where holes open up and swallow people. The Bermuda Triangle, the Oregon Vortex.” Sam replied.

“Broward County Mystery Spot?” Dean asked sarcastically.

“Sometimes these places are legit.”

“So if it is legit…a big ‘as if’…what’s the lore?”

“Well, the…”

A woman running into Dean interrupted Sam briefly.

“The lore’s pretty freaking nuts, actually. They say these places, the magnetic fields are so strong that they can bend space-time, sending victims…no one knows where.”

“Sounds a little X-Files to me.” Dean replied, they passed a couple of movers arguing over a piece of furniture.

“Look I’m not saying this is happening. But if it is, we gotta check it out. See if we can do something about it.”

Dean sighed, “your Spidey sense going off at all?”

“No.” Sam admitted, “it doesn’t always though as you know.”

“Alright, alright. We’ll go tonight after they close, get ourselves a nice, long look.”

They broke in that night. Poking around didn’t show any EMF.

“Find anything?” Dean asked with a sigh.

“No.” Sam admitted.

“Do you have any idea what you’re looking for?” Dean asked.

“Uh, yeah.” Sam said, Dean looked at him, “no.”

They poked around a bit more then an unknown voice interrupted.

“What the hell are you doing here?”

They aimed at him but quickly figured out he was just a regular person, albeit one with a gun.

“Whoa, whoa, whoa. We can explain.” Dean tried calming him down.

“You robbing me?” He asked.

“Nobody’s robbing you. Calm down.” Sam told him.

Dean went to put his gun down and the nervous guy swung his gun in his direction, “don’t move. Don’t move.”
“I’m just putting the gun down.” Dean told him.

It should have reassured him.

Sam felt a sudden spike of danger and then the gun went off before he could even think of warning Dean. It hit him full in the chest.

“Dean!” Sam raced to his brother’s side, holding him and trying to put pressure on the wound. He turned to the idiot owner, “call 911!”

“I… I didn’t mean to…”

“Now!”

He’d never realised he had a sense of his brother’s condition, not until he could feel him fading in front of his eyes.

Dean tried to talk but nothing came out.

“No, no, no. Not like this.” Sam pleaded, even as his brother lost consciousness, “Dean.”

He felt him stop existing.

Suddenly he woke to Heat of the Moment playing. He sat up, Dean was sitting on the other bed.

“Rise and shine, Sammy!”

Sam stared, had he just had a vision dream? He hadn’t had one since the change but it didn’t feel right. There were no disjointed images or jumping from place to place, instead it had felt as if he had lived it.

“Dude. Asia.” Dean said, apparently trying to get a rise out of him.

“Dean…” He said softly with both disbelief and relief. He’d seen and felt his brother die.

“Oh, come on. You love this song and you know it.” Dean said. Perhaps he was disappointed Sam wasn’t reacting to it, he turned the volume up and moved off while Sam just watched incredulously trying to sort out what was going on.

Eventually Dean had to drop the happy go lucky act, not only wasn’t Sam reacting as he would normally he looked confused.

“What?” Dean asked.

“I don’t know.” Sam replied.

“You alright?”

“No.” Sam responded and Dean felt his guts clench, “I think I…”

Sam stopped and shook his head.

“Sam?”

“That was either the most vivid dream I’ve ever had…or I’m reliving today…” Sam said slowly.

“Come again?” Dean asked before holding up a hand when Sam opened his mouth, “dream, as in
vision dream? Like what you were getting before you started getting visions while awake?"

“Yeah…maybe…” Sam replied, “except it didn’t jump around or anything, it was like I lived it.”

Dean tried to wrap his head around that for a moment, “okay, this isn’t empty stomach talk. Let’s get breakfast.”

They headed down to the diner. The exact same conversations were happening. It took Dean commenting on the special to bring it home to Sam that it was Tuesday, he felt like he’d already lived Tuesday.

“So what’s going on?” Dean asked.

“Wish I knew.” Sam replied, “it’s like I’ve already lived today. Those conversations as we came in, I’d heard them before.”

“Think it’s because of the job? It looks pretty small fry…”

“I don’t know…there wasn’t EMF when we went there…nothing…right up until…” Sam stopped abruptly feeling a little sick as the memory of the last events before he woke up played through his mind.

“Sam?” Dean asked a little alarmed at his little brother going a bit green and wondered if that was why he hadn’t ordered anything.

“I’m fine.”

Anything Dean might have said in response was interrupted by the waitress delivering his coffee and the hot sauce bottle taking a tumble, except it never reached the ground as Sam caught it first.

That caught Dean’s attention, Sam was good, very good, but like him his reflexes were honed for combat. A falling sauce bottle was not something that fell in that category.

“Nice reflexes.” He commented after the waitress had left.

“That happened too.” Was Sam’s short response.

“Okay Sam, talk to me. You looked like you were going to toss your cookies there for a bit. You sick? Is that why you didn’t order anything?”

“That would at least have the benefit of being logical, but no. I’m not sick.”

“Then what?”

Sam sighed, “you got shot okay. I saw and felt you die.”

“Felt?”

“Guess it’s an extension of that spooky always knowing where you are thing you complain about.”

“Okay, what happened after that? Hospital? What?”

“I woke up, again, to your crappy choice of alarm.”

“Okay, well that explains you looking at me like you’d seen a ghost first thing this morning.”
Sam gave a half laugh, “if I couldn’t feel that it was you you’d have ended up with a face full of salt.”

“Good.” Dean contemplated his coffee, “I still think the Mystery Spot is bunk, but you don’t have visions, dreams, or whatever over nothing. And if it’s the other possibility, that takes serious mojo. Your Spidey sense isn’t picking anything up?”

“Nothing.” Sam confirmed, “I didn’t pick anything up with the gods either, remember.”

“Great.” Dean replied sarcastically, “though if I remember correctly you sensed other stuff even though you couldn’t sense the gods themselves, anything like that?”

“Only the spike of danger a split second before you were shot.

“Wonderful.” Dean sighed, “if it’s the second option, why the hell aren’t I joining you on the ride?”

“Beats me.”

Finishing breakfast they started to retrace the steps only Sam remembered.

“So where do we start?” Dean asked, “I still think the Mystery Spot isn’t the culprit.”

“Maybe not. But it is where it stopped…yesterday…”

“So it’s a good start point at the very least. Okay, we’ll go tonight after close, get ourselves a nice long look.”

“No!” Sam spun towards him and Dean barely restrained himself from grabbing him with how fast the colour left his brother’s face.

“That how it happened in what you remember?” He asked instead.

Sam took a steadying breath and nodded.

Dean waited for a moment, “okay, now that you don’t look like you’re going to faint on me. I’m guessing the last thing we’re doing is going afterhours. So, now?”

“Yeah, nice and crowded.”

“Okay.” Dean turned and led the way.

No sooner had he stepped out onto the road then a car came flying around the corner and hit him in a squeal of tires.

Sam thought his heart had stopped for a moment. Half aware he noted that the driver was the guy from the diner that left as they arrived. The majority of his attention was fixed on his brother as he forced his legs into motion and ran to Dean’s side.

“Dean! No. No. No. Come on. Dean.” He babbled while he tried to wake him. He felt his brother fade from existence again.

He woke to Heat of the Moment.

He bolted upright, his heart still racing.

“Rise and shine, Sammy!” Dean crowed from the other bed.
“Dean.” He exclaimed, trying to calm down, trying to figure out what to do. He had to stop this, somehow, anyway he could. This last thing ruled out a dream vision; that left some sort of time loop.

Dean grinned over at him but then his face fell as he recognised the near panic on his brother’s face.

“Sam?” He switched off the radio on his way to him, “what is it? Nightmare?”

“I wish.” Sam replied, taking a steadying breath.

“Then what?” Dean asked.

“Some kind of time loop I think.” Sam replied, “I’m guessing you don’t remember the last time we went through this.”

“What the…if we’re in a time loop why wouldn’t I remember?”

“Maybe because it has reset on your death each time so far.”

That was the last thing Dean expected to hear, he pushed it aside after a moment of shock, “that the reason for your panic attack just then?”

“I’d just seen you run over, of course I was freaked.”

“How many times has this happened?”

“Being run over or the loop?”

“The loop.”

“Twice.”

“Okay, I think this needs a full belly to sort out. Breakfast?”

Sam nodded.

Reaching the diner he picked the pocket of the elderly driver on the way past. He wasn’t living through that again.

Dean remained silent when the waitress came to take the order, if Sam had indeed lived this twice as he said he knew what he’d order. Not that he thought Sam was lying. He wouldn’t put it past some demon or something torturing his brother making him think that though.

“He’ll take the special, side of bacon, coffee black. Nothing for me, thanks.” Sam told her.

Okay, he got that right Dean conceded.

“Okay, so what we have to do is figure out the cause and make it to tomorrow?” Dean asked once she was gone.

“Preferably with no more resets.” Sam said, “I’m not sure how many of those I can take.”

The waitress brought the coffee and Sam rescued the hot sauce again. Another thing Dean noted as supporting the time loop theory.

“So how do we short circuit *Groundhog Day*?”

“Beats me. But you were killed at the Mystery Spot the first time and run over on your way there the
second.”

“Okay, let’s start there.”

“Yeah, but not afterhours.”

“Okay.”

They posed as reporters to interview the Mystery Spot proprietor but nothing turned up.

“Hate to say it, but that place is exactly what I thought. Full of crap.” Dean commented as they left.

“So what is it that’s happening to us then?” Sam asked.

“I don’t know.” Dean replied then stopped walking, “all right, let me just…so every day, I die.”

“Yeah.”

“That’s when you wake up again, right?”

“Yeah.”

“So let’s just make sure I don’t die. If I make it to tomorrow, maybe the loop stops and we can figure all this out.” Dean suggested.

“Do you think?” Sam asked, it sounded almost too simple.

“It’s worth a shot. I say we grab some takeout, head back to the motel, lay low until midnight.” Dean replied. Sam nodded in agreement, thankful to have something to focus on, “alright, good. Who wants Chinese?”

Dean stepped forward, Sam felt a sudden spike of danger and the piece of furniture the two movers had been arguing about earlier in the day crashed down on Dean. His sense of his brother vanished almost instantly.

He woke again to Heat of the Moment.

Sitting up he looked at Dean sitting on the other bed.

“Rise and shine, Sammy!” Dean crowed.

Sam swore and lay back down.

“Sam?” Dean asked with worry tinging his voice.

“We’re stuck in a time loop, Dean.” Sam replied before summoning his strength and rolling out of bed.

“What?”

“I’ve watched you die three times now. So excuse me if I’m not quite ready to have this conversation again.”

Dean was shocked. Anyone else he would have been calling them crazy and finding the location of the nearest psych hospital. But this was Sam. And the carefully controlled distress was far too real.

“Okay. Sounds like it would be a conversation best on a full stomach. Breakfast?”
Sam nodded.

The diner again, Sam picked the old man’s pocket on the way past.

Carefully Sam explained what had happened.

“This situation is nuts.” Dean said once he’d finished, his coffee had arrived in the middle of the explanation complete with falling hot sauce bottle, “whatever this is, we’ll figure it out.”

“Thanks.” Sam replied, though he was beginning to doubt his brother could help.

“So…if you’re stuck in Groundhog Day, why? What’s behind it?”

“I don’t know. We started with the Mystery Spot but found nothing odd there.”

“What do we do?”

“Your idea from yesterday, we keep you breathing, try to make it to tomorrow. I can’t think of anything else either.”

“Shouldn’t be too hard.”

“Yeah, right. I’ve watched you die a few times now and I can’t ever seem to stop it.”

“Well, nothing’s set in stone. You say I order the same thing every day, right?”

“Yeah. Pig in a poke, side of bacon.”

“Excuse me, sweetheart.” Dean called over to the waitress, “can I get sausage instead of bacon?”

“Sure thing, hon.” She replied.

Dean turned back to Sam, “see? Different day already. You see, if you and I decide that I am not gonna die…I’m not gonna die.”

Sam started to feel hope that they’d get through this. Until Dean’s food arrived. And he started choking.

The waitress called an ambulance even as Sam tried to clear his brother’s airway. Nothing worked. Minutes later his sense of Dean faded again.

He woke to Heat of the Moment before the ambulance even arrived.

This time he didn’t try to explain, just told Dean they weren’t going anywhere.

Again and again he tried to bubble his brother.

Dean slipped in the shower, broke his neck. Easily the worst was when he was poisoned by the taco they’d ordered in, Sam had felt that he was dying too as his sense of his brother faded bit by excruciating bit. The shaver malfunctioned and electrocuted Dean.

He told Dean they had to get out of town, a semi flattened the driver’s side. He stuck Dean in the passenger side and tried to drive them out, a tree fell on Dean.

Tried going to completely different areas of the town, always something happened.

Giving up on that course of action he dragged Dean out to the Mystery Spot again and tried to take it
apart to discover what was going on with an axe. Dean tried to calm down his distressed brother, the axe slipped and his brother was gone again.

He couldn’t do it anymore. Couldn’t watch it happen one more time. Nothing he tried worked. He felt so powerless, so helpless. Both of them were trapped in this loop but only he remembered it, remembered his brother snatched from him over and over and over again.

Heat of the Moment was ringing in his ears again, he didn’t even sit up or open his eyes just reached over blindly to where he knew his gun was located, he wasn’t even sure he knew what he was doing he just needed it to stop, he brought the muzzle under his chin.

“What the hell?”

Dean’s voice, strong hands jerking the gun out of his hands.

“Sammy! Talk to me! What’s going on?” His brother continued and he heard the gun hit the bed.

He didn’t need to open his eyes and see the gun continue its slide, too many Tuesdays told him exactly what was about to happen. Tears stung his eyes and he screamed silently inside.

“Sammy! Come on, look at me. Tell me…”

The thump of the gun hitting the floor and it going off cut off his brother’s words. He didn’t need to open his eyes to see his brother’s suddenly sightless eyes, see his brother fall with a muffled thump to the carpet, his sense of Dean abruptly vanishing. His stomach turned.

Then Heat of the Moment sounded again, things were reset again. Except for his mental state. And he was still reacting to what had happened last iteration.

Sam bolted from the bed to the bathroom.

“Sammy?” He heard Dean call even as he locked the door without even thinking about it.

Then he was bent over the toilet losing the last dozen breakfasts he hadn’t eaten.

“Sammy!” He heard Dean try the door, “come on, open up!”

Even if he wanted Sam couldn’t get to the door to unlock it.

“I’m coming in.” Dean warned a split second before the door flew in under the force of his kick, “Sammy, what the hell dude? Don’t lock me out when you’re sick!”

His tone was at odds with the harshness of his words and the hand now resting on Sam’s back was gentle even as he continued heaving.

“Easy, easy.” Dean soothed, “just relax. Let it all out.”

The compassion in his brother’s voice pushed him over the edge into bawling even as his heaves degenerated into dry retches.

“Hey now, it’s okay Sammy.” The compassion was still in his voice though it was joined by confusion. His brother’s hand ghosted past his forehead, checking for a temperature Sam knew wouldn’t be there.

“I’m okay.” Sam managed to get out when the dry retches finally stopped.
“You want to try that again when you haven’t just puked up the last weeks’ worth of meals into the toilet and crying like you’ve just lost everything you even slightly care about.” Dean replied, reaching past him to flush the toilet then wetting a face washer and handing it to him, “what’s wrong, Sammy?”

Sam just buried his face in the face washer and sobbed.

Dean waited for a moment then sighed as he realised he wasn’t getting an answer, “okay. Let’s get you back to bed.”

He managed with some difficulty to get his much taller younger sibling to his feet and back to the bed. He checked Sam’s temperature again and frowned when he still wasn’t warm. With how violently Sam had been sick he would have expected a sky high temperature, this made no sense.

“Nightmare?” Dean asked gently and wasn’t sure whether to believe Sam when he shook his head, “what then?” A second head shake was his only answer.

“Okay then. I’m going to duck over to the pharmacy, get some stuff for your stomach.”

“No!” Sam choked out, reaching out and latching onto Dean’s arm like not just his life but his very sanity depended on it.

“Dude, what’s going on?” Dean asked cautiously, another mute shake was his only answer.

“Sammy,” Dean gently untangled himself, fever or not he figured his brother was delirious, “I need to go get you some medicine. You obviously aren’t doing real well right at the moment. I’ll be back in just a minute or two, don’t worry.”

Sam didn’t have the will power to reclaim his brothers arm and just cried silently as he heard Dean leave the room, heard his light foot falls go down the stairs until they couldn’t be heard anymore. A few moments later he heard the screeching tires that signalled the end of another Tuesday.

Then he was on his back again, under the covers and Heat of the Moment blaring in his ears again. He rolled away from the bed he knew his brother was seated on and started sobbing again.

“Sammy?” The radio switched off and a moment later he felt the bed dip behind him as his brother knelt on the mattress and leaned over him, “what’s wrong?”

“I can’t do this again…” Sam whispered, defeated.

“Do what?” Dean asked in puzzlement, “the job? It’s not a particularly strange one…”

“No. This *Groundhog Day* Tuesday yet again.”

“Wha…” Dean paused and thought for a moment, “you saying you’re reliving Tuesday over and over?”

Sam nodded.

“Any idea why?”

Sam shook his head.

“So you just go through the day, go to sleep and wake up and it’s Tuesday again?” Dean asked, “and I’m not coming along for the ride?”
Sam let out a half laugh half sob, “I wish. No, the day restarts whenever you die.”

“Okay. What keeps killing me?”

“No one particular thing.”

“Okay. Well if you’re like this it’s destroying you. Let’s get the hell out of dodge.”

“Tried that. Impala gets totalled barely past town limits.”

“Baby is totalled?”

“Not any more. Everything resets on restart.”

“Including all damage and injuries?”

“Yeah.”

“Like?”

“Like the bullet in your head 2 days ago or being flattened by a car yesterday.”

“Wait a sec, bullet in the head? Who shot me?”

Sam slowly sat up and just sat despondently on the side of the bed.

“Sam?”

“No one.” Sam finally told him quietly, “you didn’t even get out of the room. I tried to eat a bullet, anything to stop this cycle you know, you pulled the gun out of my hands, it fell, went off, hit you in the head. You were dead before you hit the floor.”

“You what?” Dean exclaimed, “never do that again!”

“Don’t even know it would have worked.”

“I don’t care if it would have worked or not.” Dean returned, “getting out of this loop isn’t worth your life! We’ll figure this out together.”

“How, Dean? You don’t remember each cycle.” The despair was palpable in Sam’s voice.

“But you do. And when my little brother tells me he’s experiencing Groundhog Day Tuesdays I actually believe him.” Dean replied reassuringly, “so you tell me however many times it takes for us to make it to Wednesday with both of us alive.”

Sam looked up at him with the first feeling of hope in way to many Tuesdays, “really?”

“Really.” Dean considered him for a moment, gauging how he was feeling, “ready for some breakfast? We can order in if you’d prefer.”

“And watch you die from a taco again? No thanks.” Sam returned.

“Do I want to know?”

“No. It was messy.”

“Joy.”
They returned to the diner, Sam picking Mr Pickett’s pocket almost out of habit on the way past.

The order went as usual, Sam passing on advice to do more practice with archery to the waitress, much to her confusion.

“Do I want to know?” Dean asked when she left.

“Only if you like descriptions of arrows in eyes.”

It settled into an almost comfortable pattern after that, started the day explaining to Dean what was going on, avoid the worst problems, do more research. Dean discovered partway through that the lady who ran into them each morning was the daughter of the vanished man they’d originally come seeking. Piece by piece Sam collected the research on the man, committing it to memory as no file would survive the reset.

It was the day that Dean commented that the man disappearing in one of the places he took joy in debunking seemed like just desserts that Sam noticed the unassuming man who hadn’t been anything particular in all of the Tuesdays he’d dealt with had changed his syrup. That never happened, aside from he and to an extent Dean nothing changed.

The next day he was waiting, prepared, and ambushed the man after he left. It took a while but eventually he dropped the mask and showed himself to be the Trickster that they thought they’d killed a while ago.

“Why are you doing this?” Sam asked.

“You’re joking, right? You chuckleheads tried to kill me last time. Why wouldn’t I do this?” The Trickster replied.

“And Hasselback. What about him?” Dean demanded.

“That putz?” The Trickster responded with a laugh, “he said he didn’t believe in wormholes, so I dropped him in one. Then you guys showed up. I made you the second you hit town.”

“So this is fun for you?” Sam asked, “killing Dean over and over again?”

“One: Yes, it is fun.” The Trickster replied, “and two: This is so not about killing Dean. This joke is on you, Sam. Watching your brother die every day…forever.”

“You son of a bitch.” Sam growled.

“How long will it take you to realise…you can’t save your brother…no matter what?”

“There’s no deal!” Sam pointed out, he was getting sick of the various creatures thinking there was one.

“No. Thanks to that little time travelling angel friend of yours. But how long do you think that’ll last? How long until they find out where and when she went? How long until hell figures out the plan went askew, hmm?”

“Whatever comes we’ll deal with it.” Sam replied, “I’m more concerned with the current situation. I kill you, this all ends now.”

He put pressure on the stake.

can’t take a joke? Fine. You’re out of it. Tomorrow, you wake up, it’ll be Wednesday. I swear.”

“You’re lying.” Sam stated.

“If I am, you know where to find me.” The Trickster, “having pancakes at the diner.”

“No. Easier to just kill you.” Sam decided.

“Sorry, kiddo. Can’t have that.” The Trickster replied and clicked his fingers.

Abruptly Sam woke up to Back in Time playing.

He sat up, he saw Dean in the bathroom.

“Were you gonna sleep all day?” Dean asked.

“No Asia.” Sam commented, barely able to believe that the song has changed.

“Yeah, I know. This station sucks.” Dean replied.

Sam glanced at the clock.

“It’s Wednesday.” He exclaimed.

“Yeah, which usually comes after Tuesday. Turn that thing off, would you?” Dean replied.

“What, are you kidding? This isn’t the most beautiful song you’ve ever heard?” Sam asked, it wasn’t the song so much as what song it wasn’t.

“No.” Dean replied, “jeez. How many Tuesdays did you have?”

“I don’t know. I lost count.” Sam replied, “hey, wait. What do you remember?”

“I remember you telling me you were stuck in Groundhog Day then we ran into the Trickster. But that’s about it.”

“Alright. Pack your stuff. Let’s get the hell out of town. Now.”

“No breakfast?” Dean looked like someone had just kicked his puppy.

“No breakfast.” Sam replied.

A little while later Dean headed down to the car with the bags.

Sam was just finishing up upstairs when he felt a flash of danger, the sound of a gunshot sounded a split second later.

Sam ran to his side, taking the stairs dangerously fast.

“No. No, no, no.” Sam pulled Dean into his arms even as blood still spurted, “hey. Hey. Come on. Not today. Not today. This isn’t supposed to happen today. Come on.”

His voice became increasingly desperate as, just like the uncountable Tuesdays that preceded today, he felt his brother’s existence fade out of his reality.

The day didn’t restart. Just when he thought he’d escaped the loop Dean was taken from him.
For a week he went back to the diner every day to try to catch the Trickster again but he was gone.

With grief white hot in his heart he went hunting. If something evil got in his way he took it out, his goal was the Trickster always though. Bobby called frequently, he couldn’t bring himself to answer or call back.

A demon in Death Valley.

Gun play where he caught a bullet.

A vampire nest in Austin.

A myriad other things all while he methodically tracked the untrackable.

Then a phone call from Bobby saying he’d found the creature, back in Broward.

Arriving at the bane of his existence, the Mystery Spot he found Bobby waiting for him, a symbol and items already laid out.

Bobby got up as he entered and engulfed him in a hug, “it’s good to see you, boy.”

Sam didn’t return the hug, he had a hard time feeling anything around the pain in his heart or seeing beyond his mission, his quest. If his heart wasn’t aching his head was killing him, he only sporadically remembered to meditate now, which he got periodic phone calls from Pamela and Missouri about.

“What are we doing here, Bobby?” Sam asked tiredly.

“This is the last place the Trickster worked his magic.” Bobby explained.

“So?”

“So you want this thing? I found a summoning ritual to bring the trickster here.”

“What do we need?” Sam asked, whatever it was he’d get it. He hadn’t come this far to balk.

“Blood.” Bobby replied.

“How much blood?”

“Ritual says near a gallon. And it’s gotta be fresh too.”

“Meaning we have to bleed a person dry.” Sam commented, even through his pain he shied away from that.

“And it’s gotta be tonight, or not for another 50 years.” Bobby continued.

“Then let’s go get some.” Sam replied.

Bobby looked at him incredulously, “you break my heart, kid.”

“What?”

“I’m not gonna let you murder an innocent man.”

“Wasn’t going to murder anyone. Take from 7, 8 to be safe. No lasting harm.”
“You can’t just do a mass kidnapping.”

“Then why’d you bring me here?” It must have been the headache, if he wasn’t looking at Bobby he could have sworn he was talking to thin air.

“Why? Because it was the only way you’d see me. Because I’m trying to knock some sense into you. Because I thought you’d back down from killing a man.”

Something was off, it was like he hadn’t even mentioned spreading the load, and Bobby wouldn’t make that kind of mistake. A necessary ritual requiring that much blood would have had Bobby calling in as many Hunters as needed to avoid involving civilians, Sam himself would have answered a call like that. Sam went into alert mode and played along.

“Well, you thought wrong. Leave the stuff. I’ll do it myself.”

“I told you, I’m not gonna let you kill anyone.”

“It’s none of your damn business what I do.”

“You want your brother back so bad…” Bobby turned around and pulled out a ritual knife from his bag and held it out, "fine.”

“What are you talking about?”

“Better me than a civilian.”

Sam couldn’t figure out what he was playing at, but he was becoming more and more convinced that he wasn’t talking to a real person.

“You’re crazy, Bobby. I’m not killing you.”

“Oh. Now I’m the crazy one. Look, Sam. I’m old. I’m coming near the end of my trail. But you can keep fighting, saving folk. But you need your brother. So let me give him back to you.”

“Bobby…”

“You and Dean, you…you boys are the closest thing I have to family. I wanna do this.”

Sam took the knife, “okay.”

“Good.” He turned away and knelt down, “just make it quick.”

“Do it, son.” He said when Sam didn’t act straight away.

“Yeah, okay, Bobby.” Sam replied, pulling out the stake he always carried with him now, “but you wanna know why?”

He stepped forward and shoved the stake into his back, “because you’re not Bobby.”

Nothing happened for a while, he started to question his reasoning, his senses.

“Bobby?” He waited for a moment, feeling increasingly sick, “Bobby. Bobby!”

Abruptly the body dissolved like the Trickster constructs they’d encountered before and the stake flew to the side to be caught by none other than the Trickster.
“You’re right. I was just screwing with you.” The Trickster said, “pretty good, though, Sam. Smart. Let me tell you. Whoever said Dean was the dysfunctional one has never seen you with a sharp object in your hands.”

He laughed as he continued, “Holy Full Metal Jacket.”

“Bring him back.” Sam asked.

“Who, Dean? Didn’t my girl send you the flowers? Dean’s dead. He ain’t coming back. He’s upstairs as we speak.”

“Just take us back to that Tuesday. Or Wednesday, when it all started, please. We won’t come after you. I swear.” Sam begged.

“You swear?”

“Yes.”

“I don’t know. Even if I could…”

“You can.”

“True. But that don’t mean I should.” The Trickster waited for a moment, “Sam…there’s a lesson here that I’ve been trying to drill into that freakish, Cro-Magnon skull of yours.”

“Lesson? What lesson?”

“This obsession to save Dean? The way you two keep sacrificing yourselves for each other? Nothing good comes out of it. Just blood and pain. Dean’s your weakness. The bad guys know it too. He’s gonna be the death of you, Sam. Sometimes you just gotta let people go.”

“He’s my brother.” Sam replied as if that explained everything, and for him it did.

“Yup.” The Trickster replied, “and like it or not this is what life’s gonna be like without him.”

“Please.” Sam begged, “just…please.”

“I swear, it’s like talking to a brick wall.” The Trickster said, Sam just looked at him pleadingly, “okay, look. This all stopped being fun months ago. You’re Travis Bickle in a skirt, pal. I’m over it.”

“Meaning what?”

“Meaning, that’s for me to know and you to find out.” With that the Trickster clicked his fingers.

He woke back in the motel room, a barely remembered song that was notable to him only because wasn’t Heat of the Moment, he almost didn’t believe he was awake. He’d dreamed it a few times in the last 6 months only to wake and find it was a cruel trick of his unconscious.

He saw Dean in the bathroom.

“Were you gonna sleep all day?” Dean called, Sam stared at him for a moment barely believing his eyes, “I know. No Asia. This station sucks.”

Sam glanced at the clock and saw it was Wednesday. THE Wednesday.

“It’s Wednesday.” He said disbelievingly.
“Yeah. Which usually follows Tuesday. Turn that thing off.” Dean responded.

Sam forgot about his caution about the nature of what he was seeing. He grabbed his brother in a tight hug.

Dean returned the hug, feeling the desperation in his younger brother’s limbs. He could only remember the most recent Tuesday and couldn’t imagine what it must have been like for Sam, every day forced to watch his brother die, every day having to convince that same brother of what was happening, he didn’t know he could have endured long enough to get them both to Wednesday, “dude, how many Tuesdays did you have?”

“Enough.” He held Dean tightly for a long while, then he pulled back, “wait. What do you remember?”

“I remember you telling me you were stuck in *Groundhog Day* then we ran into the Trickster. But that’s about it.”

“Let’s go.”

“No breakfast?”

“No breakfast.”

“I’ll pack the car.”

“No. You’re not going ANYWHERE on your own.”

“Okay.”

With his brother sticking closer than his own shadow they packed up and then left the town in the impala. They left the outer limits well behind before Sam relaxed in his seat.

“Something I should know?” Dean asked.

“We’re well past the points where the impala got totalled the times we tried to leave during the Tuesdays.” Sam replied.

Something sounded off in his brother’s voice and he tried to remember if he’d sounded this…tired…the previous day.

“Get some rest. It’s a couple of hours to the next town. I’m not going anywhere.” Dean told him, mentally putting it down to him finally escaping the *Groundhog Day* Tuesdays.

Sam nodded and shifted around to be able to rest his head on the seat. But he couldn’t even doze off, every time it came close memories from the 6 months that now wouldn’t happen flashed in front of his eyes. The demon. The vampire nest. The robotic hunt for the Trickster. The calls from Bobby that he never answered. The final confrontation with Bobby. Sudden nausea rose in his throat.

“Dean! Stop the car!”

“Sam?” Dean asked even as he pulled the impala over to a quick stop.

Sam bolted from the car when it had barely come to a halt, skidded to a halt on his knee and threw up on the gravel.

Dean quickly secured the car and came around to where his little brother was using one knee to
support himself and one to brace against. He felt his brother start in surprise as he put a soothing hand on his back, almost as if he didn’t expect him to be there.

“Sam?” he asked quietly, checking for a temperature gently and not finding one, “what’s wrong?”

“I think…” Sam swallowed with difficulty before continuing, “I think everything that happened just came crushing in on me.”

“The repeating Tuesdays were that bad?”

Sam hesitated before nodding, he didn’t think he’d ever be able to face telling his brother about the first Wednesday they’d been through or the subsequent 6 months on his own.

“You done?”

He nodded again and Dean briefly returned to the car to grab a bottle of water, which he silently handed to his brother. Sam rinsed and spat before returning it shakily to Dean.

“Ready to get going again?”

Another silent nod and Dean helped his younger brother to his feet. For the first time in a long time his taller, more solid, younger brother actually felt…fragile. Something was wrong and for the life of him Dean couldn’t put his finger on what.

Back in the impala Sam didn’t recline again, apparently not wanting to risk a repeat. Dean wasn’t sure whether it was a dream or something else that had set his brother off.

Half an hour later had them pulling in at a lonely motel off the side of the highway.

“We don’t need to stop.” Sam said quietly.

“Yeah we do.” Dean replied calmly, “you obviously need some time to decompress from all those Tuesdays.”

“I’m fine.”

“Yeah. I noticed how fine you were when you puked up the breakfast you didn’t eat on the side of the road.”

“Just need a job to focus on.”

Now Dean knew there was something very wrong, “if you still feel like that in a couple of days we’ll find one.”

He hopped out of the car and went into the office before his brother could reply reappearing moments later with the keys for a room with two beds.

Sam reluctantly came in when Dean unlocked the door. He was tired and he didn’t think he could keep his thoughts away from the landmines the last 6 months had left in his mind. He wanted, needed, something to focus on until it didn’t bother him anymore.

Dean pushed him towards the bed furthest from the door, hoping that Sam would actually rest but doubting he would. Something was bothering his little brother and resting seemed to be the thing bringing it to the forefront. As he predicted Sam turned the TV on and remained half sitting up on the bed instead of lying down. Dean did the same on his bed and waited. Takeout was ordered, arrived, Sam barely ate any. And Dean waited some more.
He was half hoping that some enforced down time would sort whatever it was, that it would just turn out to be the residuals of so many Tuesdays where he had to explain to his brother over and over about what was going on, where he was the only one who even remembered the previous ones, where he couldn’t even count on his brother believing him when he told him. That concerned Dean the most actually, how many Tuesdays had there been where Dean had called him a liar and not trusted him. He wanted to ask but it looked like Sam was finally drifting off.

He smiled in relief but quickly found he’d smiled too soon as Sam jerked back awake and bolted for the bathroom.

“Sammy?” Dean rolled to his feet and followed his brother, who was bent over the toilet bringing up everything he’d managed to swallow and a bit more. He got to his side and laid a gentle hand on his back, feeling again that surprised start at the contact.

Sam was utterly exhausted when his stomach quit heaving. He had no strength left to pretend he was fine, no strength to hide that he was falling apart from the brother he had nearly sacrificed his very sanity for. He sat back against the wall, letting his head rest against the wall also.

Dean was really surprised at how tired his brother looked. Sam must have been hiding it from him for some reason. Quickly he flushed the toilet and grabbed a wet face washer. Sam barely reacted as Dean wiped his face.

“Well that explained the start of surprise whenever he touched him Dean realised. He really wanted to get his brother off the bathroom floor but knew they needed to get to the bottom of this first.

“Please don’t hate me.” Sam whispered.

“Hate you? How the hell could I hate you?” Dean asked in surprise.

“I couldn’t find him. I couldn’t rescue you.” Sam whispered in reply, “the things I was willing to do…what I did…”

“I could never hate you.” Dean assured him, “tell me.”
Slowly and painfully Sam told him; the desperate search, the single minded hunts, the unanswered messages from Bobby, the message taking him back to the town where Dean had died, meeting up with Bobby, being willing to take enough blood to kill a person for a chance to face the Trickster again, Bobby’s offer, the staking of him.

Dean could tell Sam was getting distressed again, swallowing convulsively as he finished.

“I didn’t even know whether it wasn’t Bobby or not.” Sam said with true distress.

“Okay, calm down.” Dean told him calmly, “you know Bobby, you know how he feels in your head. Just like you always know where I am. You do that with him too, I’ve seen it. You’d know if you were actually facing Bobby. Did you sense him? I’m willing to bet you didn’t.”

“I…uh…it was like I was facing air.” Sam replied.

“There you go.”

“The other stuff…”

“Hasn’t happened anymore. And part of you had to have known that. You were hunting a creature for the specific purpose of erasing the time that had passed.”

“Doesn’t make it right.”

“Maybe not. But it does mean you get a second chance at it.”

“But…”

“And this time I’ll be with you. I’m not going anywhere.”

Dean knew that he’d gotten through when his little brother reached for him and ended up crying on his chest. He just held him until the sobs died down then pulled back slightly to look at him.

“How about we get you off this floor and back into bed now?”

Sam nodded and between to two of them they got him off the floor and to the bed. He dropped off to sleep almost immediately and Dean was glad to see that it at least was as calm as it was likely to be.

The next day, even though he’d planned to stay for several days originally, he bundled his brother into the car and headed directly for Bobby’s. Unless he missed his guess the sooner Sam saw that Bobby was alright the sooner he could put that behind him.

If Bobby was surprised to see them back so soon or by the desperate hug that Sam greeted him with he didn’t comment. Not then anyway.

Dean convinced Sam to take a snooze on the couch then withdrew to the doorway to let him sleep.
Chapter 20: Aftermath

He woke. His mind so scattered he wasn’t quite sure where he was, the memories of the endless hunt in the forefront of his mind. He placed that he was at Bobby’s but wasn’t quite sure how he’d got there. Then the memories of that phone call, meeting Bobby, the stake…

Hands gripped his arms strongly, shaking him slightly, “hey, hey. It’s okay. Bobby’s fine. I’m here.”

He blinked his eyes into focus and his brother’s face swam into view.

“Dean.” He grabbed him in a hug.

Dean just held him, repeating the sentences over and over until he was strong enough to pull back.

“Sorry.” He mumbled.

“It’s okay.” Dean replied, “want food? Or more sleep?”

“Sleep.” He lay down again and was out like a light.

Dean stood and watched him for a while and sighed. Turning he saw Bobby watching from the doorway. Before he could even think of trying to deflect Bobby jerked his head to tell him to get in there.

Once he was there Bobby turned to him, “what’s going on, Dean? That was trauma, and major trauma at that. What happened?”

Dean sighed, “ran into the Trickster again.”

“What did he do?”

“First he made Sam live through a repeating *Groundhog Day* thing where it reset every time I died. I only remember the most recent iteration where we tracked him down and I didn’t die. Then he killed me just when Sam thought he’d got us both out of the loop and made him live through 6 months
without me before Sam tracked him down and made him reset it to that Wednesday, I also don’t remember the first version of that day.”

“Balls. Okay, why’d you need to tell him I was okay? The bastard wear my face at some point?”

“Construct from what I gather. Sam killed it. He can’t quite seem to get it through his head that he sensed it wasn’t you. Straight after he was upchucking every time he thought about it so I guess this is an improvement.”

“Balls. What about you?”

“What about me? I only remember the most recent Tuesday and the second Wednesday. I didn’t have to live through being the only one to know what was going on or have to live through trying to convince my brother every single time. Or being alone for 6 months.”

“That’s what I’m talking about, boy. He’s the one who took the brute of it and don’t try and tell me you don’t wish you could’ve protected him from it.”

Dean sighed, “that I failed to protect him doesn’t matter right now. He needs me to help put him back together.”

“First off, the only person who deserves blame is that damn Trickster. There’s no way you could have protected him from that so stop beating yourself up over it. And second, he’s the only person who can put himself back together. All you can do is support him while he does, and that’s no little thing. He trusts you.”

“You sure? How many times would he have had to deal with a Tuesday on his own after I refused to believe him? How long could his trust have survived that?”

“Ask him next time he’s lucid. I think you might be surprised.”

Sam’s phone rang, Dean grabbed it before Sam could do more than stir. He saw the caller ID was for Pamela.

“Hello.” He answered softly.

“Nice as it is to hear your voice, Dean, where’s Sam?”

“He’s asleep.”

“Then you’d better tell me why his shields are so shaky and how it happened so fast.”

“A creature called the Trickster trapped him in a time loop then when he thought he’d got us out of it made him endure 6 months without me before resetting him to the day it started. How can you tell that they’re shaky from where you are?”

“When someone has the power he has it creates ripples when he’s off his form. Guard his back and get him meditating again ASAP.”

She rang off then.

“Great.” Dean grumbled, “you know it’s bad when Pamela doesn’t bother to flirt.”

“Pamela didn’t flirt? I’ll up the defences.”

“Good idea. She said to guard his back.”
Next time Sam woke it was with the same disorientation as the first time, Dean repeated his actions bringing him back to reality.

“Sorry.” Sam mumbled again.

“It’s okay.” Dean told him.

Sam ran his hand through his hair, “I’m tired. Going to get some more sleep.”

“Wait a minute.” Dean replied, physically keeping him from lying down again, “you need to eat and meditate. Which one first?”

Sam sighed, “I’ll eat if you want, but I’m not up to meditating.”

“Don’t think you have a choice.” Dean told him, “Pamela called, she could feel your shields were shaky from wherever she is and told me to watch your back. Without flirting.”

“Crap.” Sam sighed, “guess I’ll meditate first. Get a bucket though, the way I’m feeling this’ll be rough. The last six months…it was sporadic…”

“Okay, I’ll be right back.” Dean headed into the kitchen to find something to use. Normally he’d be doing everything he could to keep his brother from exerting himself in this condition. He had a feeling they didn’t have time though.

Bobby came in with a book in his hand, “he okay?”

“Yeah. Just Pamela insisted he needed to meditate ASAP and he thinks it’ll be rough.”

“Well you take care of your brother. I’ll keep putting up these sigils.”

Dean returned to Sam. If anything his brother looked even more tired than when he’d finished chucking up his guts in the motel toilet.

“Damn I wish we could put this off.” Dean commented as he put the bucket down.

“If Pamela called and didn’t flirt and could tell from where she is then I don’t want to know what’ll be trying to bite us in the arse.” Sam said tiredly.

“Okay. Want me to join you this time or just stand by ready to hold your hair and make sure you don’t face plant?”

“The latter I think.”

“Okay.” Dean sat down next to Sam and watched worriedly as he took himself into meditation.

About 5 minutes later Sam wilted and Dean grabbed him. He didn’t end up tossing his cookies but it was about 10 minutes before he could focus on Dean again.

“Glad I didn’t eat first.” Sam mumbled.

Dean helped him sit back, “think you could keep something down?”

“Yeah. If I don’t pass out first.”

“One quick and easy to digest meal coming up.” Dean ducked back into the kitchen and made up some instant porridge.
Sam managed to stay awake long enough to eat it then went to sleep.

Sam slept longer than previously and Bobby badgered Dean into getting some rest himself.

When Sam next woke disorientated it was Bobby who managed to ground him.

“Bobby.” Sam said softly as he reorientated himself, “you okay?”

“I’m not the one who tangled with the Trickster again. Mind telling me why you keep having to be reassured I’m okay?”

“What did Dean tell you?”

“That the Trickster stuck you in a time loop where Dean kept dying then killed him and made you live six months with him gone. And that the Trickster made a construct of me and you killed it.”

“Sounds right as far as it goes.”

“Then elaborate.”

“You kept calling me for the entire 6 months. Pamela and Missouri too. I…didn’t answer or call back.”

“I’d have tracked you down.”

“Don’t think I spent more than one night in one place except on a case. Not even when I got shot.”

“Sam!”

“Won’t say I was thinking all that clearly. I can’t remember not being in pain of some sort the entire time. Well anyway, you called, said you’d found him, that I had to go back to that town. When I got there you told me that you had a ritual to summon the Trickster, but it required about a gallon of blood. Fresh blood. And it had to be that night or not for another 50 years.”

“And I didn’t have 6 other Hunters with me?”

“No. And ignored me when I said that there’d be 8 donors to be safe, so none would lose too much. That made me start thinking I wasn’t talking to you. That and…”

“And?”

“And it was like there was only thin air where you were standing. But…”

“But?”

“With the headaches and everything…my senses were…sporadic…I wasn’t completely sure…”

“With me not acting like me you had more than enough reason to do whatever you needed to in order to take me out.”

“To splash holy water around, do an exorcism, or a silver knife check maybe. NOT to stake you.”

“If I was me you wouldn’t have been able to.”

“You turned your back on me after telling me to take the blood from you.”

“If I’d ended up in the situation of no other option than to drain someone I’d never have asked you to
do it. I’d have bled myself.”

“He’s right.” Dean put in from the door.

“What the hell are you doing awake?” Bobby asked him.

“I don’t exactly sleep deeply when Sam’s not too hot.” Dean replied, then produced a bowl of porridge, “up to some food, Sammy?”

“Yeah. Guess I could eat.” Sam agreed.

“Good.” Dean sat down next to his brother and handed him the bowl.

“Thanks Dean.” Sam replied as he took the bowl and started slowly eating, “you know, the one good thing to come out of this. I learnt how much you trust me.”

“What do you mean?”

“Every Tuesday, even when I wasn’t telling you about the time loop and was just telling you we weren’t leaving the room or we were jumping in the impala and getting the hell out of dodge, hell even when I told you I was driving. You trusted that I had a reason. Hell, the worst I got was splashed with holy water when I told you I was driving.” Sam replied then laughed, “which I figure was fair enough.”

“Huh.” Dean responded thoughtfully, “good to know. What did happen with the getting the hell out of dodge plan?”

“First time a truck flattened the driver’s side. The second a tree fell on the passenger seat.”

“Ouch.”

“Well…at least it was fast.”

“Sounds like there was worse ones you had to endure.” Dean prodded gently.

“The longest was the taco that poisoned you.” Sam told him.

“But not the worst?” Dean noted picking up on the difference.

Sam stopped eating and looked down at his hands.

“Sam?” Dean prompted, almost wanting to drop the subject but his knowledge of his brother telling him this was a boil that needed lancing.

“Near the end of the stretch I wasn’t telling you what was going on and just trying to keep you alive. I’d tried everything I could think of to keep you alive.”

“And?” Dean prompted when Sam went quiet, “something happened to get you telling me again?”

“I…uh…” Sam shook his head, “it doesn’t matter.”

“Nothing you say could make me hate you.” Dean told him, continuing when Sam stayed silent, “did you do something that ended up killing me?”

Sam gave a half laugh, “that happened a few times actually. An axe slipping, a gun misfiring, hell I’m the one who ordered the damn taco.”
“Then what?” Dean asked gently, trying to think of what would be worse than that. He’d listed those so matter-of-factly that it had to be a lot worse in Sam’s mind, worse even than actively killing him since he knew without a doubt that Sam saw the inadvertent killing as just as bad as actively doing so.

Sam shook his head again, a look of sadness, of despair, on his face.

Dean felt a sinking feeling in his stomach as he considered the section of time his brother had mentioned, that he couldn’t think of anything else to try, that everything he’d tried had failed. Coupled with that look on his face Dean had a really bad feeling he knew what had happened.

“Sammy?” Dean asked as gently as he could, “did you try to eat a bullet?”

Sam’s face crumpled and he buried his face in his hands. Dean wrapped his arms around his brother and pulled him to him.

“Balls.” Bobby commented, “what were you thinking?”

“I wasn’t thinking.” Sam replied through his tears, “I just needed it to stop. I didn’t care how.”

Dean tightened his hold, “what happened?”

“You pulled the gun out of my hand, tossed it on your bed. It kept sliding, fell off the bed, went off, hit you in the head.” Sam told him, “you were gone before you hit the floor.”

“Don’t ever do that again, okay Sammy?” Dean told him, “no matter what. You ever feel that hopeless, that desperate, ever again you tell me. I will do anything, ANYTHING, to help you. I would get on a plane to get to your side.”

“I’m sorry.”

“It’s okay.” Dean soothed, “I take it I found out the next Tuesday?”

“No.” Sam replied, “after I got done puking my guts out you went across to the pharmacy and got run over.”

“So the next Tuesday?”

“Yeah. I was still a mess. You told me that when I told you I was experiencing *Groundhog Day* Tuesdays you actually believed me and that I should tell you however many times it took to get us out of it. That you’d help me figure it out.”

“I’m sure I did a lot of help with that.” Dean said, sure he’d been less than no help.

“You gave me many of the biggest clues actually. From finding out that the lady who kept running into us was the daughter of the vanished guy, to giving me the clue that told me it was the Trickster. And don’t try to tell me that it was someone other than you that kept the anti-Trickster stake in the trunk.”

Dean couldn’t quite think of a response to that, “okay.”

“Okay, now that we’ve got that sorted. Both of you get more sleep.” Bobby told them.

Sam nodded and started to disentangle himself.

“You go ahead, I’ll stay here with Sam.” Dean told Bobby.
“You need to rest, too, Dean.” Sam said.

“You heard him, Dean.” Bobby interrupted before Dean could reply, “he won’t rest if he’s worrying about you.”

Dean sighed, “fine.”

It took a while but Sam gradually started sleeping longer, started knowing what reality was when he woke without someone needing to tell him. He got back into the habit of meditating, Dean joining him again after that first day.
Chapter 21: Battle Lines

What told Sam more than how he was feeling that things were getting back to normal, whatever normal was for them, was that Dean started actively searching for a job again.

Sam’s phone bleeped that a message had arrived. He frowned as he pulled it up.

“Dean!”

Dean appeared at a near run and Sam flipped his phone around to show the picture that had been messaged to him. A picture showing someone in the process of attacking, a person with pitch black demon eyes.

“Who sent it?” Dean asked.

“Believe it or not, Bela.” Sam replied.

“The tracer?”

“The phone hasn’t moved since the message.” Sam reported after checking the app.

“What’s up?” Bobby asked, joining them.

Sam showed him the photo, “from Bela.”

“Balls. We can’t just leave her there.”

“We also can’t assume this isn’t a trap either.” Dean pointed out, “she was after the Colt last time we met her, Bobby could you secure it for us?”

“Of course.” Bobby replied and Dean handed it over.

“Let’s go.” Dean said and headed towards the impala with Sam on his heels.
They entered the building where Bela’s phone still was cautiously. The building seemed empty as they wound their way to where the phone was. Reaching the room there was just a table in the centre with the phone sitting on it.

“No blood. No signs of struggle. Can’t smell any sulphur.” Sam commented softly.

“I take it that means you can’t sense any demons around either.” Dean replied.

“If I had I’d have opened with that.”

Then doors were being banged in and police poured into the room.

“Hands in the air!”

“Don’t move!”

“Down on your knees!”

Not willing to fight their way out through law enforcement only trying to do their job, no matter how misguided, they raised their hands.

“Bitch.” Dean growled even as he shifted his hold on his gun to make it safe for the police around him.

“On the ground! Now!”

“Do it!”

They were pushed to the floor.

“Sam and Dean Winchester, you have the right to remain silent.”

They were roughly cuffed.

“Anything you say can and will be used against you in a court of law.”

Another set of shoes walked in.

“You have the right to speak to an attorney and have an attorney present during any questioning. If you cannot afford a lawyer, one will be appointed for you at government expense.”

They looked up at the man wearing a FBI jacket.

“Hi, guys.” FBI guy stated, “it’s been a while.”

Dean swore silently. Agent Henriksen from the shifter in the bank. Bela set them up.

Cuffed and chained they sat in the car they’d been bundled into outside the local police station while several agents pointed weapons at them.

Dean sighed and rolled his eyes at Sam.

Sam sighed in return. At least there didn’t seem to be demons in anyone. Yet. This setup was done with demon help, so they should expect some at some point.

A drunk stumbled out of the front door and away, prompting a raised eyebrow from Dean.
Various Police took up positions at all visible exits, and probably several that they couldn’t see.

“Not holding back are they?” Dean muttered.

“Poor bastards have no idea we’re not who they need to be scared of.” Sam replied just as softly.

One of the agents outside received something over a radio and the door was opened.

“Get out. Slowly.”

They clambered out with multiple weapons aimed at them. The agent at the door slammed it and gestured at them to head into the station.

They shuffled, the only type of walk the chains allowed, into the area with all the police and agents watching them.

“Why all the sourpusses?” Dean quipped.

“I’ll show you to the cells.” The agent said, starting to drag them forward.

Sam noticed the only lady in the area had a rosary.

“Hey, hey. Watch the merchandise.” Dean mock complained.

They started moving again.

“We’re not the ones you should be scared of, Nancy.” Dean told the young lady watching them nervously.

They got walked into a cell and the door secured behind them.

They managed to sort themselves out enough to sit down.

“How are we gonna Houdini out of this one?” Dean asked.

“Good question.”

Some minutes later Henriksen came down to look at them. They both ignored him after he remained silent for a while.

“You know what I’m trying to decide?” The agent said almost conversationally.

“I don’t know, whether Cialis will help you with your little condition?” Dean asked him sarcastically.

“What to have for dinner tonight. Steak or lobster?” Henriksen replied, “what the hell. Surf and turf. I got a lot to celebrate. I mean, after all, seeing you two in chains?”

“You kinky son of a bitch. We don’t swing that way.” Dean returned.

“You know, I wouldn’t bust out the melted butter just yet.” Dean told him, “couldn’t catch us at the bank. Couldn’t keep us in that jail.”

“You’re right. Screwed up.” Henriksen replied, “I underestimated you. I didn’t count on you being that smart. But now I’m ready.”
“Ready to lose us again?” Dean returned.

“Ready like a court order to keep you in a super-maximum prison in Nevada ‘til trial.” The agent replied, sounding like he was gloating, “ready like isolation in a soundproof, windowless cell so small that between you and me, is probably unconstitutional. How’s that for ready?”

Neither of them let on that it didn’t sound very good. They’d probably have been more concerned if they didn’t think there was going to be trouble with supernatural critters, probably demons, long before any law enforcement threats could inconvenience them.

“Take a good look at Sam.” Henriksen continued after a moment, “you two will never see each other again.”

Both of them glared at him.

“Aw. Where’s that smug smile, Dean?” Henriksen gloated, “I wanna see it.”

Dean shook his head, “you got the wrong guys.”

“Oh, yeah. I forgot. You fight monsters.” The agent returned sarcastically, “sorry, Dean. Truth is your daddy brainwashed you with all that devil talk and no doubt touched you in a bad place. That’s all. That’s reality.”

“Why don’t you shut your mouth?” Dean told him. Their father mightn’t have been the best father in the world, so revenge driven, obsessed that they be ready to fight and defend themselves, and paranoid to boot, but he could have been a lot worse.

“But guess what? Life sucks, get a helmet.” Henriksen told them, “because everybody’s got a sob story. But not everybody becomes a killer.”

They heard a helicopter coming in and Sam glanced at the small window, swearing silently. Their time of being demon free was coming to an end, there was a demon coming in on that helicopter.

“And now I have two less to worry about.” Henriksen continued happily. He looked at his watch and tapped it, “it’s surf-and-turf time.”

He walked off laughing.

Sam caught Dean’s eye and flashed him the Hunter sign for demon. Dean’s eyes flicked to the window and the still audible helicopter in understanding even as he swore silently.

“And us without salt, spray paint, or holy water.” Dean grumbled softly enough that only his brother heard.

A few moments later another FBI agent entered, closing the main door as he did. Sam flashed the demon sign to Dean again while the guys back was turned.

The man turned around and walked up to their cell. Dean stood and put himself between the demon and his brother.

“Sam and Dean Winchester.” The demon said, “I’m Deputy Director Steven Groves. This is a pleasure.”

“Glad one of us feels that way.” Dean told him.

“I’ve been waiting a long time for you two to come out of the woodwork.” ‘Steven’ said, then
without warning, even though they were braced for an attack knowing he was a demon, pulled out a silenced gun and shot Dean in the shoulder.

Dean fell back on the bed as ‘Steven’ kept shooting, even as Sam leapt for the gun. He got it pointed away from Dean and the demon revealed his black eyes.

Sam instantly started the exorcism chant.

“Sorry, I’ve gotta cut this short.” The demon said, interrupting the chant, “it’s gonna be a long night, fellas.”

The demon then vacated his meat suit as loudly as he could.

Sam swore but didn’t just drop the gun, he couldn’t risk it going off as it landed.

Henriksen, the other agents and police burst in as the now vacant meat suit collapsed bonelessly.

“Put the gun down!” One of the police ordered, aiming a gun at Sam.

“Wait.” Sam said, trying to show that he wasn’t holding the gun in a usable way.

“He shot him.”

“I didn’t shoot him. I didn’t shoot anyone.” Sam quickly told them.

“He shot me.” Dean pointed out.

“Get on your knees now.” Henriksen ordered.

“Okay, okay.” Sam returned, carefully putting the gun down outside the bars, “okay, don’t shoot, please. Look, here. Here.”

They both went to their knees.

“We didn’t shoot him.” Sam insisted, “check the body. There’s no blood. We did not kill him.”

“Go ahead. Check him.” Henriksen ordered and another agent did so.

“Vic, there’s no bullet wound.” The agent reported.

“He’s probably been dead for months.” Dean said.

“What did you do to him?” Henriksen demanded.

“We didn’t do anything.” Dean replied.

“Talk or I shoot.” Henriksen insisted.

“You won’t believe us.” Dean returned.

“He was possessed.” Sam tried explaining.

“Possessed. Right.” Henriksen replied sarcastically, “fire up the chopper, we’re taking them outa here now.”

“Yeah, do that.” Dean told him.
The agent tried calling to someone stationed somewhere else, presumably at the chopper. When there was no answer that drew Sam’s attention further out and he swore silently again, quickly flashing the plural sign for demon at Dean.

Henriksen sent him out to check with a nod of his head while he kept his gun aimed at the brothers.

Sam and Dean watched him go knowing that they probably wouldn’t see him alive again.

A few moments later the radio crackled to life, “they’re dead. I think they’re all dead.”

An explosion sounded right on the tail of the report.

“What the hell was that?” Henriksen exclaimed before grabbing his radio, “Reidy?”

Silence.

“Reidy? What is going on out there? Reidy, what the hell was that? Come in. Talk to me. Come in. Talk to me, Reidy.”

Both Sam and Dean shared resigned looks. Someone else they hadn’t been able to save. Add to that the other agents and officers outside that probably weren’t there anymore.

The police and agents returned upstairs, letting the brothers return to sitting on the bed, which at least was more comfortable than kneeling on the concrete floor.

Some moments later the power went out.

They both stood up.

“Oh, that can’t be good.” Dean commented as the emergency lights came on.

“That’s an understatement. They’re multiplying.” Sam replied.

“Awesome” Dean returned sarcastically.

“While we’ve got some quiet, let’s deal with your shoulder.” Sam told him, grabbing some toilet paper.

Dean grunted from pain as Sam put pressure on the bullet wounds.

“Alright, don’t be such a wuss.” Sam told him, worried about their ability to fight without any equipment and with injuries.

“What’s the plan?” Henriksen demanded as he came back in, “kill everyone in the station and bust you two out?”

“What the hell are you talking about?” Dean asked.

“I’m talking about your psycho friends, I’m talking about a bloodbath.” Henriksen replied.

“Okay, I promise you: whoever’s out there is not helping us.” Dean told him.

“Look, you gotta believe us.” Sam inserted, “everyone here is in terrible danger.”

“You think?” Henriksen returned.

“Why don’t you let us out so we can save your arses?” Dean told him.
“From what?” Henriksen asked, “you gonna say ‘demons’? Don’t you dare say ‘demons’. Let me tell you something. You should be a lot more scared of me.”

He walked off.

“How’s the shoulder?” Sam asked.

Dean pulled out the blood soaked paper and commented sarcastically, “it’s awesome. I’ll live. You know, if we get out of here alive. So you got a plan?”

Sam didn’t answer.

Dean glanced up to see the young lady from upstairs peaking in at them.

“Hey.” Dean drew Sam’s attention to the girl.

“Hey.” Sam called to her, “hey, uh…please. Please, we need your help. It’s Nancy? Nancy, right? Nancy, my brother’s been shot. He’s bleeding really bad. Do you think maybe you could get us a towel? Please, just one clean towel?”

She hesitated.

“Look. Look at us.” Sam continued, “we’re not the bad guys. I swear.”

She skittered off and Sam sighed.

“Nice try.” Dean told him.

Sam looked back at the doorway and was surprised to see her standing there with a towel. She hesitantly handed the towel through the bars. Sam spotted her rosary but he didn’t want to scare her. He wrapped his telekinesis around the beads as she withdrew and she didn’t even notice.

“Thank you.” He said softly.

She nodded and skittered away. As soon as she turned he snatched the rosary out of the air.

He turned to Dean and handed him the towel. He showed him the beads.

Then they waited, Dean keeping pressure on the wound.

“We’re like sitting ducks in here.” Sam commented.

“Yeah, I know.” Dean replied, then yelled, “would it kill these cops to bring us a snack?”

“There’s more gathering as time goes by.” Sam told him.

“How many?”

“I don’t know. There’s too many for me to separate now.”

“Great.”

“However many there are, they could be possessing anyone. Anyone could just walk right in.”

“It’s kind of wild, right? It means, like, they’re coming right for us. Never done that before.”

Sam looked at him unamused, his brother’s humour left much to be desired sometimes.
“It’s like we got a contract on us.” Dean continued almost excitedly, “you think it’s because we’re so awesome? I think it’s because we’re so awesome.”

Sam just glared at him and Dean reluctantly stowed the humour.

The sheriff walked in.

“Well, howdy there, sheriff.” Dean quipped as he opened the door.

“Oh, sheriff?” Sam asked.

“It’s time to go, boys.” The sheriff told them.

“Oh, you know what?” Dean said, this looked like a set up to get them ‘shot escaping’, “we’re just comfy right here, but thank you.”

Henriksen walked in and Sam swore silently for the umpteenth time. He flashed the demon Hunter sign to Dean quickly, hoping he knew who he meant. Dean tensed imperceptibly.

“What do you think you’re doing?” ‘Henriksen’ demanded.

“I’m not gonna sit here and wait to die.” The sheriff replied, “we’re gonna run for it.”

“It’s safer here.” ‘Henriksen’ told him.

“There’s a SWAT facility in Boulder.” The sheriff replied.

“We’re not going anywhere.” ‘Henriksen’ replied.

“The hell we’re not!” The sheriff exclaimed.

Only because they were half expecting something to happen did they manage to react fast enough. As the demon wearing Henriksen raised the gun towards the sheriff Sam pulled him out of the way while Dean dived for Henriksen’s gun. The gun went off harmlessly.

With the sheriff safe Sam joined Dean in preventing the demon from continuing. As fast as they could they dunked him into the toilet, which they’d converted into a holy water font using the rosary beads and a prayer.

As soon as they did Sam started reciting the exorcism.

Another police officer raced in with a rifle.

Dean aimed the gun he’d managed to get off Henriksen at them, “stay back.”

“They just saved my life, stand down.” The sheriff called to the officer then looked back at Dean, “you won’t be shot. Please lower that.”

Dean’s eyes darted between the sheriff, the officer and his brother going as quickly through the exorcism as he could. Then secured the gun and handed it handle first to the sheriff.

Nancy peaked into the room fearfully.

“Sam, hurry up.” Dean called.

“It’s too late.” The demon crowed as Sam pulled his head out of the holy water, “I already called
them. They’re already coming.”

Sam finished the exorcism. With a yell the demon smoke exited to hell and Henriksen collapsed onto the floor.

“Is he…? Is he dead?” Nancy asked nervously.

Henriksen abruptly started coughing.

“Henriksen.” Sam said, “hey. Is that you in there?”

Henriksen managed to get himself off the floor and sitting on the bed with both brothers watching him worriedly.

“I, uh…” He stammered, “I nearly shot the sheriff.”

Sam gave Dean a quelling look before he could think of an adaptation of the song line, “we intervened.”

“Five minutes ago I was fine and then…” Henriksen tried to explain.

“Let me guess.” Dean told him, “some nasty black smoke jammed itself down your throat?”

Henriksen looked at him like he couldn’t believe he actually knew how to describe what had happened.

“You were possessed.” Sam told him.

“Possessed, like…possessed?” Henriksen asked incredulously.

“That’s what it feels like.” Sam answered, “now you know.”

“I owe you the biggest I-told-you-so ever.” Dean stated then looked at the sheriff, “it’s safe to give that back to him now.”

The sheriff handed the gun back to the agent hesitantly. Henriksen took it rather shakily. He stood up and helped the sheriff to his feet.

He looked at the other officer, “officer Amici. Keys.”

The officer unhooked the keys from his belt and handed them to the FBI agent, who promptly turned around and unlocked the cuffs and chains.

“Alright. So how do we survive?” Henriksen asked of the two that until 5 minutes ago he’d thought were delusional murderers.

Fortunately the station had supplies of spray paint so the first thing that happened was devil’s traps being put at every entrance. Dean kept track of them on the blueprint of the station.

Henriksen and Amici brought in the contents of their armoury.

“That’s nice. But it’s not gonna do much good.” Dean told them.

“We got an arsenal here.” Amici protested.

“You don’t poke a bear with a BB gun. It’s just gonna make him mad.” Dean replied.
“What do you need?” Henriksen asked.

“Salt. Lots and lots of salt.” Dean told him.

“Salt?” Amici asked sounding incredulous.

“Is there an echo in here?” Dean asked.

“There’s road salt in the storeroom.” Nancy said.

“Perfect. Perfect.” Dean replied, “we need salt at every window and every door.”

The two men headed off to collect the bags.

“How are you holding up, Nancy?” Dean asked her as she taped down the bandage on his shoulder.

“Okay.” She replied, “when I was little, I would come home from church and talk about the devil. My parents would tell me to stop being so literal. I guess I showed them, huh?”

She finished off the bandage, “that should hold.”

“Thank you.” Dean said.

“Sure.” She replied.

The two men returned with the large bags of salt.

“Hey, where’s my car?” Dean asked.

“Impound lot out back.” Amici replied.

“Okay.” Dean said.

“Wait.” Amici realised, “you’re not going out there?”

“Yeah, I gotta get something out of my trunk.” Dean told him.

He collected the impound lot keys and snuck out to it. As he quickly grabbed what he needed from the trunk and stashed it in the duffle bag he felt like he was being watched. It just spurred him to move faster, the huge number of demons out here would love to catch him on his own.

There was a rumble and he glanced over to see a small storm of demon smoke heading in. With a silent curse he hurried up his collecting, slammed the trunk closed, and dashed back inside.

“They’re coming!” He called in warning. Then the black smoke storm broke over the building.

After a long moment trying to breach the building the smoke withdrew.

“Everybody okay?” Sam asked.

“Define ‘okay’.” Henriksen replied.

“Right, everybody needs to put these on.” Dean stated, pulling out the anti-possession necklaces from the duffle bag, “it’ll keep you from being possessed.”

He handed a necklace to each person.
“What about you and Sam?” Nancy asked.

Both of them pulled down the necks of their shirts to show the anti-possession tattoos they both had.

“Smart.” Henriksen said, “how long have you had those?”

“Not long enough.” Sam replied.

They waited and prepared after that. Nancy was the first to notice the change outside.

“Hey, that’s Jenna Rubner.”

Sam looked out at the gathering of people outside, all openly displaying the black eyes of demons, “that’s not Jenna anymore.”

“That’s where all that black demon smoke went?” Nancy asked.

“Looks like.” Sam replied before drawing her away from the glass.

Further in the police officers were checking the perimeter and Henriksen was going over the arsenal with Dean.

“Shotgun shells full of salt.” He commented.

“Whatever works.” Dean replied.

“Fighting off monsters with condiments.” Henriksen responded ironically, “so turns out demons are real.”

Dean glanced at him working on the shotgun, “FYI, ghosts are real too. So are werewolves, vampires, changelings, evil clowns that eat people.”

“Okay, then.”

“If it makes you feel better, Bigfoot’s a hoax.”

“It doesn’t.” He replied as he loaded shotgun shells into the ammo belt, “how many demons?”

“Total?” Dean responded, “no clue. A lot.”

“You know what my job is?”

“You mean, besides locking up the good guys? No, I have no idea.”

“My job is boring. It’s frustrating. You work three years for one break…and then maybe you can save a few people. Maybe. That’s the payoff. Been busting my arse for 15 years to nail a handful of guys and all this while, there was something off in the corner so big. So, yeah, sign me up for that big frosty mug of wasting my damn life.”

“You didn’t know.”

“Well, now I do.”

They stayed silent for a while, Dean certainly didn’t know what to tell him. He certainly wasn’t one to talk about staying well away from it. He couldn’t. His brother couldn’t and Sam had tried to be normal. Maybe him being actual FBI would make things a little easier on him. He’d actually be
getting a pay check after all.

“What’s out there?” Henriksen asked, “can you guys beat it? Can you win?”

“Honestly,” Dean replied, “I think the world’s gonna end bloody. But that doesn’t mean we shouldn’t fight. We do have choices. I choose to go down swinging.”

“Plus, you got nothing to go home to but your brother.” Henriksen pointed out.

“Yeah.” Dean agreed thoughtfully before flashing a smile at him, “what about you, you rocking the white-picket fence?”

“No. Empty apartment, string of angry ex-wives.” Henriksen replied, “I’m right where you are.”

Dean gave a half laugh, “imagine that.”

The sound of a smashing window had them grabbing up weapons and dashing towards the sound.

“How do we kill her?” Henriksen asked aiming at the demon now standing in the devil’s trap.

Sam and Dean shared a considering look, wondering if this was the betrayal. Sam shook his head slightly, felt too early for the payoff she was working for. Especially since nothing had happened with what she’d been trying to convince them of.

“We don’t.” Sam replied even as Dean put his weapon up.

“She’s a demon.” Henriksen pointed out.

“She’s here to help us.” Sam replied, adding a silent ‘I hope’ to the end.

“Are you kidding?” Amici asked incredulously.

“Are you gonna let me out?” Ruby asked.

“What are you doing here, Ruby?” Dean asked.

“As Sam said, I’m here to help.” Ruby replied.

Dean gave Sam a miniscule nod and he crouched to break one of the lines.

“And they say chivalry’s dead.” Ruby said sarcastically as she stepped out. Sam repaired the trap as soon as she was out and fixed the salt line that had allowed her through the window.

“Anyone have a breath mint?” Ruby continued, “some guts splattered in my mouth while I was killing my way in here.”

She stalked out of the room.

Henriksen shot Dean a curious look and Dean gave him the universal quiet signal in response hoping he’d get that neither brother actually trusted her.

“How many are out there?” Dean asked.

“Thirty at least. That’s so far.” Ruby replied.

“Oh, good.” Dean responded sarcastically, “thirty. Thirty hit men all gunning for us. Who sent them?”
“The big new up-and-comer, you know, the one the last demon you killed bragged about.” Ruby replied.

“Who is he?” Dean asked.

“Not he. Her. Her name is Lilith.” Ruby replied.

“Lilith?” Dean questioned.

“And she really, really wants Sam’s intestines on a stick.” Ruby told him, “guess she sees him as competition.”

“It just gets better and better.” Dean grumbled.

“We’ll need the Colt.” Ruby interjected.

Dean sighed, “figures.”

“We don’t have it with us.” Sam explained further, “the bitch who set us up to get arrested by sending us a message crafted to look like she was in trouble, supernatural trouble, tried to steal it last time we ran into her so we left it behind.”

“Wait…she tried to steal from you and you still went to her rescue?” Henriksen asked in confusion.

“There’s very few people I’d count as deserving being a demon’s chew toy.” Dean told him, “Bela, for all her faults, isn’t one of them. Or wasn’t. Her working with demons to set us up changed that, we won’t be riding to her rescue again.”

“I’m sorry, I must have blood in my ear.” Ruby said, “I thought I heard you say you were stupid enough to leave the Colt behind.”

Ruby hopped up angrily and started pacing, “fantastic. This is just peachy.”

“Ruby.” Sam interjected.

“Shut up.” Ruby replied then stood in silence for a while, “fine. Since I don’t see that there’s any other option there’s one other way I know how to get you out of here alive.”

“What’s that?” Dean asked sceptically.

“I know a spell. It'll vaporise every demon in a one-mile radius. Myself included.” Ruby replied, “so you left the Colt behind and now I have to die. So next time, be more careful. How’s that for a dying wish?”

“Okay. What do we need to do?” Dean asked, he had a pretty good idea it wasn’t going to be something any of them could stomach, not that he was going to feel guilty if it wasn’t. Ruby might be playing at being helpful but neither of them had any illusions as to whether she was truly on their side.

“Aw. You can’t do anything.” Ruby replied condescendingly, “This spell is very specific. It calls for a person of virtue.”

“I got virtue.” Dean told her, it sure as hell wasn’t going to be any other as far as he was concerned if it even was something palatable.

Ruby laughed, “nice try. You’re not a virgin.”
“Nobody’s a virgin.” Dean told her with a half laugh.

Ruby just looked at him then slid her gaze over to another person in the room. Nancy looked uncomfortable with the scrutiny.

“No. No way.” Dean complained, “you’re kidding me. You’re…”

“What? It’s a choice, okay?” Nancy replied.

“What, so you…? You never…?” Dean stuttered unable to fathom it. He’d lost his virginity when he wasn’t even legal, “not even one? I mean, not even…? Wow.”

“So the spell.” Nancy asked, “what can I do?”

“You can hold still while I cut your heart out from your chest.” Ruby told her.

“What?” Nancy asked.

“What, are you crazy?” Dean asked.

“Hell no.” Sam put in.

“Stop being so squeamish.” Ruby snapped at Sam before turning back to Dean, “I’m offering a solution.”

“You’re offering to kill somebody.” Dean pointed out angrily.

“And what do you think’s gonna happen to this girl when the demons get in?” Ruby replied.

“We’re gonna protect her that’s what.” Henriksen declared.

“Very noble.” Ruby responded.

“Excuse me?” Nancy said.

“You’re all gonna die.” Ruby continued, “this is the only way.”

“Yeah, there’s no way that you’re gonna prove…” Dean started.

“Everybody please shut up.” Nancy shouted, continuing when they looked at her, “all the people out there will it save them?”

“It’ll blow the demons out of their bodies.” Ruby replied, “so if their bodies are okay, yeah.”

Nancy was quiet for a long moment, “I’ll do it.”

“No. No. You don’t need to do this.” Dean instantly protested.

“Ditto.” Sam backed him up.

“All my friends are out there.” Nancy said.

“We don’t sacrifice people. We do that, we’re no better than them.” Henriksen protested.

“We don’t have a choice.” Ruby stated.

“Well, your choice is not a choice.” Dean declared.
“Sam.” Ruby turned back to that brother, “you know I’m right.”

Sam got a sudden headache and realised this was the most blatant use of her influence power they’d experienced.

Dean looked at Sam with worry concealed behind his expression, “Sam? What the hell is going on? Sam, tell her.”

“It’s my decision.” Nancy declared.

“Damn straight, cherry pie.” Ruby replied.

“Stop!” Dean yelled, “stop. Nobody’s killing any virgins.”

“There’s always another choice.” Sam backed him up softly.

“Sam!” Ruby snapped at him.

“Do you have another plan?” Sam asked Dean.

“I got a plan.” Dean replied, “I’m not saying it’s a good one, I’m not even saying that it’ll work but it sure beats killing a virgin.”

“Okay, so what’s the plan?”

“Open the doors. Let them all in. And we fight.”

“Ohay.” Sam turned to the sheriff, “could I borrow you for a bit.”

“Sure.” Sam led him out.

He returned a little while later.

“Get the equipment to work?” Dean asked.

“Yeah.” Sam replied, carefully not saying in Ruby’s hearing exactly what equipment and what it was going to be used for.

“So?”

“So this is insane.” And it was, it was just the least insane of their options.

“You win understatement of the year.” Ruby put in caustically.

“Look I get it. You think…” Dean started.

“I don’t think. I know.” Ruby replied, “it’s not gonna work.”

She got up, “so long, boys.”

“So you’re just gonna leave?” Sam asked.

“Hey. I was gonna kill myself to help you win.” Ruby replied hotly, “I’m not gonna stand here and watch you lose.”

She walked up to Sam, “and I’m disappointed. Because I tried. I really did. But clearly, I bet on the wrong horse.”
She stayed silent for a moment, “do you mind letting me out?”

Sam walked her to the front door, broke the line in the devil’s trap and made a passage in the salt. As soon as she was beyond them he repaired them.

They heard her address the demons outside, “I’m leaving. Who wants to stop me?”

From the lack of combat noises they figured no one decided to argue.

The brother’s turned back to the others inside. Dean motioned for them to stay quiet and pulled out the bug scanner they’d retrieved from evidence, carefully checking the areas that Ruby had been allowed access to. Henriksen raised an eyebrow as he placed what the cobbled together piece of equipment was.

“Clear.” Dean said.

“You honestly expected her to bug in here?” Henriksen demanded incredulously.

“She put a bug on our car the first time she met us.” Sam told him, “we don’t take any chances anymore.”

Sam turned to Dean, “Dean, I need to check…”

“Not here.” Dean interrupted.

“Yes here. She turned it full ball on me, enough that I got a headache. You, and the others, wouldn’t have noticed anything and you know it.”

“Fine.” Dean grumbled then glared at the others, “none of you breathe a word of what you see now. Not to anyone. Not a Hunter. Not another law enforcement officer. Not a supernatural creature. No one.”

They nodded and Dean turned to Sam, “how will it affect you if she did affect everyone?”

“It’ll probably be real rough.”

“Great.” Dean sighed, then turned to the others, “Nancy, is there a bucket we can use? Sheriff, may we borrow your office?”

“There should be one in the cleaning cupboard.” Nancy replied, heading off to the specified cupboard.

The sheriff just nodded.

“What’s he going to do? What’s going to happen?” Henriksen asked worriedly.

“Ruby can… influence… people’s minds.” Dean explained carefully, “Sam is going to see if she graced you with that as well and if she did peel it off before it can sink in.”

“You can do that?” Amici asked in surprise.

“I can’t. Sam can. And it’s incredibly dangerous for that knowledge to get out.” Dean growled.

“Which probably tells you how serious I take that you may have been exposed.” Sam pointed out, “there’s a good chance I’m not going to be able to help more than I already have in the coming battle once I do this. If I could do this without you knowing I would.”
Nancy handed the bucket hesitantly to Dean.

“If you knew that could be a danger why’d you let her in?” Henriksen asked.

“Ever had an informant that you don’t really trust but if you don’t play along you won’t find out anything?” Dean asked.

“Ah, I see.”

“Okay, let’s do this.” Sam said to Dean, “the rest of you stay close.”

Dean followed Sam into the office. Sam settled himself comfortably as possible while Dean positioned the bucket in front of him.

“Okay, take care of them first if they’re affected. Both of us have defences so we can wait a bit if necessary.” Dean told him.

Sam nodded and took himself into meditation.

The most heavily affected was Nancy, Ruby had really leaned on the whole self-sacrificing thing and he felt disgusted even as he peeled it off her. It was much harder than even working on Dean. Fortunately the others were much more lightly affected and he got through them with relative ease. Then he turned his attention to Dean. Dean would probably want him to leave it for now but he refused to.

Dean’s defences made peeling it off a lot easier than the last time then he peeled the heavy crud off himself. Ruby really had ratcheted it up, there was an enormous amount in trying to get him to trust her unconditionally, another large amount in trying to create a rift between him and Dean.

He brought himself out of the meditation. He instantly covered his eyes, squeezed his eyes shut, and heaved. He felt Dean’s hands supporting and guiding him.

He heard the door open.

“Dean?”

Henriksen sounding worried.

“What is it?” Dean asked.

“He okay?”

“I will be.” Sam told him softly.

“You heard him. Just give him a few moments.” Dean said just as softly, his tone far more gentle than the plain words.

“Was it worth it?” Henriksen asked.

“Yes.” Sam told him.

He heard the door close. It was a long time before he could take his hand away from his eyes and squint at his brother. Even longer before Dean actually came into focus.

“How are you feeling?” Dean asked gently.
“Can I shoot her yet?” Sam replied, sitting back gingerly.

“I wish.” Dean replied with a soft laugh.

“Go get them ready. If I can see straight by the time we invite them in I’ll fight by your side. Otherwise I’ll salt myself into the PA room.” Sam told him.

“Okay, you rest and I’ll be back.”

Dean went out to the others and started going over carefully with each of them exactly what they’d be doing when the battle was joined.

Once everything was set Dean poked his head back in, “how are you doing?”

Sam pushed himself to his feet and had to steady himself on the desk, “good as I’m going to get right now.”

“You are so not up for a fight.” Dean told him, “salting you into the PA room it is.”

“Dean…”

“Don’t argue.” Dean crossed to him and offered a supporting shoulder, “come on.”

He led him out into the main room.

“Oh, is he okay?” Nancy asked worriedly.

“He’s a little wonky and not up for a fight. He’ll be in the PA room waiting, we’ll salt the entrances. Now get up to the roof with those bags, it’ll be show time soon.” Dean explained.

Nancy and Amici nodded and headed off. Dean got Sam settled in the PA room with a defensive salt line, leaving him with a shotgun to defend himself just in case.

Dean looked at Henriksen and the sheriff, “ready?”

They both nodded.

Henriksen handed Dean a small device before heading to the entrance he was to open, “here, just in case I don’t get a chance to afterwards.”

Dean looked at it, “a bug sweeper?”

“A proper one. I’m sure yours works fine; just with it being a serious threat you need a proper one.”

“Thanks.” Dean pocketed it and headed for his entrance.

Dean opened the doors and waited a few minutes for the others to be in position.

“All set?” He yelled.

The other two called back their readiness.

“Let’s do this!” Dean called then all three broke the lines on the devil’s traps and disrupted the salt lines.

It was all quiet for a moment then the demons raced for the openings.
They moved backwards into the building, putting up enough resistance to keep them whole and draw the demons in.

Dean heard the doors start closing and knew that meant the demons were all in, now they just had to keep them occupied until all the doors were secured.

One of the demons pinned them against the wall and Dean knew that the stalling phase was done, he just had to hope the last of the doors had been secured.

“Sam, now!”

The PA system clicked on and the pre-recorded exorcism that Sam had set up earlier played.

The demons went nuts, they couldn’t escape and they couldn’t disrupt it. A mass exit to hell followed the completion of the chant.

The three fighters picked themselves up and Sam came out of the PA room. Now was just left the dealing with the confused surviving former meat suits.

Later as they were packing up Henriksen came up to them.

“I better call in.” He commented, “hell of a story I won’t be telling.”

“So, what are you gonna tell them?” Sam asked.

“The least ridiculous lie I can come up with in the next five minutes.” Henriksen replied.

“Good luck with that. Not to pressure you or anything but what’re you planning to do about us?” Dean asked.

“I’m gonna kill you.” Henriksen responded, “Sam and Dean Winchester were in the chopper when it caught on fire. Nothing’s left. Can’t even identify them with dental records. Rest in peace, guys.”

They gave him appreciative smiles and shook his hand in thanks.

“Now get out of here.” He told them.

“Yeah.” Sam agreed, he went to pick up his bag and there was a sudden pressure and headache. Faster than he’d ever experienced it before images flashed before his eyes; a young girl talking to Nancy asking after them. Her saying her name was Lilith and her eyes going white. Henriksen reacting, her raising her hand, and everything went white.

“Sam?” Dean exclaimed in alarm as his brother stumbled and grabbed him.

“What’s wrong?” Henriksen asked in alarm, hoping that it wasn’t what the taller brother had done for them earlier catching up to him.

Sam gasped and shook his head before looking up at Henriksen, “we need to evacuate the building. Now.”

“Shit.” Dean swore, “better think of something fast, Henriksen, and the story better keep people away too.”

Henriksen looked over at the sheriff who was close by. The sheriff nodded and picked up his phone, calling dispatch and telling them they’d received a suspicious package that looked to be going off in 5 minutes and to direct everyone away.
Henriksen turned to the rest of the people in the room announcing an immediate evacuation.

There wasn’t many to get out, the dazed survivors having been sent home long ago, and less than a minute later the lot of them piled into the impala, which just fit them all, and sped away to a safe location.

“Okay, you’d better get going now.” Henriksen told them once they were a fair way away, “we’ll head to the fire station just down the road and check in from there.”

Sam nodded as he felt the sense of danger peter out, “stay safe, Henriksen. And all of you.”

Dean pulled the impala over and let them out, “same from me.”

“Try not to get yourself branded a bank robber on national TV again.” Henriksen replied with a laugh.

“As long as a shapeshifter doesn’t try robbing one again.” Dean returned with a grin.

They were glad to make it back to the motel room they’d booked, Sam in particular was exhausted and looking forward to sleep.

They hadn’t even managed to relax when Ruby stormed in and demanded they turn on the news.

Sam did so, he had a feeling it was going to be about what he saw, though he wasn’t going to reveal to Ruby that they’d got them out. The survivors anyway.

“The community is still reeling from the tragedy that happened just a few hours ago.” The reporter on the TV announced, “authorities believe a gas main ruptured, causing the massive explosion that ripped apart the police station and claimed the lives of everyone inside. Among the deceased, at least six police officers and staff. Two fugitives in custody were also killed. We’ll continue to follow the story here at the scene, but for now, back to you, Jim.”

Ruby turned off the TV and glared at them.

“Must’ve happened right after we left.” Sam said.

“Considering the size of the blast smart money’s on Lilith.” Ruby replied, tossing each of them a hex bag.

“What’s in these?” Dean asked.

“Something that’ll protect you.” Ruby responded, “throw Lilith off your trail. For the time being, at least.”

Sam glanced at Dean before saying, “thanks.”

“Don’t thank me.” Ruby returned, “Lilith killed everyone. She slaughtered your precious little virgin plus a half a dozen other people. So after your big speech about humanity and war turns out your plan was the one with the body count. Do you know how to fight a battle? You strike fast and you don’t leave any survivors so no one can go running to tell the boss. So next time, we go with my plan.”

She stalked out.

Dean pulled out the bug sweeper once Sam nodded that she’d faded from his perception and Sam took the two hex bags out to the impala once he’d cleared them.
“Why do I have the feeling those are not hiding bags, or not entirely?” Dean commented.

“Because our angel friend already put hiding sigils on us and she well knows it? Or rather knows that she can’t track us with her powers.” Sam returned, “there’s a reason she had to bug the impala after all.”

“True. But if we ditch them she’ll know we know.” Dean replied.

“There is that.” Sam agreed, “though I’m personally wanting to just shoot her and get it over with already.”

“Is that you talking or the exhaustion?”

“Definitely the exhaustion, especially since I need to squeegee before I can sleep.”

“Your defences…”

“Are not impervious. Can’t risk it. I’ll just be a minute.”

Without waiting for Dean to agree or protest he took himself into meditation. Dean swore and grabbed the closest bin to stick in front of him just in case.

Sam was happy to see that for once Ruby had left Dean alone, focusing her power on trying to make him feel like he’d failed in not trusting her and failed by trusting Dean. He peeled it off disgustedly and brought himself out of it.

He reeled and Dean grabbed him but nothing worse than that.

“She left you alone this time.” Sam told him.

“Oh, good.” Dean replied, “now get some sleep.”

A message binged on Dean’s phone even as Sam was lying down. Dean checked it and smiled.

“Henriksen. He says that it was decided not to let the news know there were survivors because it’s thought the ‘bomb’ was an attack on the police. He just got a chance to let us know and didn’t want us worrying.”

“Oh, good.” Sam replied then closed his eyes and was out like a light.
Chapter 22: Haunted House

Bobby was the one to give them the Morton house case, they were in the area and the place was only haunted on February 29th. They’d got there early to dig up the information regarding the house. Most paranormal enthusiasts stopped at the multiple records of people who fled the house before midnight, what they always seemed to ignore, or miss, were the missing person reports.

They took a drive past to check on it.

“All clear on the ghost front for now.” Sam commented.

“Yeah. But did you see the bushes moving?” Dean replied.

“Yup. Some idiot is going to do the ‘stay the night’ thing again. We’re probably going to have to chase them out.”

“Okay, let’s go get set up.”

Later they returned and broke in carefully. Carefully and quietly they made their way to where they could hear the idiots ‘investigating’ the house.

Dean led as they burst in on them, “Freeze! Police officers!”

“Take it easy. Let’s see some identification.” Sam backed up his brother.

“Come on. Let’s see some ID.” Dean repeated.

“Why are we…?” One of the young men exclaimed, handing over his ID, “are we under arrest?”

“We are unarmed.” Another one called.

“Oh, God. Oh, God.” The first one said.

“You want to explain that weirdo outfit, Mr, uh…” Dean checked the ID, “Corbett?”

“Uh…” Corbett replied.
“Whoa. I know you.” The other said.

“Yeah, sure you do.” Dean replied, “give me some identification, now.”

“Hold on a second. I know the both of you guys. Yeah.”

“What?” Corbett asked.

“Yeah.” The guy said.

Sam actually looked at the guys properly, “holy shit.”

“What?” Dean asked looking at him.

“Uh, west Texas, the tulpa we had to take out.” Sam replied trying to summarise the case quickly in a way his brother would recall it, “those two goofballs that almost got us killed. Uh, Hellhounds or something?”

Dean looked at them properly, “fuck me.”

“Yeah, we’re not Hellhounds anymore.” The one they now knew was Ed said, “didn’t test that well.”

“What’s going on?” Corbett asked.

“They’re not cops. No.” Ed replied.

“Ed, thought you had a partner too, didn’t you? A different guy?” Dean asked.

“Yeah.” Ed replied.

“Is he here?” Dean continued.

“Running around, chasing ghosts.” Ed replied.

“Okay, well listen.” Dean told them, “you and Rambo need to get your girlfriends and get out of here.”

Ed laughed, “alright. Listen here, chisel chest, okay? We were here first. We’ve already set up base camp. We beat you.”

The brothers glanced at each other incredulously, they could barely believe that the guy actually thought they were after the ‘glory’ rather than trying to keep them alive.

“They were here first.” Dean repeated sarcastically.

Ed made some confident noises, then Dean grabbed his collar and shoved him against the wall.

“Ed?” Dean said, dangerously conversational.

“Yeah?” Ed replied fearfully.

“Where’s your partner?”

Ed gingerly pointed the direction, Dean let him go and waved for him to lead them.

“What’re you doing at the Morton House, Ed? On leap year? What were you thinking?” Dean asked
as they followed him.

“We’re here to spend the night, okay? It’s for our TV show.” Ed explained.


“Yeah, nobody’s spent the night before.” Corbett said.

“Uh, actually, yeah, they have.” Dean corrected.

“Uh, we’ve never heard of them.” Ed said.

“Yeah, you know why? The ones that have, haven’t lived to talk about it.” Dean told him.

“Oh, come on, I don’t believe you.” Ed replied, laughing.

“Look, missing-persons reports going back almost half a century.” Sam pulled the printouts out angrily, “John Graham stayed on a dare: Gone. Julie Wilkerson: Gone. There are tons more. All of them came to stay the night, always on a leap year. The only body they ever found was the last owner, Freeman Daggett.”

Ed looked through the pages, “these look legit.”

“They are legit.” Sam told him, “look we ain’t got much time here buddy. Starting at midnight, your friends are going to die.”

Before any of them could say anything more the other half of the two they’d met previously came running in with two others on his heels near screaming, “oh, my God!”

“Corbett! We saw it!” Harry exclaimed to the young guy, completely missing the two brothers’ presence.

“What?” Corbett asked.

“A full apparition!” Harry exclaimed.

Dean rolled his eyes at Sam who agreed silently.

“Get out.” Corbett replied.

“It was a Class 4, a spectral illumination.” Harry continued.

“It was absolutely amazing.” The woman in the group stated.

Then the three newcomers spotted them.

“Hey, aren’t those the arseholes from Texas?” Harry asked.

“Yes.” Ed replied.

“Alright, let’s have the reunion across the street guys, c’mon, c’mon.” Dean declared.

“What are you doing here?” Harry asked.

“We’ll get you ice cream.” Dean promised, anything to get these idiots out before the 29th rolled around, “what do you say? Let’s go.”
“Guys, I think you should listen…” Ed started.

“No, no, no. Look at this. The honest-to-God proof, all right?” The woman stated, pointing at one of the computers showing some staticky footage from one of the headsets they were wearing.

Sam sighed, they probably wouldn’t get these idiot paranormal enthusiasts out of here in time.

“Are you kidding me?” Ed asked, obviously forgetting about the urgency.

“No, not kidding you.” Harry replied.

“We got ghosts.”

“What reading did we get?”

“Uh, it was a 10.9.”

“10.9?”

“Yeah, it was 10.9, it was almost 11. And I was like, ‘what’s going on?’ and I was…”

“Hold on, watch this part.”

Neither brother paid any attention to who was talking nor about what just paid attention to the actual footage.

“Oh!”

“He got blasted.”

“It was crazy.”

“Oh, my God.”

“Think we were off on this? That was just a death echo.” Sam asked Dean softly.

“Yeah, but what’s it doing here? Did anybody get shot here?” Dean asked in reply.

“No, not that I could find.” Sam replied.

“What’s a death echo?” The other new guy interrupted.

“Echoes are trapped in a loop, okay?” Dean explained, “they keep replaying how they died over and over again usually in the place where they were ganked. It’s about as dangerous as a scary movie.”

“So maybe the echo’s not dangerous, but something else is.” Sam suggested.

“You’re right. You’re right. We need to get out. Come on.” Dean declared, “let’s go. Let’s go. Let’s go.”

“Let’s go, guys.” Sam backed up his brother, “guys, time is running out.”
“But what about our equipment? What are we gonna…?” The woman complained.

“We got the material. We got all kinds of stuff.” Harry also protested.

They turned out the rest of the various complaints and cajoling in favour of pushing them towards the exit.

“Wait! Wait! Wait!” Ed yelled, “where’s Corbett?”

Both Sam and Dean swore silently.

“Get out. We’ll find him.” Dean replied.

“No man left behind!” Ed declared.

Corbett’s scream interrupted anything that might have been said in reply.

The rest of them all raced off in response.

The brothers tried to get their attention and direct them back into exiting.

Sam sighed and, even as he felt the barriers go up on the doors and windows, told his brother, “I feel like some pie.”

“Great.” Dean grumbled before giving the door an experimental shove. It didn’t move.

They went back to the ‘command centre’ that the idiots had set up and waited for them to stop running around like headless chooks. Much as they needed to save as many as they could the idiots weren’t listening.

Ed was the first to come back to that area, “oh, God. What’s happened? Oh, God. He’s gone. He just disappeared.”

“Okay, let’s go through all the angles, all the cameras.” Harry decided as he and the woman returned and started going through the computers.

“Every door, every window, every exit out of this house, they’re all sealed.” Sam told them more calmly than he felt.

“Why are they sealed?” The lady asked.

“It’s a supernatural lockdown, okay?” Dean told her, “whatever took Corbett doesn’t want us to leave. And it’s no death echo, this is a bad mother. And it wants us scared.”

An EMF started going off, Dean pulled out his to check.

“Or it just wants us.” The woman said.

“Uh, guys, the camera’s fritzing again.” The other guy said nervously.

“Whoa. Guys, the EMF’s starting to spike.” Ed called, “this is a big one.”

“Ed.” The woman called.

“Everybody stay close, there’s something coming.” Sam told them calmly.

“Guys.” The woman whispered.
“Uh, whoa.” The other guy commented.

“Okay, let’s…let’s just stay…”

A ghost appeared. Another death echo.

“Guys, is this the same echo you guys saw earlier?” Dean asked.

“No, it’s a different guy.” Harry replied.

“Multiple echoes? What’s going on?” Dean asked.

“Beats me.” Sam replied.

Dean turned back to the echo and tried to get the echo to acknowledge that he was dead.

“What’s he doing?” Harry asked.

“It’s rare but sometimes you can shock an echo out of its loop if you can talk to the part that’s still human. But usually you have to have some connection to the deceased.” Sam explained.

The echo continued until it got hit by a train.

“There’s no records of this.” Sam commented as they led the way searching.

“No one got shot here, obviously no one got run over by a fricking train.” Dean continued.

“Did the echoes take Corbett?” The woman asked.

“Okay, what are you two’s names? We can’t keep calling you guy and girl.” Dean demanded.

“Maggie and Spruce. Are you going to answer the question?”

“Yes…no. We don’t know what’s doing what here that’s what we’re trying to figure out.” Dean replied annoyed.

“Okay, look, death echoes are ghosts, okay?” Sam tried explaining, “now, ghosts usually haunt places where they lived or died.”

“Except these mooks didn’t live or die here.” Dean continued the explanation.

“Right.” Sam agreed.

“So what are they doing here?” Maggie asked.

“Hey, give the lady a cigar.” Dean quipped, “seriously does looking at this nightmare through that camera make you feel better or something? I mean…”

“Um…I, uh…” Maggie stuttered, she lowered it experimentally then brought it back up, “oh, yeah. Uh, yeah, I think so.”

“Oh.” Dean replied, not able to comprehend the mindset.

They came across an office area and started poking around.

They turned up that the previous owner had worked at the hospital as a janitor. Was a survivalist, worried about nuclear war. And had the toe tags from three bodies, two of which matched the echoes
they’d already seen.

Then they realised that Maggie wasn’t with them.

Dean managed to find the wandering girl fairly easily.

“Closer to the herd, okay?” He told her.

“Maggie?” Harry called, “Maggie?”

“She’s fine.” Dean told him.

“Harry, I got an 8.6 and climbing fast. Something huge is coming. Look.” Ed called, again preoccupied with their equipment, “something big is coming. It’s past 11 you guys.”

“What is happening?” Spruce asked.

“Nobody move.” Sam instructed, hoping it would protect them at least a bit. They didn’t have enough time to make a salt ring.

“Hold on, hold on. Stay quiet.” Dean added his support to Sam.

Then the thing was gone. And so was Sam.

“Sam?” Dean asked, alarm starting to tinge his tone.

The others checked on the rest of their group and missed that Sam was the only one missing.

Dean ignored them and moved over to where Sam had stood, “Sam?”

“Where’d he go?” Spruce asked, realising that the other brother was gone.

“Oh, no.” Maggie gasped.

Dean picked up the torch that his brother had been holding.

“Oh.” Spruce commented.

“Oh!” Sam yelled, hoping that his little brother was able to answer him. He got no answer.

They started hunting for him and Corbett again.

Sometime later Dean couldn’t believe it when he heard these idiots fighting. They were trapped in a house by a powerful ghost that killed everyone who stayed beyond midnight. Sam and Corbett were missing. And they were fighting over some stupid crap.

“Hey, hey, hey!” He interrupted and shoved them apart, “the fuck are you doing? Cut it out! We’re down by two people.”

He rolled his eyes and continued looking. He was very tempted to not bother trying to protect these idiots.

Sam woke up with a start and swore. That arsehole ghost had hit him hard but his head wasn’t aching so it wasn’t physical. He was tied down and across from him was Corbett also tied up and it looked like he’d actually been physically knocked out. He ignored the three corpses sharing the table with deliberate focus.
“Corbett.” Sam called, the young man stirred, “Corbett. Hey. Wake up, man.”

Corbett started looking around.

“Corbett, hey.” Sam tried to draw his attention to him and not their table companions, “Corbett, hey.”

“Sam?” Corbett asked.

“You gotta keep listening to my voice, okay?” Sam said, “I’m right here. Stay awake.”

“Don’t listen to him.” The ghost’s voice floated out of the dark, “it stops hurting, so don’t worry.”

The ghost picked up a knife.

“Corbett, stay with me.” Sam urged, he was sensing something about the ghost though he wasn’t sure he could do anything with it, “stay with me, you got it? I’m right here. Hey. Stay with me.”

Sam more sensed than saw that the ghost was about to jam the knife into Corbett and knew he had to try even if it didn’t work.

He latched his mind onto what he was sensing about the ghost, almost like a tether, and snapped it in two.

The knife dropped to the ground. He couldn’t tell whether the ghost was gone permanently or temporarily or even if he’d done more than make him drop the knife.

Sam didn’t get to contemplate the problem as darkness crowded into his vision then all went dark. His last baffled thought was that it didn’t hurt.

“Sam!” Corbett called fearfully as the Hunter passed out.

Dean went to hunt through the office area again for any clues. A while later the idiots joined him.

“Dean, what are you doing?” Harry asked as he came in.

“Daggett was a Cold War nut.” Dean replied, half hoping that if they actually learned the reality of hunting they wouldn’t get themselves killed next thing they stupidly chased down, “okay, he was an amateur taxidermist. He liked to slow dance with cadavers and all he ate was C rations. So what the hell are we looking for?”

“A horrible life.” Maggie answered.

“A lonely life. A Cold War life. He was scared.” Dean corrected, and the penny dropped, “he was scared. He was scared.”

He headed out of the door.

“Scared of what?” Ed asked.

There were other questions babbled in his wake but he ignored them.

Maggie finally managed to catch up with Dean, “where are you going?”

“Guys like Daggett back then, the ones scared of the Russkies they built bomb shelters. I’m guessing he’s got one.” Dean replied, opening the door to the stairs heading down, “I’ll bet you it’s in the basement.”
He headed down and the others followed.

“Why does this feel too easy?” Dean mumbled to himself as they started poking around at the bottom of the stairs.

“How could it be too easy?”

“Because ghosts this powerful never are.”

He searched around the basement and eventually heard music coming from behind the wall. Hunting around trying to find some sort of door he jumped as he heard Corbett’s voice.

“Sam wake up!”

“Corbett!” Dean called, having to glare the rest into silence, “we’re trying to find you! Is Sam okay? Where’s Daggett?”

“Sam’s out cold! I don’t know where the ghost went!” Corbett sounded panicked.

“Stay calm! We’ll find you!”

There had to be a door on the wall even though they couldn’t see it. There was a cabinet large enough to hide a door, Dean shoved it out of the way to check, and revealed a door.

“Wow, you’re strong.” Spruce commented and Dean flipped him the bird.

The door was a little rusted and it took a bit to get it open. Corbett and Sam were seated at a table, bound to their chairs, along with three corpses. Corbett was visibly panicked while Sam was obviously unconscious. A quick glance around didn’t reveal the ghost anywhere close.

“Sam!” Dean dashed to his brother while the others went to free Corbett.

“What happened?” Dean asked Corbett.

“The…the…ghost. It was going to stab me. Then it dropped the knife and vanished. Then Sam passed out.”

“Shit.” Dean mumbled.

Dean didn’t manage to wake Sam and quickly cut the ropes binding him. Then he dragged him into the next room, pulling out the salt and fuel he carried once he’d gently put his brother down in the recovery position.

The idiots were still standing around in the other room and looked at him baffled.

“What are you doing?” Maggie asked.

“Well we can’t do anything about Daggett right here, but we can get rid of the death echoes if we salt and burn these guys.” Even as he explained he splashed the salt and fuel around.

He shooed them all out before setting fire to the three corpses. Then he picked his solid as a house brother up in a fireman’s hold and carried him back to the ‘command centre’ the idiots had set up.

The idiots ran around checking their equipment, trying to find more EMF, anything for their stupid ‘show’. Dean just tried to wake his brother again, surrounding him with a loop of salt when he had no more success than last time.
“Would fresh air help?” Maggie asked.

Dean glanced at her, “good luck getting a window open.”

“Can’t hurt to try.” She commented and went to the window to try, which opened creakily.

Dean did a double take, “that’s new. Try the door.”

Maggie bounced over to the door while the others looked around in confusion. She opened the door easily.

“Okay, let’s not look a gift horse in the mouth.” Dean told them, hauling his brother over his shoulders in the fireman’s hold again, “out. All of you.”

Some of the idiots started to argue.

“So help me, if you make me keep my brother in this house a moment longer than I need to I will kick your arse.” Dean interrupted them.

Apparently he looked angry enough that the idiots scrambled out, which let him grab his and Sam’s bags then leave himself.

He put Sam carefully on his side, recovery position, in the back seat of the impala then called Bobby.

“Hello?”

“Bobby.”

“What’s happened?”

“The ghost locked us inside, took Sam. Found him, he was out cold. Still is.” Dean told him as clinically as he could, “torched the bodies we found where the ghost had taken Sam and one of the idiots who decided tonight was a good time to ‘investigate’ the house. The ghost wasn’t one of those bodies. Was too easy though. When we got out the windows and doors had unlocked. Chased the idiots out and got Sam out.”

“Maybe when you torched the bodies you torched his tether too.”

“The lack of opposition to finding that room began before we torched it. And I can’t wake Sammy.”

“Okay, calm down. Maybe Sam did something before he got knocked out.”

“Only if he could do it without equipment or being able to move. He was tied to a chair.”

Anything Bobby was going to say in response was lost as Sam stirred. Dean was out of the car and crouched in the open door near his brother’s head almost instantly.

“ Sammy.” He ran his fingers reassuringly through his brother’s hair.

“Dean.” He mumbled, he knew he was barely conscious. Knew he couldn’t stay awake long, already there was darkness crowding at the corners of his vision, but he needed to know, “Corbett?”

“He’s alive. What happened?”

“Daggett…was gonna stab him.” Sam mumbled, there was more he needed to say but not in front of the idiots they’d spent the last few hours with, “where are they?”
Dean glanced over at the idiots still running around like nuts near their vehicles, at least none of them were paying attention to them or going near the house.

“Still headless chooks. At least they’re headless chooks away from us and not in the house.”

“Oh…good.” Sam mumbled, “sensed…something. Couldn’t let him…”

Sam passed out again, Dean swore.

“Dean!” Bobby, on the phone. Dean put it back to his ear.

“Sorry.”

“What did Sam say? And how is he?”

“He’s passed out again. If I’m understanding him correctly Daggett, the big ghost, was about to stab Corbett, the one taken from the idiot group, Sam sensed something, couldn’t let Daggett stab him, and did something, presumably with his powers.”

“Okay. Didn’t sound like he was in pain. Let him sleep it off. Go salt and burn Daggett just to be sure.”

“Okay…” Dean answered taking a breath, his mind calming and crystallising now that he had a course of action, “okay.”

He hung up, closed the back door, after making sure Sam wasn’t in the way and was still in recovery position, then hopped back in the driver’s seat and dug out Sam’s research to locate where Daggett was buried. Locating it he was about to take off but glanced over at the idiots. He sighed and hopped back out of the car then stalked over to them.

“Stay out of that house.” He told them, handing over his number just in case, “you get in trouble again I won’t be here to save you.”

“How’s Sam?” Maggie asked.

“He woke up briefly. He’ll be okay.” Dean told her and looked around at them all, “I don’t think you get how lucky we all got. Stay away from strange crap.”

Dean went back to the impala and headed off to the cemetery after checking Sam was still stable. He hated trying to do a cemetery salt and burn on his own but he couldn’t just leave it. It was an uneventful salt and burn, thankfully, without any ghostly visitations and soon he could head back to the motel room and get Sam comfortable.

It took way too long as far as Dean was concerned for Sam to wake up again.

When he did it was without any preliminary sounds, just sat up. Dean was by his side in an instant.

“Sammy?”

“Dean? How long was I out?”

“A few hours. What happened?”

“Daggett was going to stab Corbett. I’d started sensing something, a tether maybe I’m not sure, with his life on the line I had to try. Did it work?”
“Your guess is as good as mine. Getting to that room where you were was a lot easier than it should have been and once we got you out the lockdown on the windows and doors had vanished.”

“That sounds like the response to a salt and burn not a salt blast. Did I snap his tether?”

“Don’t know. But I don’t want you doing that again except in an emergency. You were out for hours.”

“Sounds like a good idea. At least it didn’t hurt. But being unable to defend myself wouldn’t be exactly good.”

“No it wouldn’t. Plus you near gave me a heart attack.”

“Sorry.”

“It’s okay. By the way those idiots asked us to come view their stupid reality TV thing.”

“What are we going to do about that? It’ll create a panic if it’s believed at best. They’re idiots but that’s not some fuzzy YouTube video.”

“I’m figuring that’s something for you to figure out, geek boy. I’m going to call Bobby back.”

Sam gave a chuckle, “I think I can figure something out.”

Later they met with the idiots and wiped their footage with an electromagnet then disappeared out of town.
Chapter 23: Phone Lines

Sam glanced out the diner window, Dean was on the phone as he headed in. He hung up before pushing the door open and heading over to Sam.

“Your coffee will be here soon.” Sam told him, ignoring the little eye roll. It was going to happen anyway so why not use it, he didn’t think it was possible for him not to be aware when his brother was nearby, “who was on the phone?”

“Bobby.” Dean told him, “some banker guy blew his head off in Ohio and he thinks there’s a spirit involved.”

“How so?”

“The banker was complaining about some electrical problems at his pad for like a week. Phones going haywire. Computers flipping on and off.”

“Okay. Breakfast first though.”

“When do I ever forget breakfast? That title goes to you Sammy.” Dean chuckled, “you remembered to eat while digging through that or just had coffee?”

“Um.” Sam frowned trying to remember.

“If you have to think you haven’t.” Dean pointed out with a grin.

“Probably.” Sam agreed chuckling.

Breakfast and one road trip later they were in Milan, Ohio.

They posed as detectives and interviewed the wife of the late banker, Ben Waters. After she mentioned that the phone had been ripped from the wall Sam checked it, there was a faint feel to it that he could sense, kind of like a buzz, but not one he associated with ghosts, in the received calls log he came across an odd caller ID at around the time he died; SHA33.

Dean got out of her that there had been some unusual events; her husband having an apparent conversation with static. It did give them a name though.
Back in the motel room Dean dug up some news reports, old news reports.

“Linda’s a babe. Or was.” He commented. Normally he left researching to Sam, but that didn’t mean he didn’t know how to. Besides, Sam was meditating. Why he wasn’t sure.

“Find her?” Sam asked, coming out of his meditation. Which meant it was the light meditation where he was still aware of what was going on around him, on alert.

“Yeah, Linda Bateman. She and Ben Waters were high school sweethearts.”

“So what happened?”

“Drunk driver hit them head on. Ben walked away.”

“So, what then? Dead flame calls to chat?”

Dean looked at him, “if you honestly thought that you wouldn’t be asking you’d be telling me. Besides, she was cremated. So you want to explain what you picked up?”

“I sensed something with the phone, what I have no idea. It didn’t feel anything like what I’ve experienced so far. I’m pretty sure it’s not a ghost.”

“Okay. Then let’s look at it as a creature imitating dead loved ones. What did you make of that weird caller ID, you know, before you decided to plumb the mysteries of the galaxy?”

“Turns out it’s a phone number.” Sam replied after rolling his eyes at his brother. He could tell Dean wasn’t truly upset about the unscheduled meditation session.

“No phone number I’ve ever seen.” Dean returned.

“Yeah, because it’s about a century old, from back when phones had cranks.”

“So why use that number to reach out and touch someone?”

“Got me there too, but either way, we should run a trace on it.”

“Well how are we gonna trace a number over 100 years old?”

Which is how they came to be impersonating employees from the phone company’s HQ. They were shown into the basement where they had to convince the employee there to search for the number. Despite his belief that nothing would show up the search showed the number had actually been calling ten households, though they couldn’t find where it was coming from.

They left with the list.

“Split up?” Dean asked, “canvas the recipients?”

“Sounds like an idea.” Sam replied glancing back at the building. Dean frowned.

“What?”

“I sensed…something down there. Not sure though.” Sam sighed and shook his head, “this isn’t going to be as easy as me pointing at the culprit.”

“Well we’ve worked cases where your extra senses have been effectively blind before and we managed before you got them.”
“I know.” Sam agreed, “just disconcerting.”

Sam collected a rental and headed off to his portion of the households being contacted while Dean took the impala to his. They were going to pretend to be from the phone company checking into problems in the area.

At one house after initially striking out with the father Sam found out the daughter was having conversations with her 3 years dead mother.

Checking in with Dean he found that his brother had had the same results.

Dean hung up on his brother and was surprised when his phone rang again a short while later. No ID came up but he figured it was Sam calling back for some reason.

“Yeah, what?” He answered.

There was only static over the line and he frowned in concern. He’d only just been talking to him.

“Sam?”

There was more static for a bit then, “Dean.”

It wasn’t his brother’s voice. Dean went cold as he recognised his dad’s voice.

“Dean, is that you?” The voice continued.

“Dad?”

There was a little more static then the call dropped out.

Shaking a little he sent a message to Sam, ‘Motel. Now.’ Then headed there himself.

“What happened?” Sam asked as he came in.

Dean just silently handed his phone to Sam. Sam looked puzzled at first then his eyebrows shot up as he felt the same buzzing he’d sensed with the dead banker’s phone.

“Who did it sound like?” He asked almost dreading the answer.

“Dad.”

“What did he say?”

“My name.”

“That’s it?”

“Yeah, the call dropped out.”

“Dean.” Sam carefully picked his words, “I don’t think this is ghosts. I know what ghosts in general feel like, I know what dad specifically feels like since he was at the Devil’s Gate cemetery and my senses were online by then.”

“Unless it’s whatever is allowing them to call is distorting what you’re picking up.”

“Dean…”
“We need a way to prove it one way or another.”

“How?”

“If it’s a creature it can obviously read minds. So getting information that only dad would know won’t prove anything.”

“Maybe…” Sam mused thoughtfully.

“What?” Dean prompted after Sam remained silent.

“Well…I don’t know if it’ll work.” Sam warned, “you’ve got some mental defences now thanks to the meditations, maybe we can set up a false memory type thing for it to access. Protect your memories from access more than they already are.”

“If it bypasses that it won’t prove that it’s dad though.”

“True. But if it doesn’t it’ll prove unequivocally that it isn’t.”

“Point. Okay, how do we do this?”

“Meditate.”

“Okay.” Dean replied then checked the defences were laid properly before joining Sam.

It was slightly different than when he normally joined Sam in meditation, he got a hazy impression of what his brother was constructing on the foundation of the defences he had developed. It may have used his discipline as a foundation but the majority of its strength came from Sam.

Sam wilted a bit when he brought them out and Dean grabbed him.

“I’m okay.” Sam told him.

“Okay. If you’re sure. What mirage did you set up?”

“You know that deal the demons keep thinking you made? The one that girl prevented?”

“A ghost wouldn’t make that mistake, dad definitely wouldn’t make that mistake. Good idea.” Dean replied, “so what should I say if he does call back?”

“Assume it isn’t him and play along. If it is dad he’ll like the precaution, if it isn’t we’ll avoid tipping it off.”

“Okay.” Dean agreed, still shakier than he’d like, “I’m gonna go get some air. You try figuring out what it could be other than ghosts. And try to see if there’s a way it might actually be ghosts.”

“Okay.” Sam turned to the laptop, “let’s not talk over the phone though, if it is a creature there’s no guarantee it can’t imitate us.”

“Good idea.” Dean headed out of the room.

Dean returned three hours later.

“Found anything?” He asked.

“Not yet. Bunch of possibilities though, if you assume they adapted to modern technology anyway.
You?” Sam replied.

Dean pulled out a pamphlet and handed it to him, “Milan, Ohio. Birthplace of Thomas Edison.”

Sam looked at it, if there was something he was supposed to know about the guy he was missing it, “so?”

“Keep reading.” Dean told him.

Sam opened it up and scanned through it, then he spotted it, “you’re kidding.”

They headed to the museum. Then they endured the tour and the annoying tour guide to get close enough to the device.

They looked at the ‘spirit phone’ that the long dead inventor had apparently thought would communicate with the dead. Sam pulled out his EMF meter and scanned it.

“Anything?” Dean asked.

“Nothing.” Sam answered then glanced around to see if anyone, or cameras, were watching then briefly rested his hand on it, “no buzz.”

“Buzz?”

“That’s what it feels like. Kinda like a fly buzzing.”

“Okay, we can rule out this thing causing interference with the perception of a ghost.”

“Okay. Back to the motel?”

“Yeah.”

The drive back was quiet.

“How about you crash, you look exhausted.” Dean suggested, after their little meditation construction session his brother definitely looked wiped.

“Okay. Not like there’s more I can research anyway.” Sam agreed.

“Hey, if I sleep are we going to need to reconstruct the mirage in the morning?” Dean asked as it occurred to him.

“Probably.”

“Okay, I’ll go get some coffee.”

“You need to sleep, Dean.”

“I’ll sleep when we’ve settled what the hell this is. Nothing I haven’t done before.”

“Dean…”

“Bed. Before I put you there myself.”

“Huh?”

“You look wiped, dude. Think I can’t see doing stuff like you did today exhausts you?”
Sam held up his hands in surrender, “okay, okay. I’m going.”

Once he lay down he was out like a light and Dean grabbed himself a coffee.

He’d settled with a coffee to do some reading when his phone rang. This time the ID showed up, SHA33. He answered before it could wake Sam and ducked into the bathroom.

“How?” He asked, feeling cold. He wasn’t sure what to hope for.

“Dean.” His dad’s voice said on the other end.

“Is it really you?” Dean asked.

“It’s me.” Came the reply.

“How can I be sure?”

“You can’t.” Well that wasn’t out of character, “Dean, how could you do it?”

“Do what?” Dean asked feeling his stomach sink. Whoever, whatever, was on the other end was accessing the mirage. No ghost would have needed to, his dad definitely wouldn’t have needed to. If his dad had been hanging around he would have been tethered to something with them since all his possessions were with them.

“Sell your soul.” The thing on the other end replied, confirming that was the case. Time to play along.

“I was looking after Sam, like you said to.”

“I never wanted this, never. You’re my boy. I love you. I can’t watch you go to hell, Dean.”

He wanted to scream that he wasn’t his father, just aping the voice and desecrating the memory, but he didn’t. He needed to not tip this thing off, “I’m sorry. I don’t know how to stop it.”

“Because if you break the deal, Sam dies, right?”

“What?” Sam hadn’t warned him about that but it was something demons would definitely have put in place if they made a deal with someone with his track record. Sam had obviously given the situation more thought than he’d let on, now if only he could be sure it wasn’t because he was worried about what Dean might do to protect him.

“Well I know a way out. For both of you.”

“How?”

“The demon who holds your contract. He’s here. Now.”

“Where?”

‘Dad’ told him about an exorcism to kill a demon, to wait for his call for the location, then hung up.

Dean wanted to cry. He wanted to throw the phone against the wall and stamp it into a thousand pieces. He did neither. He quietly left the bathroom and went back to his coffee and reading.

He popped out for more coffee, for both of them, just before Sam normally woke the next morning. He timed it perfectly. Sam joined him at the table and happily helped himself to the coffee set aside
for him.

“How did the night go?”

“It called.”

“What happened?” Sam asked, immediately picking up on the change in pronoun.

“It talked about the deal as if it was real. Said that it knew a way out of it, that the demon that holds the deal is here. Told me about an exorcism that supposedly kills demons, I made a note of it just in case that bit is legit. Doubt it though.” Dean told him mechanically, handing him the scrawled note.

“Damn.” Sam sighed, taking the note and putting it aside to check into later, “I know you hoped that it was him.”

“I wasn’t sure which option I wanted more.” Dean admitted, “if it had been him it would mean he was stuck on earth for some reason and that doesn’t end well. I’d have hated having to find his tether.”

“Me too.”

Sam’s phone rang then and he answered it. Dean listened in on the one sided conversation.


“What’s up?” Dean asked.

“The girl, Lanie, her mum’s ‘ghost’ spooked her out pretty bad last night.”

“Did she say how?”

“Not really. She did say she was scared. I’m going to head over there.”

“Okay, let’s get suited up. Meet you in the impala.”

“We’re sticking together today?”

“Yeah. That ain’t a ghost, therefore it can imitate voices perfectly. We can’t trust the phones.”

“Okay.”

A short while later they were at the house.

“Have you told your father about any of this?” Sam asked after the preliminaries were over.

“And bother him at work? No.” Lanie replied, “he wouldn’t believe me. He’d just chuck me into therapy.”

“So, what did your mother say?” Sam pressed, Dean just watched. The girl had already connected to his brother and was more likely to open up to him.

“That she wanted to see me. So at first I thought I was supposed to go to the cemetery.”

“Did you?”

“Nothing happened. But then she started asking me to do other things.”
“What sort of things?”

“Bad things.”

Dean’s phone rang, one glance at the caller ID had him signalling to Sam that he was going outside and hoping Sam realised the reason.

Sam felt the buzz and nodded his understanding.

Outside Dean answered the phone, “dad?”

“Dean.” The thing using his dad’s voice replied.

“Where’s the demon?”

It rattled off an address and hung up.

Inside Sam continued, “Lanie, please. Tell me what happened. It’s very important.”

“Mum told me to go to dad’s medicine cabinet.”

“And?”

“Take his sleeping pills. Take all his sleeping pills.”

“She wanted you to kill yourself?”

Lanie nodded, “why would my mum want me to do that?”

“I don’t know.” Sam tried to match that to the creatures he’d researched. Unfortunately most of them, if they had adapted to modern technology, were capable of that. It only ruled out the ones that needed to actually eat the bodies, which they already knew wasn’t the case.

“I mean, just so I could come to her?”

That reminded him of something, “what’d you say?”

“She wanted me to come to her.”

“No, no, no. How did she say it exactly?” He had a bad feeling his list had just narrowed to one.

“‘Come to me.’ Like, a million times.”

This was bad. Not just her life but her soul was in peril and he needed to make sure she knew it wasn’t who she thought, “Lanie. That’s not your mother.”

Dean came back in just as Sam was leading her further into the house. The serious look on his brother’s face told him that he had figured out what they were dealing with and it wasn’t good.

“Listen to me. Don’t answer the phone. Don’t use the computer. Don’t do anything unless I say to, alright?” Sam told her, he glanced at her and noticed she’d stopped, “Lanie.”

Lanie looked away from the room she’d just passed, “where’s Simon?”

“Who’s Simon?” Sam asked, coming to look at the room. A kid’s play room, complete with pretend phone.
“My brother.” She said even as Sam quickly stepped forward to place his hand on the play phone. The buzz confirmed his fears.

“Stay here.” He told both Lanie and Dean before racing out of the house.

He looked around frantically trying to figure out how a kid would be told to take his life. He heard horns and knew.

He spotted the kid right as the truck driver slammed on his breaks, he grabbed him and yanked him out of the way just in time.

A little more calmly than he’d left he led the kid back to the house and the kid’s anxious sister. Once Lanie had wrapped Simon in a hug Sam moved over to Dean.

“What is it?” Dean asked.

“A crocotta.”

“That a sandwich?”

“Some kinda scavenger. Mimics loved ones. Whispers ‘come to me’. Then lures you into the dark and swallows your soul.”

“Awesome.” Dean grumbled, “so how do we find it?”

“The lore says they live in filth.”

“The flies at the phone company.”

“That would explain the buzz down there.” Sam mused, “but Dean, the buzz died away after the supervisor left, I think anyway. It’s hard to tell.”

“We need to make sure. You up to playing bait?”

“Just don’t let it eat me.”

“Never.” Dean held up the phone, “it just fed me an address across town. It doesn’t think you’ll have backup.”

“Okay. Now or never.”

They got there and Dean hid while Sam headed in.

They weren’t sure which one but without his senses, unclear as they were, he’d have thought the tech so he focused on him. He waited until the tech reached his car then came up behind him with a knife.

“I know what you are.” Sam told him.

“Wait, mister.” The tech stammered.

“And I know how to kill you.”

“Please. Okay, wait, wait. If we’re overcharging you for the call waiting or something I can fix that, I’m your friend. Please. Just…just don’t kill me. Don’t kill me, please.”
There was a flash of danger just before something heavy hit his head and everything went black.

It was all Dean could do not to race in straight away. They still didn’t know definitely which one was the creature. Though after the supervisor knocked out the tech also it was pretty clear. But there was still the possibility that the supervisor was just a crazy human who had no idea he’d knocked out a creature that wanted to eat his soul.

Dean carefully followed at the supervisor dragged them both inside and tied them to chairs. He positioned himself so he had a clear line of sight while remaining hidden.

Sam woke up to the tech whimpering and noted he was tied to a chair opposite him. The supervisor was wandering around the tech with a blade.

“Wait.” Sam said, “wait. Don’t do it.”

“You’re awake.” The supervisor said.

The tech kept babbling at the supervisor, saying he wasn’t a killer, that there was a good man inside him.

“What do you think, Sammy?” The supervisor asked, looking up at Sam, “am I a good man?”

“Just let him go.” Sam replied, pulling out Dean’s nickname for him out of thin air and acting like he knew he was a Hunter told him that it was the crocotta. He hoped Dean had been able to follow.

“I would. I really would.” The supervisor replied, “if only I’d had more than a salad for lunch. You see…I’m starving.”

He lifted up the knife to plunge it in and a gunshot rang out. The monster froze before slumping to the ground, the knife tumbling from his hand.

“Nice shot.” Sam complemented Dean as he stepped out of hiding with the Colt.

“We sure he wasn’t just a human crazy?” Dean asked as he untied first Sam then the tech.

“After he pulled your nickname for me out of thin air, hell yes.” To make doubly sure he pulled the lips back to reveal the long teeth that showed what he really was.

“Okay.” Dean replied. He turned to the tech, “I’d suggest you don’t speak of this. He was going to kill and eat you, we were hunting him down to stop him.”

The tech nodded frantically after glancing at the unnerving teeth though he looked worriedly at Sam.

“We weren’t sure which one it was. We weren’t going to act until we knew for sure.” Sam told him.

They dragged the crocotta’s body out and dumped it in the boot of the impala. Then they headed back to the motel to grab the rest of their stuff and head out of town, stopping to burn the monster’s body on the way. When they stopped for the night they carefully deconstructed the mirage memory. Sam checked in with Lanie while they were en route to let her know that it should have been taken care of but to call him immediately if she heard from her ‘mother’.
Chapter 24: Weird Science

Sam dug through news reports online while Dean took care of the former meat suit of a demon they’d come across. Exorcism as soon as they could didn’t save him, the poor guy had been dead quite a while.

An odd report, a follow up to one they’d come across the day before, got him pulling out his phone and impersonating a police officer to discover that the fingerprints from the case were decidedly odd.

Dean returned on the tail end of the conversation.

“Burn the body?” Sam asked.

“Yeah. Poor schmuck. It’s like these demons ride them hard just for kicks.” Dean replied, grabbing a beer. “what was the phone call about?”

“Remember that thing in the paper yesterday?”

“Stripper suffocates dude with thighs?”

Sam rolled his eyes, trust his brother to remember that one first, “the other thing.”

“Right, the guy that walks into the ER and keels over dead, his stomach ripped out?”

“His liver, actually.” Sam corrected, “anyways, I just found out something pretty damn interesting.”

“What?”

“The dead body? Covered in bloody fingerprints. Not the victim’s.”

“Great, my man Dave Caruso’ll be stoked to hear it.” Dean replied, not really following. Dumb crooks are dumb crooks, wasn’t their job to catch them.

“Those fingerprints match a guy who died in 1981.” Sam explained and that got his attention. Dead guy killing people was definitely their job.

“Really?” Dean asked, the possibilities running through his head, “so, what are we talking? Walking
dead? Walking, killing dead?”

“Maybe.” Sam replied, “it is similar to something in dad’s journal, though given that was just one nutty guy who dad took care of it’s not likely to be that.”

“Zombies do like the other ‘other white meat’,” Dean commented.

Packed, road trip, and one motel room later they were in the morgue impersonating detectives.

“Yup, the rest of the body was intact. The liver was the only organ missing.” The coroner told them.

“Where the liver was ripped out, did you happen to notice any teeth marks?” Dean asked.

“Can I see your badges?” The coroner asked, which instantly told them they’d missed something.

“Of course, sure.” Sam replied and they pulled out their fake badges. They passed muster.

“Fine, so you’re cops and morons.” The coroner replied.

“Excuse me?” Dean returned, “no, no, we’re very smart.”

“The liver was not ripped out.” The coroner told them, walking over to the appropriate freezer tray and showed them the corpse, “it was removed. Surgically. By someone who knew their way around a scalpel. Didn’t you read my report?”

“Of course we did.” Dean bluffed, “it was…riveting. It’s a real page tuner. Just delightful.”

“You done?” The coroner asked sarcastically.

“I think so.” Dean replied.

“Please go away.” The coroner said.

“Okay.” Dean returned.

“Sure.” Sam echoed.

The turned and left the morgue.

“Well that punches a hole in our zombie theory, huh, that scalpel thing?” Sam commented once they were out of earshot.

“Zombie with skills? Dr Quinn, medicine zombie.” Dean quipped causing them both to laugh, “what about that story you came across in dad’s journal?”

“If it’s that then we’d better stop looking for hacked-up corpses and start looking for survivors. This isn’t zombie lunch. This is organ theft.”

“Okay. Let’s do that. You need to dig into the journal more?”

“Should be okay until we know more.”

When they looked for survivors of unorthodox organ removal they found them, or rather him. Not that he could help particularly much, he didn’t remember details about who or where. Though the particulars of the wounds did give them some information. They headed back to the motel room with lunch.
“I talked to Mr Giggles’ doctor.” Sam told Dean as he finished up his research while Dean attacked his burger, “turns out, his incisions were sewn up with silk.”

“That’s weird.” Dean noted.

“Yeah, nowadays it is. But silk used to be the suture of choice back in early 19th century. It was really problematic. Patients would get massive infections. The death rate was insane.” Sam told him, showing him the websites he’d located.

“Good times.” Dean commented.

“Right. So doctors had to do whatever they could to keep infections from spreading. One way was maggots.”

“Dude, I’m eating.” Dean complained and Sam hid a small internal chuckle; he was calmly looking at diagrams and pictures of old medical procedures yet the mention of the insect bothered him.

“It actually worked because maggots eat bad tissue and leave good tissue. And get this, when they found our guy, his body cavity was stuffed full of maggots.”

“Dude, I’m eating.” Dean complained a bit more forcefully before putting the burger down, “alright, let me get this straight. So people are getting ganked.”

“Yeah.” Sam confirmed.

“A little Antiques Roadshow surgery, some…uh, some organ theft. This is sounding familiar, the case in dad’s journal?”

“Yeah.” Sam confirmed again, opening up the journal to the right page and showing his brother, “Doc Benton. Real life doctor, lived in New Hampshire, brilliant. And obsessed with alchemy, especially how to live forever. So in 1816, doc abandons his practice…”

“Right, yeah, nobody hears from him for 20 years.” Dean interrupted, remembering what their dad had told him back when he was a kid, “and people start showing up dead.”

“Dead or missing an organ, or a hand, or some other kind of part.”

“Cause whatever he was doing was actually working. He just kept on ticking. Parts would wear out, he’d replace them.” Dean finished off, “but I thought dad hunted him down and took his heart out.”

“Yeah, I guess the doc must’ve plugged in a new one.”

“Alright,” Dean dropped the journal and went back to his burger, “where’s he doing the deed?”

“According to this Benton’s picky about where he sets up his lab. He likes dense forest with access to a river or stream or some kind of fresh water.”

“Why?”

Sam had to hide a smile at that question, if his brother hadn’t liked the references to maggots he definitely wouldn’t like the answer.

“Because that’s where he likes to dump the bile, and intestines, and faecal matter.” Sam finished the phrase with a half laugh, “lost your appetite yet?”

For a sec he thought he’d pushed it too far as Dean actually gagged slightly before glaring at him.
Then he turned his attention back to the burger, “oh, baby, I can’t stay mad at you.”

Sam just chuckled as his brother’s infamous appetite won the battle. Admittedly he’d probably have been checking for a fever if anything else had occurred.

At a standstill for what they could actually do further that day they went to bed and started again the next day. Sam getting a hiking map and picking out the likely spots, Bobby called right as he was showing Dean.

“Bobby?” Dean answered.

“Hey.” Bobby replied from the other end, “I think I finally got a beat on Bela.”

“I’m listening.” Dean replied, ever since she’d worked with demons to set them up to be arrested their small circle of Hunters had been trying to find her. All of them would much rather they knew where she was and from which direction the knife would come.

“Rufus Turner.” Bobby told him.

“Is that like a Cleveland Steamer?” Dean asked.

“He’s a Hunter, or used to be.”

“And now?”

“Hermit, mostly. Does a little selling on the side. Anyway, I put the word out on Bela weeks ago. He just called, said a woman got in touch, wanted to buy some things.”

“And he thinks it’s Bela?”

Sam raised his eyebrow at that and started trying to figure out how to work around everything. They couldn’t just abandon this case, not with people dying, but they also couldn’t let that lead go cold. That bitch was trouble waiting to happen and it would be a lot better if they knew where it was coming from.

“British accent.” Bobby replied, “went by the name Mina Chandler.”

“She’s used that before.” Dean noted, “well it’s kinda a sloppy move isn’t it, getting in contact with one of your old friends?”

“Friend? Haven’t laid eyes on him in 15 years. He’s not the Christmas card type. I doubt she knows I know him. Canaan, Vermont.”

“Thanks, Bobby.”

“One other thing.” Bobby interrupted before he could hang up, “take a bottle of Johnnie Walker Blue.”

“Okay.” Dean replied and hung up.

He looked at Sam thoughtfully for a few moments, “let’s finish up here first before chasing her.”

“We do that we’ll lose her and won’t know where the next dagger is coming from.” Sam pointed out.

“We can’t just bail on this case, Benton is killing people.” Dean protested.
“I know. So the only thing we can do is split up.” Sam stated calmly, “you go see whoever Bobby sent you to. I’ll track down Benton.”

“Sam…” Dean started.

“It’s the only way we can do both, Dean, and we can’t afford to only do one.” Sam interrupted.

Dean huffed out a frustrated sigh before collecting his things. He handed over the Colt before heading for the door, no way was he taking that anywhere close to Bella.

He paused in the doorway, “Sammy, be careful.”

“You too.” Sam replied. He didn’t like splitting up any more than Dean did.

Dean stopped by a bottle shop before heading to Bobby’s acquaintance’s place. Bobby hadn’t been joking when he described the guy as a hermit. He had security up the wazoo and keep out signs everywhere.

He rang the doorbell and the camera whirred towards him.

“What?” Came a cranky voice over the intercom, Rufus presumably.

“Hi, uh, Rufus.” Dean said into the intercom.

“Yeah, even if I am, the question is still the same. What?”

“Um…I’m Dean Winchester, I’m a friend of Bobby Singer’s.”

“So?”

“You called him this morning.”

“So?”

“Uh…you told Bobby about a British chick, made contact with you.”

“Yeah, and so?”

“Do you know where she is?”

“Yeah.”

“Great. Could you tell me where I could find her?”

“No.”

“Of course not.” Dean sighed, that would have been too easy, “look, Rufus, man…”

The door abruptly opened and an African-American stepped out.

“Look, let me point something out to you.” The man said, the voice matched the voice over the intercom so must be Rufus, “you are knocking at my door, so don’t ‘look, man’ me. I’m not your man.”

“I’m sorry, sir.” Dean replied.

“Okay, I’m gonna tell you a little story. Once, Bobby called me. Asked me to call him if I got a whiff
of this Bela Talbot. I got a whiff, I called. The end.”

“If you could just tell me where she is, I mean, that’d be great.” Dean tried again, he was starting to understand why Bobby said to bring the drink.

“Dean Winchester, right?”

“Yeah.”

“Dean, do I look like I’m here to help you?”

“I’m gonna say no.”

“Then get the hell of my property.”

“Alright, hey, fair enough. I got one more question for you, though. See, I got this bottle of Scotch and…” Dean pulled the bottle Bobby had said to pick up out, “is this considered good?”

The change in his expression was enormous. And it got him invited inside. It also got him the information he was after and a lot more. Like her real name and history.

Meanwhile Sam started methodically checking the abandoned cabins that fit what Benton would be looking for. He eventually found a cabin that was obviously lived in and amongst the various reference books he found a hand written book, which he stuffed in his jacket before carefully heading down into the basement.

He found one very dead man missing a heart, probably too recent to have a missing person’s report out yet. They’d have to put in an anonymous report once they were done, save his family from spending a lifetime wondering what had happened.

Off to the side he spotted what looked like another body. Fortunately when he got close enough he could see she was only missing a section of skin from her arm, even if it was covered in maggots, and still breathing. In the back of his mind he was glad his brother wasn’t here to see it, if he’d been bothered by the mention seeing it would be more so.

Trying to check her pulse brought her to panicked alertness. He reassured her that he was there to help with words he would have been hard pressed to remember later.

He grabbed a cloth that looked clean and wrapped it around her arm as gently as he could. She did her best not to cry out. Then they both froze as they heard the door open upstairs. Sam swore silently.

Quickly he unbuckled her, helped her get out of the basement window and joined her, quickly carrying her to the car he’d rented. Benton caught up to them at the car but he wasn’t a match for a Hunter who saw him coming and Sam floored the car away from him. Even running over him didn’t stop him, Sam saw him stand in the rear view mirror as he left.

Dean located the hotel room Bela was staying in and waited for her to show up. He probably didn’t need to confront her directly; he’d managed to get her current phone number and that would let them track her but he wanted to look her in the eyes.

When she arrived he pinned her to the wall. He disarmed her roughly.

“Why?” He asked.
“Why what?”

“Oh I don’t know, why the hell you worked with demons to set us up? Why you killed your parents, Abbie, at the oh so tender age of 14?”

“How did you even…?”

“Doesn’t matter.”

“Are you going to kill me?”

“Tempted, very tempted.

“You’re not the cold blooded type.”

“You mean, like you? It’s true. See I couldn’t imagine killing my parents. Or setting someone up who’s just trying to save your life.”

“They were lovely people. And I killed them. And I got rich. And I can’t be bothered to give a damn. Just like I don’t care what happens to you.”

Dean wondered if she was trying to get herself shot. That made him wonder why, what was so bad that getting shot by someone who had once been willing to be an ally if not a friend was preferable.

“You make me sick.” He told her.

“Likewise.” She replied.

It would be so easy. But much as she’d screwed up their lives she was still human, and human arseholes weren’t their job. Plus it would be too much of a bother to dodge a police investigation, especially one that didn’t have so much weird crap that it got shelved. Plus there was that herb he’d seen above the door in his initial investigation of the room; that looked familiar but he’d have to double check with Sam about it.

“You’re not worth it.” He told her, stepping back and not letting on he’d felt her pick his pocket. Then he walked out, he had a brother to back up.

He called from the road, he’d already messaged Bela’s new number to Sam when he located it and when it popped up in the app knew Sam had plugged it into the tracking program. Somewhere someone desperately wanted a programmer who could pull off something like that and never knew one existed.

“Dean?” Sam answered.

“Yeah.”

(Is Bela…?)

“No, no. She deserves to die a dozen times over, but I couldn’t do it.”

“Dean. That’s not a bad thing.”

“I know. Weird thing was it almost looked like she wanted me to shoot her.”

“That’s odd. There’s a lot of things Bela is, suicidal is one thing I wouldn’t have picked.”
“I sent you a picture, when you have a sec could you check if that’s what I think it is.”

“Will do. I found Benton’s cabin by the way.”

“You okay? Was he there?”

“Yeah.”

“Did you kill him?”

“No.”

“What do you mean, no?”

“There was another victim there, had to get her out. Ran him over, not that that did much, getting away.”

“She okay?”

“Yeah, he just wanted some skin from her, I dropped her off at the hospital. The other one wasn’t so lucky. I also found his lab book.”

“What’s in it?”

“The formula.”

“What, the live forever formula?”

“Yeah. And Dean, there’s no magic involved, just science. Very, very, extremely weird science…”

“So anyone could use it?”

“Yeah. And if it didn’t require so many deaths to keep one person going it would actually be a good thing.”

“But it does so it isn’t.”

“Yeah. Maybe if they actually figure out how to grow organs…but…”

“But until then it can’t be risked falling into someone’s hands who’ll be like Benton.”

“I’ll toss it in the fire.”

“No. We’ll get Bobby to secure it. That way once they can grow organs Hunters can get use out of it.”

“Okay. I’ll stick it in the safe for now.”

“No. Bela has where we’re staying, can’t risk that.”

“Joy. Okay…”

Anything more that Sam might have said was cut off by sounds of a struggle as he fought the chloroform soaked cloth that came out of nowhere.

“Sam!” Dean got no answer, “Sammy!”
He swore, hung up, and floored the accelerator. For someone to sneak up on Sam, especially when he had to be on alert, was no mean feat. Which meant it was probably Benton, the rogue doctor had had two centuries to perfect stealth. At least Sam had thought to send the location of the cabin to the tracking app, which was a habit both of them were trying to get into if they split up for some reason.

Sam woke up strapped to the wooden ‘operating table’ he’d rescued the woman from with his eyes taped open.

“You can relax.” Benton told him, bringing his scarred visage over, “it’s all gonna be okay. Ain’t nothing gonna happen here that you got to worry about, Sammy.”

Sam grit his teeth at hearing him speak Dean’s nickname for him. No one but Dean was allowed to use that.

“And your chances of coming out of this procedure alive very, very high.” Benton continued obliviously.

“How do you know my name?” Sam asked, may as well try to keep him talking to allow Dean time to get there since he probably wasn’t going to get out of these straps very quickly.

“Oh.” Benton replied, “I know. You think I’m some kind of monster, don’t you? Well, I gotta tell you, I have never done one thing that I did not have to do. This whole eternal life thing is very high maintenance. Something goes bad, like my eyes here, you gotta replace them. And sometimes, things get damaged, like when your father cut out my heart. Now that…that was very inconvenient. So I’m sure that you can understand all the joy I felt when I read all about myself here in his journal.”

Sam figured he’d been out longer than he thought if Benton had had the time to go through his dad’s journal and find that. Which meant that Dean was all that much closer. Just had to keep this nutty doctor chatting long enough.

“Kind of makes this whole thing just feel like some kind of family reunion, don’t it?” Benton continued, coming back over and picking up some medical device that resembled nothing so much as a mini ice cream scoop. Sam had a feeling he was about to run out of time, “well, I guess it’s about time that we get this thing started.”

The gunshots as the scoop just started removing his eyeball was about the most welcome thing Sam had ever heard. Of course Benton didn’t fall but he did stop trying to dig the eye out and turned towards where the gunshots had come from, and Dean.

“Shoot all you want.” Benton told the older brother, walking towards him. Dean shot him a few more times before Benton reached him and tossed him into the wall.

When Benton reached for Dean again the knife appeared in the Hunter’s hand out of nowhere and he stabbed the nutty doctor in the chest.

Benton laughed, “a knife? What part of immortality do you not understand? Pity about the heart, though. It was a brand new one.”

“Good.” Dean told him, “should be pumping nice and strong. Sending this stuff throughout your whole body.”

Dean held up a bottle of chloroform, “see, I picked up your little bottle upstairs and dipped the knife in it.”

With a groan Benton collapsed. Dean picked himself off the ground and went to release his brother,
then the two of them strapped Benton to his own archaic operating table.

“Wakey wakey eggs and bakey.” Dean said when the ancient doctor stirred some time later.

“Please.” Benton said.

“Please what?” Dean asked, “you’ve been killing for over 150 years and now you got a request? Shut up.”

“You don’t understand, I can help you. I know what you need.” Benton tried.

Dean ignored him in favour of talking to Sam, “I’m gonna have to cut him into bits. This immortality thing is a bitch.”

“I can read the formula for you.” Benton tried again, “you know, immortality forever young, never die.”

If he thought that would tempt them he was wrong. Dean picked up a rag and dumped some chloroform on it.

“What makes a monster, is the disregard for life.” Dean told him, “even if living forever was on the agenda it wouldn’t happen while other’s had to die and both of us agree with that.”

He pressed the rag over his face and knocked him out again. They then cleared out his fridge and dumped him in it, securing it with chains they’d found in the cabin then buried him in an unmarked grave. It wasn’t the most humane solution, nor was it foolproof, unfortunately they didn’t have another option. Someone could dig it up years from now. But they wouldn’t get the notes also and hopefully one look at the good doctor wouldn’t get whoever did to trust him. Bobby would find a way to secure the book, or destroy it if necessary.

Sam glanced at the tracker as he got in the impala, “Bela’s headed this direction.”

“Then we’d better get ready.” Dean returned, hopping in, “did you check that picture?”

“Yeah, Devil’s Shoestring. Keeps Hellhounds at bay.”

“Thought so.” Dean started up the impala and headed back to their room with one stop on the way.

It was close to midnight when Sam told him that she was in their former room. Dean called the room number.

“Hiya, Bela.” Dean said as she answered, “here’s a fun fact you may not know. I felt your hand in my pocket when you swiped that motel receipt.”

“You don’t understand.” Bela replied.

“I’m pretty sure I understand perfectly.” Dean returned, “you see I noticed something interesting in your hotel room. Something tucked above the door. An herb. Devil’s shoestring? Well, there’s only one use for that. Holding Hellhounds at bay. So I went back and I took another look at your folks’ obit. Turns out, they died 10 years ago today. You didn’t kill them. A demon did your dirty work. You made a deal, didn’t you, Bela? And it’s come due. Is that why you tried to steal the Colt? Try to wiggle out of your deal? Our gun for your soul?”

“Yes.” She replied.

“And when you failed.”
“They changed the deal. They wanted me to kill Sam.”

“Really? Wow. Can’t say I’m surprised, it’s not the first time they’ve tried. I am surprised you thought you’d succeed where actual demons didn’t. That’s kind of a tight deadline too. What time is it? Oh, look at that, almost midnight.”

“Dean, listen, I need help.” For the first time since they’d met he heard her crying.

“Sweetheart, we are weeks past help.” Dean told her. Even if they were inclined to help her out there was no way they’d be getting back to her within two minutes.

“I know I don’t deserve it.” She was still crying, and it sounded like she wasn’t faking.

“You’re right, you don’t. But you know what the bitch of the bunch is?” Dean replied, “if you would’ve just come to us sooner and asked for help we probably could’ve taken the Colt and saved you.”

“I know, and saved yourself. I know about your deal, Dean.”

Dean barely managed to keep from rolling his eyes, “and which demon is spreading that fairy tale?”

“The demon that holds mine. She’s supposed to hold every deal and is pretty pissed that someone hasn’t brought yours to her.”

“She?”

“Her name’s Lilith. She said that if she can’t find who’s run off with it then you can’t either but she’ll find out in three weeks when it comes due and will skin them alive.”

“That name just keeps popping up.”

“It’s the truth.”

“This can’t help you, Bela. Not now. Why are you telling me this?”

“Because just maybe you can kill the bitch.”

“Enjoy hell, Bela.” Dean replied and hung up.

“Well?” Sam asked softly.

“Apparently Lilith holds every contract and we have our answer for what type of filing system hell uses. From what she said to Bela she thinks that some demon ran off with my contract but thinks she’ll find out who that is in three weeks when it’s supposed to come due.” Dean told him.

“Great.” Sam complained, “at least we have an idea when the shit will hit the fan though.”

“Yeah.” At least he didn’t need to reroute, they were already on their way to Bobby’s.
Chapter 25: Preparations for Siege

“Well, can’t say I wasn’t expecting to hear that it’s supposed to be due soon.” Bobby stated once they’d told him, “I’ve been setting up some of my cabins to withstand the type of shit storm you’re going to end up with once they figure out that contract never existed. Here’s way too close to other people to weather something like that.”

“Thanks, Bobby, we’ll try not to bring it down on your head too.” Sam told him gratefully.

“Do I look like a ditchable prom date to you?” Bobby growled, “no way am I letting you face that on your own ya idjit.”

“You’d be more use not joining us under siege.” Dean pointed out, “we’re probably going to have to move from place to place and no guarantee the cabin we’re leaving will be still standing. If we need another place fast you’re our best bet for that and you’ll only be in extra danger without being able to help if you join us.”

“We appreciate that you want to.” Sam added, “we really don’t want you in danger right alongside us, especially since it won’t help.”

Bobby glared at them.

“You know we’re right.” Dean told him.

“Do you at least have a plan?” Bobby demanded.

“Fight and keep moving.” Dean replied.

“For how long?”

“As long as it takes.”

“Real strategic there.”

“Beats the alternative.”

“We might see if we can get that knife off Ruby.” Sam added, “that’ll give us two demon killing
“And she’ll be expecting us to go after Lilith anyway.” Dean said.

“She’s not just going to hand it over.” Bobby pointed out.

“We know.” Dean told him, “still worth a shot though.”

“Plus she thinks we’re a little antagonistic towards each other, especially over her.” Sam added.

“How’d you manage that?” Bobby asked.

“Fake fighting in front of her.” Dean replied.

“Well if you’re bound and determined to do this on your own you’d better get going.” Bobby stated, handing over a map of the cabins he’d already secured, “I’ll let you know as I get more set up. And for heaven’s sake, let me know if you run into more trouble than you can deal with.”

“Thanks, Bobby. We will.” Sam replied sincerely.

They hopped in the impala and picked a random direction. First order of business was finding a sufficiently abandoned barn to set up in to summon Ruby.

Trap laid Dean hid while Sam summoned. This would be the first time he’d voluntarily endured her presence and if he had anything to do with it, it would be the last.

“You know, phones work too.” Ruby stated, “hey, Sam. How’s tricks?”

“How do you get around so fast?” Sam asked.

“I got the Super Bowl jetpack.” Ruby replied, “so…you called?”

“Did you know?”

“Um, gonna need a tiny bit more.”

“That Lilith holds all contracts.”

“Yes, I did.”

“You didn’t think that was important?”

“You weren’t ready.”

“For what?”

“If I told you, you two yahoos would have just charged after her half-cocked. And Lilith would have peeled the meat from your pretty, pretty faces.”

“Well, we’re ready now.” Sam told her, not that they were actually going to challenge the demon queen but in the circumstances that Ruby believed that was precisely what they would have been doing, “I want your knife.”

“You’re right about one thing.” Ruby replied, so openly calculating he wondered how under her spell he was supposed to be, “you’re not ready…but now’s the time to. Lilith’s guard’s down.”

“Is that so?”
“She’s on shore leave. A little R and R.”

“What the hell does that mean?”

“Trust me, you don’t wanna know. You didn’t lose those hex bags I gave you?”

“We got them.” He wasn’t going to tell her they were just stuck in a secure alcove in the impala rather than carried around though.

“Good, then she won’t sense that you’re coming.”

“So you’ll give us the knife?”

“No.”

“But you just said…”

“You wanna charge in with one little pig sticker? It’s a waste of a true blue window. Like hitting Hitler with that exploding briefcase. Forget it.”

Sam thought fast trying to figure out what she wanted to hear, “okay, then how?”

“I know how to save your brother.”

“No, you don’t.” Sam replied, barely containing an eye roll. Dean didn’t need saving, they weren’t preparing to tackle Lilith in her own den they were planning on dealing with a siege when that knowledge came out, “you told Dean you couldn’t do anything. You’ve been lying to me all along. So just give me your damn knife.”

“You’re not the one I’ve been lying to.”

“Oh, so there’s actually something you can do?”

“No. But you can.”

That certainly sounded ominous to Sam, he had a feeling he knew what Ruby was trying to lead him to and there was no way he was going down that path. Especially not after the original blood from Azazel had been cleansed from him, and he certainly wasn’t going there willingly.

“What?” Sam asked incredulously.

“Sam, you’ve got some God-given talent. Well, not God-given, but you get the gist.”

“All that psychic crap? That’s gone ever since Yellow Eyes died.” Sam told her, keeping up that particular fiction that had been established early on.

“Not gone. Dormant. And not just visions either.” She told him, “why do you think Lilith is so scared of you?”

“Right, she’s scared of me.” He didn’t need any acting ability to pull that dose of incredulity off.

“If you wanted, you could wipe her off the map without moving a muscle.”

“I don’t believe you.”

“It’s the truth.”
“And you decided to tell me this just now?”

“Um, demon?” She gestured to herself, “manipulative’s kind of in the job description. Fact is, is that you never would have considered it. Not until you were…”

“Desperate enough?” Sam interrupted.

She shrugged, “you don’t like being different. You hate the way Dean looks at you sometimes. Like you’re some sort of sideshow freak. But suck it up, because we got a lot of ground to cover and we gotta do it fast, but we can do it.”

Sam just looked at her, she was right about one thing. Manipulative bitch was a good description of her. He wondered what influence crud he was going to be peeling off his mind this time.

“Look, call me a bitch, hate me all you want but I have never lied to you, Sam. Not ever.” She continued and he nearly looked at her incredulously, “and I’m telling you, you can save your brother. And I can show you how.”

“So that’s you, huh?” Dean interrupted and Sam was incredibly grateful he’d decided this had gone far enough, “our slutty little Yoda.”

“Dean.” Ruby replied turning towards him, “charming as ever.”

“Oh, I knew you’d show up.” Dean told her, “because I knew Sam wouldn’t listen.”

That, of course, was a pure lie. They’d planned this carefully so it would appear they were outright fighting.

“But you’re not gonna teach him anything.” He continued, “you understand me? Over my dead body.”

“Oh, well, you’re right about that.” Ruby returned.

“What you are gonna do is give me that knife. And then you’ll go crawl back into whatever slop you came from and never bother me or my brother again, are we clear?” Dean stated.

“Your brother is carrying a bomb inside of him and we’d be stupid not to use it.” Ruby replied.

“Dean, look, just hold on…” Sam played the next hand they’d planned out.

“Dean, don’t. Come on man, you blind? Can’t you see this is a trick?” Dean followed through.

“That’s not true.” Ruby tried interrupting.

“She wants you to give in to this whole demonic, psychic whatever, okay?” Dean continued and Sam noted he’d picked up on that too, “I mean hell she probably wants you to become her little antichrist superstar.”

“I want Lilith dead. That’s all.” Ruby replied.

“Why?” Dean asked.

“I’ve told you why.” Ruby responded.

“Oh, right, yeah. Because you were human once. And you like kittens and long walks on the beach.” Dean sarcastically returned.
“You know, I am so sick of proving myself to you.” Ruby caustically replied, “you wanna save yourself? This is how, you dumb, spineless dick.”

Dean smirked before feinting a turn away and then clocking her one. Sam barely contained a grin and it was a good thing she wasn’t looking at him. Her attention was fixed on Dean though and a second later she retaliated.

Sam intervened, grabbing her arm, “Ruby, hey.”

She retaliated by kicking him into one of the supports and turning back to Dean, again Sam wondered again how under her thrall he was supposed to be by this point. Only Dean would have had a chance at getting away with that without the relationship shattering, and even with Dean the next thing he would have done was incapacitate him then try to figure out what was going on so he could save him. They may have both been prone to speaking physically in times of stress and anguish but that was a level of viciousness they’d never reached.

Dean held his own but demons were known for super strength for a reason and she kicked him across the barn away from Sam.

Dean picked himself up and grinned at her.

“What the hell are you grinning at?” Ruby demanded. Sam mused that she really should have known better than to fight with any hunter, much less his brother.

“Missing something?” Dean asked producing the blade they were after.

“I’ll kill you, you son of a bitch.” Ruby stated with what looked like true anger. She charged at Dean and learnt the other part of her mistake as she ran into an invisible wall courtesy of the devil’s trap that had been laid in preparation on the ceiling.

“Like I said, I knew you’d come.” Dean told her then turned and headed towards Sam.

“Wait, you’re just gonna leave me here?” Ruby demanded.

Dean ignored her in favour of addressing Sam, “let’s go, Sam.”

“Oh.” Ruby stated furiously, “oh, so you’re just too stupid to live, is that it? Then fine. You deserve hell. And I wish I could be there, Dean. I wish I could smell the flesh sizzle off your bones. I wish I could be there to hear you scream!”

“And I wish you’d shut your pie hole, but we don’t always get what we want.” Dean returned as he left with Sam on his heels.

They hopped into the impala and headed away from the barn.

Ruby had faded from his senses far in the distance before Sam got Dean to pull over at the next rest stop.

“You okay?” Dean asked quietly.

“Yeah. I’m glad that was only pretend fighting.” Sam replied with a grin, “I’m still surprised she bought it. Don’t really want to contemplate what she wanted me to do. I want to squeegee our minds before we get too far though.”

“Sounds good.” Dean agreed, “by the way, I don’t think of you as a sideshow freak.”
“Never thought you did.”

Dean pulled into the rest area, “in the car or at a table.”

“Table just in case.”

“Ohkay.” Dean picked a table that was shielded from easy viewing and they headed there, he just hoped he wouldn’t be having to carry his brother on the return.

Sam settled himself as comfortably as possible and Dean sat next to him.

Sam took himself into meditation. The murk was heavy around him and it took a bit to clear it all away. It was far less around Dean, probably because his interaction with the demon had been so confrontational right from the point he stepped out of hiding. He peeled it off his brother too then brought himself out of the meditation.

He grunted in pain and covered his eyes yet again, feeling Dean steady him, his hand ghosting over his forehead as his brother checked his temperature that was always elevated after this exercise.

“I’m fine.”

“Yeah, I’ll believe that when your temperature is normal and you can see straight again. How’s your stomach?”

“Not about to declare independence if that’s what you’re asking.” Sam managed to squint at his brother as the pain started to recede.

“So what did she do this time?”

“There was a lot of murk around me, I think she must have touched on pretty much everything she’s targeted previously at least a little. You got off much lighter.”

Dean checked his temperature again.

“Your temperature is nearly back to normal. Think you can walk?”

“Yeah.”

Okay.” Dean pulled Sam to his feet, ready to grab him if he was overestimating his stability. He wasn’t though and managed to walk back to the impala under his own steam even if Dean was hovering to make sure.

Once back in the car Dean directed them obliquely towards the closest cabin.

“Any idea why she wants me to kill Lilith?” Sam asked after a moment.

“Maybe she just wants you to give in to that blood hobble you were inflicted with that ain’t there anymore.”

“Maybe. But she wouldn’t get to lead me down that path unless I was actually seeing results, no matter how under her thrall I was. So why would she want me to learn how to do something like that? Why would the hobble allow that?”

Dean glanced briefly at him, “good question. And not one with an easy or reassuring answer I think.”
Chapter 26: Siege

It had been a month. A month with no hunts, little outside contact, just preparation.

Every Hunter they knew had been warned and had taken their own precautions. Sam had disabled the GPS’s as a precaution, hiding even their phone signal. Henriksen had been given the heads up and they found out the survivors of that demon siege had followed their example and got the anti-possession sign tattooed on, even Nancy.

The supposed due date had come and gone almost uneventfully, the next day Bobby had messaged that demons had become riled up in a major way. Demon signs had all but exploded all across the country in a way that was only matched by the activity right before the Devil’s Gate had been opened.

The demons were hunting. And they weren’t having much success.

Ruby’s phone hadn’t moved from the abandoned barn but that didn’t mean much. She could have abandoned the phone there after the fight, especially if she’d figured out the brothers had been acting.

Yesterday Bobby had sent them another urgent message, there’d been reports of invisible dogs all over the country. Not connected to deals. Hell had broken out the best trackers they had.

There was a howl in the distance.

“Could just be wolves.” Sam commented hopefully.

“Could be.” Dean agreed, “but since when has our luck run that well?”

“True.” Sam replied, checking on the ammunition.

Bobby had made sure all the cabins had a supply of material for restocking their various ammunition but even he wasn’t up to having a forge in every one so they had a portable one that was stored in the impala between uses so that there was less chance of needing to cut and run without it.

Once they’d heard about the hellhounds making their presence known Dean had insisted Sam wield the Colt while he used Ruby’s demon blade. Sam had pointed out that they didn’t know whether he could sense the hellhounds like he could demons but Dean had just pointed out that in that case they
were no better off than if he had the gun but if he had the gun and could sense them it was much better.

A growl at the door confirmed that it wasn’t wolves, especially as a cautious look through the window confirmed there was nothing to see.

Dean caught Sam’s eye and tapped his temple, silently asking if his brother was sensing the demonic dog. Sam nodded before flashing him ‘3’. They felt different to demons and he wasn’t sure whether to be concerned or not that he couldn’t sense any actual demons. He was sure that would change. As they’d seen with the opening of the Devil’s Gate a heavy enough weight of demons could overwhelm defences. They just had to hope they could hold out.

Waiting for more to show up wasn’t going to do them any favours so Sam cracked the window just enough to put the muzzle of the Colt through then aimed where he could sense one of the hellhounds. He shot, there was a yelp and the lightshow of a supernatural creature dying lit up mid-air.

“Nice shot.” Dean said.

A breeze sprang up, they were trying to blow away the salt and goofer dust. Bobby had anticipated that though and since they’d actually had time to prepare, a luxury they didn’t normally have, he’d glued the lines down.

Soon all three were dead and they had to decide whether to leave or not. On the one hand there hadn’t been many and neither the fortifications nor their supplies were running thin. On the other hand they’d been found and more would be on their way.

Sam slotted three more bullets into the holes vacated by the shots into the hellhounds.

“How long do you think?” Sam asked.

“Until?” Dean replied, most of his attention still on the outside of the cabin even though the immediate threats had been taken care of.

“Their reinforcements show up.”

“Don’t know. Let’s see shall we. At least we don’t have to hunt them down for once.”

They might have to leave in a hurry eventually but until then they’d make as big a dent in the demon horde that was coming at them as they could.

Two more progressively larger waves came at them before the defences were threatening to buckle. Every window had been broken and while the demons and hellhounds couldn’t cross the lines the demons were more than capable of throwing things trying to disrupt those lines.

“Time to go.” Dean declared as the last demon fell dead, cleaning the blood off the knife.

“Yeah.” Sam agreed, “starting to run out of bullets too.”

Bobby had made sure to have a protected shed attached to the cabin, and hopefully the other cabins too, where they could store the impala while they were hiding there and accessible from the inside in case they had to bug out fast.

They didn’t have much they needed to grab on the way to the car, nearly everything was stored in the impala just in case. Less than a minute later they were on their way.
Sam called Bobby once they were moving, switching it to speaker.

“Hello?”

“Hi Bobby” Sam said with Dean echoing him.

“Hell it’s good to hear your voices. When the demon signs concentrated I figured they’d found you.”

“They did. Unfortunately for them. Hope hell doesn’t want them back, they’re slightly dead.” Dean told him.

“Good for you. Any plans that’s safe to speak of?”

“Rinse, repeat.”

“Okay. You stay safe. Let me know if you run into more than you can deal with.”

“Will do, Bobby.” Sam said.

“We’re doing pretty good so far.” Dean added, “Sam here can bullseye hellhounds.”

Bobby snorted, “just be careful.”

He hung up.

They headed towards another cabin via a roundabout route and not the next closest one.

A stop for more supplies to replenish not even halfway there was the last time they interacted with anyone.

They replenished the special ammunition once they were at the cabin. Then they waited again.

It took 2 days for the hellhounds to find them again, followed by waves of combined demons and hellhounds again.

Again they left once the defences were too compromised to withstand another wave. Checked in with Bobby, replenished their supplies, and went to another cabin. As Dean had so aptly described it; rinse, repeat.

It was after the third cabin that Ruby found them at a resupply stop. Sam had noted that her phone was on the move again during the waiting portion but given she’d been two states over before they stopped they hadn’t expected her to show up.

Predictably she went after Dean when he was away from prying eyes.

“I’d like my knife back, please.” She stated after pinning him, “or your neck snaps like a chicken bone.”

The Colt cocking at the back of her head brought her up short, Sam’s sense of his brother had spiked with danger and had brought him there in a stealthy run. He missed the slight spike of danger as he aimed the Colt at her.

“Take it easy.” Sam told her before dragging her away from Dean, he wanted to shoot her majorly; her presence was giving him a headache and figured that it was because she wasn’t hiding how powerful she was anymore.
“How the hell did you get out?” Dean asked after checking that she hadn’t lifted the knife.

“What you don’t know about me could fill a book.” She replied, “give me the knife before you hurt yourself.”

“You’ll get it when this is over.” Sam told her, not that they would just hand it over peacefully.

“It’s already over.” She replied, “I gave you a way to save Dean, you shot me down. Now it’s too late.”

“Again with the saving me from the deal thing? You haven’t figured out that there’s no contract yet? The horde trying to hunt us down didn’t clue you in?” Dean demanded.

“Yeah, it clued me in.” She replied, and her eyes shifted white, “but it’s only Sam they’re hunting.”

“Sam! That’s not Ruby!” Dean warned.

Lilith slammed Dean away to pin him to the wall while pushing Sam’s aim off and pinning him in the opposite direction.

“How long have you been in her?” Dean asked.

“Not long.” Lilith replied, “but I like it. It’s all grown-up and pretty.”

“And where’s Ruby?” Sam asked.

“She was a very bad girl. So I sent her far, far away.” Lilith replied.

Then she raised her hand at Sam, the bright white light starting up that Sam had seen in his vision at the police station.

He just reacted, the odd thing he used when operating in the spiritual realm with ghosts and powers melding with his telekinesis almost instinctively, wrapping it around him protectively.

It was a toss-up who was more surprised he was still breathing afterwards, Dean, Sam, or Lilith.

Since she was so disconcerted by his survival Sam aimed the Colt at her again, this time he didn’t miss the flash of danger. Rather than try to analyse it and lose the advantage he switched tacks and began an exorcism.

Lilith smoked out before he got three words in.

“What the hell?” Dean asked, barely managing to keep his feet landing after the force pinning him to the wall disappeared.

“You got me.” Sam replied, “I just reacted. I’m not even sure what I did.”

“Okay.” Dean replied after a moment, “we can discuss it more when we’re safe again. There a reason you didn’t shoot her?”

“I got a spike of danger when I aimed at her. For some reason killing her is dangerous.”

“Shit. Okay, let’s go before she sets her doggies on our tail again.” Dean complained.

At least they’d already got the supplies in the car because they sure as anything weren’t stopping for them here and now. Moments later they were in the impala and leaving the small town in their dust.
Chapter 27: Storm Calm

Chapter Notes

Story Name: Pivot Point
Pen Name: ElenaRoan
Disclaimer: Don’t own any of them, written purely for enjoyment.
Warnings:
Summary: What if Anna decided to derail the apocalypse by intervening to help rather than trying to make the brothers never having existed.
Timeline: Season 3
Note: I’m Australian and I can’t bring myself to use USA spelling, sorry.

Chapter 27: Storm Calm

It had been a week since they’d holed up in a new cabin and no hellhound or demon had shown up. In fact they’d got a call from Bobby asking if they were dead since all demon signs had abruptly vanished and there were no new reports of invisible dogs. The information that they’d somehow survived an attack by Lilith herself had barely phased him, it had at least given a reason for why the demons were apparently running scared.

The call had also given Sam the opportunity to ask Bobby to see if he could locate an exorcism that would dump a demon in the deepest bowels of hell. If he couldn’t kill Lilith then dropping her somewhere where it would take another Devil’s Gate opening to get her back out was the next best option.

“So think we can go back to normal?” Sam asked.

“Beats me. This might just be the calm before them pulling some big weapon out of hell and aiming it at us.” Dean returned.

“Let’s hope not.”

That night the wind picked up to the point it sounded like it was on the way to a major storm.

“Please tell me that’s natural.” Dean complained.

“No idea.” Sam replied as the windows and doors started rattling.

A few moments of that then suddenly all the lights simply blew one after another. Then the door opened as though there was no warding or traps on it.

A man calmly walked through, ignoring the devil’s trap on the floor and all the iron like it was nothing, his beige trench coat flapping in the wind that was still increasing.

Dean was closer to the door and leapt forward to jam the demon killing blade into whoever and whatever this thing was. It had no effect.

The ‘man’ regarded him curiously then before Dean could do anything else raised his hand and gently tapped him on the head. Dean collapsed immediately.
Sam raised the Colt ready to fire as soon as Dean was out of the way but a negligent wave from the ‘man’ spun the weapon out of his hand and pinned him to the wall. The field of force holding him felt both stronger and very different from any he’d ever experienced from demons and there was no way he was freeing himself, even if he could figure out the trick he’d used to protect himself from Lilith.

The ‘man’ calmly pulled the blade out of his chest and dropped it. Then he looked at Sam and walked purposefully towards him.

“Who are you?” Sam asked, hoping that if he got him to talk it might buy him enough time to free himself and rescue Dean if he was still alive.

The ‘man’ didn’t reply, just reached forward to grab him by the shoulder and raised his other hand for what looked like a strike.

Except he froze and a puzzled look crossed his face.

“I do not understand.” The first words the ‘man’ had said since he walked in.

“Don’t understand what?” Sam asked.

“You…I was told…I do not understand.” He dropped both the striking hand and the one gripping Sam’s shoulder and looked around perplexed, though he didn’t drop the pinning force.

“Told what?” Sam wasn’t sure whether to be amused or worried.

“I was told you were the general of the demon army, that you were the boy with the demon blood. I was told you had to die to protect the planet.”

Sam snorted, “where have you been the past month? We’ve been killing demons and hellhounds by the dozen as they besieged us. As for demon blood, what yellow eyes did to me as a baby wasn’t my choice and it got cleared from my body a while ago.”

“That should not have been possible. It takes a lot to clear that sort of influence and once it has been actively used not even an archangel could clear it.”

“Be that as it may no demon has even noticed, well…maybe Lilith but that’s because she tried to kill me and I still don’t understand how I survived.”

The ‘man’ looked at him with concern on his face, which puzzled Sam. The guy had just tried to kill him, was apparently under orders to kill him, why was he worried now.

“The first demon tried to kill you?”

Sam went cold, he’d read and reread the signs contained in the book Bobby had given him over and over, even managing to place what some were referring to, and the significance of her being the first was instantly clear.

“She’s the first? Oh, shit.”

“Yes. I do not understand why heaven and hell would have the same goal.”

“Excuse me? Heaven? Who or what are you?”

“I am Castiel, an Angel of the Lord.”
“An angel? You’re shitting me.”

Castiel just tilted his head curiously then lit up in a weird manner that caused the shadows of massive wings to show up on the wall.

“Shit.” Sam mumbled, “what did I do to cause heaven to want me dead?”

Surely he would remember if he’d done something so horrible as to set angels on his arse.

“I do not know.” Castiel replied, “I was lied to. What I was told about you is not true. I do not understand.”

“I don’t understand either. Who lied to you?”

“The angel hierarchy. The order was supposedly from God, but God would not make that sort of mistake. I do not understand.”

“I didn’t know angels could lie.”

“They can lie. Can make mistakes. Can…”

Castiel abruptly released the pinning force holding Sam and went over to their writing supplies.

Sam grabbed the Colt and dashed to his brother’s side. To his relief Dean was still breathing but deeply unconscious.

“The orders were to keep Dean alive.” Castiel told him, turning back to him with a sheet of paper. Handing it to him, a complex sigil drawn on it, he continued, “draw this in blood then place your hand in it.”

“Why? What will it do?”

“It will banish any angels in its vicinity. If I just leave they will know I have learned they lied. I will be…reprogrammed.”

“That sounds painful.”

“I do not know. I may be anyway. You cannot trust me if you see me again. Now draw the sigil and run.”

Sam nodded, grabbed a knife to cut his hand then drew the symbol quickly.

“Thank you.” He told the angel softly before placing his hand in the centre. A flash of light and the angel was gone.

Quickly Sam grabbed what supplies were out and shoved them haphazardly into the impala then picked up his unconscious brother, shoving the demon killing blade into his waistband as he did so, and placed him in the passenger seat. He started up the car, hit the fast open button on the garage door and floored the impala away from the cabin.

He’d been driving for 2 hours, randomly picking directions when there was a choice, when Dean abruptly woke up.

“Dean! Hey, how are you feeling?” Sam asked, chancing a hasty glance at him.

“I have a feeling I should be feeling much worse. How did we survive? What was that?”
“That, apparently, was an angel called Castiel. And apparently his orders were to kill me, though he was also apparently told specifically to keep you alive.”

“Don’t think I’m ungrateful, but how are you alive? Another development in your powers?”

“No. He was told I was the general of the demon army and that I had demon blood. Apparently when he touched me he could tell that there was no demon blood in me, oh and get this, he said it takes a hell of a lot of power to clear something like that. And if I’d started using it actively it wouldn’t have been possible, that not even an archangel could have cleared it.”

“So we might have an ally?”

“No, he made a point of saying that he could be reprogrammed and not to trust him when we next see him. By the way that piece of paper,” Sam pointed to the one with the sigil drawn on it, “learn that. It banishes angels if you draw it in blood and put your hand in it. He got me to use it on him so his superiors wouldn’t learn he knew they’d lied.”

Dean grabbed it and studied it, committing it to memory.

“Why can’t we ever get involved in something normal?” Dean complained.

“Beats me. He was doubly confused as to why both heaven and hell were trying to achieve the same goal; my death. He also said that Lilith is the first demon.”

“Okay, she’s a demon celebrity. How is that significant?”

“Remember that Book of Revelation that Bobby gave me? I’ve been studying it, trying to figure out what we need to avoid.”

“And?”

“Well there’s two special seals. They’re referred to as the first and the last but I get the impression they’re more like end cappers, in that they can happen in either order just on either end of the other 64 seals.”

“And?”

“Well one of them is the death of the first demon.”

“That would be why you got the flash of danger when you aimed the Colt at her?”

“That would be my guess.”

“Shit. What’s the other one?”

“When a righteous man sheds blood in hell.”

“How on earth would they achieve…oh hell.”

“Yeah. That’s probably what they want your arse in hell for. Someone who does the right thing regardless of the cost to themselves and isn’t afraid to get their hands dirty. It has to be a Hunter, and a Hunter that actually cares about the people they save as opposed to vengeance. Be a hard combination to find, I think they mightn’t have many other options other than you.”

“And why they’re so focused on killing you, to get me to exchange myself for you. Shit.”
“Yeah. Any chance at convincing you to leave me dead if they succeed in getting to me? Just show
them the big middle finger and keep living.”

Dean was quiet for a long moment, “I can promise you I won’t make a deal. The rest, I can’t promise
you.”

Sam sighed, “I was afraid of that.”

The last thing he wanted was his brother’s life also riding on his. Especially with both heaven and
hell apparently trying to take him out. Not that he couldn’t understand the viewpoint, not when his
own focus had narrowed to getting Dean back when they tangled with the Trickster that last time.

“So where are we?”

“Don’t know. Been driving randomly for two hours now just to put distance between us and where
we were.”

“Okay, put in at the next vacant rest area and we’ll see if we can figure out what to do.”

“Okay.”

There was a moment of silence in the car then Dean’s phone rang. Glancing at it he raised an
eyebrow then answered it and put it on speaker.

“Bobby?”

“Anything you two idjits want to tell me about a trench coat wearing guy?”

“Shit. Did he hurt you?” Sam asked worriedly.

“No. But he waltzed right through all my wards and traps then handed me a book, said you’d need it
and gave me a sigil to draw in blood and told me to do so.”

“What’s the book about?” Dean asked.

“Enochian warding symbols against, of all things, angels.” Bobby replied.

“Well, sounds like he’s still managing to cover his tracks.” Sam commented.

“Who and what the hell is he?” Bobby demanded.

“He said he was called Castiel and that he’s an angel.” Sam replied.

“Why do I have a feeling this won’t be black and white.” Bobby asked.

“Because it isn’t. Castiel said he was lied to, that what he was told about me was false. He also said
he didn’t understand why heaven and hell would have the same goal.” Sam stated.

“What goal is that?” Bobby demanded.

“My death.” Sam answered.

“Well, hell.” Bobby complained.

“That’s my thoughts too.” Dean stated, “and Bobby, Castiel took me down with two fingers. We’re
just lucky he didn’t finish his orders.”
“You’re going to have to keep moving. He mentioned that the sigils on your ribs hide you from him too, he gifted me with a set also just so you know.” Bobby replied, “hurt like a bitch. As long as you keep moving they shouldn’t be able to get a bead on you from what he said. I’m going to work on figuring out these sigils, swing by when you can so I can teach you.”

“Will do, Bobby.” Sam answered.

Bobby hung up and they pulled into the next vacant rest stop and planned where they’d go from there. They couldn’t go directly to Bobby’s, the angels would probably be looking for that, so they chose indirect routs and never stayed longer than they needed anywhere. They skipped even the cheapest motels, avoiding interacting with anyone as much as they could.

They drove for over 24 hours straight, taking it in turns, but eventually they had to stop for some proper sleep.

Sam was scouting for a suitable place to rest when the ambush came, so tired that he had a headache, which dulled his sense of his surroundings to the point that he only got a flash of the sense of demon presence right before one of them clobbered him.

After kicking him a few times in the stomach the woman pulled the demon blade out of his waist band and Sam realised belatedly he’d forgotten to give it back to Dean so now he had both demon killing weapons and his brother had nothing to use to come to his rescue.

“Thanks for keeping this warm for me, Sam.” She said.

“Ruby.” Sam growled, there was no one else who would have said that. She was in a new meat suit.

“It’s nice to be back.” Ruby told him, “where I was, even for hell, it was nasty. I guess I really pissed Lilith off. Imagine my relief when she gave me one last chance. A ticket topside. And all I had to do was find you and kill you.”

“Fine. Go ahead. Do it.” Sam returned bluffing, he wasn’t sure whether he hoped Dean was close by or not. He’d stupidly forgotten to give the blade back to him so unless he had holy water actually on him there wasn’t much his brother could do to help. Not that that would stop Dean.

Ruby looked at him for a moment then pulled the knife back…and stabbed the other demon who had been holding Sam.

“Grab your keys. We gotta go.” Ruby told him, “now.”

She stalked off and Sam swore silently. At least his sense of where his brother was hadn’t shorted out on him and as soon as Ruby was out of sight he yanked open the door where his brother had been preparing to bust in.

Sam motioned his brother to silence, handed him the Colt, and gave him the hunter sign indicating follow. Dean nodded and handed him the impala keys, knowing that Ruby would be expecting Sam in the impala, accompanied by the hunter sign for ‘be careful’. The silent signs were necessarily on point and not much elaboration could be conveyed by them but Dean had picked up that it was Ruby.

Sam nodded then hurried after Ruby while Dean headed down to the street to check the other cars and watch where Ruby took him.

Both of them needed sleep, life apparently wasn’t going to let them. Sam grabbed one of the emergency energy drinks they had started keeping in the car while under siege and ‘accidentally’
dropped one on the footpath before hopping in the driver’s seat. He also set his phone to record while she wasn’t looking in his direction.

Dean collected it as soon as he wouldn’t be seen and let himself into one of the cars and followed at a discrete distance. He had to drop back even further when Ruby directed Sam to take the impala onto some country roads. He was very glad Sam had figured out the trick to let them track each other while still blocking others from tracking them.


She looked over at Sam, who ignored her.

“You know, a thank you would be nice.” She continued.

“Who asked for your help?” Sam asked, wishing they’d got rid of the demon’s tracker since that was the only way she’d been able to find them.

“You have no idea what I’ve been through. When Lilith gets pissed, she gets creative.” Ruby told him, “you wanna hear about the corners of hell I’ve seen, Sam?”

“No, I don’t.” Sam replied, especially as he wasn’t sure his defences were up to keeping her crud out right now. At least this was a fairly transparent play for sympathy.

“And the things I had to do to convince her I was sorry, that I could be trusted.”

“Well, this’ll definitely get you a fat Christmas bonus.” Sam returned, wondering if there was a point to keeping the charade up now that they knew her goal was to break the Lilith seal.

“Very funny.” Ruby replied, “I’m a fugitive for you, Sam. I took all of this risk to get back to you. So, yeah, I deserve a damn thank you.”

“Who asked you to save me?”

“I’m just trying to help.”

“Exactly what help can you give me?”

“Nothing I know of is powerful enough to pull Dean back out.” Ruby said and it took all of Sam’s control to keep his attention on the road and not look at her incredulously, he had trouble believing she thought Dean had been dragged to hell. He wondered if the demons not involved even knew of the massive sieges they’d weathered.

Reminding himself to keep up the act he pulled over, “then I have no use for you.”

“What?” Either she was an incredibly good actress or she was genuinely shocked.

“Get out.” He said, hoping she would because then he could wait for Dean and continue their journey to Bobby’s.

“Sam.” She actually managed to sound compassionate.

“Whose body are you riding, Ruby?” Sam asked. They’d killed so many demons lately and what bothered him far more was they didn’t know how many of the meat suits would have survived without the use of the lethal weapons they’d had to use.
“What do you care? You’ve never asked me that before.” She sounded puzzled.

“I’m asking now.” Sam replied.

“Some secretary.”

“Let her go.”

“Sam…”

“Or I send you right back to hell.”

“Okay.” She handed the knife back to him and stepped out of the car. Seconds later the black smoke that was Ruby exited and the meat suit collapsed, but not in the boneless way that indicated she was already dead.

A quick check showed she was still breathing and no major injuries. He grabbed a burner phone even as Dean pulled up. He raised an eyebrow but did a quick bug check before speaking.

“Exorcism?”

Sam shook his head, “told her to let her go and her goal is apparently important enough to get her to comply. Dean, she apparently thinks you were killed and dragged to hell.”

“Wow. The demons really don’t have much of a grapevine do they?”

“I’ll say. Let’s get somewhere and actually get some damn sleep.”

“Sounds good. How’d they jump you anyway?” Dean pulled out the Colt and handed it back while Sam returned the blade to him.

“Damn headache.” Sam grumbled, dialling emergency on the burner and putting it in her hand before heading around to the passenger side and letting Dean take over driving, “didn’t quite register their presence before the dead one was clocking me one.”

“Just tired or is there another reason for the headache?”

“Just tired.”

Dean managed to find an abandoned farm house not too far away that he quickly fortified while Sam squeegeed his mind, a bucket proving necessary this time with how exhausted he was.

Sam slept for a solid 12 hours and Dean didn’t sit up watching. He made sure their sleep area couldn’t be seen from any entrance and there was traps and salt at all of them. If Ruby got in she’d be waiting for them to wake.

Once they woke up they decided on a combination of Hunter signs that would indicate it was Ruby, neither of them wanted to guess at that information again even if it hadn’t been a problem this time.

If Dean had worried that Sam’s paranormal senses wouldn’t be up to snuff, once they both woke up, his concern was quickly assuaged when Sam looked up, flashed him the Ruby signs, and motioned for him to hide. The knock on the door seconds later all that was really needed to further illustrate what he was indicating. Dean grabbed his phone and blade then ducked into the area they’d decided on for hiding him.

Sam answered the door with the Colt aimed through the wood.
“Proof.” The woman standing outside stated, showing him the hospital forms for a brain dead comatose woman, “this body is 100 percent socially conscious. I recycled. Al Gore would be proud.”

She looked pointedly at the salt and trap until he disrupted the lines to let her in. They had other ones further in set up because they figured she’d be by eventually.

“You grabbed a coma patient?” Sam asked.

“You didn’t want me to take a body with someone in it. And I made sure that the spirit was gone. The apartment was empty. You happy?” Ruby explained.

“Why are you here?” Sam asked.

“Look, I can’t bring Dean back.” She told him, “but I can get you something else that you want.”

“And…what’s that?”

“Lilith.”

“You want me to use my psychic whatever.” He noted, wondering if she’d actually spell it out this time.

“Look, I know that it spooks you.” Ruby stated.

“Skip the speech.” Sam told her, “just tell me what you want me to do.”

“Look, Lilith is one scary bitch.” Ruby stated, “when I was in the pit, there was talk. She’s cooking up something big. Apocalyptic big.”

Sam reminded himself that she thought Dean was dead and thus him grieving. If she knew anything about him she knew that that wasn’t something he would handle well.

“So let’s kill her.” He stated, keeping to himself that an exorcism was his goal.

“You wanna go in there and half-arse it like before?” She asked and Sam filed the information that she apparently thought they had actually tried to beard Lilith in her den away for later contemplation, “we have the time to get it right. Let’s get it right.”

“Okay. What do you want from me?”

“A little patience. And sobriety.” Ruby replied, gesturing at the various beer bottles around that he and Dean had shared while they took a breather.

Sam nearly laughed in her face. Sure the amount looked large for a single person in the relatively short period of time they’d been there, but if his brother really was dead beer wouldn’t have been his choice for getting blind drunk. He made a mental note to mention to Dean to get a prop for if they needed to continue this façade.

“Promise me that and I will teach you everything I know.”

“So, what, you’ll teach me how to concentrate in just the right way to kill demons?”

“No.” She replied with a seductive little smile, “the power came from yellow eyes’ blood. You need more blood in order to do anything.”
Sam had no chance of controlling his reaction to that suggestion. He went green and clamped his hand over his mouth even as he gagged.

“Geeze, Sam, stop being so squeamish.”

“No way. Not happening.” He managed to gasp out looking frantically around. The bucket was in the sleeping area and too far for him to make it, the disused kitchen sink was within reach though and he dashed over to it.

“It’s the only way.” Ruby stated as if it was the most reasonable thing in the world.

“Not gonna…” Sam started but was interrupted by heaves, “get out.”

“Fine.” She said in disgust and stalked out the front door.

Once his sense of her faded he grabbed the closest thing he could reach and threw it towards Dean’s hiding place in a break between heaves.

Dean was out like a shot and quickly cleared the area of having bugs before dashing to his side.

“Easy, easy. Just relax.” He instructed laying a calming hand on his back.

“Shit, Dean. How far gone am I supposed to be at this point?” Sam asked around the heaves.

“Think about something else for a bit, see if that helps calm it down.”

“Like?”

“Like…a nice routine salt and burn.”

“Do we ever get one of those?” Sam chuckled, but his brother’s intuition was right, with his attention off the encounter and the disgusting topic his stomach settled.

Dean grabbed him a bottle of water and he rinsed and spat.

“Right. I’m going to squeegee, could you fix…” Sam waved towards the front door.

“Sure.” Dean agreed and quickly fixed the trap and salt line while Sam headed towards the area they’d slept in.

Sam was in meditation by the time Dean got there. A few minutes later Sam brought himself out of the meditation with a shudder.

“You okay?” Dean asked.

Sam nodded and took a drink of water.

“If I never have to deal with that again it’ll be too soon.” Sam told him with another shudder.

“What did she do this time?”

“A bunch into that sexual attraction thing and a lot into craving what she was suggesting.”

“Gross. No wonder you were puking.”

“Just how bad off would I have had to be for that to actually sound reasonable?”
“Well right from the start she tried to make you attracted to her, to trust her, at the same time to distrust me, and put a wedge between us. Add to that she was dangling the promise that she could save me from a deal, which fortunately doesn’t actually exist, then tells you that you could save me. So at this point, if what she thought had happened actually had, you’d not just be grieving but feeling like I’d died because you failed and that I’d died when things weren’t right between us. Add to that she expected you to be drunk, and we probably better get something harder than beer just for you to display if nothing else if we have to continue with this, and it’s a recipe for bad decisions that you’d believe were all your own.”

“Damn.” Sam commented, “well I can’t exactly claim I make good choices when I think you’re gone.”

“Let’s not go there, okay? Ready to hit the road? We’ve probably stayed in one place longer than we really should have.”

“More than ready.”

They grabbed their things and piled into the impala again.
Chapter 28: Beginning of the Dance

Ruby stayed away while they were at Bobby’s learning what they could of the wardings, something Sam was particularly thankful for.

Bobby had actually dug up an elaborate ritual that would toss the demon exorcised into the deepest depths of hell. Only catch was they’d need to trap the demon first if they were going to have a hope of doing so. Sam made sure to take a copy of the chant and various diagrams that were needed. Hopefully they’d get a chance to use them.

Of course the first time they were elsewhere, yet another abandoned house that they fortified with wardings and salt, Ruby turned up.

Sam rolled his eyes at Dean even as he waved him towards the selected hiding spot. Dean sending him reassuring messages with his eyes as he grabbed phone and knife before heading there.

“The answer’s still no.” Sam told her as he let her in reluctantly.

“Stop being squeamish, Sam, there’s no other way.” She replied as she came in and looked around.

“There’s always another way.” Sam stated.

“And look where that got Dean.” Ruby said sharply.

Sam had to turn away, if Dean had actually died that would have been a very cruel blow.

“Just give it time, Sam. It’ll get better.” Ruby said and there was no way Sam would have thought that she didn’t know exactly what she was doing there.

“What?” He returned, not looking around at her. For one he didn’t think he could fake the level of grief that kick to the gut would have produced.

“I’m not talking about the fight.” Ruby replied, “I know losing Dean is…”

“Hey.” Sam interrupted, “I don’t wanna talk about it. Where do you get off slapping me with that greeting card ‘time heals’ crap anyway? What the hell do you know?”
“I used to be human. And I still remember what it feels like to lose someone.” She replied, then reached out to touch his shoulder, “I’m sorry.”

Sam shrugged her off, “uh-uh, don’t.”

“Sam, you’re not alone.” She said then abruptly moved in to kiss him.

He shoved her off him, “no! What are you doing?”

“Sam, it’s okay.” Ruby tried telling him.

“No, that is anything but okay!”

“What’s wrong?”

“What’s wrong? Where do I start?” Sam realised that maybe he should really have been playing along, she had been trying to make him sexually attracted to her after all, but there was no way he could get past his revulsion to the entire idea.

“Is it because of the body?” She asked, “because I told you. It’s all me inside of here. There’s no one else in here. And it’s nice inside this body, Sam. Soft and warm.”

She moved closer to him as she spoke and he stepped backwards.

“What are you doing?” Sam asked, he could feel the headache that meant she was pouring power into her abilities.

“Isn’t it because you’re really scared to go there with a demon?” Ruby asked, continuing to approach and he kept moving back. He had to concentrate to make sure he didn’t get backed into anything like a corner or anything, “because it’s wrong and it’s bad and we shouldn’t?”

“Not interested, Ruby.” He growled and caught the flicker of surprise in her eyes, “now unless you had anything useful to impart you can go.”

“You’ll never be able to take Lilith unless you stop being stupid, Sam.” She told him.

“As I said, there’s always another way. I’m not going to pollute my body by introducing more demon blood, that’s simply not happening.”

“You’re already corrupted by what yellow eyes gave you, avoiding or taking a little more won’t change that.”

“My choice is what it is.”

“Fine.” She stalked out.

Sam opened the door to Dean’s hiding spot once the sense of her presence had faded and Dean rapidly cleared the room of having bugs.

“You okay?” Dean asked as he put away the device.

“I definitely need to squeegee, and I need a shower.” Sam replied.

“Go squeegee, we’re probably going to have to wait on the shower though. Don’t think there’s running water here.”
“Figures.” Sam grumbled but headed into the more secure room they’d set up for sleep while Dean fixed the front door security.

Sam was just bringing himself out of the meditation as Dean came in and he flopped back on the air mattress they’d set up for him, Dean’s being close by. Bobby had bestowed them on them when it became obvious they’d need to go on the run and mightn’t be able to stop at motels. The impala was all very well for catching some sleep by the side of the road, not so much for weathering sieges even if it was now layered in Enochian wardings to keep angels out along with everything else.

“Do I want to know what she did this time?” Dean asked.

“Probably not.” Sam grumbled.

“You okay?”

“Yeah. Just next time we stop, can we make sure there’s a shower available?”

“Will do. Get some rest.”

They headed off the next morning again and actually stopped at a motel the next night, which let Sam get his longed for shower.

They kept moving from place to place, not quite sure that they could risk stopping long enough to investigate anything though by this point both of them were longing for a case. They both didn’t feel that they could risk people by getting involved though; they might save them from something normal only to bring down the most powerful and dangerous demons and angels on their heads.

Both of them started keeping track of unusual newspaper articles though. About 3 months past the ‘due date’ there was a sudden spike in demon signs.

“Could be Lilith.” Sam commented when he showed Dean.

“Or could be some of her followers having a party.” Dean replied, “if we go in without a sure fire way to trap her we’ll tip her off to our plan.”

Sam sighed, “yeah. Much as I hate passing up chasing down demons messing lives up, unless we can draw her to a place of our own choosing and battle ground we’ll blow the chance to dump her arse back in hell. Just wish…”

“Yeah…I know. We’re a little too far to get there in any decent time also.”

“What if…?”

“Other Hunters go in?”

“Yeah.”

“Not a pleasant thought.” Dean pulled out his phone and called Bobby on speaker.

“Hello.”

“Hey Bobby. The demon sign around…”

“Tamara and a few others are already headed there.”

Sam swore, “Bobby, we think it might be Lilith.”
“Balls. So whoever is in there are powerful demons even if they’re only followers.”

“Yeah. Tell them to be extra careful.” Dean agreed.

“Any chance you can get there? You two have the only demon killing weapons around.” Bobby asked.

“Be at least a three day drive.” Dean answered.

“Balls. I’ll pass on the warning.” Bobby said.

“We’ll see if we can head that direction, maybe we’ll get there in time to help.” Dean decided.

“If it is her and it is a trap won’t that be revealing your hand?” Bobby asked.

“We’ll just have to hope she doesn’t realise.” Sam replied, “but the world doesn’t have enough Hunters to just throw some away because Lilith wants to play.”

“Be careful.” Bobby told them before hanging up.

“Okay. Let’s go grab some breakfast to go and start driving. And hope the only thing we get there in time to do isn’t claim their bodies.”

They started heading towards the diner only to stop short in an alley as Castiel appeared. He actually looked surprised to see them. Both of them grabbed out knives in preparation for using the banishing sigil.

“I haven’t been reprogrammed yet.” He told them, “I wasn’t sent here, this is a random jump in the ‘search’. They won’t know I’ve found you unless I tell them.”

“Okay. Aren’t you running a big risk doing that?” Dean asked.

“Yes.” The angel replied.

“Why? Not that I’m ungrateful.” Dean responded.

“Because it is the right thing. Orders based on lies are not right. God would not lie. Therefore those orders are not from God. Therefore something is wrong in the hierarchy.”

“Well that is a superb piece of logical reasoning.” Dean commented.

“Out of curiosity, what would you do if you came across demons in your search?” Sam asked.

“I would be duty bound to destroy them on sight. Why?”

“Some friends of ours are about to tangle with Lilith, or servants of Lilith, and they’re three days drive away. We’re not likely to get there in time to do more than claim their bodies for burial.” Sam told him.

“I hope you are not planning on killing her, that is…”

“One of the end seals, yes we know.” Sam interrupted.

“We’re planning on tossing her arse back into hell in the most permanent way we can managed.” Dean told him, “but if we reveal our hand too soon…”
“You will not be able to trap her in order to do so. I understand.” The angel stated, “you would like me to ‘accidentally’ go to the township?”

“If that would be possible.” Sam said hesitantly.

“Yes. It would not be seen as usual.”

“Okay then. Good.” Dean said then paused thoughtfully, “Castiel, what would happen if you got into trouble?”

“I would pay the price. Reprogrammed or perhaps imprisoned in heaven’s jail.”

“Heaven has a jail?” Dean asked incredulously.

“Yes.”

“There is no one you can go to for help?” Dean continued.

“No.”

“That is just not right. I mean you’re risking everything to help us. We gotta figure out a way we can help you if necessary. I owe you for Sam if nothing else.”

“That would be extremely unwise. You would have no warning if I was reprogrammed without getting off a distress call to you.”

“When we run into you we have to assume that anyway.” Sam pointed out, “unless you can think of something that can tell us definitively whenever we speak to you.”

“There is a way.” Castiel stated, “the phrase gohol laiad. I will not translate it directly since it makes little sense in English. What it means is an order to speak what is known to be true.”

Sam ran the phrase over in his head until he was sure he could pronounce it properly, “what response should we expect in return?”

“Use it and see.”

“Gohol laiad.”

“Authority has been misused. False orders have been given.” The angel responded with a compulsive woodenness that was impossible to mistake.

Dean shivered, “I don’t know about anyone else, but the ability to override someone’s choices is just…wrong.”

“Do not trouble yourself. I am not human. It is not you who would override my choices in any case.”

“I’m with Dean. The ability to compel an answer is disturbing. I think I find that you do not find it disturbing even more disturbing.” Sam noted.

“Do not let it bother you. I gave it to you freely.”

“Speaking of you giving us that.” Dean said, digging out one of their burner phones and swiftly setting it up before handing it to the angel, “our numbers are in there.”

The angel looked at the device curiously.
“I’m assuming you know how to use a phone.” Dean added.

“Yes. I do believe I can figure that out.”

“Okay. Good.”

“Now, where are your friends?”

Sam showed the angel the newspaper reports they’d found, most of them printouts from online papers.

Castiel nodded, “I will protect them. Thank you.”

Then he vanished with a soft whoosh of wings.

The brother’s looked at each other for a moment.

“Okay, guess we can have a sit down breakfast after all.” Dean commented.

Sam chuckled, “I wonder how long until Bobby calls to ask us exactly what stupidity we’ve done this time.”

“I’ll bet on two hours.”

“Three.”

They continued to the diner and actually enjoyed a sit down breakfast for the first time in a long while. Sam took the opportunity to plug the number of their former burn phone into the tracking program.

It was an hour and a half later that Bobby called.

“I win.” Dean stated before answering and putting it on speaker, “hi Bobby.”

“Okay, what did you two idjits do this time?”

Sam laughed, “what happened?”

Sam laughed, “what happened?”

“Well I couldn’t get through to them because they’d already gone in. Minions of Lilith so yeah, they had them on the ropes. Then this, quote, man in a trench coat appeared out of nowhere. Looked at the demons. Laid his hands on their heads and burned out their eyes. Then looked around at the Hunters and said ‘you are not who I am looking for’ and vanished, unquote.”

Dean laughed, “okay, that’s pretty funny.”

“Weren’t you supposed to be avoiding that guy?”

“Kinda hard to when he appears in the alley you’re walking down.” Sam told him, “but he hasn’t been reprogrammed yet and since we are 3 days drive away we asked what he’d do if he just happened to come across some demons.”

“Okay. Can’t argue with the idea since it resulted in several very definitely still amongst the living Hunters. Just for Pete’s sake be careful!”

“We will, Bobby.” Sam assured him.
Chapter 29: Wolf

Another diner, another small town with an unmemorable name.

“Well there’s been a string of deaths, no real details though.” Dean noted as they waited for the coffee’s to be delivered. For once Sam’s sense of his brother hadn’t resulted in their coffee’s arriving shortly after his arrival, that wasn’t because of Sam though.

Eventually a nervous looking waitress brought the coffee’s over. Her hand shook as she put the cups down, sloshing coffee on the table.

“I’m sorry, I’m sorry.” She stammered pulling out a cloth.

Sam looked at her, “hey, are you okay?”

The natural compassion in the younger brother’s voice had her crumpling into tears. Another waitress hurried over.

“Sorry sir’s, she’s had a hard time lately.” She started to draw the first waitress away.

“It’s okay.” Sam told her, “if we can help we’d like to. Could you get her a coffee? We’ll cover it.”

“The only way you can help is to convince her that her eyes were deceiving her. There’s no way a man killed her boyfriend, it was an animal attack.”

“She witnessed one of the recent deaths?” Dean asked cautiously.

The first waitress nodded tearfully.

Sam and Dean glanced at each other; that comment told them these deaths were right in their ballpark. They needed to investigate even if they ended up having to hand it on to another hunter to finish because of their pursuers.

Dean fished out his fake FBI ID and flipped it open, “in that case, we’re going to insist. It’ll save us having to locate her later.”

“The FBI is seriously investigating animal attacks?” The second waitress asked sceptically.
“Some brainy tech turned up a pattern so we got sent out to investigate.” Dean bluffed.

“Well far be it for me to interfere with an investigation. If you can get her to be able to focus on her job again I’ll even be grateful.” The second waitress half snapped before heading off.

“You don’t really look like FBI.” The first waitress commented.

“Well we weren’t expecting to run into a witness before we’d introduced ourselves to the locals.” Sam explained, “we prefer to have breakfast feeling relatively comfortable before donning suits, do you have any idea how uncomfortable those things can be day after day?”

She gave a small chuckle, “you couldn’t pay me enough to get dressed up in a suit.”

“I hear you there. Sometimes I wonder what on earth we were thinking. At least we can get away with not wearing them every waking moment when we’re not in DC.” Dean agreed, “what’s your name?”

“Lorraine.”

The other waitress brought over the coffee they’d requested then left them alone.

“Can you tell us what you saw?” Sam asked gently.

“We were walking home from a movie. It was nice out, you know, thought it would be romantic.”

The brothers didn’t roll their eyes at each other but only just. They certainly couldn’t place what part of walking around at night struck people as a good idea.

“Go on.” Sam prodded gently.

“This man came out of nowhere. Couldn’t really see him clearly but he was definitely a man. The shadows were playing tricks with his face though.”

“What kind of tricks?”

“Made it look like his eyes were weird and it looked like he had fangs.”

“Did you recognise him?”

“No.”

“Could you tell us where the attack took place?”

Sam noted down the streets she told them.

“Did he hurt you at all?”

She shook her head, “no, Mike, my boyfriend, he pushed me behind him when that man came at us and told me to run. I found a police car but when we got back…Mike was dead with a gaping hole in his chest.”

“My sympathies for your loss.” Sam told her gently.

“Will you catch him?”

“We’ll do our best.” Dean stated.
She gave them a teary thank you and went off to do something out the back.

“Werewolf?” Sam asked Dean once she’d gone.

“Looks like. I don’t know about you but even with heaven and hell after us I really want to take out that son of a bitch. There isn’t much time left before the full moon.”

“Think we can do so without bringing the heavies down on the victims?”

“I think we should try. We can’t just run for the rest of our lives.”

“True. Can’t say I haven’t been looking for a case myself and I know you have too.”

“Finish up with breakfast then we gotta go say hi to the locals.”

A short while later they’d changed into the suits and were introducing themselves to the local police, feeding them the line about the tech picking up a pattern and thus their presence. It got them access to the autopsy reports, which confirmed the teeth marks, claw marks, and missing hearts, and access to the crime scene reports. What it didn’t tell them was who the poor bastard that was turning during the night and eating the victim’s hearts was, not that they expected the police to discover that piece of information. It was a rare police officer that even knew about the paranormal.

“All the attacks have occurred in a two block area.” Sam commented when they were back in the impala.

“Best bet would be to go there tonight and see if he’ll come after us.” Dean noted, “any chance that your senses will be able to track this arsehole?”

“Don’t know yet. Guess we’ll find out when we find him.”

“Awesome.” Dean complained.

“It’s not like this has a rule book.” Sam told him, “even Pam can’t sense beyond spirits and some demons normally.”

“Whoa, back up a sec. Pam? As in ‘best in the state’ Pam? And you eclipsed her within a week of having these senses?” Dean demanded, more than a little disconcerted at that titbit of information.

“I thought you knew. That was part of the reason she concentrated on teaching me how to figure out right and wrong with my abilities and that danger sense I have.”

“Well I didn’t know, obviously.” Dean replied before letting out a frustrated sigh.

“Sorry.” Sam told him quietly.

“No. It’s okay. I just…I don’t know how to protect you if something with your abilities bites you in the butt. I thought at least there was someone I could get help from if it was more than you could handle.” Dean responded as he started the car and took them back to the motel.

“There’s some sigils that I usually put up in the process of fortifying that you could put up in a pinch if it became necessary.” Sam said after staying silent for a moment, “they’re stronger if I put them up, something about power resonance, but in an emergency you can put them up just as easily. They’re in the sigils notebook.”

Dean glanced across at him, “I’d noticed those actually. I figured there was a reason like that for why you always put them up and never asked me to, they’re the same ones Bobby put up when Pam told
“us to watch your back.”

“Sorry. I should have consciously made a point of explaining that to you.”

“It’s okay.” Dean gave a half laugh, “I can’t exactly be the easiest person to explain that stuff to can I?”

Sam gave him a wry smile, “it could have been a lot worse. Ruby obviously expected you to treat me like a sideshow freak and we were both freaked out when I started getting dreams and visions even without the headaches that accompanied them.”

“In part that was because we knew it had something to do with old yellow eyes and we didn’t know what he wanted to do to you. The changes are a lot less freaky because we know he has nothing to do with them and if anything didn’t want you to have full control.” Dean pulled into the motel car park and stopped the car, “I just worry that I won’t be able to protect you one of these days.”

“When it comes to this stuff,” Sam told him softly as they climbed out, “if I can’t protect both of us then no one alive can.”

“Do I need to tell you how much that sort of scenario bothers me?” Dean returned.

“Knowing you it’s not your vulnerability that bothers you.” Sam replied with a wry smile.

“Of course not, bitch.” Dean grabbed the various weapons out of the trunk and took them into the room.

“Jerk.” Sam returned with a smile, following him.

They carefully checked their weapons, made sure the silver bullets were loaded properly, and checked the backup silver knives were sharp. Then they waited for nightfall.

Come dark they cautiously went into the hunting zone. They stuck close to each other, Dean in particular making sure he could see if Sam reacted to anything that couldn’t be seen. They still didn’t know whether he would be able to sense werewolves. Sam didn’t need to see his brother to know where he was, something Dean still found spooky.

Something began tickling on the edge of Sam’s senses and he gave a tight smile even as he signalled Dean. Repeated exposure to unknown readings on his senses, if nothing else, had made it at least a little easier to place where he was sensing it from on first encounter.

Then the creature was launching itself out of the dark at them. Sam drew and shot even as Dean spun to face the threat. It was unneeded though, the shot flew true and the two of them watched as the were features faded into the confused expression of the dying former human.

“I take it that’s a ‘yes’ on being able to sense werewolves?” Dean asked.

“Yes. Poor bastard.”

Taking out a werewolf was always kinda sad, usually the poor bastards didn’t have a clue what was going on. Unfortunately that cluelessness didn’t translate into helplessness.

They dragged the body out of town and burnt it before returning to the motel for the remainder of the night. Stopping by the diner for breakfast they let Lorraine know that it had been taken care of before heading out of town.
Chapter 30: Dodging Angels

Sam had a map of the area spread out on the table at yet another diner. They’d known what they would encounter before hitting town this time though; a rash of deaths with their throats torn out and the blood missing. Which led the two Hunters to conclude that a vampire nest had recently come to town.

There were only so many places, particularly in a small town, where a nest could set up. So after breakfast they were going to carefully check the possibilities. At least they could do so without going inside, unlike most Hunters, thanks to Sam’s paranormal senses.

An evangelist from some sect they didn’t recognise tried to press a tract on them as they left, earning a glare from Dean for his trouble.

It was about midday that they checked the fourth possibility and Sam sensed the distinctive feel of vampires. An abrupt blast of air interrupted their preparations and they both spun to confront the intrusion.

“Sigil and run! Now!” Castiel rapped out urgently, “I was sent.”

“How did you find us?” Sam asked while Dean just grabbed a knife, sliced open his palm and started drawing.

“The hierarchy has resorted to contacting some more fringe churches in an attempt to locate you. You need to be careful.”

“So do you.” Dean stated as he finished the sigil, “let us know you’re okay.”

He slapped his hand down and the angel vanished in a bright flash. They only paused long enough for Sam to mark down the building on the map then bolted back to the impala and were headed to the horizon before 5 minutes had gone by.

Sam snapped a picture of the map and sent it to Bobby then called him on speaker.

“Sam?”

“Hi Bobby. Found a vamp nest but got some angel problems so we couldn’t finish. Could you send
“Can probably find someone. You two okay?”

“Yeah, just had to sigil and run.” Dean replied.

“How’d they find you anyway?”

“Apparently they’re using some more fringe churches to try to find us so we’re going to have to avoid the weirder church sects.” Sam replied.

“That’s gonna be fun.” Bobby noted.

“Tell me about it.” Dean complained.

“Well I’d better find someone to clean up those vamps. Stay safe and for heaven’s sake let me know you’re okay.”

“Will do.”

They hung up and drove.

They spent the next several days like that, taking turns driving for as long as they could and only stopping when they both needed proper sleep.

They were across the country before they chanced stopping at a motel again. Sam was asleep as soon as his head hit the pillow. Dean was too wired to sleep just yet though.

He was surprised a few hours later by his phone ringing, he answered before Sam could do more than stir slightly.

“Cas?” He asked softly after seeing the caller ID.

“Yes. I need to talk to you.”

Dean frowned worriedly, both for the angel and for their safety.

“Gohol laiad.”

“Authority has been misused. False orders have been given.” Castiel replied woodenly.

Dean released the breath he’d been holding, “you okay?”

“Yes.”

Dean found the motel’s address on its stationery and read it out to the angel along with the room number. A moment later there was a soft knock and he opened the door.

“The wards prevent me entering.” Castiel told him.

Dean hesitated for a moment before pulling out the black light and pen so he could see what he was crossing out. Two crossed out and the angel could enter.

He glanced at Sam, still soundly sleeping in the other bed, before turning his attention back to Dean.

“What do you want?” Dean asked softly, “is something wrong?”
“Listen to me. You have to stop it.” Castiel stated.

“Stop what?” Dean replied.

The angel reached over and tapped him on the head and the older brother vanished. Castiel looked back over at the younger brother and prepared to watch over his sleep.

He didn’t dream, he was too exhausted plus the reinforcement from the angel that he was unaware of made that impossible. A growing sense of unease stole through his mind though and eventually he abruptly wrenched himself awake.

“You are strong.” Castiel noted with surprise as he sat up.

Sam froze then reached quickly for the closest knife.

“Gohol laiad.”

“Authority has been misused. False orders have been given.” The angel returned and Sam relaxed.

“Where’s Dean?”

“He needed to see.”

“See what?”

“Where it began.”

Sam thought over what he’d been told for a moment, “time travel?”

“Yes.”

“That explains why there’s an aching void where my sense of my brother usually is.” Sam noted grumpily.

“My apologies. I had intended to keep you asleep until he returned to spare you any distress.”

“Thanks for nothing.” Sam grumbled before sighing, “so why didn’t you keep me asleep?”

“Because you woke up.”

“You mean you didn’t let me?”

“No.”

“You know, you’re not much like what I’d imagined an angel to be like.” Sam commented after remaining silent for a while.

“I have seen your greeting cards and how they portray angels. It is not how it is. I am a soldier.”

“You don’t look much like what I’d expect even a warrior angel to look like either.”

“Oh, this?” Castiel gestured at himself, “this is a vessel. Few humans can handle seeing my true form or hearing my true voice.”

“A vessel? You mean you’re possessing someone? Like a demon does?”

“No. Permission must always be granted. He is a devout man, he prayed for this.”
“That’s not right. Why should someone have to give up their life just so one of you can wander around down here?”

“I…” Castiel started then went silent for a moment, “I do not know. Perhaps it was intended so that we would not come down here among you lightly.”

“And how well has that worked?”

“I do not know. There…there are some who act as if humans only exist to serve our needs. But…we are commanded to love humans.”

“There has to be a better way.”

“Perhaps. But it would take something huge to change it.”

“Like?”

“Something I have never seen in my entire life.”

“Oh.”

Dean blinked back in on his bed and Castiel turned to regard him.

“I couldn’t stop any of it. She still made the deal.” He said quietly to the angel then glanced over at Sam as he realised his brother was no longer sleeping, he nearly didn’t continue but realised he needed to know despite the pain it might cause both he and his brother, “she still died in the nursery, didn’t she?”

He saw Sam lose all colour in his face and shifted over next to him to steady him.

“Do not be too hard on yourself.” Castiel told him, “you could not have stopped it.”

“What?”

“Destiny cannot be changed, Dean. All roads lead to the same destination.”

“Then why’d you send me back?”

“For the truth. You needed to see how it began. Now you know everything we…I do.”

“What the hell are you talking about?”

“I don’t believe in destiny.” Sam interjected softly, “we’ve seen it change.”

“You have? When? That should not have been possible.” Castiel answered.

“Could you guarantee that the information is not passed on in the event you are reprogrammed?” Dean asked bluntly.

Castiel thought for a moment, “no. I cannot.”

“It is the reason I don’t have demon blood. It is the reason that seals are not breaking as we speak. It is the reason that both heaven and hell want me dead.” Sam said quietly, “I’m sure you can understand why we wouldn’t like to reveal to the beings that can pop around the time stream at will exactly when that change occurred.”
“The seals? The apocalypse? But why would heaven want that?” Castiel asked in confusion.

“Don’t ask us. But both sides have been going all out with the apparent goal of killing Sam and getting me to exchange myself via a demon deal for him.” Dean told him, “hell was apparently convinced there was a deal in place until the hounds didn’t collect me. We weathered some massive sieges from them but after Lilith tried personally and failed they apparently gave up. After that is when you were ordered to kill Sam.”

“The righteous man? Why?” There was pure anguish in the angel’s voice, “we…the garrison…angels…we are supposed to protect humanity…protect the planet…why bring on the apocalypse?”

Sam reached out and squeezed the angel’s shoulder comfortably, “if we knew that we’d be on our way to figuring out how to fix it.”

“Given how hard hell has been pushing I’m not sure whether to be insulted or disconcerted that they apparently thought I’d break in a matter of months.” Dean commented.

Castiel shook his head, “time runs differently in hell. About 10 years passes in there for every month here.”

“Ouch.” Dean responded.

The angel shook himself, “I should go. They will check on my location soon.”

“Stay safe.” Dean told him, Castiel nodded before walking out the door and vanishing.

“Why do I feel like I just broke his world?” Sam asked quietly.

“Because we probably did.” Dean replied with a sigh, “until a few moments ago he believed his people were basically good. Now he knows those in charge are actively trying to bring about the end of the world and maybe more of his fellow angels are involved.”

Dean grabbed up the UV pen and replaced the two sigils he’d crossed out earlier.

“So when did he send you?”

“Back to ’73. Would you believe I had to talk dad into buying the impala? He was about to buy a VW van.”

“That’s hard to imagine.”

“I’ll say.”

“Anything else?”

“Mum was a hunter, from a family of hunters.”

“What?”

“Surprised the hell out of me too. And she could kick some arse, she nearly took me down. Met her mum and dad, her dad in particular didn’t trust other hunters. Was all I could do not to have to pick my jaw up off the ground when they described dad as ‘naive’.”

“Hard to imagine him ever being that.”

“I’ll say.
“What were they like? Did you ever hear anything about them?”

“Nope, didn’t know anything about Samuel and Deanna until Cas decided to drop me 36 years into the past.”

He watched the various expressions play over his brother’s face at that information.

“Dean…” Sam started with an amused smile.

“Laugh it up, Sammy.” Dean returned nowhere near as annoyed as he was making out since half the goal of telling him was to cheer his brother up, “obviously she was a kick ass lady for mum and dad to name their first born son after her.”

Sam laughed though a short while later he turned serious again.

“You mentioned something about a deal?”

Dean didn’t need to see his brother’s face to know he was worried that he was about to find out their mother was in hell.

“Not for her soul.” Dean quickly told him, “she made a deal to give him permission to swing by some years down the track in return for dad’s life.”

“She…she gave him permission to do what he did to me?” Sam asked, not at all sure how he felt about that.

“Not specifically, he was vague in his wording with all the deals he made. He’d have been doubly cautious when dealing with a Hunter.” Dean reassured him.

Sam sighed, he was too tired to sort through this and deal with it now that the absence of his brother wasn’t putting him on high alert.

“Grab some more sleep.” Dean told him with the intuition he’d had since they were kids.

Too tired to argue Sam just nodded and lay down again. Dean waited until his breaths evened out into the rhythm of sleep before lying down on his own bed and joining him in slumber.
Chapter 31: Shelved Transformation

Sam was still sleeping when Dean woke the next day. He’d already been exhausted before Castiel had sent Dean on the unplanned trip through time and either the angel had woken his brother or something else had woken him up. The curve balls from Dean’s return certainly hadn’t helped.

With a sigh he slipped out quietly, heading to the closest diner to grab some coffee for both of them. Even as tired as Sam was being awake for a couple of hours would be better than sleeping straight through.

“Dean Winchester, as I live and breathe. Back from the pit I see.”

Dean swore silently and snatched out the knife. He knew that voice. He firmly reminded himself that he shouldn’t know who she was at this point and to not let on he hadn’t visited hell at all.

“And you are?”

“Come now, Dean, you know me.” She returned, “that’s my knife you have there.”

“Ruby.”

“Oh good boy.” She smiled at him predatorily, “maybe you can get your brother to stop being so squeamish and start helping people already.”

“Somehow I think he doesn’t like your methods.”

“Well tough. Unless he stops being stupid people are going to die.”

“Why do you even care?”

“Strange as it seems, Dean, I actually want you guys to win.”

“You’re a demon.”

“So?”

“So why on earth would you want one of the strongest demons in hell dead?”
“I told you before, I still remember being human.”

“Yeah, that’s reassuring. You were a witch.”

“I was stupid. I made a mistake. I’m trying to make up for it now.”

“Right.” The sarcasm dripped of the word, “be that as it may I need to get some coffee and get back to Sam.”

“Maybe I’ll go see him while you’re getting coffee.”

“He’s sleeping and the place is locked down. You even get inside you’ll be in a devil’s trap.”

Anger flashed over Ruby’s face and he wondered if that was real or feigned, “fine.”

She was gone. That didn’t reassure him. At least the room was secured so she couldn’t get to his brother without Sam waking up. He sent a message letting him know she was around just in case.

When he returned it appeared that Ruby hadn’t decided to try, especially as all the defences were untouched and Sam was still sleeping.

He put the coffees on the table and contemplated how to best wake his brother. He decided soft music might be the gentlest and reached for the radio. Making sure the volume was on low he switched it on. Heat of the moment sounded softly, he winced and reached for the frequency control. The radio shattered before he made contact.

“Shit! Sam, I was changing the station, I swear!”

He didn’t need to see the fear on his brother’s face to know exactly how that song had affected him and it was exactly the opposite of what he’d been trying to achieve. He came to Sam’s side and squeezed his shoulder reassuringly as he sat down next to him.

“I’m sorry. I was trying to wake you gently, I wasn’t expecting THAT to be on the radio or for it to wake you before I could change the station.”

Sam took a deep breath to settle the panic he’d woken in with hearing that song.

“It’s okay.” He replied, still trying to calm down, “I know you wouldn’t have played that deliberately.”

“If I ever thought it would make a good joke I just got disabused of that notion, you bulls eyed that radio and didn’t leave a scratch on me. Hate to see what you could do to me if you wanted.” Dean told him and Sam blinked, noticing the fragments of the radio for the first time.

“Uh…sorry?”

Dean shrugged, “that’s the motel’s problem. But I’m never playing the radio in Baby while you’re sleeping from now on.”

Sam gave a half chuckle at that.

“Coffee?” Dean suggested, “that reminds me. I ran into Ruby when I was getting those.”

Sam swore and ran a tired hand over his face, “remind me to shoot her next time I see her.”

“Sorry. You can leave it for a bit if you need more sleep, I’ll sit up.”
“No. You need sleep just as badly as I do, you just haven’t crashed yet.”

“I got some extra sleep on my time travel excursion, even if I was chasing yellow eyes.”

“Still. I’ll just be a moment.”

“Wait one, let’s try something. See if it makes it a little easier on you.”

“What?”

Dean didn’t answer, just got up and went into the bathroom, returning a few moments later with a wet face washer. Sam had to admit the idea made sense even if he felt awkward about it.

“Hey, stop getting embarrassed. I can’t help out with that stuff, just gotta hope you don’t get hurt. At least let me see if I can make it a bit easier for you how I can.” Dean scolded him gently.

“Sorry.”

“Not after an apology, just let me help.”

Sam smiled ironically, that was definitely his brother in a nutshell. He could cope with dang near anything as long as you didn’t expect him to be hands off.

Dean grabbed the bin just in case then draped the cold wet cloth on Sam’s head and forehead.

Sam took himself into meditation as Dean plopped himself down next to him again. His brother’s defences made it a lot easier than it used to be, though that didn’t make it easy, especially when he was still tired. Fortunately she hadn’t put much effort into it this time, just a little into trying to get Dean to trust her. Even if he was completely defenceless Sam didn’t think she’d have much luck with that.

He wilted against Dean once he brought himself out and he felt his brother feel his forehead briefly.

“Well, seems to have kept the temperature down a bit at least.” Dean commented, “want the coffee now?”

He just wanted more sleep really but he could understand where Dean was coming from, this exhaustion was pretty extreme even for how flat out they’d been going lately. It could be his body just needed a wakeup reminder, or it could be something more.

“Guess so.”

Dean snagged the cup and handed it to him then grabbed his own as Sam pulled the face washer off.

Sam was about halfway through when his phone rang. He raised an eyebrow at it, most people tended to call Dean simply because his name came first in the alphabet but some made a habit of calling Sam because he was usually a passenger, then answered.

“Hello?”

“Sam, it’s Travis.”

“Hey, Travis.”

“Good to hear your voice, was worried I wouldn’t get a hold of you after those warnings a month or so back.”
“It’s good to hear your voice too.” Sam barely held in a sigh, if Travis was calling then he needed help and he still felt like just falling into bed for a week, “look, it’s not a really good time right now.”

“Wouldn’t have called if there was anyone else who could remotely help me, not with the amount you boys have on your plate. Got a busted wing and this ain’t gonna wait.”

“Okay.” Sam sighed with a resigned look at Dean, who looked equal parts concerned and grumpy, and picked up a pen, “give me the details.”


“Thanks Sam.” Travis hung up.

“What’s wrong?” Dean asked as Sam put the phone down.

“He’s got a broken arm and needs help.”

Dean blew out a frustrated breath and nodded resignedly, their friends knew the attention on them so Travis wouldn’t have called unless he had no one else.

“Okay, finish your coffee. I’ll get the stuff in the car.”

“I can help.”

“You are at most going to look up what Travis wants our help with, two panicked awakenings obviously undid all the benefit of the sleep you got.”

Sometimes Dean was too intuitive for Sam’s comfort. He wasn’t even in the same time period the first time he woke. He couldn’t really argue with him though, it felt like he hadn’t slept at all.

He finished off the coffee as he looked up the name they’d been given on the laptop. Nothing stood out about the guy.

“Ready?” Dean asked, coming back in after getting the rest of their stuff into the impala.

“Guess so.” Sam replied, shutting down the laptop.

Dean was still being a mother hen Sam noted as his brother grabbed the computer and shooed him out ahead of him.

He intended to sit in the passenger seat and talk to Dean during the trip but instead drifted off within half an hour, which Dean was more than happy about. Even if he made sure a tape was playing instead of the radio.

Once they arrived Dean got them a motel room before waking Sam, happy to see that he seemed more rested than he had. Once it got dark they took up careful surveillance of the man they’d been given the name of after checking in with Travis. Aside from giving Dean a run for his money in the appetite department and no weight to show for it there didn’t appear much.

“Well, you sure that’s him?” Dean asked.

“Only Jack Montgomery in town.” Sam replied.

“And we’re looking for?”

“Travis said to keep an eye out for anything weird.”
“Weird?”
“Yeah.”

“What about your Spidey sense?”

“Well there’s something faint but I can’t really tell what. Nothing familiar.”

Dean sighed and returned to watching the man, “all right, well, yeah, I’ve seen big weird, little weird, weird with crazy on top. But this guy…come on, this guy’s boring. If it wasn’t for your Spidey sense I’d be voting to call it a night.”

“I don’t know, Dean. Travis seemed pretty sure.” Sam had to admit this guy seemed unlikely to be a supernatural threat and he was with Dean, if it wasn’t for the Spidey sense he’d have been deciding it was mistaken identity too. His senses were annoyingly vague about the guy though, he couldn’t tell whether it was coming from him or directed at him.

Well until he started munching on some raw meat anyway.

“I’d say that qualifies as weird.” Sam commented.

“I’ll say. But what the hell are we dealing with?”

“Better ask Travis that, he knew enough to send us here before anything had started happening.”

“Because that’s so reassuring.” Dean responded even as he started up the impala and headed back to the motel.

They’d intended to call the older Hunter once they got back but found him waiting in the room, complete with cast on his right arm and a beer in his left hand.

“Travis.” Dean greeted him with a grin before turning to his brother, “see, Sam? Told you we should’ve hid the beer.”

Travis came to his feet, also grinning, “smartarse. Get over here.”

He gave him a hug then Sam, “oh, good to see you.”

“You too.” Dean returned, echoed by Sam.

“Man, you got tall, kid.” Travis stated, looking at Sam. Dean had to chuckle at that, everyone seemed to notice his brother’s height that made everyone else look small by comparison, “how long has it been?”

“Gotta be 10 years.” Sam replied after a moment of thought.

“You still a…oh, what was it? A mathlete?” He asked.

Sam laughed, though a little sadly, those days were well behind him now even if it was part of the reason he’d got into Stanford, “no.”

“Yes, sure is.” Dean contradicted, he never wanted anyone to forget just how scarily smart his little brother was. Not that their father’s friend had missed that.

“Been too long, boys. I mean, look at you. Grown men.” Travis continued, “John would’ve been damn proud of you, sticking together like this.”
“Nothing more important than family.” Dean agreed and was happy that that was true despite the efforts of both heaven and hell.

“You both good after all those demons came at you?” Travis asked, “what was with that anyway? Something to do with what happened to your mum?”

“Her and Jess, yeah, to an extent.” Dean replied with a glance at Sam.

“Jess?”

“My girlfriend. Killed the same way.” Sam told him sadly, even now over three years later it still hurt.

Travis was no stranger to grief, he was a hunter after all, and he dropped the topic after one glance at the younger brother.

“Anyway, sorry I’m late for the dance. Thanks for helping out an old man. I’m a little shorthanded.” He raised his arm in the cast by way of explanation with a laugh, “so you track down Montgomery?”

“Yeah, we found him at his home.” Sam replied.

“And?”

“He had a hell of a case of the munchies.” Dean added, “topped off with a burger that he forgot to cook.”

“That’s him, all right.” Travis confirmed sounding a little sad.

“What’s him?” Dean asked.

“Boys, we got a Rougarou on our hands.”

“A Rougarou?” Dean asked and glanced at Sam, he’d never heard of that before and it showed, “is that made up? That sounds made up.”

“They’re mean, nasty little suckers.” Travis explained, “rotted teeth, wormy skin, the works.”

“Well, that ain’t this guy. He was wearing a cell phone on his belt.” Dean pointed out.

“He’ll turn ugly soon enough.” Travis replied, “they start out human for all intents and purposes.”

“So, what, they go through some kind of metamorphosis?” Sam asked.

“Yep, like a maggot turning into a blowfly.” Travis confirmed, “but most of all, they’re hungry.”

“Hungry for what?” Dean asked, that sounded like it could get real bad.

“At first, for everything.” Travis replied, “but then for long pig.”

Sam made a disgusted sound and Dean shot a concerned look at him. He didn’t look green though so he relaxed a little at least as far as his brother was concerned.

“Long pig?” Dean asked looking back at Travis.

“He means human flesh.” Sam explained.

“And that is my word of the day.” Dean complained.
“Hunger grows in until they can’t fight it.” Travis continued, “until they gotta take themselves a big, juicy chomp, and then it happens.”

“What happens?” Sam asked.

“They transform completely, and fast.” Travis replied, “one bite’s all it takes. Eyes, teeth, skin all turns. No going back either. They feed once, they’re a monster forever. And our man Jack’s headed there on a bullet train.”

“Well, how’d you find this guy if he’s walking, talking human?” Dean asked.

“Let’s just say it runs in his family.” Travis answered.

“You mean…?” Sam started.

“Killed his daddy back in ’78.” Travis interrupted, “son of a bitch mangled eight bodies before I put him down. Guy used to be a dentist. Cadillac. Trophy wife. Little did I know, pregnant trophy wife. She put the boy up for adoption. By the time I found out, he was long gone, lost in the system.”

“You mean to tell me you couldn’t find someone?” Sam asked with undisguised incredulousness.

“I’m not sure I wanted to.” Travis admitted, “the idea of hunting down some poor kid. I don’t think I’d had the heart. No. I wanted to wait. Make damn sure I had the right man. Apparently I do.”

Sam ducked out to do some quick research and Travis pulled out the flamethrower equipment that he’d brought along, the parts to assemble some anyway. Dean figured one of these days he should do something about assembling a robust one so they didn’t have to make one every time they needed a flamethrower, they were going to get caught short at some point.

“So fire, huh?” Dean asked as he worked on assembling one.

“The only way I found to kill these bastards, deep fry them.” Travis answered.

“Well, that’s gonna be horrible.” Dean commented, “that what you did to Jack’s dad?”

“Uh huh.”

“Not wasting any time, are you?” Sam commented as he returned.

“None to waste.” Travis returned, “the guy hulks out, we won’t be finding bodies, just remains.”

“Well, what if he doesn’t hulk out?” Sam asked and Dean looked at his brother curiously, unless he missed his guess his brother had turned up something that suggested they could fight the hunger, “I did a little homework. I’ve been checking out the lore on Rougarous.”

“What, my 30 years of experience not good enough for you?” Travis asked, sounding offended.

“What?” Sam was baffled, this is what he did; he researched and turned up every skerrick of information that could be found, “no. No, I just wanted to be prepared. I mean, not that you didn’t…”

“Sam loves research.” Dean interrupted with both an explanation and subtle defence of his brother. He’d definitely learned to appreciate it and Sam’s viewpoint, even if shades of grey were difficult to understand for a black and white thinker, “he does. He keeps it under his mattress right next to his K-Y.”
“Look, everything you said checked out, of course.” Sam was quick to assure the older Hunter, “but I found a couple of interesting stories about people who have this Rougarou gene or whatever. See, they start to turn, but they never take the final step.”

“Really?” Dean asked, wondering exactly how hard making that choice would be for the sufferers. Probably about as difficult as fighting the blood lust for vampires and they’d seen how small a portion of that population had actually managed that.

“See, if they never eat human flesh they don’t fully transform.” Sam elaborated.

“Go vegan, stay human?” Dean asked. Sometimes it was a lot easier not to consider the role of choice in these things, but he’d never be able to return to the way of thinking from before his brother had proved that choice was just as large a part of being a monster as the physical.

“Basically. Or, in this case, eat a lot of raw meat, just not…”

“Long pig.” Dean finished.

“Right.”

“Good on you for the due diligence, Sam.” Travis said sarcastically, “but those are fairy tales. The fact is, every Rougarou I ever saw or heard of took that bite.”

“Okay, well, that doesn’t mean that Jack will.” Sam argued.

“So, what do we do? Sit and hope, and wait for a body count?” Travis returned.

“No, we talk to him. Explain what’s happening.” Sam returned, “that way he can fight it.”

“Fight it?” Travis asked with a laugh, “are you kidding me? You ever been really hungry? I mean, haven’t-eaten-in-days hungry?”

“Yeah.” Dean replied, not that he liked to think about it. He could see what Travis was getting at but he also understood that they couldn’t just kill someone for something they might be able to resist. That would make them no better than what they hunted.

“Right, then.” Travis continued, “somebody slaps a big, juicy sirloin in front of you, you walking away? That’s what we are to him now. Meat on legs.”

Dean had to admit that in that period he wouldn’t have turned away from a meal, but he also hadn’t had a reason to. If eating meant he’d lose Sam, though, he’d have probably happily starved to death. There was a reason Sam had never experienced anything like that after all.

“I’m sorry. I’m sure he’s a stand-up guy.” Travis continued, “but it’s pure, base instinct. Everything in nature’s gotta eat. You think he can stop himself because he’s nice?”

“I don’t know. But we’re not gonna kill him unless he does something to get killed for.”

“I agree.” Dean backed him up quietly, the demon blood may have been cleared from his brother’s system by a miracle they still didn’t quite understand but even now there were some hunters that would kill him simply because of his gifts even if they knew there was no demonic stuff involved, “Jack has a reason to try. He has a wife. Family. Might be enough for him. We’ve seen vampires fight the blood lust successfully, not many true but some.”

Travis glowered at them. Dean had a feeling he wasn’t going to accept it and not for the first time he
wondered what would be happening if that woman hadn’t intervened. He had a feeling she’d saved more than just Sam’s life and he wasn’t even thinking of the world or the ominous mention of the apocalypse she’d made.

Dean led the way to the impala and headed back to Jack’s house.

“Alright so we’re gonna go have a little chat with this guy.” Dean commented, “I hope he can resist, I really do. But worst case scenario, you gonna be okay with it?”

“Yeah. Just don’t write him off without giving him a chance.”

“It’s not me you have to worry about that with. You heard Travis, far as he knows they always turn. Maybe it will be too much for him just like most vamps can’t resist the blood lust.”

“We’ll just have to see.”

“Yeah. And let’s hope the angels stay away long enough for us to have a decent idea of which way he’ll swing. Because I don’t like his chances if we have to bolt.”

“Yeah.” Sam agreed.

“Why do you think the choice component keeps being forgotten?” Sam asked softly after a while.

“Because it’s easier to just classify human good not human bad.” Dean replied with a sigh, “easier and simpler. It’s far easier to feel like you’re a hero if you don’t have to consider the murkiness of choices. There’s creatures out there where their choices don’t change a thing, where they either don’t have the ability to choose or they’re not aware of what they’re doing. They’re a lot more cut and dried than the ones where choice is a factor.”

“Do you miss it?”

Dean gave a half laugh, trust Sam to pick up on that, “yes. But I wouldn’t go back for all the money in the world.”

Arriving they found the man watering in his back yard.

“Jack Montgomery?” Sam asked as they approached, continuing as he looked around at them, “I’m Sam Winchester. This is my brother, Dean. We need to talk.”

He looked at them in confusion, “about?”

“About you.” Sam told him bluntly, “about how you’re changing.”

“Excuse me?” Jack asked, a small flash of fear racing across his expression.

“You’re probably feeling your bones move under your skin.” Dean took over, “and your appetite’s reaching, you know, Hungry, Hungry Hippo levels. How am I doing so far?”

“Who the hell are you guys?” He asked.

“We’re people who know a little something about something.” Dean explained, or rather didn’t explain.

“We’re people who can help.” Sam continued, “please just hear us out.”

The explanation was both simpler and more complex than they’d thought. On the one hand he was
experiencing the stuff they were telling him about. On the other he was still basically a civilian who
until moments ago believed all this stuff was the stuff of fairy tales.

“A what?” He asked after they gave him the basics.

“A Rougarou.” Dean reiterated, “sounds made up, I know, but believe me, it’s not.”

“All right, I’ve noticed certain things.” He conceded, “I mean, some strange things. But I just…I
don’t know. I’m sick or something.”

“Your father was one of these things.” Sam told him. When Jack looked at him in confusion he
elaborated, “your real father. He passed it on to you.”

“No. Are you guys listening to yourselves?” Jack denied, “you sound like…”

“Let’s skip the whole ‘you guys sound crazy’, shall we?” Dean interrupted, “you’re hungry, Jack.
You’re only gonna get hungrier.”

“Hungrier for…?” Jack asked hesitantly.

“Long pig.” Dean told him, “a little ‘Manburger Helper’ may have crossed your mind already.”

“No.” Jack denied, but it was the type of no of someone who desperately doesn’t want to admit even
to themselves that something has been on their mind.

“It doesn’t have to be like this, Jack.” Sam told him, “you can fight it off. Others have.”

“No.” Jack reiterated.

“We’re not gonna lie to you though.” Dean stated, “it’s not gonna be easy. You’re gonna feel like an
alcoholic swimming around in whiskey. But I’m telling you, you gotta say no. Or…”

“Or what?”

“You feed once, and it’s all over.” Sam said before Dean could continue, finishing the statement with
a regretful sadness, “and then we’ll have to stop you.”

“Stop me?” Jack asked, “my dad, did somebody stop him?”

“Yes.” Sam told him honestly, “after he killed 8 people. A decent enough person beforehand to be a
dentist and have a wife. I don’t know about you but if I got to that point I’d WANT someone to stop
me.”

The information was obviously a little too much for him to take in and he shook his head.

“Get off my property right now I see you guys again, I’m calling the cops.”

“Jack, your wife, everybody you know, they’re in danger.” Sam tried to point out.

“Now!” He yelled.

They both sighed and left. Dean felt like pointing out that if he saw them again he wouldn’t be able
to call the cops because he’d no longer be human.

They set up discrete surveillance on the man. Over the afternoon and into the evening it was obvious
he was troubled, though whether over the information or his own desires it was hard to tell. Dean
suspected it was both. What bothered him more than the struggle the poor guy was going through was the words Sam had spoken to him. He wished he could dismiss them as lightly spoken words considered without true thought to what it meant but he couldn’t. He knew there was a time when his little brother had been seriously worried about going dark side, when he’d begged Dean to take him out if it came to that. He’d hoped that bleak outlook had faded from his brother’s thoughts.

“You don’t still worry about that, do you?” Dean asked softly.

“What? About going dark side?” Sam followed what he meant without difficulty, “not from supernatural causes, no. Not since our angel friend cleansed the blood from me.”

“I take it that you worry about it from non supernatural causes then. Not that there’s a chance of that.”

“Human’s aren’t paragons of virtue, history has shown that over and over. There’s a reason the saying about power corrupting exists.”

Dean snorted incredulously, “the day you start abusing any power you have is the day I start hunting the djinn that’s trapped me.”

Sam shot him a surprised look.

“I’m serious Sam. Either that or being possessed are the only reasons you could ever possibly do that.”

“Okay…” Sam sounded like he didn’t believe him.

“Seriously, Sam, how many Hunters would be bothered to even give someone like Jack a chance to choose?”

“I’m sure there’s others.”

Anything Dean might have said in response was interrupted as Jack got up from the seat he’d been sitting on for hours and wandered towards a window with a fire escape through which could be seen a woman.

“Damn it, Jack, no.” Sam pleaded with thin air even as he grabbed the flamethrower.

Dean gave his shoulder a quick squeeze as he grabbed his then he was out of the car. A split second decision had him racing up the fire escape behind the man, Sam giving him the boost he needed to get to the ladder.

Jack was actually on his way back down when he got to just below the window.

“You going to take care of me now?” He asked hoarsely.

“Do I need to?” Dean asked bluntly.

“I don’t know.” He admitted.

“Please don’t prove my brother wrong.” Dean gestured for him to precede him down the stairs.

“Why do you care?” Jack asked as he went ahead of the Hunter.

“Because he does. And because so many of us wouldn’t give you the chance to choose one way or the other. Hell, even me sometimes. The risk of what you might do. But being a monster is your
choice and you’re one of the few who may actually get to make that choice, no matter how hard it is.”

The relief was very visible on Sam’s face when they came reached the bottom and Jack was obviously not transformed.

“What, you planning on watching me for the rest of my life?” Jack asked.

“We can’t. Got worse on our arse than what you could turn into.” Dean told him, “but we’re going to try to stick around long enough to know if you can endure and then we’ll keep an eye on the news reports near you.”

“Taking a risk aren’t you?”

“Yeah.” Dean agreed, “and there’s certainly some, many actually, who’d think it’s too big a risk. But as I said, you can choose whether you act as a monster or not and that’s what it should hinge on.”

“Not going to say it’ll be easy.” Sam added, “not even going to say others who do our job are going to believe you can. It’s worth it though.”

Jack nodded silently.

“Okay, we’ll follow you back to your place.” Dean told him and Jack again nodded silently.

They hopped back in the impala.

“Think he’s going to be able to?” Sam asked softly.

“I think he just got a taste of just how difficult it’ll be.” Dean answered before starting up the car and following him back. He almost groaned aloud when they got there and saw Travis’ car parked outside, he should have known the older hunter wouldn’t have let it go, “I guess now we know where Travis is.”

“That stupid son of a bitch.” Sam commented with dread as they headed urgently into the house.

“I can’t make this mistake all over again.” They heard Travis say as they got within hearing distance, “I won’t be around in 30 years. This has got to end now.”

Dean swore silently as he put the pieces together before stepping into the room, “Travis, no. He can resist.”

“No he can’t. He’ll turn. They always turn.”

“He’s not mindless. He deserves the chance to try not to.” Sam added, joining his brother.

“And in 30 years when the next one turns? I’m not going to be around to take care of it.” Travis asked.

“We should be. And they won’t be blindsided by it like Jack was.” Dean replied.

“You got demons on your arse wanting you dead, kid.” Travis pointed out and the brother’s saw Jack do a double take at them.

“There’s several score less now than when they started trying.” Dean responded, “and they’ve given up for now it seems.”
Travis glared at him.

“Travis, we got this. If he turns we’ll sort. If his kid turns we’ll sort. They need the opportunity to make the choice.”

“The blood of those they kill will be on your hands.” Travis growled and stomped out.

Sam and Dean watched him leave then Dean released Jack and his wife, Michelle, from the ropes Travis had bound them with.

“Guess you weren’t kidding about some of your colleagues not believing it’s possible.” Jack commented softly.

“He’ll let it go for now. He’ll want to prove that we’re wrong.” Dean told him then looked over at Michelle, “I’m guessing you two got some stuff to talk about.”

“Yeah.” Jack agreed then looked back at the older brother, “speaking of talking about weird crap. Demons?”

Dean shrugged, “they want the apocalypse, to do that they gotta kill Sam for some reason they haven’t bothered explaining, we kinda don’t much like that idea so argued the point.”

Jack shook his head, “and I thought what’s going on with me was weird.”

“Compared to most of the population, it is.” Dean told him wryly.

“We’ll let you talk.” Sam stated, preparing to leave.

“Hey…before you go…” Jack asked hesitantly, continuing when they looked at him, “if I start losing, how…?”

“Incineration.” Dean told him sympathetically.

Jack made a face, “thanks.”

They nodded at him and headed back to the impala.

They stuck around a couple more days but he didn’t come close to crossing the line again, they just had to hope he could keep it up.
Chapter 32: Dress Up

Sam was reading over the case notes as they drove into Pennsylvania, something felt off but he couldn’t put his finger on what.

“Come on, man.” Dean complained, glancing over at him, “jobs don’t get much sweeter than this. You know? Dead vic with a gnawed-on neck, body drained of blood. And a witness who swears up and down that it was a vampire.”

“Think that’s part of what’s bothering me. Since when do civilians know a vampire when they see one?” Sam replied, “other than that, it’s a hell of a case.”

“Gee, drown me in enthusiasm, Sam.”

“Something feels off.” Sam admitted with a sigh.

“Something?” Dean glanced at him again, this time with naked concern on his face, “Spidey sense something?”

“Maybe.”

“Okay, in that case this might be even more in our ballpark.”

“True. Just be careful.”

“Always.”

When they reached town if Sam hadn’t known better he’d have thought Dean had timed taking this one to coincide with Oktoberfest. Even though he hadn’t Sam knew his brother would enjoy it for all he could. It was all he could do not to laugh as Dean spotted the pretzels and made a bee line for them, getting one for each of them.

A barmaid flirted with Dean on her way past and he reciprocated without even having to think about it. Whatever else had changed over the past few years Sam was glad his brother hadn’t changed in this at least.

Sam spotted a sheriff in the crowd, “looks like that’s our man.”
“Sheriff Deitrich?” Sam asked as they approached.

“Are you the boys from the fed?” The sheriff asked.

“Agents Angus and Young,” Sam fed him the false ids, “we called ahead about your problem.”

The sheriff looked uncomfortable, “right. I tell you what. Why don’t we talk this out away from the crowd, huh?”

He led them into the quiet of the morgue and pulled out the body they’d come about.

“Marissa Wright, 26. Just up from Larkin for the fest.” He gave the basic details of the victim then looked down at her and made a noise of regret, “terrible. Just terrible. I mean, it’s the last thing this town needs in peak tourist season.”

Sam wasn’t sure whether he was serious or just covering that he cared, though the fact that she hadn’t had her throat ripped open was puzzling him and he knew it was puzzling Dean too, “definitely the last thing Marissa Wright needed.”

Dean reached forward and moved the head to the side, exposing the two puncture wounds on her neck.

“What the hell?” Dean asked.

“Hey, you got me.” The sheriff agreed, not realising that what was confusing the older brother wasn’t what he was confused by, “I mean, this killer is some kind of grade A whacko, right? I mean, some Satan worshipping, Anne Rice reading gothic psycho vampire wannabe?”

Dean wasn’t going to touch that with a ten foot pole, “sheriff, in your report, you mentioned a witness.”


He slid the body away and directed them to where they could find Ed. The bar. It didn’t take much for them to find him, just the barmaid who’d flirted with Dean earlier.

“I remember you.” She said as they approached.

Sam’s eyes flicked to the other barmaid who’d just left but gave no other sign that there was something off.

“Oh, and I remember you, Jamie.” Dean returned, swiftly reading her name tag, “I never forget a pretty…everything.”

She appeared pleased at the complement, which given she was a barmaid said something. Sam almost wished they weren’t here working and his brother could play.

“We’re looking for Ed Brewer.” Sam told her.

“What do you want with Ed?” She asked with a frown.

“Well, we are,” Dean replied, clearing his throat as they both pulled out their ids, “federal agents. Mr Brewer was witness to a serious crime. We just need to…”

“Wait a minute. You’re a fed? Wow, you don’t come on like a fed.” She interrupted and cleared her
throat uncomfortably, “seriously?”

Dean leant forward and it was all Sam could do not to roll his eyes, “I’m a maverick, ma’am. A rebel with a badge. One thing I don’t play by? The rules.”

It didn’t quite fly with her and Sam interrupted, “okay, maverick. Um…so where can we find Mr Brewer?”

She pointed them to the guy in the corner getting sloshed.

“I told the cops everything I saw.” He stated dramatically once they’d introduced themselves, “no one believes me. Why should you be any different?”

“Believe me, Mr Brewer. We’re different.” Dean told him.

“I spoke the God’s honest truth, and now I’m the town joke.” Ed replied.

“Marissa Wright’s murder is no joke to us.” Sam stated, “and we wanna hear everything, no matter how strange it may seem.”

“We have a lot of experience with strange.” Dean backed up his brother.

“It was just after midnight. I just left here and like I do every night, I cut through the park on the way home.” He told them, just as dramatically as he’d started the conversation, “at first I thought it was a couple kissing. But she was…struggling too much. And this man, he was…well, he was biting her neck.”

“Can you describe her assailant?” Sam asked, anticipating having to coax him into details like any civilian exposed to the supernatural creatures.

“Oh, he was a vampire.” He responded promptly, surprising them and leaving them wondering what type of civilian could even recognise a vampire for what it was. He certainly wasn’t a Hunter.

“Okay, right. And by that, you mean…” Dean asked.

“You know, a vampire.” He insisted with a hiss for effect.

“Uh-huh. Yeah.” Dean replied, “so he looked like…”

“He looked like a vampire. You know, with the fangs, and the slicked back hair, and the fancy cape, and the little medallion thingy on the ribbon.”

“You mean, like a Dracula?” Dean asked incredulously.

“Exactly. Like a Dracula.” Ed confirmed, “right down to the accent.”

“The accent?” Sam asked, he had a feeling he was going to regret asking, “what did he say?”

“You know, something like:” Ed dramatically put his arm across his face and imitated the old film version of Dracula, “‘stay away, mortal. The night is mine!'”

He looked at them in silence for a moment, “you do believe me, don’t you?”

They looked at him for a moment, almost tempted to tell him how unlike movie vampires real ones were, then excused themselves.
Dean headed directly to the bar, “so got a beer back there for me?”

“I don’t know, Agent Young,” Jamie replied, “you off duty?”

“And then some.” Dean answered.

He joined Sam at another booth.

“So, what do you think?” Dean asked after checking that there was no one in hearing range, “goth psycho vampire wannabe, right?”

“Maybe.” Sam agreed hesitantly.

Dean looked at his brother, “maybe? Your Spidey sense acting up?”

“Um…” Sam paused for a bit to figure out the right way to word it, “I am sensing something. Don’t exactly know what. I have sensed it before but never found any odd news reports, so whatever it is doesn’t drop bodies or cause anything newsworthy. Or at least doesn’t usually."

“Huh.” Dean commented, “so we’d better stick around and make sure, huh?”

“They’re probably not involved.”

“Probably.” Dean agreed, “I’d bet going off the reservation isn’t limited to humans though. Do you have any idea who?”

Sam nodded, “the other barmaid.”

Okay, so we keep an eye on her and make sure she’s not involved.” Dean decided, “in the meantime, room’s paid for and it’s Oktoberfest. Come on, brother, beer and bar wenches.”

“Pretty sure women today don’t react well to the whole wench thing, Dean.” Sam told him with amusement, though if anyone could pull that off it was his brother.

“Hey, bar wench, where’s that beer?” Dean called, apparently intent on proving Sam wrong.

“Coming up good sir.” The lady called back.

“Dude, Oktoberfest.” Dean told him happily.

“There you go.” Jamie put the beer down in front of Dean then turned to Sam, “what can I get you?”

“Oh, he doesn’t drink.” Dean interrupted before Sam could reply and it was all he could do not to roll his eyes as his brother continued, “he’s a Christian Scientist. Doesn’t even take aspirin. It’s a real drag on stakeouts.”

Jamie chuckled, “you’re funny.”

“I’m a lot more than that.” Dean told her, charm fully in evidence, “love the chance to show you. What time you get off?”

“Ha, ha. Like I said, funny.” Jamie returned dryly before heading back to the bar.

Sam nearly laughed out aloud. Dean just turned his attention back to his beer in apparent enjoyment.

“Well, you enjoy yourself.” Sam told him, he wasn’t going to be drinking tonight even if he’d felt
like it thanks to his brother’s questionable sense of humour, “I’m gonna go back to the room and get some sleep.”

Dean’s eyes immediately shadowed with concern and Sam rolled his eyes.

“Relax, needing some sleep after a full day isn’t a sign of some impending doom.” Sam told him a tad irritated.

Dean relaxed again, “okay. Call if you need anything.”

Sam nodded and headed off, leaving Dean to enjoy Oktoberfest.

Once he’d finished his beer he approached Jamie at the bar again, “so how about tonight?”

“Oh. Sorry, I promised Lucy a girls’ night out.” She replied, indicating someone behind him and he turned to see the other barmaid, the one that had tipped Sam’s Spidey sense earlier, who gave him a smile and moved off, “besides, no self-respecting bar wench lets herself get picked up by a customer on the first try.”

He could almost hear his brother tell him ‘burn’ at that response.

“Well I’m not a customer. I’m a federal agent.” Dean replied.

“Try again tomorrow, G-man.” She told him with a chuckle.

If it wasn’t for the other barmaid pinging on Sam’s radar he’d have told her they’d be gone the next day. This case looked like a human perp trying to make it look strange more than anything else.

“If we’re still here I might.” He replied, “we mightn’t be staying on the case though.”

“What, it’s too weird for you?” She asked.

“Not weird enough.” He replied then with one last grin at her he returned to their room.

Sam was sleeping peacefully and Dean checked the defences automatically before he turned in himself.

The morning brought a phone call from the sheriff informing them of another weird murder overnight. This one with a witness swearing that it was a werewolf.

So first thing they were dealing with a young woman who was anxiously slurping her massive drink while telling them about her boyfriend feeding her the oldest line in the book to encourage a reluctant girlfriend to get frisky with them. Dean was decidedly unimpressed and if the guy hadn’t been dead would probably have clocked him one, coercion was far too close to rape in his book.

“And then it just…” she finished her story, “it just tore Rick into little pieces.”

“Ma’am, we understand how hard this is but can you describe the creature.” Dean asked warily.

“Oh.” She took another big slurp of her drink apparently to steady herself, “it was a werewolf.”

“A werewolf?” Sam asked, another supernatural creature that most civilians had trouble recognising for what they are.

She nodded and made an earnest noise.
“You’re sure?” Sam pressed.

“Oh, yeah.” She replied, “with the furry face, and the black nose, and the claws, and the torn up pants and shirt. Like from the old movies.”

“Um…” Sam struggled to find something to say.

“Whoa, okay, so…” Dean filled the silence, “thank you for your time.”

They left as she went back to her drink and headed to the morgue.

“First a Dracula, and now a full on movie time wolf man?” Dean complained as they looked for the correct tray so they could take a look at the body, “what the hell is going on in this town?”

Sam didn’t answer as he located the tray, pulled it out, and unzipped it. It was bad even for those used to seeing carnage left behind by various supernatural creatures.

“Damn.” Dean exclaimed.

Sam let out a controlled breath, “all right. Whatever did this, wasn’t a psycho wannabe.”

He fished out a mess of hair with his pen to illustrate what he meant then poked around some more.

“Look at those white marks. Right down to the bone and deeper.” He noted.

“Strong enough to tear a healthy man apart, limb from limb. Could be a werewolf.” Dean agreed, aside from the weird appearance that it. And werewolves weren’t together enough transformed to disguise themselves.

“Except, look.” Sam pointed, “heart’s still there, in one piece. They never leave the heart behind.”

“Thus, I reiterate. What the hell is going on?” Dean replied.

“Well, I was hoping you boys could tell me.” The sheriff stated, coming in and catching the last comment, “just got a rush job back from the lab on those fibres we found on the body. Canine, wolf hairs.”

The brothers looked at each other and tried to figure out how all this added up. The sheer strength involved ruled out it being a human perpetrator.

“I’m getting a headache.” Dean complained.

They excused themselves from the sheriff, not really having answers for him at this point or even a clear idea what they were hunting, and headed back to the bar for some food.

“I don’t know, man. Looks like we’ve stumbled onto a midnight showing of Dracula Meets Wolf Man. Is that it?” Dean complained.

“I don’t know. I mean, Wolf Man seems real enough. Makes Dracula seem less impossible, I guess.” Sam replied.

“Yeah, but werewolves don’t grow wolf hair. That’s just a myth.” Dean pointed out.

“Yeah.” Sam agreed, “not to mention I’d have sensed if either were around.”

“So what, we’ve got something or somethings pretending to be a vampire and a werewolf monster-
mashing this town?” Dean asked.

They went silent as Jamie brought some drinks over for them.

“Looks like you guys are staying a while.” Jamie noted, “I heard about Rick Deacon.”

“Yeah. This case just got weird enough for our department.” Dean replied.

She gave a small laugh, “well, beers are on me.”

She went to clear off the empty glasses but paused and looked back at Dean, “and just so you know, I get off at midnight tonight.”

“Oh, it’s not another girls’ night out?” Dean asked and Sam barely kept a straight face at the news that his brother had actually struck out the night before.

“Doesn’t have to be.” Jamie flirted in reply.

“Okay then. I’ll see you tonight.” Dean told her.

“Okay then.” She replied.

Sam watched him as she walked away and tried not to chuckle.

Dean turned back to him after a moment, “hey, you think this Dracula could turn into a bat?”

Sam didn’t dignify that with a response, leave it to his brother to find something to joke about even in the middle of a weird case.

“That’d be cool.” Dean continued.

Late that night they got another call from the sheriff, this time a mummy at the museum. The victim was a security guard who’d been on the phone with one of the museum’s experts at the time. Not that the account was particularly helpful, though the report of him firing his gun, the spend bullet casings, and no evidence of hitting something else did tell them some things. Like that ordinary bullets did nothing.

They took a look at the sarcophagus while the police wheeled the corpse away. A small label caught Sam’s eye and he pointed it out, careful not to disturb it since the police would both be rather annoyed and pick up on their not being real law enforcement if they messed up the chain of evidence.

“This sarcophagus isn’t ancient. It’s from a prop house in Philly.” He told Dean.

“Oh. Goes well with the bucket of dry ice he was keeping in it.” Dean commented, pointing out the small bucket. Neither were likely to actually lead the police to the perpetrator but that wouldn’t stop them being annoyed and suspicious if they were disturbed.

“Is he making his own special effects?” Sam asked, puzzled.

“A mummy with good sense of showmanship.” Dean returned.

“This is stupid.” Sam complained.

Dean suddenly realised the time, “damn it. Jamie. I’m late. You good here with the mummy and the crazy…?”
Dean waved his hands around to indicate the whole confusing situation.

“Yeah.” Sam nodded and Dean headed out the door.

Dean got to the bar just in time to encounter Jamie running away from something. A something that turned out to be the Dracula that had brought them to town to start with. He automatically put himself between Jamie and whatever it actually was.

“Son of a bitch.” He complained, looking over the creature.

“You should not use such language in the presence of my bride.” The Dracula returned with a thick accent.

Even if he hadn’t already been after this guy, even if he’d actually been human, he’d have set out to take him down after that statement. If he was to wed Jamie there’d be no need to chase her down an ally, and Jamie wouldn’t be as scared as she was. Dean couldn’t understand in the slightest why some chose to force such interactions, mutual pleasure was his goal and anything else was just disgusting and a definite turn off.

“Okay.” Dean stated and slugged the pretend vampire.

He bounced back up and hissed at Dean, bearing two long fangs as he did so. Dean went the slug him again but the Dracula blocked him this time and they ended up going hand to hand.

“Jamie, run!” Dean called as he realised how strong the guy was.

“You have no choice in the matter, Mr Harker. Mina is mine!” The Dracula declared as she took off. Dean noted the odd names used for future reference.

The pretend vampire bared his fangs again and dramatically leant towards his neck with Dean trying to hold him off, he got a hold of the ear and was surprised when it came off in his hand. Even though he hadn’t expected it to come off it had the desired effect; the Dracula hissed again and took off. Leaving Dean with the ear and the stupid medallion he’d had around his neck.

Dean glanced at the ear, half expecting it to be some kind of prosthetic and nearly dropped it when he recognised what it really was. He didn’t though, shoving it and the medallion into a pocket even as he dashed after the guy.

Unfortunately he leapt over a gate that Dean had no chance of climbing over, incongruously hopped on a small scooter, and drove off.

With a shake of his head he decided to find Jamie, unless he missed his guess the bastard would come after her again. The bar was closest so he checked there first and was relieved to find her there. He hadn’t been looking forward to hunting up her address just so he could check she was okay.

He send a quick message to his brother, ‘Bar. Now.’ Before taking a closer look at the two pieces of evidence he’d torn from the Dracula then joining Jamie at the table for a drink.

Sam arrived a little while later.

“Hey.” Dean greeted him.

“You guys all right?” Sam asked, running an eye over both of them. Dean was a little scuffed up but nothing needing stitches. Jamie didn’t have a scratch though she was certainly spooked.
“Yeah, I think so.” Dean replied, “and I think I know what’s going on.”

“Yeah?” Sam asked.

“Part of it at least.” Dean pulled out the now wrapped in towel ear and dropped it in front of his brother.

Sam unfolded it to find the ear and pulled a face, “uh…the ear part?”

“Ripped it off of Dracula’s head. Touch it.” Dean told him.

That was the last thing he wanted to do but his brother wasn’t joking around, this time at least, so he did.

“Eww.” He complained.

“Feel familiar to you?”

“In more ways than one.” Sam sighed as he placed both the texture and the sense he got from it once he was touching it.

“Skin of a Shapeshifter.” Dean confirmed though he also tapped his temple, after a quick glance to make sure Jamie was distracted, in query and Sam nodded minutely, “just like St. Louis and just like Milwaukee. Of course, this one’s all whole new buckets of crazy. Oh, and…”

Dean dug through his pockets and pulled out the medallion, “this. I pulled it off during the fight. Look at the label on the ribbon.”

Sam took a look and wasn’t particularly surprised to find the same label that had been attached to the sarcophagus.

“It’s a costume rental.” Sam noted out aloud.

“All three monsters, the Dracula, Wolf Man, the mummy, all the same critter. Which means we need to catch this freak before he *Creature-From-the-Black-Lagoons* somebody.”

“So you guys are like Mulder and Scully or something?” Jamie asked and Sam realised Dean hadn’t even tried to explain anything to her just yet, “and *The X Files* are real?”

Dean chuckled, glad she was settled enough to ask questions again but not that she had to deal with this, “no, *The X Files* is a TV show. This is real.”

“Oh.” She replied, still way too close to freaking out for Dean’s comfort.

“Okay, so the stagecraft, the costuming. It’s like he’s trying to re-enact his favourite monster movie moments right down to the bloody murders.” Sam thought out aloud.

“Wait a second. Who the hell is Mina?” Jamie asked suddenly.

“Mina?” Sam asked.

“Yeah, it’s what he called Jamie.” Dean remembered, “and he called me Mr Harker.”

“Jonathan Harker?” Sam asked, continuing when Dean looked at him confused for actually knowing the name, apparently the movie was a little too old for Dean, “they’re characters from the movies and the novels. Mina, Dracula’s intended bride. Harker, the fiancé that stands in the way. Seems like he’s
“fixating on you. Like he sees you as his bride.”

“Oh. Well, lucky me.” Jamie complained and neither brother could blame her. This situation was creepy enough but to have it focused on you would be much worse.

“But to fixate on you, the shifter has to have seen you before or been around you.” Sam told her and realised that the shifter he’d been sensing, the co-worker and best friend of Jamie, fit that bill exactly, “apparent gender is fluid for shifters just so you know.”

“So while he’s attacking you as a male pretend vampire you might know them as a female in everyday life.” Dean clarified, picking up on what Sam was getting at and trying to figure out how to check if it was her without revealing his brother’s abilities.

“Sounds almost like you know who.” Jamie noted.

“We know of one.” Dean replied cautiously, “and they’re in the right position to be focused on you.”

“However we’ve also come across a lot who aren’t killing or messing with lives and we think that they’re no more inclined normally to hurting people as normal humans.” Sam added.

“So you don’t want to disrupt their life if it’s not them.” Jamie guessed.

“Yeah.” Sam agreed, “unfortunately that would mean there’s a second one somewhere that we haven’t found and, well, logic and common sense says that’s fairly unlikely.”

“There is Ed, Lucy swears he has a crush on me. He come in almost every night.” Jamie said thoughtfully.

“Ed Brewer, Ed?” Sam asked, continuing when she nodded, “already cleared him, he’s not a shifter.”

“Why? When you didn’t know until tonight what it was?” Jamie asked.

“Because it’s a good idea to know where all…abnormal…beings are just in case.” Dean told her.

“There are others? More monsters are real?” Jamie asked.

“Some of them. Yeah.” Dean replied.

Sam slipped into the dark to check the entrances. Both of them would have felt better to be able to fortify the place, but that wouldn’t help against a shifter.

“And this shapeshifter he could turn into different people?” Jamie continued.

“Yeah. Except this one’s turning into the great monsters of screenland, which is a new one for me.” Dean returned.

“You’re not really FBI, are you?” Jamie asked.

“Not so much.” Dean admitted.

In the dark Sam grinned, she was definitely a smart one. His brother wasn’t flirting anymore, that had switched off like a light as soon as she’d been threatened and unless he didn’t know his brother it wouldn’t return unless she restarted it. Especially with what she’d been subjected to.

“So…this is what you do? You and your partner just tramp across the country on your own dime
until you find some horrible nightmare to fight?” She continued.

Dean shrugged, “some people paint.”

“Wow.” Jamie returned and Dean looked at her surprised.

“What?” Dean asked.

“That must suck.” Jamie replied, “I mean…you’re giving up your life for this terrible…I don’t know, responsibility.”

Dean chuckled, “neither of us really chose this life. When you get targeted like my brother and I… well…you can either go into hiding for the rest of your life or you can do something to help others who garner the same type of attention even if it’s not quite as intense.”

“What do you mean targeted?” Jamie asked.

“Our mother was killed when we were kids, our dad a couple of years ago, there’s some creatures out there hunting us, we gotta keep moving regardless so may as well help people as we do. Do some good, save people, let them have normal lives even if we have no hope of it.” Dean replied, “it’s kinda like a calling.”

“You weren’t worried that those hunting you could hurt those you help?” Jamie asked and the question seemed genuinely curious rather than worried.

“We did for quite a while. For the most part those hunting us would consider those we help as beneath their notice though and the rest wouldn’t consider them useful even as pawns unless they could bring it to our attention, which is pretty hard when they don’t know where we are and if they did would just come after us directly.” Dean replied.

“So does that make you some kind of monk or something?” Jamie asked.

Sam made sure his attention was directed at the doors, he could tell where this was going.

“You know, celibate?” Jamie elaborated when Dean looked at her confused.

“Man, I hope not.” Dean told her.

Sam ignored them as she initiated a kissing session. She might have forgotten his presence but his brother wouldn’t have, not that it would bother Dean.

Sam stiffened as he sensed a shifter approaching, tapping on a table a couple of times to alert Dean he slipped further out of sight even as the woman switched on the light.

“Holy crap. Oh, my God, Jamie.” Lucy exclaimed.

Sam frowned as he realised she’d brought the bottle of alcohol in her hand with her, the chances of her being uninvolved dropped even lower.

“Guys, I’m sorry.” Lucy continued, “I thought you guys were going out.”

“Lucy, it’s okay. Listen…”

“You know what…I just came to borrow a bottle. I got something going on back at my…” Lucy trailed off and Sam’s hopes sank, with that lie the chances of her not being the shifter killing people bottomed out and he freed the Colt in case, “anyway, you guys look really busy. So I’m just gonna
get out of your hair.”

“No, seriously…” Jamie started only to have Dean interrupt.

“Before you go, mind telling us where you were, say, an hour ago?”

Her face fell, “why?”

“Because,” Dean replied, slipping out past Jamie and putting himself between her and the shifter, “I pulled the ear off a shifter that attacked Jamie and you’re the only one we’re aware of in the area. So where were you?”

Instead of answering she got an ugly look on her face, threw the bottle at him, which he barely managed to deflect away from the table and Jamie, then grabbed up a knife from behind the bar and launched herself at him.

His general paranoid nature led him to have a silver knife on him as a matter of course and he snatched it out. She never reached him though, Sam aimed and shot her before she managed to get halfway.

Jamie gave a small shriek.

“Sorry.” Dean told her softly, “careful of the glass.”

“Was she…was she…”

“Probably.” Sam answered, “she brought that bottle with her.”

“Why would she do that? Why lie about that?” Jamie asked.

“Don’t know. I suspect we’ll find out more if we took a look at her place.” Sam replied, looking behind the bar for some bleach.

“Why are you doing that?” Jamie asked.

“Did you want to try explaining to the sheriff that she could assume the forms of others and chose to take the forms of monsters in order to re-enact their onscreen murders?” Dean asked.

“Good point.” Jamie replied, showing a resilience most civilians didn’t have in this situation, then deftly grabbed Lucy’s purse.

She poked through the purse, extracting the driver’s license and keys, while Sam brought over a dustpan and brush, mop and the bleach and Dean picked up Lucy’s body and took it out to the impala.

He raised an eyebrow at her when he returned.

“I need to know.” She replied to the unspoken question.

“She has a point.” Sam noted as he finished the clean-up, “especially if she has to report her missing at the beginning of next shift. Would be nice to know exactly what was going on too.”

“Point.” Dean agreed.

Once everything had been tidied up and the place secured they headed to the address on her licence. It looked like an ordinary home initially, though they found several costumes carefully arranged in
the bedroom; both ones already seen in this little killing spree and several others.

Then they found the basement, which had been redone to resemble the inside of a castle. One room had various pieces of furniture straight out of various monster movies and another done up like a ladies bed chamber. Jamie looked sick when they found the latter and neither brother could blame her; it had a lock on the outside of the door and a dress in her size on display.

“Okay, we seen enough. This’ll be more than enough for law enforcement to label her the murderer and master of disguise.” Dean decided and ushered both of them out.

“You okay?” He asked Jamie once they were out.

“Yeah. Hard to believe my best friend was so…crazy. Was our friendship made up too?” Jamie replied.

“Probably.” Sam told her sadly, “there was an old style painting with her face. Probably connected to Dracula since she seemed so fixated on that film.”

“I want to go home now.” Jamie sighed.

“We can drop you off.” Dean told her.

“Do you have to?” She asked.

“What do you mean?” Dean asked.

“Why waste the one good thing to come from this? You’ll be gone tomorrow.” She replied.

Sam chuckled, “I can drop you both off and take care of things.”

“Sounds like a plan.” Jamie agreed.

“Well I’m not going to argue.” Dean replied.

They hopped into the impala and drove to Jamie’s place where Dean gave Sam the keys and headed inside with her.

Sam just grinned and headed out to the closest forested area to salt and burn the shifter’s corpse before burying it. Then he returned to the motel.

The next morning he collected Dean as he was saying farewell to Jamie as she was heading off to work.

They headed out of town, Sam setting up the laptop to follow any news from the town so they’d know how things panned out.
Chapter 33: Imposed Anxiety

"We got anything?" Dean asked as he came in with breakfast and coffee. It was much more common for them to eat either in the impala or whatever motel room they were in lately, just from the purely more secure aspects.

"Lucy has landed on the wanted fugitive lists." Sam replied, "they’re listing her as a master of disguise with uncertain sex and believed to be armed and dangerous."

"Kinda what we were hoping for." Dean noted, handing Sam’s portions to him, “anything new?”

"Rock Ridge, Colorado. Three dead in three days, all of apparent heart attacks in otherwise healthy individuals."

"Sometimes heart attacks happen, even in clusters." Dean pointed out, “what makes you think this is us?”

"All were perfectly healthy, one was a marathon runner.”

"Not exactly a high risk of heart attack. Okay, eat up. We’ll get on our way once you’ve eaten.”

It didn’t take long before they were introducing themselves to the coroner as FBI agents, who promptly showed them the corpse in question.

“Agent Tyler, Agent Perry, meet Frank O’Brian.”

“He died of a heart attack, right?” Sam asked.

“Three days ago.” The coroner confirmed.

“But O’Brian was 44 years old and according to this a marathon runner.” Sam pointed out.

“Everybody drops dead sooner or later.” The coroner replied, “it’s why I got job security.”

“But Frank kicked it here.” Dean inserted with a feeling the coroner wasn’t particularly interested in doing his job, “just yesterday, two perfectly healthy men bit it in Maumee, all heart attacks. You don’t think that’s strange?”
“Sounds like Maumee’s problem to me.” The coroner returned, “why does the FBI give a damn, anyway?”

“We just want to see the results of Frank’s autopsy.” Dean replied, side stepping the question.

“What autopsy?” The coroner replied.

Dean barely restrained himself from sighing, “the one you’re gonna do.”

With a bit of grumbling the coroner moved the corpse into the examination area and began the autopsy in front of them. If he thought he would chase them away with the procedure he was mistaken.

“First dead body?” He asked as he cut into it.

“Far from it.” Dean replied.

“Oh, good. Because these suckers can get pretty ripe.” The coroner returned, “hey, hand me those rib cutters, would you?”

Dean handed over the requested tool without any confusion. While the coroner busied himself with the ribs Dean looked over the other marks on the corpse.

“Is that from a wedding ring?” He asked, spotting a pale area on the ring finger, “I didn’t think Frank was married.”

“Ain’t my department.” The coroner replied uninterested.

Sam picked up the hand Dean had noticed and indicated the various scrapes, “any idea how he got these?”

“You know what? When you drop dead, you actually tend to drop.” Came the disinterested answer, “body probably got scraped up when it hit the ground. Huh.”

“What?” Sam asked.

“I can’t find any blockages in any of the major arteries.” The coroner replied, then pulled the heart out, which did succeed in getting Dean to gag slightly, “heart looks pretty damn healthy.”

The coroner handed the organ to Dean, “hold that a second, would you?”

Sam nearly laughed except something undefinable changed when the organ landed in his brother’s hands. He was trying to figure out what and how to ask when the coroner did something that squirted some kind of fluid over his face.

“Oh, sorry. Spleen juice.” The coroner said insincerely.

The autopsy didn’t produce any further interesting results and they headed to the police department after Sam had cleaned the stuff off his face.

“You okay?” Sam asked once they were out of the building and away from prying ears.

“Yeah, why?” Dean asked looking at him worriedly, “your Spidey sense?”

“Yeah. But what I’m not quite sure.”
“Okay. Let me know when you figure it out.”

“Okay. You’ll tell me if you notice anything?”

“Of course.”

At the police department they had to wait for the sheriff to be available. Eventually the sheriff poked his head out.

“Hell’s bells, Linus, have you seen my…” He interrupted himself as he spotted the brothers as they rose to their feet, “who are they?”

“Federal agents, I…” Linus replied.

“And you kept them waiting?” The sheriff interrupted.

“You said not to disturb…” Linus protested and the brothers felt a rough sympathy for him; he couldn’t win.

“Come on back, fellas.” The sheriff said, waving them over. He stopped them at the door though, “shoes off.”

Sam and Dean glanced at each other then toed off their shoes, it wasn’t worth making an issue over his eccentricity, then followed him in in socks.

“Al Britton. Good to meet you.” The sheriff introduced himself, shaking their hands. Again Sam felt that odd undefinable feeling.

“You too.” Sam replied. Al waved them to a couple of seats in front of his desk, “thank you.”

First thing the sheriff did as he sat down was slather hand sanitiser all over his hands.

“Okay.” Al said, “so, what can I do for Uncle Sam?”

“Well, we’re looking into the death of Frank O’Brian.” Sam explained, “we understand some of your men found his body?”

“They did.” Al confirmed, “me and Frank…we were friends. Hell, we were Gamecocks.”

Dean laughed, the sheriff glared at him, and Dean schooled his expression.

“That’s our softball team’s name.” Al told him almost defensively. Dean nodded in acceptance, “they’re majestic animals.”

He was silent for a bit as Dean tried to figure out what to say then continued, “I knew Frank since high school. To be honest, I just this morning got up the strength to go see him. Frank was…he was a good man.”

“Yeah. Big heart.” Dean quipped and Sam shot him a glare.

“Before he died, did you notice Frank acting strange?” Sam asked, “maybe scared of something?”

“Oh, hell, yeah.” Al answered, “real jumpy.”

“You know what scared him?” Sam asked.
“No. Wouldn’t answer his phone.” Al returned, “finally sent some of my boys over to check on him and...well, you know the rest.”

The sheriff started coughing and they were treated to a repeat of his hand sanitiser routine once he finished.

“So why do the feds give a crap?” Al asked, “you don’t really think there’s a case here.”

“No, no, it’s probably nothing. Just a heart attack.” Dean replied.

They excused themselves a short while later.

“No way that was a heart attack.” Dean declared once they were outside.

“Definitely no way.” Sam agreed, “three victims, all with those same red scratches. Went from jittery to terrified to dead within 48 hours.”

“So something scared them to death?” Dean asked.

“Alright, so what can do that?” Sam asked.


“Yeah. So we make a list and start crossing things off.” Sam replied. That undefinable feeling was getting stronger.

“Alright. Who was the last person to see Frank O’Brien alive?”

“Uh…his neighbour, Mark Hutchins.”

Dean looked worriedly ahead of them, “hang on, hang on.”

“What?” Sam asked, looking at his brother with concern.

“I don’t like the looks of those teenagers down there.” Dean told him and Sam looked at them. They looked like ordinary teenagers and his senses weren’t indicating any supernatural creature.

“Let’s walk this way.” Dean declared and headed across the road before Sam could say anything.

Sam hurried to catch up, “dude? Are you okay?”

“What? Yeah, I’m fine.” Dean dismissed and led the way to the neighbour’s house.

Said neighbour had quite a collection of reptiles and Dean watched them warily. Sam frowned, while they hadn’t encountered many reptiles with their job he was sure a phobia of reptiles would have come up at some point, it wasn’t like the creatures were rare.

“Tyler and Perry.” Mark commented after they introduced themselves, “just like Aerosmith.”

“Yeah, small world.” Sam returned, “so the last time you saw Frank O’Brien…”

“Monday.” Mark replied promptly, “he was watching me from his window. I waved at him, but he just closed the curtains.”

“Did you speak to him recently? Did he seem different? Um...scared?” Sam asked.

“Oh, totally. He was freaking out.” Mark confirmed.
An alligator splashing in its enclosure distracted both brothers, Dean with nervousness and Sam with worry as he noted his brother’s reaction. He was starting to get the bad feeling that his brother was the next target of whatever this thing was they were hunting.

“Do you know…uh…do you know what scared him?” Dean asked.


“Witches?” Sam replied, that was certainly a possibility even if they hadn’t found any hex bags so far and it didn’t feel like the magic he’d encountered before, “like…?”

“Wizard of Oz was on TV the other night, right?” Mark elaborated, “and he said that green bitch was totally out to get him.”

Sam and Dean glanced at each other; that just dropped down in the list as a more likely possibility.

“Anything else scare him?” Sam asked.

“Everything else scared him.” Mark replied, “Al Qaeda, ferrets, artificial sweetener, those PEZ dispensers with their dead little eyes. Lots of stuff.”

“So tell me, what was Frank like?” Sam asked, noting as he did Dean looking around at the menagerie warily.

For the first time Mark looked hesitant to answer, “I mean, he’s dead, you know, I don’t want to hammer him but…he got better.”

“Got better?” Sam pressed.

“Well, in high school he was a dick.” Mark admitted.

“A dick?” Sam asked.

“Like a bully. I mean, he probably taped half the town’s butt cheeks together…” Mark trailed off as Dean gave a small laugh, “mine included.”

Dean schooled his expression. It wasn’t truly that he found it amusing, he’d never been a bully after all, but neither he nor Sam had ever been subjected to stuff like that.

“So he pissed a lot of people off.” Dean stated, “you think anyone would have wanted to get revenge?”

“Well, I don’t…” Mark started then looked at them worriedly, “Frank had a heart attack, right?”

“Just answer the question, sir.” Sam replied, banking on the whole ‘response to authority’ thing that was ingrained in society.

“No, I don’t think so. Like I said, he got better.” Mark returned forcefully, “and after what happened to his wife…”

“His wife?” Dean asked, “so he was married?”

“She died, about 20 years ago.” Mark confirmed, “Frank was really broken up about it.”

Ghost was looking like a definite possibility to Sam, especially as what he kept sensing had some aspects in common with what he normally sensed from ghosts.
Dean mulled that information over for a moment, then his attention was captivated by the large python draped around Mark’s shoulders even though the snake hadn’t moved significantly.

Mark noticed and laughed, “don’t be scared at Donny, he’s a sweetheart. It’s Marie you gotta look out for. She smells fear.”

He nodded at something over Dean’s shoulder and the older brother abruptly became aware of another large python coming over the back of the couch.

Normally Sam wouldn’t have worried about his brother in this sort of situation. Even dealing with a phobia he could get things done, yet this time he gasped and barely contained his reaction. Seeing the utter terror behind the mask Dean put up was more than Sam could sit still for and he carefully peeled the snake off his brother and handed it to the reptile enthusiast before excusing them and walking Dean out to the car.

“You okay?” He asked quietly.

“Yeah. I’m fine.” Dean replied automatically.

“So being scared of reptiles is normal for you?” Sam pressed with his scepticism unhidden.

“I…” Dean shook his head, “I don’t know, never really came up before.”

Sam was willing to bet that it had never come up before because it had never been an issue before.

They headed back into town and split up, though Sam was hesitating on that. With how odd Dean was acting he didn’t want to leave him alone. They didn’t have a choice if they were time critical like he suspected.

It was dark when he returned to the impala where Dean was waiting for him. He noted Dean near jumped out of his skin when he got in the car.

“Any luck at the county clerk’s office?” He asked without commenting on his brother’s jumpiness.

“I’m not sure I’d call it luck.” Dean replied, pulling out a printout of a news article, “Frank’s wife, Jessie, was manic depressive. She went off her meds back in ’88 and vanished. They found her two weeks later, three towns over, strung up in her motel room. Suicide.”

“Any chance Frank helped her along to the other side?” Sam asked, at least Dean was acting mostly normal right now.

“No, Frank was working a swing shift when she disappeared. Airtight alibi.” Dean returned.

He started up the car and started heading back to the hotel, “how was Frank’s pad?”

“Clean. Searched it top to bottom, no EMF, no hex bags, no sulphur. Not even the vague sense I’ve been picking up since we started investigating.” Sam returned.

“So probably no ghost, no witches, no demons.” Dean concluded, “three down and 97 to go.”

“Yeah.” Sam agreed, he noticed they didn’t seem to be going as fast as Dean normally drove and glanced over at the speedo, “dude, you’re going 20.”

“And?” Dean asked and Sam felt his worry ratchet up another notch.

“That’s the speed limit.” Sam noted, not that it was a bad thing just quite atypical for his daredevil
brother.

“What? Safety’s a crime now?” Dean asked and Sam decided not to push his brother until him going into a panic attack wouldn’t create problems. Until Dean drove past the hotel anyway.

“What are you going? That was our hotel.”

“Sam, I’m not gonna make a left hand turn into oncoming traffic. I’m not suicidal.” Dean returned, talking at a much faster clip than normal.

Sam looked at him alarmed and only half noted that the EMF detector he’d forgotten to turn off was going off for a moment.

“Did I just say that?” Dean asked, sounding a little bit more normal, “that’s kind of weird.”

“You hear something?” Sam asked, the sound from the EMF detector finally registering. He dug out the detector and saw with more than a little alarm that it went off when it got close to his brother.

“What the hell?” Dean asked, looking at the device with obvious mounting fear, “am I haunted? Am I haunted?”

Sam switched the device off fast, “okay, let’s just get to the hotel. We can figure out what’s going on once we’re there.”

“But…” Dean sounded a hair’s breadth from a full blown panic attack.

“Whatever it is, we’ll figure it out.” Sam told him as reassuringly as he could. He mentally noted what time it was and realised it was too late to give Bobby a call, he’d have to call in the morning.

Somehow he managed to coax Dean into the hotel carpark then up to their room and finally into sleeping.

Sam sent Bobby a message then next morning he called him as he grabbed breakfast for both of them. Bobby did manage to id what it was, unfortunately he didn’t know how to fix it off the top of his head.

“Yeah, alright, Bobby. Keep looking.” Sam finished as he returned to the hotel. His steps slowed as he registered music coming from the impala.

He was surprised on approaching the car to find Dean lying in the front seat air drumming along to the song, he’d left his brother in the hotel room.

Dean sat up with a gasp when Sam banged on the roof to get his attention.

He turned off the music and climbed out, Sam did not like the naked fear showing on his face.

“Dude, look at this.” Dean exclaimed, showing him the beginnings of the red marks on his forearms.

“I just talked to Bobby.” Sam told him.

“And?” Dean asked, still sounding just short of panic.

“Well, you’re not gonna like it.” Sam answered, handing the doughnuts to Dean and was surprised and even more concerned when his brother just tossed them into the car.

“What?”
“It’s ghost sickness.” Sam explained.

“Ghost sickness?” Dean asked.

“Yeah.”

“Oh, God, no.”

“Yeah.” Sam was quite sure his brother actually had no idea what that meant.

“I don’t even know what that is.” Dean admitted a moment later.

“Okay. Some cultures believe spirits can infect the living with disease, which is why they stopped displaying bodies and started taking them to funeral homes.” Sam explained.

“Okay, get to the good stuff.” Dean instructed, at least being given information was calming him down.

“Symptoms are: you get anxious, then scared, then really scared, then your heart gives out.” Sam told him, “sound familiar?”

“But we haven’t seen a ghost in weeks.” Dean protested.

“I doubt you caught it from a ghost. Look, once a spirit infects that first person ghost sickness can spread like any sickness. Through a cough, a handshake. It’s like the flu.” Sam explained, wondering how much was actually being comprehended by his brother. Normally he wouldn’t worry about that but his brother was definitely struggling, “now, Frank O’Brien was the first to die which means he was probably the first infected. Patient zero.”

“Our very own outbreak monkey.” Dean declared and Sam was glad for the indication his brother was following him.

“Right. Get this. Frank was in Maumee over the weekend. Softball tournament. Which is where he must have infected the other two victims.” Sam continued.

“Were they Gamecocks?” Dean asked.

“Cornjerkers.” Sam replied.

“So a ghost infected Frank, he passed it on to the other guys, and then I got it from his corpse?” Dean asked.

“Right.” Sam confirmed.

“So now what? I have 48 hours before I go insane and my heart stops?” Dean said, fear starting to resurface.

“More like 24.” Sam replied reluctantly.

“Super.”

“Yeah.”

“Well why me? Why not you? You got hit with spleen juice.” Dean demanded, though he’d have been demanding why it wasn’t him if Sam had been the one infected.
“Yeah. See, Bobby and I have a theory about that too.” Sam told him reluctantly, “turns out all three victims shared a certain…personality type.”

Dean looked at him confused and Sam continued, “Frank was a bully, the other two victims one was a vice principal, the other was a bouncer.”

“Oh, okay.”

“Basically, they were all dicks.”

“So you’re saying I’m a dick?” Dean asked sounding hurt and offended.

“No, no, it’s not just that.” Sam hastened to explain, “all three victims used fear as a weapon. Now this disease is just returning the favour.”

“I don’t scare people.” Dean insisted.

“Dean, all we do is scare people.”

“Okay, well, then you’re a dick too.”

“Apparently, I’m not.”

“Whatever. How do we stop it?” Dean demanded.

“We gank the ghost that started all this.” Sam told him, “we do that, the disease should clear up.”

“You thinking Frank’s wife?”

“Who knows why she killed herself, you know?” Sam watched as his brother took a breath, focusing on the direction they had for what to do, “hey, what are you doing waiting out here, anyway?”

“Our room’s on the fourth floor.” Dean explained looking embarrassed, continuing when Sam looked at him blankly, “it’s high.”

Sam sighed as it clicked what the issue was, “I’ll see if I can move us down to the first.”

“Thanks.” Dean told him.

“Sure.” Sam replied feeling quite disconcerted by the naked gratitude being directed at him by his big brother.

Dean hopped back in the impala while Sam headed into the hotel office.

“Hey, I’m sorry to ask but is it possible to move us from the fourth floor down to the first?” He asked hesitantly and the manager looked at him suspiciously.

“What’s wrong with the room?”

“Nothing’s wrong with the room. Just my brother has a phobia of heights, he’s been doing really well with it but had a scare when we were out last night and can’t cope right now.”

“Oh the poor dear.” Her maternal instincts abruptly switched on, “no problem, I’ll get that sorted right now.”

A few taps on the computer later and she handed him a new key, “just return the other when you
have your things moved.”

“Thank you.” Sam replied genuinely then headed up to grab their belongings and clean up the salt before the cleaners noted it.

Once in the new room he quickly laid out the salt lines and the sigil fortifications in black light pen. Then he collected his brother from the car and walked him to the room. He did a double take at his brother when Dean sat on the couch despondently.

“What’s wrong?” Sam asked gently.

“I don’t wanna be a dick.” Dean replied and Sam sighed, he should have realised how his brother would take that statement in his current state.

“Dean, it’s a ghost remember. They’re not known for being able to see shades of grey. Remember Bloody Mary? Charlie couldn’t have done anything about her boyfriend’s death but it was enough for Mary. And the ghost ship, it was an accident that killed Shelia’s cousin but it was enough for that ghost simply because she was driving.” Sam told him, “this ghost is focused on fear used as a weapon but it’s missing the reasons behind it. Sure Frank was a bully, but bullies aren’t the only ones to use fear as a weapon and those who use it to protect, like you, are just as vulnerable. I’d guess police are just as at risk.”

“Oh.” Dean replied and was silent in thought for a moment, “hey…what about that sheriff? You think he’s at risk? You said police probably would be.”

“Yeah. I sensed the same thing I’ve been sensing around you in his office.” Sam confirmed.

“Shit.” Dean complained. Was bad enough he was affected but there was a civilian’s life at risk too.

Sam silently agreed with his brother.

Sam left Dean with one of the few books they actually had with them that spoke about the illness while he ducked out to get some food and check on some leads. Returning to find the clock smashed on the floor, the book closed, and Dean drinking a beer on the couch as far from the book as he could get made him question that decision.

“Everything alright?” Sam asked cautiously.

“Oh, yeah.” Dean replied almost desperately, “just peachy. Find anything?”

“Yeah. Jessie O’Brian’s body was cremated. So I’m pretty sure she’s not our ghost.” Sam replied, sitting down. He noticed that Dean was scratching again, “hey. Quick picking at that. How are you feeling?”

“Awesome.” Dean replied, having to force himself to stop scratching, “nice to have my head on the chopping block. Again. Being hunted once isn’t enough?”

“Yeah.” Sam agreed, feeling a little guilty. Heaven and hell might be after him but his brother was right there with him.

“It’s freaking delightful.” Dean declared with a cough.

“We’ll keep looking.” Sam reassured him.

Dean started coughing again.
“You okay?” Sam asked, feeling a bolt of fear go through him as his brother appeared to start choking. For a second his mind flashed back to the endless Tuesdays and the number of times Dean had choked to death before he forcibly wrenched his mind back to the present, “hey.”

Dean forced himself to his feet and to the sink.

“Dean!” Sam was on his feet instantly and following him.

Dean half choked half gagged over the sink until he coughed up a woodchip just as Sam reached him. Good thing too since Sam hadn’t been looking forward to trying to clear his brother’s airway with the memories of the failed attempts from the endless Tuesdays clawing at the edges of his mind.

Dean still looked like he might be sick as he stared at the wood chip then fished it out of the sink and rinsed it off. Hopefully the blood coating it didn’t indicate anything major.

“What the…?” Dean mumbled.

“We’ve been completely ignoring the biggest clue we have; you.” Sam noted, hoping the utter relief that Dean wasn’t choking any more wasn’t as evident as he thought it was.

“I don’t wanna be a clue.” Dean complained.

“The abrasions, this. The disease, it’s trying to tell us something.” Sam told him, maybe a little too enthusiastically.

“Tell us what, wood chips?” Dean demanded.

Sam gave a half laugh, “exactly.”

The look Dean turned on him told Sam the semi levity wasn’t exactly appreciated.

It didn’t take Sam long to track down the only wood mill in the area and the subsequent, slower than usual, drive let him get his own reactions back under control. With Dean so close to a panic attack at any moment they didn’t need him doing so as well because of his memories of the endless Tuesdays.

Dean looked up at the plant with worry all over his face as they got out of the Impala.

“I’m not going in there.” Dean stated and Sam nearly sighed aloud.

“I need backup, and you’re all I’ve got.” Sam pointed out, “you’re going in, Dean.”

He nearly did a double take as Dean pulled out a bottle of scotch and took a large swig. Maybe he was overestimating his brother’s ability to push through the fear, always before even when he was dealing with a phobia he’d buckled down and done what needed to be done.

“Let’s do this.” Dean declared as Sam watched him with concern.

If it wasn’t a really stupid idea to go into a potentially haunted place without backup Sam would have got him to stay behind, he could almost see his big brother going to pieces in front of him. And, phobias aside, the all-encompassing anxiety that this sickness was producing was an unfamiliar foe to both of them. The closest was the complete uncertainty of what reality was that had plagued Sam after they had finally escaped the endless Tuesdays and the 6 months that followed.

Dean opened up the trunk, looking fearfully at the building as he did so, “it’s a little spooky, isn’t it?”

Sam didn’t have anything to say in response to that, the mere idea of being scared of a hunted
building, the idea of his big brother being scared of a haunted building, was so far from reality that there was nothing that came to mind to say. Instead he just grabbed out a shotgun and handed Dean’s gun up to him out of habit, even though the handgun wouldn’t actually be useful and normally Dean would grab another shotgun as well.

“Oh, I’m not carrying that.” Dean declared and Sam nearly grabbed the holy water even though he could tell his brother wasn’t possessed.

“It could go off.” Dean explained to Sam’s incredulous look.

Dean grabbed out a torch when Sam shifted to a glare, “I’ll man the flashlight.”

“You do that.” Sam told him, gritting his teeth and feeling like he’d ended up in an episode of the twilight zone. Hopefully one shotgun would be enough.

He cautiously led the way into the building with Dean sticking close by him. The EMF detector whined and Sam pulled it out before he realised that it wouldn’t be useful.

“EMF’s not gonna work with me around, is it?” Dean asked and Sam sighed. It was always more reassuring, especially to his brother, to have something other than his spooky senses to point the way.

“Well, we always have the Spidey sense.” Sam replied. The nervous smile he got in response told him the anxiety was spooking him out about his abilities too.

“Come on.” Sam said. The place was definitely haunted, he just hoped it wouldn’t be too much for his brother.

Sam spotted something on the ground and his brother nearly freaked out when he stopped to grab it. It was a ring.

“To Frank, Love Jessie.” Sam read out, “Frank O’Brien’s ring.”

“What the hell was Frank doing here?” Dean asked.

“No idea.” Sam replied, though it did suggest that this was where Frank got infected.

They moved further in towards where Sam could sense the ghostly presence.

There was a noise from some lockers. His senses told him the ghost wasn’t there, but that didn’t rule out the ghost doing something there, trying to scare or distract them, or trying to hide something. Powerful as ghosts could be they tended to lose subtlety.

He led them cautiously towards the lockers. Opening the locker a cat growled at them and sped away. Normally this would have just been seen as a minor nuisance by both of them, this time Dean completely freaked out. Complete with screaming.

He wasn’t sure what was more disconcerting, the utter refusal to carry his gun or his brother being utterly terrified of a simple cat. The phrase ‘who are you and what have you done with my brother’ flickered through his mind but remained unspoken. He knew it was his brother even if he was acting completely unlike how he normally did. Maybe he should get Bobby to either come back him up or send another Hunter who could be trusted.

“That was scary.” Dean declared and Sam was sure he was unable to keep his incredulousness of his face.
Rather than try to come up with a coherent reply Sam headed off towards the ghost.

“What?” Dean asked plaintively in his wake.

Entering an office area he started poking around, he half expected Dean to just look around baffled in his current state and was pleasantly surprised when a focused expression came over Dean’s face and he moved towards a desk on the other side of the room. Sam relaxed slightly as he looked through the other desk, finding a battered employee pass.

“Luther Garland.” Sam read off the pass.

Dean meanwhile found some drawings, then pulled out the article they’d found, “hey, this is…this is Frank’s wife.”

“The plot thickens.” Sam commented, coming over.

“Yeah, but into what?” Dean asked, picking up one of the pictures and accidentally tearing it. Immediately the machinery started moving.

Dean spun around and gasped in utter fear. Sam made a mental note that Dean’s helpfulness was probably over for the time being with that response.

Sam felt the ghost relocate to behind him a moment before Dean’s eyes fixed fearfully on something over his shoulder. Turning he saw a large hulking man standing in the corner with his back to them.

“Hey.” Sam called.

He more felt than heard his brother move and when he glanced back Dean had bolted out of the building. With a sigh Sam turned back to the ghost as it turned towards him and moved threateningly forward. A salt blast from the shotgun banished him for a while and he retreated from the building himself, it wasn’t a good idea to deal with any supernatural creature without backup even if what needed to be burned was there, which is wasn’t.

He found Dean sheltering behind the impala finishing off the bottle of scotch.

Sam held up the employee pass, the ghost had been a spitting image of the man pictured, “I guess we got the right place.”

Dean just looked at him in near panic and it looked like he wasn’t comprehending much right now. Sam sighed and shooed him into the passenger seat, with the amount he’d just drank even with his high tolerance of alcohol there was no way he wasn’t drunk.

Back at the police station Linus dug up the police file for the man who’s pass they’d found. An unsolved murder file, if that wasn’t a recipe for a vengeful ghost then nothing was.

Linus looked at Dean as Sam looked through the police file, “is he drunk?”

A glance at his brother told him that Dean wasn’t handling the alcohol as well as he normally did, it didn’t do to admit that when he was supposed to be law enforcement though, “no.”

It didn’t look like Linus quite believed him so he pulled the officer’s attention to the file, “deputy, according to this, Luther Garland’s cause of death was physical trauma. Now, what does that mean?”


“Then can we talk to the sheriff?”
“Um…he’s out sick today.” Linus lied, he wasn’t very good at it. Plus Sam could feel a second nexus of the ghost sickness in the sheriff’s office. Al must be just as rational as his brother by this point and Sam barely suppressed a sigh, they were running out of time to save both of them and unless he missed his guess the sheriff was a couple of hours more advanced than Dean.

“Well, if you see him will you have him call us? We’re staying at the Bluebird.” Sam told him, Dean had reverted to nearly normal a few times and maybe the sheriff would too and be able to give them some information, then held up the file, “mind if I take this?”

Linus shook his head to indicate that he didn’t mind and Sam headed towards the exit. After a few steps he noticed that Dean wasn’t even slightly moving to follow him, rather than draw more attention to his brother’s state he reached out with his telekinesis and put pressure on Dean’s shoulders to turn him then push him to the door.

“Was that you, Sammy?” Dean slurred as Sam pushed him into the passenger seat again.

“Know anyone else who could?” Sam asked rhetorically.

“Um…”

“That wasn’t a real question.” Sam sighed, his brother needed to sleep this off. And wasn’t that something he never expected, Dean might enjoy his drink, even have quite a high tolerance for alcohol, but he never ever drank to excess while on a job. And that wasn’t a control he himself could actually lay claim to.

Sam took Dean back to the hotel and deposited him in his bed while he searched through the file.

He managed to track down the next of kin of Luther and then looked at Dean. He had to figure out whether to wake his brother and try taking him with him to visit the nursing home or leave him behind. It would be much more difficult to pull off the FBI charade with Dean in his current state, and he was still drunk, on the other hand he didn’t want to leave his vulnerable brother alone.

“Dean?” He tried calling, his brother mumbled and rolled over. Still drunk then and Sam really couldn’t take the time to let him sleep it off properly.

He scrawled a note explaining where he’d gone to his brother and a second he stuck on the door instructing him to stay in the room. Then he hopped in the impala and headed to Peaceful Pines.

He located the man he was looking for in the dining room.

“Mr Garland?” He asked, “hi. I’m Agent Tyler, FBI. I’d like to ask you a few questions about your brother, Luther.”

“Let me see some id.” He asked.

“Certainly.” Sam replied, handing his over.

“Certainly.” Sam replied, handing his over.

Garland looked it over for a moment then handed it back, “don’t you guys usually come in pairs?”

“My partner is off sick today.”

“What do you want to know?”

“Well, according to this,” Sam showed him the police file, “your brother, Luther, died of physical trauma.”
Garland gave a half laugh.

“You don’t agree?” Sam asked.

“No, I don’t.”

“Well, then what would you call it?”

“Don’t matter what an old man thinks.”

“Mr Garland, I’m just trying to get the truth on your brother.” Sam told him, “please.”

Garland was quiet for a while before he finally spoke, “everybody was scared of Luther. They called him a monster. He was too big, too mean looking. Just too different. Didn’t matter that he was the kindest man I ever knew. Didn’t matter he’d never hurt no one. A lot of people failed Luther, I was one of them. I was a widower with three young ‘uns and I told myself there was nothing I could do.”

The man was near in tears.

“Mr Garland.” Sam continued gently, unfolding the drawing of Frank’s wife, “do you recognise this woman?”

“That’s Jessie O’Brian.” Garland confirmed and stayed quiet for a moment, “her man, Frank, killed Luther.”

That was definite news to Sam, the police file didn’t list any suspects let alone someone identified as the perpetrator, “how do you know that?”

“Everybody knows. They just don’t talk about it.” Garland replied, “Jessie was a receptionist at the mill. She was always real nice to Luther, and he had a crush on her. But Frank didn’t like it. Then when Jessie went missing Frank was sure that Luther had done something to her. Turns out the old gal killed herself, but Frank didn’t know that. They found Luther with a chain wrapped around his neck. He was dragged up and down the stretch outside that plant ‘til he was past dead.”

“O’Brian was never arrested?” Sam asked, not that he really had to ask the file allowed only a bleak conclusion to that. The sheriff was Frank’s friend after all.

“I screamed to every cop in town. They wouldn’t look into Frank. He was a pillar of the community. My brother was just the town freak.”

“You must have hated Frank O’Brian.” Sam commented.

“I did for a long time, but…life’s too short for hate, son.” Garland replied, “and Frank wasn’t thinking straight. His wife had vanished, he was terrified. A damn shame he had to put Luther through the same but…that’s fear. It spreads and spreads.”

“Thank you Mr Garland.” Sam told him before seeing himself out and returning to the hotel room, sending an urgent message to Bobby before he did so.

Dean was awake and in a highly agitated state when Sam got there.

“Where did you go?” He demanded.

“Whoa, Dean, calm down.” Sam replied, “I went to see Luther Garland’s brother like I said in the note.”
“Okay.” Dean replied, sitting down nervously on the couch, “what did you find?”

Sam wasn’t quite sure whether his brother had actually sobered up this fast or whether it was the rush of fear on being alone when he woke. And exactly why he woke was a little concerning to Sam actually, though as long as he didn’t have anything to clean up he probably wouldn’t know.

“Frank killed Luther by road hauling him outside the mill.”

“Oh.” Dean replied and thought for a bit, then gestured to his arms, “well now I know what these are: road rash. And I’m guessing Luther swallowed some woodchips when he was being dragged down that road.”

Sam nodded in agreement, he’d reached the same conclusion on the drive back, “it makes sense. You’re experiencing his death in slow motion.”

“Yeah, well, not slow enough. I say we burn some bones and get me healthy.” Dean replied, calmer now that there appeared to be an actual goal for them.

Sam sighed, “Dean, it won’t be that easy.”

“No, no, it’ll be that easy.” Dean responded starting to sound panicked again, “why won’t it be that easy?”

“He was road hauled.” Sam explained reluctantly, “his body was ripped to pieces. He was probably scattered all over that road. There’s no way we’re gonna find all the remains.”

Dean struggled to control his breathing and closed his eyes, “you’re kidding me.”

“Look, we’ll just have to figure something else out.” Sam told him, trying his best to sound reassuring.

Dean hopped up and started pacing, Sam noted that what control his brother had had over his breathing was gone.

“You know what? Screw this!” Dean exclaimed and some instinct made Sam step back to block access to the door.

“Whoa, whoa, Dean, calm down.” Sam tried reassuring him. Unless he missed his guess his brother wasn’t thinking entirely rationally any more.

“No, I mean, come on, Sam.” Dean kept pacing, “what are we doing?”

“We’re hunting a ghost.” Sam hoped just stating the facts would engage Dean’s logical reasoning, which was what had overridden the fear on a number of occasions in the last couple of days.

“A ghost, exactly! Who does that?” Dean demanded. Apparently life wasn’t giving Sam any breaks today.

“Us.” Sam stated calmly.

“Us! Right!” Dean wasn’t calming down, “and that, Sam, that is exactly why our lives suck! I mean, come on, we hunt monsters! What the hell? I mean, normal people, they see a monster, and they run. But not us, no! We…we search out things that want to kill us! Huh? Huh? Or eat us! You know who does that? Crazy people! We are insane!”

Dean kept pacing, his speed increasing, “and then there’s the bad diner food, and then the skeevy
motel rooms and the truck stop waitress with the bizarre rash...I mean, who wants this life, Sam, huh? Seriously? Do you actually like being stuck in a car with me 8 hours a day, every single day? I don’t think so! I drive too fast, and I listen to the same five albums over and over again, and I sing along. I’m annoying, I know that! And you, you’re gassy! You eat half a burrito and you get toxic! We got the combined might of both heaven and hell after us! I mean...you know what? You can forget it.

“I’m done with it! I’m done with the monsters, and the demons, and the ghost sickness! I’m out! I’m done! I quit!” He started for the door but shied away because Sam was in the way and retreated to the bathroom instead. Sam sighed, at least the window in the bathroom was too small for Dean to get out of even if he was functioning at the top of his game.

With a sigh Sam plopped down on the couch and waited for Dean to calm down enough to come out of the bathroom. He hated having to wait but it wouldn’t help either of them to try forcing the issue right now.

Eventually Dean came back out and sat on the couch next to him, still highly agitated but at least thinking.

“What do we do now?” Dean asked fearfully, “I mean, I got less than four hours on the clock. I’m gonna die, Sammy.”

“Not if I can help it.” Sam replied.

From Dean’s reaction that wasn’t what he heard and he scrambled up then backed away fearfully.

“Dean!” Sam called as he followed him trying to break through what was obviously a hallucination, Dean started choking again, “hey, hey, hey, Dean! Hey, Dean! Dean! Dean!”

Dean gasped and Sam could see the change in his brother the instant the hallucination let him go.

“You okay?” Sam asked cautiously, consciously reigning in his own fear as the memories of the endless Tuesdays tried to force themselves to the forefront of his mind again.

Dean nodded shakily and began to pace once Sam stepped back.

Sam regarded Dean worriedly as he paced. The hallucinations were obviously getting worse and for the life of him he couldn’t figure out how to break the hold the ghost had on him. Bobby was due soon, maybe he’d have an idea of how to deal with a ghost where their remains were spread to kingdom come. But they were running out of time.

He’d snapped a ghost’s tether once, or at least that’s what they figured. Dean had asked he not do that again except in an emergency, Sam made a split second decision that this qualified. Moving over to his bed he took himself into meditation without even mentioning it to Dean, his brother was acting so unlike himself it wasn’t worth trying to explain.

Once in the odd perceptions that characterised what they conveniently referred to as meditation the thing attacking his brother’s mind snapped at him. He flinched back briefly before stilling again. Dean suddenly
had a bad feeling this wasn’t an ordinary meditation session.

“Sam?”

Sam didn’t even stir. Then the fear surged and Dean couldn’t even see straight.

Sam grappled with the thing as it tried to resolidify its hold on his brother, then he managed to yank it off Dean and finally saw the tether. He tore it asunder and the thing fighting him appeared to explode, tearing into his mind as everything went black.

The utter terror backed off and Dean could make out what was going on around him again. His eyes landed on Sam and it felt like his insides had turned to ice. His brother was still on the bed but no longer in meditation position. Instead he was seizing violently.

Dean barely managed to keep his brother from falling off the bed as he frantically tried to recall everything he’d learnt about seizures. He vaguely remembered you weren’t supposed to try to restrain someone but he sure as hell wasn’t going to let his brother fall onto the floor. He tried to remember what the length of time beyond which you needed to call an ambulance, tried to remember whether that applied to the first time and figure out whether that would ever apply to a supernatural cause.

“Sammy!” As if he really expected his brother to actually answer.

Sam abruptly went still, which scared Dean more than the last couple of days had managed to. He forced himself to focus, to assess. Danger had already been considered long ago; salt lines and sigils everywhere. Response wasn’t happening any time soon. Sending for help was a very different priority for hunters. Airway…

Dean’s hands shook as he gently opened Sam’s mouth. Didn’t appear to be blocked. Then he leant over to check if Sam was actually breathing, vaguely remembering that bringing your face down to check was no longer recommended for safety reasons, not that he had a problem with it since it was his brother.

A small puff of air on his cheek told him Sam was indeed breathing and he let out his own breath in a sigh of relief. Carefully he rolled his brother into the recovery position.

His hands still shaking Dean found his phone and called Bobby.

“Dean? I’m about two hours out.”

“Bobby, it’s Sam. He just had a seizure.” Dean couldn’t keep his voice from shaking. There was silence from the other end for a moment.

“Are you sure it was Sam? The hallucinations can be pretty realistic.”

“Pretty sure. He was meditating then next time I looked…Bobby…I think he did something stupid.”

“Like what? One sec, I’m going to call his phone from my backup. If it’s a hallucination he’ll answer.”

Sam’s phone started ringing in the quiet room.

“I can hear it ringing.” Dean commented quietly.

“So can I.” Bobby replied but let it ring out before continuing, “okay, what stupid thing do you think
Sam did?”

“I don’t know. Decided to battle this sickness for my mind maybe?”

“Sam’s certainly capable of not only deciding to do just that but following through also. So the big question is did he succeed? What’s his condition?”

“I got him on his side, airway open and he’s breathing. The seizure probably means he lost though, so how do we take care of a ghost that can’t be salted and burned?”

Bobby was silent for a moment, “we?”

“Of course ‘we’!” Dean snapped, “the ass hat hurt Sam! Think I’m going to just sit here and let it kill me after that?”

“I think whatever Sam did worked.” Bobby replied, “welcome back, Dean.”

“Wha…”

“I’ll be there soon. Just keep an eye on Sam.” Bobby replied before hanging up.

Bobby arrived a while later and confirmed with the EMF meter that Dean was no longer haunted. Sam hadn’t given any signs of waking though and Dean refused to move from his side.

A short while later Bobby answered the door when there was a knock since Dean wasn’t moving from Sam’s side anytime soon.

“Oh, sorry. I thought it was someone else in this room.” The man on the other side said. He was in a police uniform, a sheriff.

“Al?” Dean called from further in before Bobby could reply, Al poked his head around the door and Dean could see his eyes widen as he took in Sam’s condition. He remembered the sheriff had probably had as difficult a ride as he’d had these last few days, “hey, you feeling okay?”

“Yeah, now.” Al replied as Bobby let him come in and waved him to the couch before shutting the door. Dean didn’t expect the law enforcer to miss the salt lines but the sheriff had the grace not to comment on it, “I was going to ask you why you were looking into the Garland death and to tell me what the hell was going on. Now I just want to know what happened to your partner.”

Dean sighed, “are you really sure you want to know?”

“Yeah.” Al replied with obvious trepidation, “I have a feeling I’ll regret it but yes.”

“Okay. Don’t say I didn’t warn you though and I’d appreciate not being called insane once I finish.” Dean replied, “Luther was what is referred to as a vengeful ghost. A little different from the usual though since he gave Frank ghost sickness, that’s what killed him and the two in Maumee. You and I got infected with that sickness from Frank’s corpse. Sam tangled with the ghost, got hurt but managed to take it out, which banished the sickness from us. I had about 4 hours to go, you I’d guess had an hour or two less.”

“Damn. That’s an incredible story.” Al said and Bobby deposited a shot glass of scotch in front of him, “your partner going to be okay?”

Dean had almost expected more disbelief but that sort of thing is harder to maintain when the supernatural crap has happened to you.
“We’ll know when he wakes up.” Dean replied with a sigh.

“Shouldn’t he be in hospital then?” Al asked.

“And tell them what? We’d both be locked in the psych ward if we told them he’d been injured by a ghost.” Dean replied.

“Damn.” Al replied, “so now you know the truth of the Garland death, what are you going to do about it?”

Dean shrugged, “not really our department. Our concern was the ghost killing people, yours is about justice for the living. Luther already took his revenge on Frank, and very nearly you. Two other’s completely uninvolved also paid that price.”

“The FBI seriously has a department for ghosts killing people?”

“Officially, no.” Dean lied smoothly.

Al snorted a laugh and finished his drink, “I think I’m going to try my damndest to forget I ever heard or experienced any of this and hope I never have to deal with it again.”

“That’s definitely a plan.” Dean agreed.

Bobby let him back out again.

“ Took a risk there, boy.” Bobby noted.

“Being nearly killed by something you can’t explain does tend to quash the disbelief somewhat.” Dean replied.

They went back to waiting for Sam to wake up.
Chapter 34: Recovery

Wakefulness came slowly, and painfully. He wasn’t in the altered perceptions of meditation anymore he could tell that. Voices floated around him.

“Should we be taking him to hospital?”

“Would they even be able to tell if something’s wrong? I mean, best guess is he fought that thing for my mind. Would they even be able to tell if he…I don’t know…got hurt somehow? And won’t they put him on medications? How would that affect his abilities? His mind?”

“I don’t know. But Dean, the sum total of what I know about seizures can be summed up in two words. Jack and squat.”

He wasn’t aware of making any movement or sound but suddenly a hand was on his cheek.

“Sammy? You with us?”

Dean. Sounding worried. Reluctantly he concluded he’d better make an effort to connect with him. He managed to force his eyes open a little and squinted at his brother.

“Good to see you back with us. How are you feeling?”

Sam went to sit up and aborted the movement when every muscle protested. Instead he rolled painfully onto his back.

“Sore. What happened?”

“Was hoping you could tell us. One minute you were meditating then the next time I looked at you, you were seizing.”

“Oh.” Sam replied then paused to think and collect his memories, “I decided to see if I could snap the tether like I did with Daggett. If it didn’t work then Bobby was already on his way.”

“That was way more than what happened with Daggett. You just passed out with him.”
“The sickness fought back, was like it was an extra growth or something on the actual ghost. Which I guess makes sense given how it works and spreads. I managed to find the tether and snap it, then the sickness exploded. I don’t remember anything after that.”

“A seizure is what happened.” Dean told him angrily, “what were you thinking?”

“That I wasn’t going to just sit around and watch you die.” Sam replied.

Dean sighed, “Sammy, I wasn’t even sure you were going to wake up yourself or even wake up at all. I’m not worth that kind of sacrifice.”

“You are to me.” Sam told him, “I didn’t know this would happen but I’d do it again in a heartbeat if I needed to, even if I knew I wasn’t waking up afterwards.”

“Sammy…no…” Dean all but whimpered and Sam found the strength to reach over to him.

“Not something I would do lightly.” He assured his big brother.

“You better not.” Dean replied before changing the subject, “where are you hurting?”

“Would be easier to list where I’m not hurting.” Sam replied with a small chuckle.

“Okay. Let me grab you some painkillers.” Dean replied and got up to rifle through their medical kit, returning a few moments later with a tablet cocktail and glass of water.

“You checked on the sheriff?” Sam asked as Dean eased him into sitting position to take the tablets.

“He stopped by. He’s okay, knew something odd had been happening to him. I told him the basics.”

“That must have been a fun conversation.”

“Could have been worse. I don’t think he’ll try checking up on our credentials but it might be a good idea to get moving anyway.” Dean told him.

“The longer we stay in one place the more likely we’ll get spotted.” Sam agreed.

“I’ll see you at my place.” Bobby interjected and Dean nodded in agreement.

“Once the painkillers have a chance to kick in we’ll be there.” Dean replied and Bobby let himself out.

With a look that warned Sam not to even think about trying to help Dean gathered their stuff and took it out to the impala, cleaning up the salt lines as he did so. Then he returned to Sam and waited until the time for the tablets to absorb had passed.

“How are you doing?” He asked.

“I’ve had worse.” Sam replied, cautiously pushing himself into sitting position and wincing slightly. He either needed more time for the painkillers or trying to do stuff caused more pain than they could eliminate.

“Here. Let me.” Dean told him and pulled Sam’s arm over his shoulders, managing to position himself right to take the majority of Sam’s weight as he got him onto his feet.

That did keep the pain to a minimum, even if Sam did feel kinda bad for leaning on his brother heavily to get to the car. Dean on the other hand just made sure he was comfortably situated in the
passenger seat before dropping off the keys and driving them out of town. Sam wasn’t sure why they were headed to Bobby’s but the way he felt he wasn’t going to argue.

“Called Pamela. She said she’d meet us here.” The veteran Hunter opened with when they rolled into his scrap yard.

Sam had slept most of the way and felt a little better than he had. Especially as Dean had made sure to get food and more painkillers into him right on time. Dean still helped him out of the car and made sure to take as much of his weight as Sam allowed, which wasn’t as much as before given the younger brother’s independent nature was starting to reassert itself. He didn’t argue with not going further than the couch in the lounge room though.

“Does she think he hurt himself when he pulled that stunt?” Dean asked as he manoeuvred his brother, ignoring the glare Sam sent in his direction.

“She refused to say before looking at him.”

Once he had his brother situated comfortably on the couch Dean grabbed some beers from the fridge. Sam waved away the offered drink though, with painkillers in his system he didn’t figure it was a good idea even though Dean never thought twice about stuff like that. Many Hunters were heavy drinkers or outright alcoholics and Sam considered it a blessing that Dean, for all his high tolerance and like of alcohol, didn’t actually fall into the latter category; he’d never be able to refrain from drinking to excess while on a case if he had been. Bobby accepted one though.

“How are you feeling, by the way?” Sam asked, looking at Dean. With everything that had happened he hadn’t checked.

“Fine.” Dean replied, looking like he thought that was a silly question.

“You’re sure, Dean?” Bobby asked, not able to resist ribbing the older brother, “because this line of work can get awful scary.”

“I’m fine. What, you wanna go hunt?” Dean demanded, starting to get annoyed, “I’ll hunt. I’ll kill anything.”

“Aww.” Sam looked at Bobby, starting to relax after everything.

“He’s adorable.” Bobby returned.

“Whatever.” Dean grumbled as the other two laughed.

“That wasn’t just straight vengeful spirit.” Sam commented a while later after a comfortable silence.

Bobby picked up a small book from the table and handed it to Sam, “this encyclopaedia of spirits dates to the Edo period.”

Sam opened it and was surprised to find it written in Japanese, “you can read Japanese?”

Dean leant over to take a look too and looked curiously at Bobby.

Bobby replied with a string of Japanese that neither brother understood.

“I guess so. Show off.” Sam mock complained as Dean laughed.

“Anyway, this book lists a kind of ghost that could be what that ghost was.” Bobby explained, “it infects people with fear. It’s called a Buru Buru.”
“Glad I had another option rather than salting and burning, that ghost’s remains were spread to kingdom come.” Sam commented, continuing when Dean threw an exasperated look his direction, “I’m not going to apologise for or regret doing so, no matter what the consequences are. I wasn’t going to let you die.”

“The lore says you can kill a Buru Buru with fear, ‘cause it was born of fear. Hell, it is fear. How you go about scaring a ghost to death, though, beats me.” Bobby told them.

“Might have been able to figure something out, you and genius boy over there.” Dean said.

“In time?” Sam asked reasonably, “and the sheriff had an even shorter amount of time left.”

“You’d have had two hours left by the time I got there then however long until we figured out how to scare it to death, if that’s even possible. The chance of the sheriff surviving until then is slim to none and your chances wouldn’t have been that great either.” Bobby pointed out, “much as I hate to admit it what your brother did was the most likely solution.”

“What if…” Dean started.

“Then we’ll deal with it.” Sam interrupted, “we don’t even know if it damaged anything yet, it’s just as likely it just looked bad. People survive with epilepsy all the time, there’s no reason to think that it has caused permanent damage because I had one seizure. I wouldn’t take it back even if it wiped out my gifts.”

“Is that a possibility?” Dean asked worriedly, half wondering if his brother hadn’t mentioned something.

“I can still sense you, and Bobby, so no.” Sam answered.

A knock at the door had Bobby heading to answer it and a short while later he returned with Pamela following him.

“You know, if you wanted to see me you didn’t have to go banging your head against ghosts.” She told them, “it’s always a pleasure to see two great looking guys.”

“Good to see you too, Pam.” Dean told her though he didn’t manage to conceal his worry for his brother.

“You have been practicing the sense that I taught you?” She asked as she sat down next to Sam, “that should have warned you off if it was going to damage you. Though knowing you, you’d have ignored it if Dean was in danger.”

“Probably.” Sam agreed, “but it didn’t fire off, and yes I’ve been practicing.”

“Well that’s a good sign.” Pam stated, “let me have a look at you.”

She put her hand on the side of Sam’s head and he felt her gently probing his defences. It felt strangely like prodding a scrape.

“Well your defences are a little raw.” She declared as she withdrew her hand, “but you’re otherwise unharmed. The defences are probably what caused the seizure though, them holding off the onslaught of whatever that was.”

Dean looked at her perplexed and she continued, “if he hadn’t had those defences he probably wouldn’t have woken up.”
Dean winced.

“Not something you need to worry about, Dean.” Sam told him.

“Yes.” Pamela agreed, “he might be in uncharted territory but defenceless he isn’t.”

“He’ll be okay?” Dean asked.

“Yep. Nothing that a little R and R won’t fix.” Pamela returned with a smile that spoke of what she thought one of the R’s should be.

“I think I’ll just be happy with some more sleep.” Sam said with a chuckle.

“You do that.” Pamela told him with a grin before seeing herself out.

Dean insisted on helping Sam lie down then settled in a chair to watch over his brother. Pam may have said he wasn’t in danger but Dean wouldn’t relax until Sam was completely recovered.

“So, what did you see in the hallucinations?” Sam asked when Dean woke him to eat and take the next dose of painkillers.

“What?” Dean asked, surprised.

“I know you didn’t actually hear what I said with the one I witnessed.” Sam replied.

Dean hesitated for a while before deciding that his brother deserved the truth, no matter how irrational it was, “your eyes went yellow.”

Sam looked surprised, “yellow eyes is dead.”

“I know. Never said it was logical or rational for that matter.”

Sam pulled down the collar on his shirt to reveal the anti-possession tattoo as a silent reassurance.

“Anything else?” Sam asked.

“That you didn’t need me, that you couldn’t wait to be rid of me, at the same time as the eyes.”

“I will always need you.” Sam told him, knowing that while his brother wouldn’t normally be uncertain about that he’d need the reassurance now, “hell, I wouldn’t dare do half the stuff I do without knowing you’ll watch my back.”

“I know.” Dean replied, “and sorry I spaced out on you a few times there.”

“Definitely not your fault.” Sam replied with a chuckle, “not like either of us has much experience in dealing with extreme anxiety. Fear, yes, but not the type of all-encompassing anxiety that that ghost caused. And your logical reasoning and detail orientation overrode it several times, which I don’t think the sheriff managed at all.”

“Still feel bad that I didn’t have your back.”

“Still not your fault.” Sam told him, “you did better than most too so stop beating yourself up.”

“Okay, okay.” Dean replied with a chuckle. He looked him over with worried eyes, he still looked exhausted, “how are you feeling anyway?”
“Tired.” Sam admitted, “mind if I grab some more sleep?”

“Go ahead, I’m not going anywhere.” Dean responded.

“You need sleep too.” Sam told him as he lay down.

“I will.” Dean assured him. Would probably be on the floor down here he had to admit, to himself if no one else, though.
Chapter 35: Hex

A few days rest had Sam feeling back to normal. Dean, however, was reluctant to leave the sanctuary of Bobby’s place, not that he was scared of hunting but because he was worried about exposing Sam again. Which was starting to frustrate Sam.

Sam leant against the door to the garage where Dean was working, when he was able bodied and spending time at Bobby’s he liked to help out.

“Man died after swallowing razor blades.”

Dean raised an eyebrow as he looked over at him, “that takes some serious trying. Where?”

“Couple of hours away.”

“Okay.” Dean replied, pushing away from the car and looking around for Bobby, “Bobby?”

“How many razor blades did they find?” Sam asked her gently while Dean looked around, he’d subtly pointed his brother in the right direction to look. The widow needed his approach though.

“Two on the floor, one in his stomach, and one was stuck in his throat.” She told him brokenly, “he swallowed four of them. How is that even possible?”

Dean made a little bit too much noise poking around and attracted her attention, “the candy was never in the oven.”

“We just have to be thorough, Mrs Wallace.” Dean soothed.

“Did the police find any razors in the rest of the candy?” Sam asked.

“No. I mean, I don’t know. I don’t think so.” She fumbled, “I just…I can’t believe it. You hear urban
legends about this stuff, but it actually happens?”

“More than you might imagine.” Sam replied with a sigh.

Dean held up the hex bag Sam had known was there.

“Mrs Wallace, did Luke have any enemies?” Sam continued.

“Enemies?” She repeated, obviously puzzled.

“Anyone who might’ve held a grudge against him?” He pressed.

“What do you mean?”

“Co-workers, neighbours.” Sam stated and she stared at him with open incredulousness, “…maybe a woman.”

“Are you suggesting an affair?” She demanded.

“Is it possible?” He pressed, usually it was something personal that got a hex bag inflicted on someone.

“No! No, Luke would nev…” She broke off in obvious difficulty and Sam winced internally.

“I’m very sorry, we just have to consider all possibilities.” He tried to explain and winced inside again.

“If someone wanted to kill my husband, don’t you think they’d find a better way than a razor in a piece of candy he might eat?” She demanded and he had to concede that that was the weakness in the line of questioning, it wasn’t like he could explain that her husband had been hexed after all.

They excused themselves then and returned to the motel room to investigate the hex bag. Which was weirder than usual.

After double checking the room was as secure as they could make it Dean left Sam digging through the various books and ducked out to look up information on the victim, and make a candy run.

Sam had to laugh when he returned and saw him munching, “after that guy choked down all those razor blades?”

“It’s Halloween, man.” Dean returned blasély.

“Yeah. For us, every day is Halloween.” Sam retorted.

“Don’t be a downer.” Dean complained, “anything interesting?”

“Well, we’re on a witch hunt, that’s for sure, but this…isn’t your typical hex bag.” Sam gestured to the deconstructed bag on the table.

“No?” Dean prompted.

“Goldthread.” Sam told him, holding up the herb, “an herb that’s been extinct for 200 years.”

He put it back down and picked up the coin, “and this is Celtic. And I don’t mean some New Age knockoff. It looks like the real deal, like 600 years old real.”
Dean picked up the blackened stick looking thing and looked at it.

“And…uh…that is the charred metacarpal bone of a newborn baby.” Sam told him uncomfortably.

Dean nearly dropped it in his haste to put it down, “oh. Gross.”

“Relax, man.” Sam told him, “it’s at least a hundred years old.”

“Oh, right, like that makes it better.” Dean complained, “witches, man, so frigging skeevy.”

“Yeah.” Sam agreed, “well, takes a pretty powerful one to put a bag like this together. More juice than we’ve ever dealt with before, that’s for sure.”

“What about you, find anything on the victim?” Sam asked. He was getting the feeling that they wouldn’t find a simple reason for the man being targeted, not with such a powerful hex bag.

“This Luke Wallace, he was so vanilla, that he made vanilla seem spicy.” Dean replied in exasperation, “I can’t find any reason why somebody would want this guy dead.”

“That’s what I was afraid of.” Sam sighed, pushing away the book.

“Well since we’ve hit a road block, dinner?” Dean asked, in part because he knew getting his brother distracted was the best way to get his subconscious to juggle everything into place.

“You just filled up on candy.” Sam pointed out.

“Still got room. Saw a decent looking diner a couple of blocks over.”

Sam chuckled, “lead the way.”

The diner did turn out to be fairly decent and they ended up grabbing a booth in the back, people watching while they ate. It was a couple of hours before they headed back.

Sam frowned as they closed the door behind them, his danger sense was being set off by something.

“Dean…” He started then incredibly strong bands of magic snapped into being and wrapped around him, pain blinding him instantly.

He felt Dean grab him as his knees buckled. He vaguely heard his brother’s voice but was beyond making out what he was saying. What he knew was that he needed to get the information he knew to his brother or it would be lights out.

“Hex…” He managed to gasp, he hoped anyway, and forced his hand and arm to work, pointing to where he could feel the bag’s ‘hot spot’.

He wasn’t really aware of very much after that, until the bands abruptly vanished. Blinking to clear his sight he saw Dean dropping the still flaming hex bag, then his brother dashed back to his side. He noted that he was propped against the wall next to the door.

“Hey, you okay?” Dean demanded, pulling out a handkerchief and wiping his face.

Sam became aware that he’d thrown up during the attack and made a face, “glad to be alive, thanks.”

“Who the hell do we even know in town? There’s no way that wasn’t deliberate.” Dean asked as he helped Sam to his feet then shadowed him into the bathroom.
Sam rinsed out his mouth then carefully peeled off his shirt, dumping it on the floor to be carted to the washing machines next load.

“Target of opportunity maybe? They can’t have known we’d come to town.”

“There’s hate behind this one, there’s no way even a powerful witch targets Hunters without a reason.”

“Us specifically or Hunters in general do you think? I can’t think of any witch we’ve encountered that either hates us that much or is even still alive.”

“I think it’s probably you specifically.” Dean told him reluctantly, “I was the first through the door but it grabbed you.”

“Which means they targeted me. Great.” Sam sighed, leaving the bathroom slightly unsteadily, “who did I piss off?”

“Wish I could tell you.” Dean replied, waving his brother to the bed, doing a belated bug sweep that fortunately came up clean, then digging out a clean shirt for him. Sam slipped it on then pulled the books closer and started going through them again, “think you’re going to find the answer in there?”

“Maybe. Whatever the reason it’s not personal revenge, even if targeting me indicates hatred for me. Not with a hex bag that difficult to assemble, that takes planning. Generations of planning.”

“Any ideas?”

“Won’t know ‘til I read it.” Sam pointed out.

“Want me to read while you rest?” Dean asked.

Sam shook his head, “no. Doubt I could relax right now anyway, no matter how wiped that left me feeling.”

“Okay.” Dean replied and settled on the other bed to watch him worriedly. Sam decided not to argue with him about that, it couldn’t have been an easy thing to witness.

Sam read in silence, and Dean watched him, for around an hour.

“Might have something. A spell. Check this out:” He stated, “three blood sacrifices over three days. The last before midnight on the final day of the final harvest.”

He handed the book over to Dean, “Celtic calendar, the final day of the final harvest is October 31st.”

“Halloween.” Dean noted.

“Exactly.” Sam agreed.

“What exactly are the blood sacrifices for?” Dean asked, wondering even as he asked whether Sam surviving meant the spell had been derailed.

“Well, if I’m right, this witch is summoning a demon.” Sam replied, “and not just any demon. Samhain.”

“Am I supposed to be impressed?” Dean asked, there weren’t many demons he bothered to learn the names of. That his brother had nearly died in a spell focused on it didn’t make him any more inclined
to find out, beyond labelling it or the witch responsible ‘dead’ anyway.

“Samhain is the origin of Halloween.” Sam explained patiently, “the Celts believed that October 31st was the one night of the year when the veil was thinnest between the living and the dead. And it was Samhain’s night. Masks were put on to hide from him. Sweets left on doorsteps to appease him. Faces carved into pumpkins to worship him. He was exorcised centuries ago.”

“So even though Samhain took a trip downstairs, the traditions stuck?” Dean asked.

“Exactly. Only now, instead of demons and blood orgies Halloween is all about kids, candy, and costumes.” Sam agreed.

“Okay, so some witch wants to raise Samhain and take back the night?” Dean asked with a half attempted try at levity. Sam let it pass, Dean had had to catch his brother as he collapsed due to whoever trying to fulfil this spell and humour was a coping method Sam had long noted. He’d probably be lucky if his brother didn’t try to wrap him in cotton wool after this.

“This ritual can only be performed every 600 years.” He added.

“And the 600 year marker rolls around…?”

“Tomorrow night.” Sam confirmed.

“Naturally.” Dean complained, “sure is a lot of death and destruction for one demon.”

“That’s ‘cause he likes company.” Sam told him, “once he’s raised, Samhain can do some raising of his own.”

“Raising what, exactly?” Dean asked.

“Dark, evil crap, and lots of it. I mean, they follow him around like the pied piper.” Sam replied.

“So we’re talking ghosts?” Dean commented looking at the pictures.

“Yeah.” Sam confirmed.

“Zombies?” Dean continued and Sam again confirmed it.

“Leprechauns?” Dean quipped and Sam rolled his eyes, “those little dudes are scary. Small hands.”

“It starts with ghosts and ghouls, this sucker just keeps on going though, by night’s end, we are talking every awful thing we’ve ever seen. Everything we fight all in one place.”

“Awesome.” Dean complained, “think because they misfired on you it’s been derailed?”

“Maybe. Best to prepare as if they had a backup though, or if they can still continue if they have two sacrifices on the final day.”

“It’s gonna be a slaughterhouse if so.”

“There’s more.” Sam told him, “think I might know why they’re so angry with me.”

He pulled out the small esoteric version of Revelation that Bobby had given him over a year ago, flipped open to somewhere in the middle, and showed Dean, “one of the seals is the raising of Samhain. So they are pissed because they either have to wait 600 years for another go at the apocalypse or forego the chance at the seal.”
“That makes too much sense. Get revenge and try to kick start it all back up again in one fell swoop even if they can’t get the seal.” Dean replied.

“Bobby might know whether they can continue with the spell or not.” Sam suggested.

Dean checked the time, “he might. I’ll send him a message and check with him in the morning.”

He looked critically at his brother, “you look wiped, dude. Grab some sleep.”

“Probably a good idea.” Sam conceded, “adrenaline is starting to run out.”

“Sleep. I’ll keep watch.”

“You need sleep too.”

“No way I can sleep after that. And we don’t have any wards that’ll keep out witches. I’ll be fine, I wasn’t the one they tried to turn inside out.”

“I’m too tired to argue.” Sam sighed and crawled under the covers, “I’ll argue when I wake up.”

Dean just gave a soft chuckle and watched his, thankfully alive, brother fall asleep. He could swear his heart had nearly stopped when Sam had collapsed, if his brother hadn’t had enough presence of mind to get the message out about it being a hex bag and where it was through the obvious pain he was in Dean wasn’t sure he’d have figured that out or located it fast enough.
Chapter 36: Warding and Guns

Dean refused to go even out of the room while his brother was still sleeping, not even when he checked in with Bobby to find out if he knew what they could expect. Though he did keep his voice soft.

“Hey, Bobby.” He greeted quietly when the older Hunter answered.

“Why are you whispering?” Bobby demanded.

“Sam’s asleep.”

“What happened that you’re not going to step outside to talk? Or is this still you being over protective from what he did with the ghost sickness?”

“I wish.” Dean replied then had to take a moment to control the anguish in his voice, “hex bag nearly killed him last night.”

“Damn. He okay?”

“Yeah. But Bobby…if he hadn’t pushed his way through the pain to let me know what was going on…it would have been game over.”

“Sounds like it was pretty bad. I doubt you called just to let me know about the close call though. This about the spell you sent me a message about?”

“Yeah. Sam dug up some information about a spell to raise Samhain that can only be done once every 600 years; three sacrifices over 3 days with the last on October 31st.”

“How many sacrifices so far?”

“One death and one attempt. Seriously powerful hex bags with really old crap. Extinct herb, antique coin, charred bone from a newborn.”

“The attack on Sam was supposed to be the second?”

“Yeah. The herb burnt up when I burnt it but the bone and coin were recognisable.”
“Was there another death last night?”

“Not that I’ve heard.”

“Okay. Unless they managed to get another sacrifice in when you prevented them killing Sam then raising Samhain is off the cards. However that means they’ll be pissed as hell and they’ll probably come right at you.”

“Joy. That on top of being pissed at us because they couldn’t break a seal with it.”

“That why they went after Sam?”

“Our best guess as to why anyway. Not exactly usual for even a powerful witch to target a Hunter they haven’t even met and they can’t have expected us to come to town.”

“Not to mention that they’d get some serious brownie points if they actually managed to kill him.”

Dean saw Sam start to stir, “wait a sec, Bobby. Sam’s starting to wake.”

When Sam finally blinked a little blearily at him Dean was beside his bed again.

“Don’t tell me you stayed there all night.” Sam commented.

“Not completely. Just been talking to Bobby.” He held up the phone as demonstration and Sam could see that the line was still open.

“Well I’m going to go to the bathroom, put that on speaker so I can join in when I get back.”

He got back to Bobby giving his brother a lecture about not sleeping.

“See, I’m not the only one who thought that was a crap idea.” Sam commented as he sat down on the bed to join the conversation.

“You didn’t argue last night.” Dean retorted.

“I was too tired to argue last night, I told you I’d argue about it when I woke up.” Sam replied.

“That should have been your cue to get some sleep at least.” Bobby pointed out, “Sam, how are you doing?”

“Better. Not an experience I’d want to repeat anytime soon though. Just glad Dean found the hex bag and burnt it.” Sam told him.

“Don’t leave your contribution out.” Dean contradicted him, “that it was magic was the last thing on my mind when you went down. If you hadn’t managed to tell me it was a hex bag and point to where it was I doubt I’d have found it in time. And I could see how much pain you were in, how you managed to get the information through that is beyond me.”

“Sam can sense hex bags?” Bobby asked.

“Yeah. Did I forget to tell you?” Sam replied.

“Yeah. Anything else you forgot to tell me?”

“He can sense ghosts, demons, vampires, rougarou, shapeshifters, and werewolves. Can sense the effects of a Crocotta but can’t identify the actual critter. Can’t sense pagan gods or Tricksters.” Dean
listed. Sam looked at him surprised, “what? I keep track.”

“Okay, good. First things first you gotta find out whether they managed to get a backup sacrifice in.” Bobby stated, “if they did you’re going to have to identify the witch and stop the final sacrifice or you’re going to have one hell of a time dealing with Samhain himself.”

“So they had to get the second sacrifice before midnight last night?” Sam asked.

“Yup, or the summoning is off the cards for this try.” Bobby confirmed.

“They had a couple of hours to locate and off a substitute, and they probably had one already picked that they substituted Sam for because they can’t have expected us to come to town.” Dean noted.

“That would explain why we didn’t have to deal with anything else last night.” Sam agreed, “though…is it just me or does it seem like these two spells were set up like traps? Set in place and activate when certain triggers go off rather than having the witch actively powering it like we’ve seen before.”

“Certainly a possibility.” Bobby replied, “if so they mightn’t know it misfired yet.”

“So no going outside until we are ready to defend ourselves.” Dean noted.

“How are we going to do that? I can tell where the hex bags are, the actual bands of magic I can’t get a grip on.” Sam asked.

“I’ll have a dig through my books and get back to you.” Bobby stated, “I remember there’s some that talk about defending against or reducing the effects of magic but I’ll have to check.”

“Okay, Bobby, talk to you later.” Sam agreed and they hung up.

“How do you want to handle this?” Dean asked.

“First I want a coffee.” Sam replied, “then let’s hack into the cameras and see if we can spot someone watching us. They had to have spotted us at some point then followed us back here in order to break in and plant the hex bag. And we also need to see if there were any deaths last night after it misfired on me.”

“Okay.” Dean replied and waved Sam towards the laptop, “you get started, I’ll make the coffee. Had the police scanner going most of the night so we’ll hear something if there’s a weird corpse found.”

It took a bit for him to be sure of what he found to bring it to Dean’s attention. Dean had been listening to the scanner, and munching on candy, while Sam worked.

“I think there’s two of them.” Sam stated.

“What have you found?” Dean asked, coming to stand behind him.

“took me a bit to see it.” Sam replied, pulling up the pictures and pointing out the people.

“Outside the Wallace’s when we were there.” A blond teenage girl.

“When we returned to the motel.” An older man.

“When we went for dinner.” The older man again, with the teenager appearing for a bit while the man went into the carpark and out of the shot. Would have been nice to actually get them on camera breaking in but their luck didn’t go that way.
“When we got back.” Just the older man again.

“Now.” Both.

Neither of them were just standing there watching, they always had something they were doing but the sheer persistence spoke to the true nature of what they were actually doing.

“Holy crap.” Dean commented.

The phone rang, Bobby getting back to them. A soft email alert rang out at the same time.

Dean answered the phone and switched it to speaker, “Hi Bobby.”

“Just sent you an email with some pictures from the book I dug up. Works better if you can paint them but pen works in a pinch. You found anything on your end?”

“Think we’re dealing with two witches.” Sam told him, “they appear to be watching the room.”

“Great.” Bobby commented sarcastically, “okay, don’t waste time putting those sigils on then. Don’t waste time once they attack, if your guns don’t work use the Colt.”

“This isn’t going to be quiet is it?” Dean asked.

“Probably not. But at least it’ll be so weird the cops will shelve it. Try to make sure any cameras that have a view can’t see your faces.”

“Thanks Bobby.” Sam told him.

“Call me once it’s over, let me know that you survived.”

“Will do.” Dean replied and Bobby hung up.

“Okay, you take a look at that information Bobby sent. I’ll pack up.” Dean told him.

Sam nodded then brought up the email, carefully going through the photos that Bobby had sent.

Sam glanced up at Dean when he deposited the bags next to the door, “finished?”

“Yep.”

“Okay. Shirts off and sit here.” He gestured at the chair next to him.

Dean looked slightly uncomfortable but complied as Sam pulled out the black light pen and lamp.

“Closest we can approximate to painting it.” Sam explained as he started carefully constructing the needed sigils.

Once he finished with Dean he stripped off his own shirts and repeated the exercise. Dean double checked both their weapons and the Colt while he did so.

“Ready?” Sam asked as he put the shirts back on.

“Ready as we’ll get.” Dean answered, handing over Sam’s gun and the Colt.

Sam carefully stowed them, “okay. Let’s do this.”

Dean led the way out of the door, both of them being careful to make sure the cameras in the area
couldn’t get a shot of their faces. The anger that suffused the faces of the two suspected witches swept any doubt away as to what they were.

“I knew we should have targeted that party!” The blond teenager exclaimed.

“Can’t you ever just die when you’re supposed to!?” The man growled at them, his eyes fixed on Sam.

Foregoing any further conversation the man let loose with a bolt of power directly at Sam. He felt the sigils burn slightly as they protected him desperately. The teenage girl raised her hands to fire at Dean, a glow wreathing about her hands.

A couple of pedestrians screamed and fled.

Both Sam and Dean freed their guns and fired at the two witches.

Apparently they weren’t expecting to face resistance, or maybe they just weren’t expecting the brothers to be able to mount a defence, since the bullets from their guns blew their chests out near simultaneously.

They waited for a moment but the witches didn’t revive.

Dean grabbed their bags out of the room and they hopped into the impala and headed out before the motel manager was game to come out from under his desk.

They gave Bobby a call to let him know they’d survived and started to head back to his place after Sam had asked if he could borrow the books on warding’s and the like, he didn’t intend to be caught unprepared like that again.

Sam checked the results on the sigils as Dean drove, each was surrounded by a small burn. Nothing compared to what the bolt would likely have done but the protection hadn’t been complete and, unless he missed his guess, wouldn’t have stood up to a second bolt.

“We got any burn cream?” He asked.

“Yeah…” Dean replied even as he shot his brother a worried glance. Then he pulled in at the next carpark they came across, “okay, let me see.”

“It’s not that bad.” Sam protested.

“Bad enough that you’re asking for burn gel.” Dean retorted, hopping out of the driver’s seat and retrieving the first aid kit from the boot.

“Now let me see.” He demanded as he returned, putting the kit on the seat between them.

Sam unbuttoned his shirts with an annoyed sigh. Dean felt each one with his hand to check for residual heat, there wasn’t any so at least with burns from magic they didn’t keep cooking. He pulled out the burn gel and applied it liberally, noting the slight easing of tension around his brother’s eyes that spoke to how much it had actually hurt.

“Okay.” Dean stated, packing up the kit again and putting it on the back seat, “let me know when that starts hurting again.”

“Dean…”

“Don’t argue. Not a pain you should be having to put up with, we already have enough of that in our
lives."

Dean resumed the journey to Bobby’s without waiting for Sam to reply.
Chapter 37: Wishing Well

They hadn’t stayed long at Bobby’s, just long enough to collect the books that the older Hunter thought might help Sam in his looking into wards. Not that he had a huge amount, the books weren’t common and there’d been a lot lost over the years to one thing or another.

So while the laptop ran a search for odd news reports Sam read through one of the books as he waited for Dean to return.

Dean was still in over protective mode, insisting on Sam remaining in the secured motel room they were currently in while he went to grab lunch for both of them. That was definitely getting old, though he couldn’t really argue with the fact that the last time they’d went out for a meal he’d come under magical attack. Sooner or later he was going to need to make it clear to Dean that splitting up didn’t make either of them safer though. And he hadn’t thought he’d ever be worried about his brother cutting back on the amount he drank, but it spoke to Dean almost permanently operating in mission mode and not relaxing rather than anything else. That sort of stress almost never ended well and he wasn’t sure how to keep his brother from running himself into the ground.

“Anything interesting?” Dean asked as he came back in and deposited their meals, a burger for him and a healthier alternative for Sam, on the table. A coffee already waiting for him courtesy of Sam.

“Been pretty quiet lately.” Sam replied with a glance at the search results, “no signs of demon activity, no omens or portents I can see.”

“That’s good news for once.” Dean commented, not that he really expected it to continue, as he started munching on his burger.

“Yeah.” Sam agreed, helping himself to his own meal. They might argue about what constituted ‘food’ at times but Dean always made an effort to get something that Sam would actually like rather than forcing him to have what Dean considered nearly food nirvana.

“Just the typical smattering of crank UFO sightings,” he continued, “and one possible vengeful spirit. Here, check this out.”

He brought the story up and turned the laptop towards Dean.
“Up in Concrete, Washington, eyewitness report of a ghost that’s been haunting the showers of a women’s health facility.” Sam explained, Dean nearly snorted out the coffee he’d just taken a mouthful of, “the victim claims that the ghost threw her down a flight of stairs…”

Sam nearly laughed as he recognised the look on his brother’s face. Maybe he’d been worrying unnecessarily since it appeared Dean was actually starting to relax again if he was wanting a case because of the eye candy he might get, “I can see you’re very interested.”

“Women, showers…we gotta save these people.” Dean declared, “eat up Sammy.”

Once they’d both finished their meals they packed up, cleaned up the salt, and hopped in the impala.

It was a few hours’ drive and they arrived in town early the next morning. Sam had spent part of the drive on the phone with the woman who’d experienced the ghostly visitation and arranged to meet her at a local eatery called ‘#1 Lucky Chins’, posing as an author. Dean wasn’t too keen on Sam going in alone but after the woman had expressed hesitancy at meeting if he wasn’t on his own there really wasn’t another option, it wasn’t exactly rare for a victim of an attack, supernatural or otherwise, to be wary about being outnumbered.

“I’m not surprised the spirit world chose to make contact with me.” The woman told him earnestly after they’d introduced themselves, “I’m something of a natural sensitive.”

Sam kept a polite expression on his face, he wasn’t sure if he’d be able to pick other psychics but he sure wasn’t getting the feeling of energy he got around Pam. Probably best not to bust her bubble though.

“I can sense that about you, Candace.” He lied a little more awkwardly than usual, “that whole sensitive thing.”

The flattery worked though and she looked pleased.

“So, what did you say you’re calling your book?” She asked.

“Oh. Well, um, the working title is…Supernatural.” He improvised hastily and tried to get her back on topic, “I’ve been crossing the country gathering stories like yours. But anyways, you were telling me about your encounter.”

“Yes, well, once I saw the apparition that’s when I started to run.”

A couple very demonstrably making out distracted him for a moment and he filed it away in the ‘weird things of the world’ folder, he’d certainly never been like that with Jess even though he’d been planning on asking her to marry him, which still sent a pang of grief through his gut when he thought of it, and Dean, for all his hypersexual nature, was never that overt. He returned his attention to the lady opposite him.

“And you said the ghost chased you?” He asked, referring to the notes from the phone conversation.

“Not just that, it knew my name.” Candace replied, “it kept yelling, ‘Mrs Armstrong, Mrs Armstrong!’ and…that’s when I hit the stairs and fell.”

“You fell?” Sam asked, this was sounding less like an actual ghost all the time, “the ghost didn’t push you?”

“Oh, I don’t…I don’t know…” she admitted with a bit of confusion and stuttering, “I mean…I think it did. Maybe.”
That was definitely different, Sam had never encountered a situation where it could be unclear whether a ghost had done something. When a ghost threw or pushed it was wild and powerful, and there was no chance of mistaking it for a slip or trip.

“Did you feel like it meant to hurt you, like it was violent or…?” He continued.

“It was a ghost.” Candace exclaimed, “I’m lucky to be alive. Anyway, I was at the bottom of the stairs and…that’s when it got weird.”

Sam looked at her wondering what type of civilian didn’t consider just encountering a ghost already weird. Especially one that had obviously not actually encountered supernatural crap before.

“It helped me up.” She continued and Sam did a double take. Even ghosts that could easily affect the material world would have difficulty doing that.

“Say again?” He asked.

“Yeah, it helped me up.” She reiterated, “and it kept saying over and over, ‘please, don’t tell my mum.’”

“Yeah, that’s weird.” Sam agreed after a silent moment.

Saying his goodbyes to the woman Sam headed out and found Dean seated on some stairs reading a paper not far away. His older brother had agreed to checking out the site of the ‘haunting’ rather than hovering over Sam as much as he could from outside the eatery.

“Well, you pick up anything?” Sam asked as he approached.

“No EMF in the shower or anywhere else.” Dean replied grumpily, “this house is clean.”

“Yeah, I’m not surprised. Not only am I not picking up anything I kind of got the feeling back there that crazy pushed Mrs Armstrong down the stairs.”

“I gotta tell ya, I’m pretty disappointed.”

“You wanted to save naked women.” Sam noted with a small laugh.

“Damn right, I wanted to save some naked women.” Dean replied, still sounding put out.

Sam just laughed, glad his brother was starting to loosen up again.

A group of boys raced past, obviously a group of bullies chasing another boy.

“Run, Forrest, run!” Dean called after them. Sam thought of pointing out that the only reason he had never been that first boy was because of Dean but then decided not to, no point getting his brother all tense again and it wasn’t like they could do anything to fix that situation anyway. Dean wasn’t a bully, never had been, but his take would be that the kid needed to learn to defend himself and if he’d had any sort of connection to the boy he’d have taught him how to.

“Sorry, Dean, I don’t think anything’s going on here.” He said instead.

When he glanced back at Dean he found his brother had been distracted by an argument a short way away, between an obvious local and the town’s sheriff. He caught a fragment of the conversation, the local saying something about being thrown into a tree.

“Something’s going on.” Dean noted, unspoken was that it was obviously a little weirder than usual.
“It was Bigfoot, Hal, THE Bigfoot!” The local insisted as they approached.

“Gus, you’re not talking sense here…” the sheriff tried to reason with him.

“There’s a Bigfoot out there, damn it, and he’s a son of a bitch!” Gus interrupted.

“Excuse us. FBI.” Sam interrupted, flipping open the badge he’d pulled out as they approached, Dean doing the same.

“What?” The sheriff asked incredulously.

“Yes, sir. We’re here about the…that.” Sam continued, not as smoothly as normal. Bigfoot was a hoax, but there was obviously something odd going on for someone to insist that that was the case.

“About Bigfoot?” Hal asked, still sounding incredulous.

“That’s right. Sir, can you tell me exactly where this happened?” Sam switched to looking at the local.

“Yes, I can.” Gus answered a little defensively but then gave them detailed directions to where the incident had occurred.

“What the hell’s going on in this town?” Dean asked as they followed the directions, “first there’s a ghost that’s not real and now a Bigfoot sighting?”

“Every Hunter worth his salt knows Bigfoot’s a hoax.” Sam agreed.

“Yeah, maybe somebody’s pumping LSD into the town water supply.” Dean returned, “you’re not picking anything up with your Spidey sense?”

“Nothing.” Sam answered.

They continued in silence for a moment then stopped in their tracks as they reached the spot Gus had told them about.

“Okay,” Dean said as they both looked at the weird tracks, “what do you suppose made that?”

“That…uh…is a big foot…” Sam replied, coming up short on his knowledge of what animal, supernatural or otherwise, could possibly have made that track.

They followed the weird footprints for a while and they led to a shop that had obviously been broken into. The door had been ripped off its hinges and the inside was a mess. It was hard at first to tell that anything had been taken rather than smashed or ripped.

“So what, Bigfoot breaks into a liquor store jonesing for some hooch?” Dean demanded before squatting to take a closer look at the broken bottles, “Amaretto and Irish cream. He’s a girl-drink drunk.”

Sam rounded a corner and found that the magazine isle had also been raided, “hey, check this out.”

Dean came over and looked it over.

“He took the whole porno rack?” He asked, sounding surprised.

Sam spotted some fur that had got caught and pulled it out.
Dean looked at it trying to figure out how that fit into everything, “well, I’ll say it again. What the hell is going on in this town?”

Without needed to actually say anything to each other they took a seat outside and tried to figure out how to make sense of what they’d come across.

“I got nothing.” Dean declared eventually.

“It’s got to be a joke, right?” Sam asked, “some bug ass mother in a gorilla suit?”

“Oh it’s a Bigfoot.” Dean replied half joking, “you know, and he’s some kind of a…alcohol-porno addict. Kinda like a deep woods Duchovny.”

A young girl rode past and the wind blew a magazine out of the crate she had on the back of her bike. Dean frowned as he looked at the magazine then got up and picked it up, Sam joining him.

“A little young for Busty Asian Beauties.” He commented.

Checking around the back they found she’d left a box with the missing bottles and magazines on the back steps, along with a ‘sorry’ note, then left by the small bridge they’d followed the tracks through.

Feeling kind of like stalkers they tracked her back to her home, which didn’t look all that odd.

“What is this, like a Harry and the Henderson’s deal?” Dean asked as they approached the door.

The young girl they’d seen on the bike answered the door to their knock.

“Hello?” She asked.

“Hello.” Sam replied awkwardly and could tell his brother wasn’t any more comfortable, “um… could we…? You know what, are your parents home?”

“Nope.” She answered.

“No.” They both chorused, a little frustrated.

“Um…” Dean decided to have a go, “have you seen a really, really furry…”

“Is he in trouble?” She demanded, silencing both the brothers for a moment.

“No…no, no. Not at all.” Sam awkwardly replied, “we just…we wanted to make sure he was okay.”

“Exactly.” Dean backed him up.

“He’s my teddy bear.” She told them, then whispered, “I think he’s sick.”

“Wow. Uh…” Dean replied, “amazing, because you know what? We are…uh…teddy bear doctors.”

They both pulled out the health inspector badges and showed her briefly as a substitute.

“Really? Can you please take a look at him?” She asked.

“Sure.” They said together, still awkward and knowing that if that had been their kid selves they wouldn’t have even got to ‘hello’ let alone invited into the place.

She led them upstairs and told them on the way, “he’s in my bedroom. He’s pretty grumpy.”
She knocked on a door, “Teddy? There’s some nice doctors here to see you.”

She opened the door and though the brothers had been bracing themselves for anything they still couldn’t believe what they saw. An actual teddy bear, but this one the size of an adult human, watching news reports and drinking from a bottle of alcohol.

“Close the frigging door!” The bear yelled and the girl complied.

“See what I mean?” She asked when the door was closed.

They shared a shocked look.

“All I ever wanted was a teddy which was big, real, and talked.” The girl explained without them having to ask, “but now he’s sad all the time…not ‘ouch’ sad, but ‘ouch in the head’ sad…says weird stuff, and smells like the bus.”

“Um…little girl…” Dean started.

“Audrey.” She interrupted.

“Audrey.” Dean corrected, “how exactly did your teddy become real?”

“I wished for it.” Audrey replied.

“You wished for it?” Sam asked.

“At the wishing well.” She elaborated.

With a frown Dean stepped past her and went into the room.

“Look at this!” The bear cried, gesturing at the news reports on the screen. He was watching some 24 hour news station, “you believe this crap?”

“Not really.” Dean replied, half expecting to find out they’d fallen down a rabbit hole.

“It is a terrible world.” The bear continued with anguish in his voice, “why am I here?”

“For tea parties.” Audrey said before Dean could even think of an answer to a question he wasn’t even sure he could answer for a fellow human let alone a former toy somehow wished into sentience.

“Tea parties?” The bear asked with tears in his voice, “is that all there is?”

Dean turned around and quietly left the room as the giant teddy started crying. He wasn’t sure he’d know what to say to SAM if he’d been that upset never mind someone and something else.

He could see Sam trying to figure out something to say.

“Audrey, give us a second, okay?” Sam finally managed, and she nodded, “okay.”

They moved off a bit, both of them still trying to figure out the right course of action.

“Are we…? Should we…? Uh…” Sam asked hesitantly then dropped his voice to a whisper, “are we gonna kill this teddy bear?”

“How?” Dean asked, “we shoot it, burn it?”

“I don’t know. Both?”
“How do we even know that’s gonna work? I don’t want some giant, flaming, pissed off teddy on our hands.”

“Yeah.” Sam agreed, “besides, I get the feeling that the bear isn’t really the, you know, core problem here.”

“Audrey, where are your parents?” Sam turned towards the girl and returned to a normal volume.

“My mum wished they were in Bali, so I think they’re in Bali.” She replied.

“Okay, well…” Sam tried to decide what to do, technically they probably should have been notifying someone about the abandoned minor situation but after the way they’d been raised it didn’t really present itself as an option in his thought process, “I’m really sorry to have to break this to you, but your bear is sick. Yeah, he’s got…”

“Lollipop disease.” Dean supplied when Sam fumbled.

“Lollipop disease.” Sam repeated with a grateful glance at his brother.

“It’s not uncommon for a bear his size.” Dean continued, “but see, it’s really contagious.”

“Yeah, is there someone, maybe a grownup that you can stay with while we treat him?” Sam continued.

“Mrs Hurley lives down the street.” Audrey supplied promptly.

“Perfect.” Dean declared.

“Good.” Sam echoed, “yeah, good. We’d like you to stay there for a few days, okay?”

“Okay.” She agreed happily.

“Oh, and Audrey…where is this wishing well?” Dean asked.

“Lucky Chin’s.” She answered before heading out of the house to her neighbour’s like they’d asked.

Back at the eatery they entered just as the kid who’d been being chased earlier was leaving. In the back of his mind Sam hoped that wasn’t a situation they were going to end up having to deal with.

“Think it works?” Dean asked as they reached the well.

“You got a better explanation for teddy back there?” Sam asked.

“There’s one way to find out.” Dean declared and dug out a coin.

“What are you gonna wish for?” Sam asked, a little worried.

“Shh.” Dean admonished him and Sam had enough time to hope that his brother would stick to something inconsequential before Dean tossed the coin in, “you’re not supposed to tell.”

There was a flash of magic to Sam’s senses; dark, twisted magic that raced out of the room and vanished from his perception. He swore silently; that explained why he wasn’t sensing anything, it was only perceptible as it activated.

The door jingled as someone else walked in.
“Somebody order a foot long Italian with jalapeno?” The new person called. They both regarded him with surprise for a moment.

“That would be me.” Dean finally said, raising his hand.

As inconsequential requests go food was definitely a good one to choose Sam had to concede.

They grabbed a seat after collecting the sandwich and Dean unwrapped it.

“Are you seriously going to eat that?” Sam asked, a vague sense of something not being right on the edge of his senses.

“Yeah, why not.” Dean replied, biting into it before Sam could raise any further objections. Sam nearly sighed as he realised his brother thought it was just his usual attempt to get Dean eating more healthily and not that he was concerned about consequences. Maybe they’d get lucky and there wouldn’t be any, food was pretty inconsequential after all. And his danger sense hadn’t been set off.

“I think it works, dude.” Dean commented after a moment, “I was pretty specific.”

“The teddy bear, the sandwich…” Sam noted in agreement, there were too many close by who might overhear for him to specify what he’d picked up when the coin had gone in though. Short of using the code phrase anyway and it was way too late for that to make any difference.

Dean made a wordless sound of agreement and pulled out the paper he’d been reading earlier, the top story was about a massive lottery win, “I’m guessing this.”

“I’m guessing that.” Sam added, nodding to the cloying couple again in the place.

“Oh, that definitely goes on the list.” Dean agreed. He put the paper away again, “what are we supposed to do? Stop people’s wishes from coming true? Sounds like a douche thing to do.”

“Yeah, maybe.” Sam replied, “but when has something like this ever come without a price tag? And usually a deadly one.”

“Oh, I don’t know…it’s a damn good sandwich.” Dean returned but the concern he could see in Sam’s face prompted him to action, “alright, fine. We’ll put a hold on the wishing until we figure out what’s what.”

The guy in charge of the place hurried up to them, “gentlemen, I’m sorry. We don’t allow people to eat outside food here.”

“Well, I am certainly not gonna eat the inside food here.” Dean replied, improvising smoothly, and reached for one of the badges they carried, with Sam fishing for his own as he realised what Dean was doing, and flipped it open, “health department. You, my friend, have a rat infestation. We have got to shut this place down under Emergency Hazard Code 56C.”

“Rats?” The man demanded, sounding shocked.

They managed to get him to chase the other customers out and drained the fountain.

“It’s a typical fountain, plaster Buddha. Nothing I can see.” Dean stated after poking around in it a bit.

“Yes, nothing. We keep a clean place here.” The proprietor declared at his shoulder.

“Sir, I’m gonna have to ask you to leave during the preliminary investigation.” Sam told him,
jumping on the opportunity to let him and his brother work without witnesses, and refused to let him reply, “okay? Thank you.”

They both gazed at the well as the man shuffled away.

“Oh, come on, aren’t you a little bit tempted?” Dean asked, tossing him a coin.

Sam gave a quick glance to check whether the proprietor was still in ear shot before answering, “no. I felt it when it activated, dark, twisted magic. Anything I’d wish for wouldn’t have a good ending.”

“That why you didn’t want me to eat the sandwich?” Dean asked, looking uneasy.

“I didn’t get any warnings if that’s what you’re worried about.” Sam replied with a shrug, “and as wishes go that’s pretty inconsequential. I’d be hard pressed to pick as good to test.”

“What would you wish for?” Dean pressed, “wish yourself back, before it all started? You’d be some yuppie lawyer with a nice car, a white picket fence.”

“Not what I’d wish for.” He replied softly though he could tell Dean would have liked for it to never have happened, for all that he’d been the one to come get him from Stanford all those years ago, for his little brother not to have been roped back into the Hunting life, to not have lost all he had. But he couldn’t go back, didn’t want to go back. Couldn’t even figure out how’d he’d managed to convince himself he might possibly fit in in that world the four years he’d been there. That he’d had some sort of vague idea of being able to help out Hunters who’d got on the wrong side of the law after graduation still felt like just trying to convince himself of a lie.

“Seriously?” Dean asked.

“It’s too late to go back to our old lives, Dean.” He hedged, “I mean, I’m not that guy anymore. Even if we left these extra abilities out of the equation.”

“Alright, well, what then? What would Sammy wish for?” Dean pressed and Sam could see concern lurking in those eyes.

“Jess alive with us. Lilith back in hell. The angels leaving us alone.” Sam replied, “nothing that wouldn’t get completely messed up.”

“Okay.” Dean accepted it a little sadly, only one of those things they had a chance of achieving themselves and he was right, those type of wishes were just asking for something to go wrong. He noticed there was an odd sized coin and reached down to brush the other coins away, “hey, what’s that?”

“Some kind of old coin.” Sam noted, glad for the change in subject, “I don’t recognise the markings.”

Dean tried to pick it up and swore as it refused to move.

“Lift with your legs.” Sam half joked.

Dean gave up on trying to move it, “what, is that little mother welded on there?”

Sam frowned and reached out with his telekinesis to try to shift it, he both mentally and physically recoiled as soon as his ability touched it and it felt like the object had bitten him.

“Sam?” Dean called, alarmed, and grabbed hold of his arm.
“Shit.” Sam swore, “note for the future…trying to lift a dark magic infused coin with telekinesis…hurts!”

“You okay?” Dean asked.

Sam looked at him and nodded.

“Right.” Dean glared at the fountain then stalked out to the impala and Sam joined him. Fishing out a crowbar and mallet he handed the heavy hammer to Sam and stalked back in.

The owner noticed their return with the tools and hurried after them.

“Hey, what is this?” He demanded as Dean wedged the crowbar as much under the coin as he could, “you are gonna break my fountain!”

“Now, sir, I don’t wanna slap you with a 44 slash 16, but I will.” Sam told him, chasing him away again, “alright, thanks.”

When levering the coin didn’t work Dean grabbed the mallet from Sam and tried using it to hammer the crowbar under the coin. The head of the mallet broke off before the coin even started to shift. Dean swore.

“Well if we didn’t know before that the coin was magical we do now.” Sam commented.

“Boy, I’d say.” Dean complained, looking at the shattered handle, “I think it’s Hoodoo that’s protecting the well. I don’t think we can destroy this.”

Sam pulled out his notepad and pencil, opened it to a blank page, ripped it out, and handed them both to Dean.

“Get a rubbing of the marks will you?”

“Right.” Dean agreed, making a quick rubbing, “after what it did to you earlier you ain’t touching it.”

“Maybe it would and maybe it wouldn’t. Don’t see a reason to chance it though. Could you look that up?” He asked as he put two and two together.

“Where are you going?” Dean asked, already stashing the rubbing.

“Something just occurred to me.” Sam replied before heading out of the eatery and to the women’s fitness centre that had brought them originally.

Dean just shrugged at the non answer and headed out, leaving a perplexed owner in his wake.

In the showers now that he knew what to look for it didn’t take long for him to spot the wet footprints being created by thin air.

Sam grabbed the shoulder of the boy, who promptly appeared, and spun him towards him.

“What?” The kid asked and the woman he had been spying on gasped.

“Don’t worry, Ma’am.” Sam stated, holding up the appropriate badge, “I’m with the Health department.”

She just grabbed her things and fled the room. Sam looked back at the kid.
“So you can turn it on and off, huh?” Sam demanded.

“I… I… How’d you know I was…?” He stammered.

“You actually walked up to a wishing well, dropped a dime, and wished to be invisible so you could spy on women in the shower.”

The kid stammered for a bit before finally managing to get out, “no. No. That’s crazy.”

Sam just sighed, “put on some pants.”

The kid nodded.

“And stay visible.” Sam added, with a couple of pokes for emphases.

“Ow.” He complained.

Sam just pointed him towards the exit and the kid stammered again, “okay.”

Meanwhile Dean headed back towards the impala. He was surprised to see the group of boys from earlier but instead of the three bullies chasing the smaller kid instead the kid was chasing the three bullies and from the look of fear on their faces it wasn’t some kind of game.

The kid stopped to look at him and Dean knew he didn’t like where this was heading. Defending yourself was one thing, attacking others with power beyond what they could defend against was something different.

“You got a problem, mister?” The kid demanded.

“What? No.” Dean replied a little surprised.

The kid was apparently happy enough with that answer and resumed his chase. Dean watched him leave then began to resume his trek towards the car only to have his stomach churn. He pushed his hand against his middle and managed to stave off any further response but he had a bad feeling about this. Good thing the motel wasn’t far.

It had settled by the time he got in the room and he’d plugged the image into Sam’s search program before his stomach let him know it hadn’t gone away, he relocated to the bathroom before he could make a mess. It wasn’t like he had the most restrained gag reflex after all.

It calmed again after a few minutes and he was able to take a look at the results the program had dug up. He’d got a good idea of what was going on before the rebelling sandwich sent him scrambling into the bathroom again, this time it didn’t calm and he alternated between heaving into the toilet and trying to calm everything down at the sink. Last thing he wanted to do was worry Sam, who would probably be back any minute.

Sam had settled for chasing the kid away from the spa once he’d escorted him outside, he certainly couldn’t tell the kid’s parents what he’d done, then walked back to the motel.

He paused on entering as he heard Dean heaving in the bathroom. It was all he could do not to go straight in and make sure his big brother was okay.

He’d known since he was a teen that Dean, much to his chagrin, had a rather weak stomach. After annoying his brother fussing over him to the point of Dean losing his temper, several times, he’d made him a deal; he wouldn’t make a fuss when he struggled as long as Dean let him know if he was
in real trouble.

Much as it would be easy to blame their father for his big brother’s embarrassment over it he knew that at least as much came from Dean’s own nature, his dedication to Hunting, and his need to not display perceived weakness.

So instead of racing straight to his brother’s side Sam closed the door forcefully and called out, “Dean?”

He heard Dean cough and the tap turned on. That at least meant his brother was on his feet. The fact that it was promptly followed by an obvious gag wasn’t as hopeful though.

“You alright?” He pointedly asked.

“The wishes turn bad, Sam. The wishes turn very bad.” Dean replied.

Sam frowned, that wasn’t an ‘I’m fine’ but it also wasn’t a ‘help me’ and the fact that he could actually get a full phrase out was a good sign, even if he’d promptly heaved again on the tail of it.

“The sandwich, huh?” Sam asked.

The toilet flushed, which meant that Dean at least thought he was done for now. If ever there was a nonverbal cue that his brother didn’t want him in there fussing that was it. So Sam headed towards where he could see the research sitting open on the laptop.

Dean came to the doorway from the bathroom and Sam noted he still looked rather green and shaky, and the towel he was carrying a mute witness to the older brother not being completely sure his gag reflex was done with him.

“The coin is Babylonian.” Dean told him tiredly, “it’s cursed. I found some fragments of a legend, but…”

Sam had begun to turn towards the laptop to check what Dean had mentioned but turned back when his brother interrupted his sentence with a gag. A second one had him disappearing briefly back into the bathroom. He reappeared with a half groan.

“I’m good.” Dean declared with a rather shaky grin, his will power obviously being brought to bear on the situation. Sam knew to just accept the statement, his brother knew well he expected him to tell him if he was in trouble and took care not to say he was okay when he wasn’t, he didn’t want his little brother fussing over him all the time after all.

Sam sat down at the laptop and looked over what Dean had found “The serpent is Tiamat.” He continued, coming into the main room and heading towards the fridge, “which is the Babylonian god of primordial chaos.”

Dean grabbed a ginger beer out of the fridge and came over to join Sam with a couple of coughs that the younger brother didn’t mistake for anything other than controlled gags.

Sam threw a concerned look at his brother and the can he held but didn’t say anything. Dean gave him a half shrug in reply but stayed equally silent on the subject.

“I guess her priests were working some serious Black Magic.” Dean continued his explanation as if there’d been no silent interruptions.
“They made the coin?” Sam asked.

“Yeah, to sow the seeds of chaos. Whoever tosses the coin in a wishing well, makes a wish, it turns on the well. Then it starts granting wishes to all comers.”

“But the wishes get twisted.” Sam extrapolated easily, “you ask for a talking teddy…”

“You get a bipolar nut job.” Dean finished easily.

“And you get E. coli.” Sam replied half-jokingly, earning a half frustrated half embarrassed look from Dean.

“This thing has turned more than one town upside down over the centuries.” Dean continued, opening up the ginger beer, “it’s even wiped a few off the map. I mean one person gets their wish, it’s trouble. But everybody gets their wish…”

“It’s chaos.” Sam finished.

Dean gave him a wordless noise of agreement and took a drink, Sam deliberately didn’t look at him as he did.

“Any way to stop it?” He asked instead.

“One way.” Dean replied, “we gotta find the first wisher. Whoever dropped the coin in and made the first wish, they’re the only ones who can pull it back out and reverse the wishes. So for now, we’ve got, you know, a couple of nutso dreams come true but once the word gets out about the well things are just gonna get crazier and crazier.”

“This isn’t going to be easy to figure out is it?” Sam sighed.

“Unfortunately.” Dean agreed, “where’d you go anyway?”

“Remember that ‘ghost’ we came here about originally?”

“Do I want to know what wish caused that?”

“Teenage boy wished to be invisible so he could spy on women in the showers.”

“But…?”

“But he has to be naked to do so.”

Dean paused for a moment, “okay…now I need mental bleach.”

“Tell me about it.” Sam agreed.

He turned back to the laptop and finished going through the links that Dean hadn’t got to before being interrupted. There wasn’t any additional information though. Then he started working out a rough timeline for the known wishers, trying to figure out which was the first.

They could have headed back out and started interviewing those they could but Sam had a feeling that Dean’s stomach wasn’t done with him yet, especially if the curse had given him a form of food poisoning like he’d half joked.

Dean wasn’t an idiot either, much as he preferred to just ignore it when it happened, his will power usually sufficient to batter it back under control, he knew that in this situation there wasn’t a huge
chance that it was over and done with. That was part of the reasoning behind the ginger beer, to try
to calm things down before it could get unsettled again.

He watched Sam work through the research for two hours before unsettled was exactly what his
stomach got again.

“Dean?” Sam called as Dean headed back to the bathroom but he waved him off.

The churning was more urgent than before and Dean barely made it to the toilet before it was coming
up and out. It took a long time to settle and Dean waited once it had finally let him be to make sure it
wasn’t going to make a surprised reappearance before flushing the toilet and getting up.

Or rather trying to get up. Soon as he moved the room spun and he braced himself on the wall,
squeezing his eyes shut, hoping it would stop. When it didn’t he knew he was in trouble.

“Sam?”

His little brother was by his side so fast he half wondered if he’d teleported.

“Talk to me.” Sam instructed, getting him to lean back against the wall.

“Dizzy.”

“Okay.” He felt Sam’s hand on his forehead, “damn, you’ve spiked a fever.”

Sam moved away a little bit and he heard the tap running, a few moments later a cool face washer
was wiped over his face then left on his forehead.

“Do you still feel sick?” Sam asked.

“No.” Not that that really meant anything if the room kept spinning thanks to his touchy gag reflex.

“Okay, let’s get you lying down.”

“But…”

“After the amount I just heard you bring up I’ll be surprised if you have anything left to gag up.”

He realised it must have sounded real bad, Sam had probably been waiting just outside the door if
not at the door when he’d called. But he’d stuck to the agreement from when they were teens; no
fussing unless Dean was in trouble and had trusted Dean to actually tell him if that was the case. Sam
had probably realised he was in trouble before Dean did but had still trusted him.

“Just let me take your weight.” Sam told him, then the face washer was taken away and his brother
hauled him to his feet.

He did gag as the room spun even more and his legs tried to give out on him. Sam kept him upright
and he felt the towel he’d been carrying pressed to his mouth and was thankful his brother had
thought of that just in case.

“Okay, just lean on me.” Sam told him then slowly guided him forward. It seemed to take ages until
Sam was lowering him onto one of the beds. Once he was lying down the face washer was draped
across his forehead again.

There was a slight scrape then Sam was talking again, “bin next to you just in case.”
“Thanks Sammy.”

“No problem. Feeling any better?”

“Being horizontal is calming down the spinning a bit.”

“Okay, good. Try to rest, sleep if you can, I’ll be here.”

“Okay.”
Chapter 38: Lightning and Dreams

Sam worked methodically through the information they had and scoured through the online archives of the local paper trying to piece together the timeline. Dean slept on the bed a little restlessly. He’d gagged a few times since Sam had put him there but thankfully the vomiting seemed to have actually passed. The fever hadn’t and Sam had been rewetting the face washer each time he checked on his big brother.

He had all their phones next to the laptop, with their volume turned way down, in case anyone called them. He wasn’t expecting anyone to so it was rather surprising when his phone rang. He checked the caller id and then answered softly.

“Vic. Everything okay?”

“I thought I’d be asking you that question.” Henriksen replied, “why are you whispering.”

“Dean’s asleep.” Sam told him, “oh don’t tell me…you’ve landed with the mess from the witches attacking us?”

“Is that what it was? Good job keeping your faces obscured by the way, if I hadn’t known you I wouldn’t have been able to pick it as you.” Henriksen responded, “got put on a joint agency task force because they’re worried the blast that hit you represents a new weapon. It doesn’t, does it? They didn’t find any weapons at the scene and I managed to talk them out of trying to get a match on the mangled bullets they pulled out of them to try and talk to the obvious targets of an attempted murder. I really don’t want to know how you managed that one. Already ruled a clear case of self-defence in case you’re wondering, they’re just worried about what was used on you.”

Sam gave a soft chuckle but didn’t elaborate on the bullets, it was amazing what a small application of telekinesis could do.

“They didn’t have any weapons beyond themselves and maybe a knife or two and hex bags.” He assured the FBI agent.

“That those little sacks of weird crap?”
“Yep. Shouldn’t be dangerous without the witches but I’d suggest burning them. We noted that the
spells they used tended to be trap like rather than having to be powered and directed by a witch at the
time of deployment as is usually the case, in our experience anyway.”

“Yeah, like that’d be easy to achieve. Right now they’re sitting down in evidence separated out into
their components.”

“That should have broken any spell that’s been set on them.”

“And if it hasn’t?”

“Trust me, you’ll know. One of those suckers near turned me inside out the previous night.”

“Hopefully that doesn’t happen. I’m already starting to get called ‘Spooky’ after escaping that insane
‘bomb blast’ by the skin of my teeth, I DON’T need anything else contributing to that.”

Sam chuckled.

“Did that blast hurt you?” Henriksen continued, “it looked pretty scary, I was half expecting to see
you go down the first time I saw the footage.”

“Had some protective sigils drawn on my skin that blocked most of it. Got a little burnt but nothing
major.”

“Glad I don’t have to try to explain that one. Try to keep OUT of noteworthy stuff in the near future,
okay?”

“Will do. You stay safe.”

“You too.” Henriksen hung up.

Sam shook his head in amusement then went to check on Dean again. The face washer had warmed
up again so he renewed it. Dean was moving fitfully when he returned, a nightmare it looked like.
Fever dreams were like that.

“Dean.” Sam called softly, reaching for his shoulder to at least bring him awake enough to break the
hold of the dream. That wasn’t what happened.

A brief sensation of falling then he was standing behind his brother in a chaotic landscape that made
no sense.

He looked around confused for a moment, this was like the time when they’d drank the dream root
tea yet he hadn’t had any. Neither of them had since that crazy case, the last of the root was locked
up at Bobby’s just in case. Since he was here though he may as well try to help because his brother
wasn’t going to get proper rest with this going on.

He concentrated and the surroundings shifted from the tormenting fever dream to a soothing lakeside.

“What?” Dean looked around in confusion and his eyes landed on Sam with a question in them.

“Just rest.” Sam told him before focusing and he was suddenly back in reality.

“Okay, that was odd.” Sam mumbled to himself. But Dean was calm and he carefully placed the face
washer back before returning to the laptop.

The online archives were frustratingly incomplete, the personal announcements section in particular
wasn’t there and he figured they’d have to make a trip to the local library first thing in the morning.

A couple of hours later Dean finally woke and sat up without difficulty.

“Hey. How are you feeling?” Sam asked as Dean pulled the face washer off.

“Better. How long was I out? Is Bobby here?” Dean replied.

“About four hours.” Sam replied, “and even if I’d called Bobby the second you got sick he’d still be a good half a day away at best. Which I didn’t and as far as I know he’s not on his way. Why?”

“So where’d you get the dream root? And why did you feel you needed to? Or was that a construct of my fevered brain?”

“Oh, that. Neither actually.” Sam replied a little uncomfortably, “you were obviously having a nightmare, I went to wake you up and suddenly I was in there with you. Beats me how. Figured I’d help you rest then managed to get back out.”

Dean looked at him with obvious surprise, “damn. So, what, you’re like a natural dream walker or something?”

“No idea. But I’m definitely going to look into that once we’re done with this job.” Sam replied then came over and felt his brother’s forehead. Dean gave him a half-hearted glare, he was feeling better but he had to admit he hadn’t been in a good place earlier, “fever’s broken.”

“Okay, so what do we have?” Dean asked, as Sam headed back to the laptop, and flipped open the newspaper he’d got earlier looking for something he only half remembered.

“We got teddy bear, lottery guy, invisible pervert guy.” Sam replied, “they all must have wished sometime in the last two weeks. But who wished first? And how are we supposed to know who else wished for what, when? I’ve been going through what archives the paper has online but it’s not complete.”

Dean found what he’d half remembered in the paper, “well, it helps when they announce it in the paper.”

He put the paper down in front of Sam and pointed out the announcement he meant, the cloyingly sweet couple they’d both noticed at the eatery, “goes back a month.”

“Wesley Mondale and Ms Hope Lynn Casey have announced their surprise engagement.” Sam read out, it was certainly something he would have noted down if the paper had bothered to keep those archives online.

“Ah. True love.” Dean commented sarcastically, the almost compulsive nature of the affection between the two was pretty obvious now.

“Best lead we got.” Sam agreed and looked up where they lived.

“Okay. We can do that in the morning. You get some sleep now.” Dean told him.

“You get some more too.” Sam replied, waving him back to the bed and meeting his eyes impassively when Dean glared at him, in part because he was annoyed Sam had put him on the bed furthest from the door that Dean usually relegated his little brother to.

With a grumble Dean returned to the bed, though he refused to lie down until Sam crawled into his
Next morning they headed out to Wesley’s place. The young woman answered the door and they introduced themselves as representatives of the florist. She eagerly led them in.

“Wes, you didn’t tell me that you called the florists for the wedding.” She exclaimed happily to the man seated in the chair before the TV. Unsurprisingly he didn’t look as happy as someone who’d had their dreams come true really should.

“Huh?” He asked, looking at the two of them perplexed. She didn’t notice.

“Oh. You’re the best!” She declared then gave him a kiss.

“Wha…?” He mumbled.

“I’m gonna go get my folders.” She declared with a happy noise.

“Okay.” He agreed, looking a little run over. She disappeared out of the room.

“Wesley, how’s it going?” Dean asked once she was gone.

“It’s Wes…” he started to correct, started to get up to but the brothers moving close convinced him to stay seated. He looked at the a little puzzled before obviously placing where he’d seen them before, “aren’t you the guys from the health department?”

“Yeah.” Sam confirmed a little sarcastically, “and florists…on the side.”

“Plus FBI.” Dean added, “and on Thursdays, we’re teddy bear doctors.”

“Huh?” Wes asked, looking completely confused.

“It doesn’t matter who we are. What matters is what we know.” Dean declared, dropping the nice act.

“So a coin collector, huh, Wes?” Sam asked, his quick Hunter’s once over of the room on entry hadn’t missed those and his brother was extremely unlikely to have either.

Wes looked hesitantly around at the displays, “oh, yeah. My grandfather gave them to me.”

“Did you happen to lose one of those coins lately?” Dean asked, “and by ‘lose’, I mean drop into a wishing well at Lucky Chin’s and make a wish on it?”

He shook his head unconvincingly, “no, I…I don’t know what you’re, uh, talking about.”

Hope came bustling back into the room, her arms filled with folders, “okay, now. I have a lot of ideas. But, you know, we don’t have all the money in the world. Wes is between jobs right now. Means more time for me.”

They smiled awkwardly at the cloying happiness she exuded, she continued obliviously.

“You know, I’m thinking a Japanese-ikebana kind of thing.”

“Yes. I can see it.” Dean lied smoothly.

“Yeah.” Sam agreed awkwardly, “so, Hope, uh, tell us how you two lovebirds met?”
“Oh, best day of my life.” She gushed.

“I bet.” Dean encouraged her.

“Yeah. It’s the funniest thing. We both grew up here…but I never really knew who he was. Not by name anyway.” She continued happily, adding little satisfied noises that were almost embarrassing, “oh. Until one day last month, it was like I just…I just saw him for the first time. He was just glowing…just glowing.”

She forgot about her audience and started running her hands over his face.

“Babe, can you get us some coffee?” Wes interrupted, obviously knowing where it was leading if he didn’t.

“Yes, yeah.” She responded eagerly, grabbing him for a very thorough kiss first though.

Wes managed to interrupt her again eventually and she bustled into the kitchen happily.

Wes cleared his throat embarrassedly once she’d gone.

“Wes, we know. So tell us the truth.” Sam told him.

“My…uh…grandfather found the coin in North Africa.” He told them reluctantly after staying silent for a moment, pulling the display with a missing coin off the wall as he told the story, “you know, World War II, and he brought it back. He said it was a real wish granting coin. But that nobody should ever use it.”

“He was all I had.” Wes continued, “and when he died I thought: ‘well, you know what? Why not give the coin a shot?’”

“Yeah, well, now you’re gonna wish it back.” Sam told him.

Wes laughed until he realised Sam was serious, “oh. Ha, ha. No, I’m not.”

“If you don’t stop it something bad’s gonna happen.” Dean told him.

“Something bad, like us.” Sam bluffed convincingly.

He looked at them like he didn’t believe them and Dean pulled out his gun.

“We really wish you’d come with us.” Dean told him seriously.

That managed to get him into the car. Hope was gone from the kitchen when they walked him out and they just hoped they’d get this finished before she got back, presumably with the cops.

“I don’t get it. So my wish came true. Why does that have to be a bad thing?” Wes complained from the back seat as Dean drove them back to the eatery.

“Because the wishes go south, Wes. Your town is going insane.” Sam explained.

“Come on, you’re gonna tell me your relationship with Hope is functional?” Dean added, “that it’s what you wished for?”

“I wished she would love me more than anything.” Wes replied.

“Yeah, and…uh…how is that going? That seem healthy to you?” Sam asked.
“Well, it’s a hell of a lot better than when she didn’t know I was alive.” He responded sulkily.

“You’re not supposed to get what you want, man. Not like this.” Dean told him, Wes sighed dejectedly, “nobody is. That’s what the coin does. It takes your heart’s desires and it twists it back on you. You know the whole, ‘be careful what you wish for’?”

The impala clipped something, though neither brother had seen anything in the road. Not even a pothole.

“Did we just hit something?” Sam asked, trying to sense with his abilities if there was anything else.

“I didn’t see anything.” Dean replied and threw a questioning look at Sam. A minute headshake was his answer, his brother couldn’t sense anything.

“‘Careful what you wish for’.” Wes sarcastically repeated in the back seat, “you know who says that? Good looking jerks like you guys. The ones who got it so easy because you happen to be handsome.”

“Easy?” Both of them asked incredulously.


“Believe us, we do not have it easy.” Sam told him.

“We don’t have it even close to easy. We never get what we want.” Dean added, “in fact we have to fight tooth and nail just to keep whatever it is we got.”

“But maybe that’s the whole point, Wes.” Sam noted.

“Yeah, people are people because they’re miserable bastards. ‘Cause they never get what they really want.” Dean elaborated.


“Just take a look at Michael Jackson, hmm? Or Hasselhoff.” Dean added.

“You know what? Hope loves me now, completely.” Wes protested, “and it’s awesome. Besides, look around. Where’s all this insanity you guys are talking about?”

They didn’t need to tell him the things they’d already seen, as they pulled up to an intersection they could see the bullied kid from earlier literally tilting a car with the three bullies trapped inside.

“Well, that should cover it.” Dean commented as the kid levered the car onto its side.

Even with from inside the impala they could hear the kid scream out ‘kneel before Todd!’ several times. When the kid, Todd obviously, started to push the car again Dean shoved the car into park and jumped out.

Dean turned back to Sam briefly, “I’ll handle Todd. You get Wes to Lucky Chin’s. Go.”

Sam slid across into the driver’s seat as Dean headed towards the scene, he just had to hope that his brother could deal with a kid who’d obviously wished for super strength. It occurred that maybe it should have been him dealing with Todd instead of Dean, his telekinesis might have let him hold the kid off if he decided to attack instead of talk as was most likely. There was no time to change it now though.
“Right.” Sam stated as he threw the impala into gear again, he was aware of Wes leaning over the back of the seat looking incredulously at the scene as they pulled away.

“Hey, kid, can I talk to you for a second?” Dean called as he approached, wondering if this was one of the stupidest things he’d ever done. He couldn’t just turn away though, not with lives in the balance bullies or not.

“Get out of my way.” Todd stated angrily.

“Okay. Hey, I can dig it, Todd. It’s Todd, right?” Dean asked, holding up his hands placatingly, “look, I know the score, okay? They’re bullying you…”

“Every day.” Todd interrupted, “every day. You do not know what it’s like.”

“No. No, I don’t.” Dean had to admit, he mightn’t have been a bully but he’d never been bullied himself and Sam had mostly escaped it also thanks to being his little brother, “but, you know, you’re you and I’m me, so…”

“I couldn’t stop them.” Todd told him sadly, “I couldn’t do anything. Then Audrey Elmer told me the wishing well worked.”

“Okay, okay.” Dean replied, trying to figure out how to connect with this hurting kid. Normally he didn’t have to try and he wished he’d had more than a glancing encounter with the kid before now, the damage was probably long done but maybe he’d have been able to teach the kid how to defend himself enough to mitigate it, “look…look, I get it. They’re…they’re mean little jerks, huh? But they’re not superhuman like you. You see, with great power comes great respons…”

Dean didn’t get any further as Todd swung a wild punch and sent him flying, he landed in a pile of garbage bins some distance away, which probably saved him from more injuries. If his jaw wasn’t broken he’d probably be luckier than he deserved to be.

Sam pulled the impala to a halt in front of the troubled eatery.

“That…that kid turned over that car like it…like it was nothing.” Wes commented in a shocked voice as he climbed out of the back seat.

“Should have seen the teddy bear.” Sam told him, coming around the car, “now, come on. Fun’s over. Time to pull the coin.”

Wes looked down at the ground despondently.

“Wes.” Sam growled, getting fed up.

“Why can’t we just get what we want?” Wes asked frustratedly.

“Because that’s life Wes.” Sam told him, not without sympathy. Life could hand out some pretty crappy hands sometimes, he knew that better than many.

Anything more he might have said or that Wes could have said in reply was lost in a sudden searing pain and everything went dark.

Dean struggled to get out of the pile of rubbish, much as it had cushioned his landing, and he wasn’t going to look a gift horse in the mouth no matter how smelly, it didn’t make getting back up easy. Especially with his head ringing like a bell.
He looked back over at the kid and Todd was headed back to the car.

“Hey, kid.” Dean called, he couldn’t let him finish off the bullies. Even if the power wasn’t, hopefully, about to vanish it would destroy his life far more thoroughly than what the bullies could do. Unfortunately he could only think of one thing to at least distract him long enough, and it was probably going to hurt, “I didn’t wanna have to do this.”

Dean punched him and it was like he’d hit a brick wall. That definitely hurt and he felt his knees give out from the pain. He tried to get enough control back to get back on his feet but Todd wrapped his hand around Dean’s throat first. Normally with the right sort of leverage and training you could break that sort of hold, training Dean had thanks to his father. Todd was stronger than anything Dean had ever fought before and he couldn’t get the leverage he needed. Darkness started to crowd at the edges of his vision. Just as he was about to black out suddenly the grip was gone and he dragged air into his lungs desperately.

Sam woke with a gasp on the sidewalk, he couldn’t see Wes anywhere and, even more perplexingly, his shoes were some distance from him. He wasn’t sure what exactly had knocked him out, his head wasn’t aching so it probably wasn’t being hit on the head.

Once Dean had got enough air in to clear his vision again he looked up at the kid. Now that the strength and invulnerability was clearly gone Todd looked scared, obviously worried that there was nothing to stop the bullies now once they started back up. And Dean knew he had to do something to prevent that from happening or this kid was going to go off the rails some years down the track in one way or another.

“Okay.” He stated, a little breathlessly, “follow my lead and you won’t have a problem. Come on.”

In view of the kids just managing to crawl out of the car he acted as if Todd was still coming after him.

“Okay, man, no more. No more, okay?” He said as if he feared the kid, then looked at the three kids, “I wouldn’t mess with this kid any more if I were you.”

With a hidden smile he headed away from them.

“Stay back!” He heard them say with fear as Todd looked at them and was glad when the kid walked away from them. It probably wasn’t perfect, and there was no way Dean could stick around to help out in the future, but it was something at least.

Sam had got his shoes back on, still not sure exactly what had happened, and was about to go hunting for Wes. Last he remembered the guy was still reluctant to reverse the wishes. A faint jingle alerted him to the door to the eatery, turning he saw Hope leave. She gave him a blank look of complete failure to recognise him before continuing on.

He turned back to the door just as an unhappy looking Wes came out. A slight expression of relief flashed across his face as he saw Sam standing there but it was quickly swallowed by the sadness again.

Wordlessly he handed the coin over to him, Sam only hesitated slightly before taking it. The object ‘nipped’ at him again but it was nowhere near as bad as when he’d tried lifting it with telekinesis. Almost unconsciously he wrapped it in a little cocoon formed of a melding of his telekinesis and spirit plane manipulation ability and the pain stopped.

He recognised it as what he’d used to protect himself from Lilith that time once he’d realised what
he’d done.

Sam was about to tell him thanks when Wes just nodded at him and walked off despondently.

Dean caught up to him as he was hunting down places that could melt metal down.

“You okay?” He asked as he saw the beginnings of bruises decorating his brother’s face, and more disturbingly his neck.

“Just peachy.” Dean told him.

Sam located a place not far away and ducked off to get the coin melted. Dean realised as his brother disappeared from view that he’d forgotten to check whether he was okay since the coin had hurt him earlier. Kicking himself mentally he grabbed the latest paper and watched the people moving around the town.

The lead story in the newspaper was about how the lottery guy had used a fake ticket.

He spotted Audrey, the two badly sunburned adults with her were probably her parents back from Bali. By the looks of them he didn’t think he really wanted to know how that wish had gone south. Audrey was carrying her teddy, returned to normal size though with a perplexing roughly patched hole in the back of its head. Knowing how the toy wished to sentience had been feeling he was abruptly glad they’d got the girl out of the house. She waved to him but didn’t try to introduce her parents.

“Well, the coin’s melted down.” Sam told him as he returned shortly after the family had gone past, “it shouldn’t cause any more problems.”

“Audrey’s parents are back from Bali.” Dean agreed, “looks like all the wishes are gone. You okay by the way? That coin hurt you pretty bad before, it didn’t hurt you carrying it?”

“A little.” Sam admitted after a quick glance to confirm there wasn’t anyone close enough to eavesdrop, “but then I managed to cocoon it.”

“I didn’t know you could do that.”

“Neither did I until I did.”

“Oh, okay.” Dean looked at him for a moment, “okay, time to go. You ready?”

“Definitely.”

Dean led the way back to the impala and they headed out of town.

Chapter End Notes

As you may have noticed Henriksen made a brief appearance via a phone call. Which makes me pose these questions:

I have a couple of plot bunnies that I’m unsure if anyone would like to read the resulting stories, I write for my own enjoyment and because I need to (anyone who’s ever had a plot bunny latch on undoubtedly knows what that’s like *chuckle*)
The first one follows the what happens to Henriksen. It definitely isn't as active as this Pivot Point bunny and it would probably be lucky to have a chapter once every two weeks, especially as some chapters appearance will be controlled by chapters in Pivot Point.

The second one is a weird little bunny that is best summarised as "what if the boys were born as girls?" It is a 'road' type story but it'll get very very dark a few years (story time) in, which is the biggest reason I'm hesitating about posting it. It surprised me when the bunny went into that area.

And finally I'm always receptive to constructive criticism, I can't get better if I don't know what I'm doing wrong after all. Plus I'm dyslexic and while I read over and over there's every chance I've made some stupid mistake with spelling. And I'd also love to talk about why I've made some of these choices if anyone's interested.
Chapter 39: Wiretap

They were in the middle of replenishing their funds with a bit of pool hustling when Sam noted the arrival of their little demonic ‘friend’. With a quick warning glance at Dean he ignored her until they’d finished.

Brushing off his opponent’s attempt to get another game he headed towards her, she was at least visible now, with Dean slotting in at his side easily.

“Hi.” Sam greeted her warily.

“You got a lot of nerve showing up anywhere near me.” Dean growled at her.

“I just have some info and then I’m gone.” Ruby returned.

“What is it?” Sam asked, wondering if they’d be able to either trust or act on the information.

“I’m hearing a few whispers.” Ruby told him.

“Oh, great. Demon whispers. That’s reliable.” Dean stated, saying what Sam couldn’t.

“A girl named Anna Milton escaped from a locked ward yesterday.” Ruby said, ignoring Dean, “the demons seem pretty keen on finding her. Apparently some real heavy hitters turned out for the Easter egg hunt.”

They had to admit the information was probably legit, she was still trying to talk Sam into following her rather disgusting instructions after all. It wasn’t likely she’d try to stab them in the back before she’d achieved her goals.

“Why? Who is she?” Sam asked.

“No idea.” Ruby replied, “but I’m thinking she’s important. Because the order’s to capture her alive.”

Sam threw a quick glance at Dean; that was certainly an interesting titbit. Even if this was a trap they couldn’t just leave an innocent to the mercies of demons.
“I just figured that whatever the deal is you might wanna find this girl before the demons do.” Ruby continued.

“Maybe we should check it out.” Sam said, even though he didn’t really want to let Ruby know exactly what they’d be doing just in case it really was a trap.

“Actually we’re already working a case, but thanks.” Dean said, throwing a ‘play along’ look at his brother, who gave him a miniscule nod in reply.

“What case?” Ruby asked sceptically.

“We’ve got leads, big leads.” Dean bluffed.

“Sounds dangerous.” Ruby returned sarcastically.

“Well it ain’t goose-chasing after some chick who for all we know doesn’t exist, just because you say she’s important.” Dean replied.

“I’m just delivering the news.” Ruby snapped, and it looked like true anger, “do what you want with it. Far as I’m concerned, I told you, I’m done.”

She hopped up and started to stalk out, Sam grabbed her arm to stop her.

“Wait, this hospital Anna escaped from. Got a name?” He asked.

“Connor Beverly Behavioural Medicine Centre.” Ruby snapped in return before pulling her arm out of his grip and stalking out.

Sam looked at Dean with a silent question once her presence had faded from his senses. Dean jerked his head to indicate heading outside.

Once outside Dean quickly cleared them of having been bugged.

“Well?” Sam asked.

“I don’t think she’s given up on getting you to do what she wants you to.” Dean returned, “so it’s probably true. I don’t fully trust it though; she’s not exactly in the main demon information loop or she’d know I’d never been to hell. She could have got the information the way a Hunter would have, or someone is trying to set us up using her as either a willing or unwilling conduit.”

“True.” Sam agreed.

“Your Spidey sense saying anything?”

“I think…we need to chase this up.” Sam replied hesitantly, struggling to find the right words for what he was sensing, “but it’ll be dangerous.”

“Awesome.” Dean complained as he hopped in the impala. They hadn’t planned on staying overnight so all their gear was already there.

Sam tracked down where the hospital was located, once he’d squeegeed their minds, and Dean got them moving in the right direction while Sam began chasing down information on the case, starting with the hospital and the missing person’s report for the girl.

“Anna Milton’s definitely real.” He commented as he got off the phone.
“Doesn’t mean everything is on the up and up.” Dean reminded him, “this hospital’s a three day drive, lot of places to launch an ambush.”

“I know.” Sam agreed, “I’m getting the sense this is real important though, and urgent.”

“Awesome.” Dean complained again.

Sam pulled out the notebook he’d been making notes on the situational wards he’d been studying when he got time, even got to make a stop by a calligraphy store with hunter signs in the windows for some ink and brush so they wouldn’t get caught out like they had by the witches trying to raise Samhain, and flipped to the section on combat orientated wards. Specifically the ones he’d found for demons, though there were a couple he’d dug up for angels also. Hopefully they’d never need the latter, going into combat with angels wasn’t something they particularly wanted to do.

Since they weren’t wards that could be laid out much in advance he just made sure he had them sorted out in his mind and made sure the ink and brush were able to be reached easily.

Eventually they reached the town they needed, being extra careful about where and when they stopped the entire way.

They introduced themselves as detectives at the hospital and were promptly shown to the psychologist who’d looked after Anna.

“Of course, I wanna help however I can.” She assured them once they’d been introduced.

“The orderly has no recollection of Anna’s escape?” Sam asked.

“Apparently she knocked him unconscious.” She replied, “the blow caused some amnesia. He doesn’t even remember coming into her room.”

“That’s a hell of a right hook to knock out a guy with 80 pounds on her.” Dean commented, starting to wonder if the danger Sam had sensed was from the girl herself rather than the demons.

“We think she may have planned this.” The psychologist replied, gesturing to the door, “waited behind the door.”

“Right.” Sam acknowledged, “you mentioned Anna’s illness was recent.”

She nodded, “six months ago she was happy, well adjusted. Journalism major, lots of friends, bright future.”

“So, what happened? She just flipped?” Dean asked.

“Well, that’s the tragedy of schizophrenia.” She replied, “within weeks, Anna was overtaken by delusions.”

“What kind of delusions?” Sam asked.

“She thought demons were everywhere.” She replied, pulling out a sketch book.

That got both their attentions.

“Interesting.” Dean commented.

Sam flipped open the sketch book, the first couple of pictures were of a church apparently.
“It’s not uncommon for our patients to believe that monsters are real.” The psychologist explained.

“Well, that’s just batty.” Dean replied, half wondering how many were declared insane simply because some monster had tried to mess up their lives and whether there were any doctors who actually knew how to tell the difference between real and crazy.

Sam flipped to the next page, “what the…?”

“Yes, that’s what I thought too.” She replied, “but you obviously haven’t met her.”

Dean promptly leant over to take a look at the picture, which appeared to be a picture of Sam.

The next was a drawing of the angel, Castiel, with a long knife in his hand.

A distance shot of their confrontation with the witches followed, unrecognisable fortunately or even the oblivious psychologist would have been asking questions.

A picture of the two of them standing shoulder to shoulder facing down something that fortunately wasn’t pictured.

Interspaced between all of them was pictures of a church and a stained glass window.

“How…?” Dean asked, the chance that it was pure coincidence was dropping to zero yet for the life of him he couldn’t remember that name. Young as she was there was a chance she might have been a Hunter’s kid and they’d had glancing contact at some point, yet he could swear he didn’t know anyone by the name ‘Milton’.

“My best theory is she’s seen your pictures somewhere, department website maybe, and fixated on them.” She told them, “Anna’s father was a church deacon. When she became ill, her paranoia took on religious overtones. She was convinced that demons were trying to bring about the apocalypse and that angels were hunting someone who didn’t deserve it. I hope you find her. It’s dangerous for her to be out there alone right now.”

It was an obvious dismissal and they nodded politely then left. It would have been nice if they could have asked to see her file, they didn’t even know what she looked like yet.

“That…was weird.” Dean commented once they were outside.

“I’ll say.” Sam agreed, “I don’t know either her name or the family name. You?”

“Me either. Think she’s a psychic or something?”

“Maybe.”

They got to the listed address of her parents, no one answered their knock though.

“Maybe they’re not home.” Dean suggested hopefully.

“Both cars in the driveway.” Sam noted, dashing that hope. Not that his brother had truly held much hope out of that.

Dean tried the handle and glanced at Sam when it was open. He raised an eyebrow in question, silently asking if Sam was sensing anything. A small headshake was his answer. Dean cautiously entered.

“Mr and Mrs Milton?” He called, taking the risk of alerting something in the hope of getting a
response from the people they’d come to find.

“We’re from the sheriff’s department.” Sam added as he cautiously followed his brother, “just wanted to ask you a couple of questions.”

He closed the door and turned to look in a side room and had their answer to what had happened.

He sighed and moved over to the two bodies with slit throats, Dean back tracked and joined him when his brother switched from following him.

A small powdery residue near the woman’s body attracted Sam’s attention, a cautious sniff confirmed his thoughts.

“Sulphur.” Sam told Dean, “demons beat us here.”

Dean pulled out the bug sweeper and did a quick check to make sure there wasn’t any bugs.

“You didn’t sense any outside though.” He more stated than asked.

“No. They’d obviously been and gone.” Sam returned, “whatever the deal is with this Anna girl…”

“Yeah, they want her.” Dean agreed, “and they’re not screwing around.”

He glanced around, their best chance of finding her were out of the picture, they had to rely on their own deductions.

“All right, so, I’m *Girl, Interrupted* and I know the score of the Apocalypse.” Dean thought out aloud, wandering around looking at various things, “I know demons are trying to start it, I maybe know that angels are too, I at least know that who they’re hunting is innocent. Just busted out of the nut box. Possibly using superpowers, by the way. Where do I go?”

While his brother mused Sam let his eyes rove around, a set of pictures caught his eyes and he felt himself go cold. He forced himself to go over and check before he alerted his brother though and also forced himself to consider the photo as if he hadn’t recognised anyone.

He turned to Dean and flipped the photo around to show him, “we do know her.”

Dean glanced over and did a double take, “holy crap. The time travelling angel.”

“And it’s the right timeframe for the ‘save her life’ comment she made.”

“So how do we do that? We gotta find her first.”

“You got those sketches from Anna’s notebook?” Sam asked.

“Yeah.” Dean replied and pulled it out.

Ignoring the pictures of them and the various situations Sam put the repeating images next to the picture. It took Dean a moment to get it, looking beyond the image of the girl who’d saved Sam two years ago.

“She was drawing the window of her church, over and over.”

“If you were religious, scared, and had demons on your arse, where would you go to feel safe?” Sam asked.
“Good point. But I don’t get it, is she an angel or a girl?”

“Beats me, let’s just save her first.”

It didn’t take long for them to locate the church in the picture and they cautiously entered. Sam wasn’t sensing any demons either in the building or in the surrounds but they weren’t going to take chances.

Small sounds of movement caught their attention and they silently headed towards them.

Through some stained glass Sam caught the hint of long red hair. Taking a chance he put his gun away.

“Anna?” He called out cautiously, “we’re not gonna hurt you. We’re here to help. My name is Sam. This is my brother, Dean.”

She stayed quiet all through that, their names got a reaction though.

“Sam? Not Sam Winchester?”

The familiar voice, even a lot more hesitant than when they’d first heard it so long ago, sent a shiver down their spines.

“Yeah.” Sam called, forcing himself to find his voice.

She stepped out from hiding and the brothers were disconcerted yet again. It was one thing to see the photograph, it was another to see the woman in the flesh that had saved Sam as he bled out in Dean’s arms.

“And you’re Dean?” She asked.

“Yeah.” Dean answered.

“It’s really you. Oh my God. The angels talk about you.”

“I’ll bet.” Dean grumbled.

“They talk about you all the time lately.” She continued, “I feel like I know you.”

“You can talk to angels?” Dean asked, kicking himself for slipping into using the knowledge from the last time they’d met and who knew whether that was completely accurate for here and now.

“Oh, no, no.” She returned, “no way. They probably don’t even I exist. I just kind of…overhear them.”

“You overhear them?” Sam asked, not as surprised as he suspected he would have been otherwise.

“Yeah, they talk and sometimes I just…hear them in my head.” She explained hesitantly, which was quite understandable. She’d probably been called crazy most of the time, if not every time, she’d tried to do so.

“Like right now?” Dean asked.

“Not right this second. But a lot.” She replied, “and I can’t shut them out. There are so many of them.”
“So they lock you up with a case of the crazies when really you were...just tuning into angel radio?”

Dean more stated than asked.

She looked utterly relieved, “yes. Thank you.”

“Anna, when did the voices start? Do you remember?” Sam asked.

“I can tell you exactly. July 20th.”

They glanced at each other.

“The day Castiel tried to kill you.” Dean noted.

“First words I heard, clear as a bell: Sam Winchester must die.” She agreed.

“How do you know I don’t deserve it?” Sam asked curiously. From talking with Castiel there wasn’t much chance that a dissenting opinion was being freely expressed on angel radio.

“I don’t know.” She replied, “I just do. They know someone is helping you avoid their hunter. They don’t know who though.”

Sam and Dean shared a concerned glance.

“Do they have any suspects?” Dean asked.

Anna shook her head, “not for sure. Some have speculated that a demon is helping you. Some that perhaps one or more ghosts or creatures or even one of the pagan gods is what’s helping you. They were pretty pissed off that you’d received warning that Castiel was coming and it let you banish him every time he’s found you.”

They relaxed minutely. At least he was still managing to cover his tracks and, at least ‘publically’, his superiors weren’t suspecting an angel of helping them.

“What do you think?” Dean asked.

“This is above my paygrade, man.” Sam replied with a sigh. Fortunately, or unfortunately, they didn’t need to understand the entire situation in order to know she was in danger and probably from both sides.

“Well, at least now we know why the demons want you so bad.” Dean noted to her, “they get a hold of you and they can hear everything the other side’s cooking. You’re 1-900-ANGEL.”

Sam felt Ruby arrive and swore silently, he managed to flash Dean the Hunter signs indicating her quickly. Dean imperceptibly tensed.

Anna gave a hesitant chuckle then looked serious again.

“Hey, do you know, are my parents okay?” She asked hesitantly, “I...I didn’t go home. I was afraid.”

Dean was spared having to answer by Ruby storming in.

“You got the girl? Good, let’s go.” The ‘helpful’ demon declared.

Anna near screamed, “her face!”
“It’s okay. She’s here to help.” Sam tried to reassure her, finishing silently ‘I hope’ to himself.

“Don’t be so sure.” Dean returned, changing his stance towards his brother. If Anna was any sort of decent observer she’d have noticed that but he couldn’t worry about that right now. What mattered was keeping Ruby from guessing they weren’t at each other’s throats.

“We have to hurry.” Ruby stated.

“Why?” Dean asked.

“Because a demon’s coming. Big timer.” Ruby returned, “we can fight later, Dean.”

“Well that’s pretty convenient.” Dean returned, “showing up right when we find the girl with some bigwig on your tail.”

“I didn’t bring him. You did.” Ruby returned and Dean didn’t even have to look at Sam to know his answer to that. His brother had quite a range now and tailing them wouldn’t have been easy at all, especially as the demons didn’t know what he was capable of and wouldn’t have hung way back like they would have needed to in order to avoid Sam’s radar. So either Ruby was lying or they’d found some other way of locating Anna. Probably the latter since Ruby was still playing at being the good guy and demons weren’t dumb. There was every chance they’d found the church either by eliminating methodically the places Anna had a connection to, or they’d figured out the picture like Sam and Dean had.

“What?” Dean asked anyway.

“He followed you from the girl’s house.” Ruby insisted, “we gotta go now.”

Sam hid a wince as the powerful demon’s presence came within range. Nearly as bad as Lilith’s. He glanced around for something he could use to alert his brother without tipping Ruby, and even Anna, off about what he could do. He found something.

“Dean.” He stated, pointing at the statue that had just begun crying blood.

“It’s too late.” Ruby said, actually sounding upset, “he’s here.”

“Who the hell is he?” Dean demanded.

“Name’s Alastair, he’s hell’s top torturer. You should already know that, Dean.” Ruby returned and Dean reminded himself that, strange as it seemed, Ruby actually appeared to believe he’d gone to hell even though the rest of hell knew different.

Sam quickly looked around, he spotted a cupboard and quickly moved to Anna, herding her towards the dubious sanctuary, “come with me.”

He opened it and ushered her in, “okay. Stay in there, don’t move.”

“Okay.” She agreed in a frightened voice.

Back with the other’s he readied the Colt and what holy water he had.

“You really think that’s going to work with what HE is?” Ruby demanded, “if you’d just listened to me you might have a chance. As it is we’re all dead.”

“Wait a sec…” Dean growled.
“It’s thanks to you and your bellyaching that he doesn’t have the one thing in his arsenal that would help against this demon so shut up.” Ruby snapped in return. It definitely looked like she wasn’t faking this anger.

They heard the footsteps on the stairs and Sam levelled the Colt at the door. Regardless of what Ruby believed they weren’t giving up and they definitely weren’t going down without a fight. The door flew open. His finger started to tighten on the trigger but a negligent wave from the white eyed demon coming through the door threw him into the wall to the side, the Colt flying from his grasp at the impact.

Dean drew the demon killing knife and moved forward, another negligent wave from Alastair blasted him backwards and through the window. He barely managed to roll as he landed, then he was running around the building heading back to the room with his brother and the maybe angel who they owed nearly everything to.

Sam picked himself up, Alastair hadn’t bothered to pin him. With the demon advancing on him he didn’t have time to try to reclaim the Colt so he yanked out the flask of holy water.

Behind Alastair he saw Ruby make a beeline for the place he’d hidden Anna and desperately hoped that it wasn’t the betrayal they were still anticipating. He had to hope that she was still playing for her goal.

He threw the holy water at the demon and saw Ruby drag Anna out of the room while Alastair was still reacting to it.

“That smarts.” The demon declared and then he was on him.

Even though the Alastair was obviously powerful enough to use that demon force crap without even really thinking about it he obviously enjoyed using physical force. Not that that really gave him any sort of advantage as the demon slapped the flask out of his hand and wrapped his hands around his throat.

Sam struggled to break the hold but he wasn’t having much luck against the demon’s strength, he wasn’t seeing a lot of options that he had; Alastair had him pinned, Dean was who knew where after flying through that window if he was even still mobile. Anna who the hell knows. At least they had a name to go with the face now but who knows how long it would be before the time of the one who’d saved him all those years ago. Ruby was still pretending to be a good guy so for now they could trust her not to outright stab them in the back. Fat lot of good that would do them if Alastair succeeded in choking the life out of him.

He couldn’t get leverage to break free, there was darkness around the edges of his vision as he struggled to get any air into his lungs, he could feel the sheer power of the demon in front of him, the blood soaked cruelty. With the last vestiges of his consciousness he lashed out with his mind, much to his surprise he tore the demon to shreds. He didn’t have time to analyse it as pain tore through his world, he didn’t even notice that the hands cutting off his breath fell away.

His knees buckled, his hands went to his head. Nausea clawed through his guts and he struggled not to puke. There might be others around, he needed to get back to his feet, fight.

Strange hands on him, strange voice.

“Sir? You okay? Can you answer me?”

Who? Didn’t matter, they had no unknown friends here, any unknown was more likely to be a
demon and the pain in his head made him pretty much blind to their nature at the moment. He struggled weakly.

“Sir. Please relax, I’m a doctor. Don’t know how I’m free but please, let me help.”

The words weren’t making any sense, he couldn’t get his eyes to focus. He couldn’t defend himself right now and he needed to.

“Get away from him Alastair!”

Dean’s voice. Wait, was Alastair still here? He tried to focus, figure out where the enemy was.

“Wait!” The unknown voice, “I’m not Alastair. I’m free somehow. I’m a paediatrician, he’s hurt, please let me help.”

Silence for a bit, wetness close by. Dean’s hand on his shoulder pulling him to lean against him. Safe. He was safe.

“What can a kiddie doctor do?”

“Contrary to popular opinion we can treat adults too, just specialise in children.”

“Okay. Do you know what happened?”

“No. The…thing…that had me was trying to choke him. Then it was gone and he collapsed in obvious pain.”

“The demon left? Would have looked like black smoke.”

“No. Just gone.”

“That makes no sense.”

“Dean…” He finally managed to mumble.

“Back with us Sammy? What happened?” His brother asked.

“Shred…” he managed then swallowed with difficulty, “Dean…sick…”

The words were barely intelligible even to him and he knew what he was trying to say.

Somehow Dean knew and managed to get his head over the bare floor rather than himself or his brother, or the stranger from nowhere, just before he threw up.

“Does he suffer from migraines?” The unknown voice asked.

“Used to. Nothing like this though.” Dean answered, gently cradling him as he puked. Sam had no strength to hold himself up and his brother was taking all his weight.

“It’s not unknown for something like that to have a resurgence later in life.” The strange voice again.

“Maybe in purely medical terms. Sam’s were supernatural in origin.” Dean replied.

“Do you honestly expect me to believe he has a medical condition caused by supernatural stuff?”

“You were just a meat suit for a powerful demon, you really trying to deny that supernatural crap doesn’t exist? You’re lucky by the way. Most demons kill their meat suit before one of us gets to
“exorcise it.”

“Is that what made it go away?”

Finally he wasn’t even dry heaving anymore and Dean pulled him back to lean against him again. He felt him shift around a bit then the strange hands were wiping a wet handkerchief over his face.

“You said there was no black smoke. Plus it’s hard to miss a Latin invocation, it’s not short unfortunately.”

“Then what happened?”

“Dean…” he managed to mumble again.

“Sammy? With us yet? What happened?”

“Shred…Alastair…” he was sure there were more words to go with those but he couldn’t get them out.

“Alastair shredded something?” Dean sounded worried.

“No…I…shred…”

Dean’s hand brushed over his forehead briefly.

“Sam? You saying you shredded Alastair?”

“Yeah…”

“Is that normal?” The stranger again.

“I didn’t even know it was possible.” Dean replied.

“Dean…”

“Yeah, Sammy?”

“Safe?”

“For now.”

“’kay…pass out…”

He stopped fighting the pain, the blackness encroaching on him. Dean would keep him safe. He heard Dean swear as everything went black.

Chapter End Notes

Comments, constructive criticism, and questions always welcome.
Chapter 40: Revelations

Chapter Notes

Story Name: Pivot Point
Pen Name: ElenaRoan
Disclaimer: Don’t own any of them, written purely for enjoyment.
Warnings:
Summary: What if Anna decided to derail the apocalypse by intervening to help rather than trying to make the brothers never having existed.
Timeline: Season 4
Note: I’m Australian and I can’t bring myself to use USA spelling, sorry.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Chapter 40: Revelations

Dean honestly hadn’t thought his brother could weigh more than when he’d been puking uncontrollably and hadn’t been able to take his own weight, he quickly found out otherwise when he passed out though.

“Lie him down in the recovery position.” The paediatrician suggested, “I wish I had my equipment.”

“Actually, we’d better get out of here. There’s still other demons out there.” Dean replied, checking Sam’s pulse then pulling him over his shoulders in a fireman’s hold after grabbing the Colt from where it had landed. The doctor looked conflicted but followed him without further protest as he headed down the stairs. He waved the doctor to the passenger seat and carefully laid Sam in the back, recovery position of course.

Dean would have preferred to locate an abandoned house or even gone to one of Bobby’s cabins if there was one close but with Sam in the condition he was they needed running water, so he booked them in as discretely as possible into a hotel, managing to get a multi room suite so he could protect both of those currently in his care.

He left the paediatrician with the first aid kit and Sam in one of the bedrooms while he set about securing the room. He’d just finished the psi sigils when he heard Sam throwing up again and dashed into the room. The doc had Sam’s head over the room’s bin, not that his brother was bringing much up. Dean promptly took over holding Sam, murmuring something soothing at him in case he was conscious enough to register it.

“If I can borrow a phone I’ll call in some prescriptions of injectable painkillers and antinauseacs.” The doc suggested.

“Hold off on that.” Dean told him quietly as Sam calmed down without giving any indication of actually waking, “let me check on what sort of crap Alastair left you to deal with first. If we’re lucky it’s just a missing person’s report if not, we might have to look at getting you a new identity. Even if the worst you have to deal with is being a missing person calling will bring the police in and they’re not equipped to deal with this sort of crap if they even believe it.”

The doc looked more than a little put out that he couldn’t help his ‘patient’ as he’d like, “but…”
“Can’t risk more people than we already have.” Dean told him, “best to stick to over the counter stuff for now.”

“He’ll need to be awake and keep it down for that to help.” The doctor pointed out.

“It’s just going to have to do.” Dean replied reluctantly, he hated his little brother being in pain, “what’s your name by the way?”

“Avery McGarn.” He told him.

“Okay, Avery, give me a list and I’ll grab them next time I’m out.”

“Okay. Sam’s resting as well as is possible in the current situation, let me look at you now.”

“What?” Dean asked, confused, “I’m fine.”

“You’re bleeding.” Dr McGarn pointed out.

“I am?” Dean asked, surprised. He hadn’t noticed.

“Probably from going through that window, I’m surprised you don’t have worse given that was from the second floor.”

“Nearly was, I only just managed to roll on landing.”

“Well get your shirt off and let me look. I noticed you have stitching supplies in the first aid kit. Might be a little rusty but that’s not something you forget.”

“If it needed stitches my shirt would be soaked and I probably wouldn’t be awake.” Dean told him but slipped out of the shirts anyway, letting the doctor clean the shallow cuts a little uncomfortably. Normally if he wasn’t able to reach them his brother would be the one taking care of any injuries so it was decidedly odd to have an actual doctor doing so.

He was just putting a clean set of shirts on when there was a knock at the door.

“Housekeeping.” A woman called and Dean swore, he must have forgotten to put the ‘do not disturb’ sign up.

“Not now.” Dean called back.

“Sir, I’ve got clean towels.” The woman replied and Dean swore again. Whoever that wasn’t taking no for an answer.

“Stay in here and DON’T open the door no matter what you hear.” Dean told Avery firmly before leaving the bedroom, closing the door, and dumping a quick line of salt along the doorway.

He opened the door cautiously.

“Couldn’t you just leave them at the door?” He asked the maid standing outside.

She shoved the towels into his hands and pushed past him. She nodded in apparent satisfaction that the curtains were already drawn. After looking around again and apparently not seeing what she was looking for she turned back to Dean and handed him a slip of paper.

“I’m at this address.”
“What?” Dean growled.

“Go now. Get Sam. Go through the bathroom window. Don’t stop, don’t take your car, don’t pass Go. There are demons in the hallway and parking lot.” She replied, “where the hell is Sam anyway?”

“He’s sleeping. Alastair hurt him, Ruby.” Dean growled in reply, “and you better not have hurt that maid.”

“You’re damn lucky he didn’t kill all of us.” Ruby snapped, “and yeah, I’m possessing this maid for a hot minute. Sue me. She’s fine. Coma girl’s slowly rotting on the floor at the cabin with Anna, so I’ve gotta hurry back. See you when you get there. Now go.”

She turned and stalked out. Dean sighed and hoped that his defences were enough to hold off any crud she’d sent his way until Sam was back up to dealing with it. It was unlikely that she was betraying them at this point but he wasn’t about to just take her word for it.

He peeked through the curtains into the car park. It took a little bit for him to spot the little tells, the little things being done that didn’t need to be done. Dean more sighed than swore, that bit of what she’d told them was at least accurate.

He headed back into the room, Dr McGarn jumped nervously as the door opened.

“We gotta go. How is he?” Dean asked.

“Dragging him all over creation probably isn’t the best thing for him. In fact, given his continued state of unconsciousness, I’d much prefer getting him to a hospital than anything else.”

“Not gonna happen.” Dean told him, “demons are outside, we gotta move.”

The doctor’s face fell, perhaps he’d been convincing himself that his experience as a demon’s meat suit had just been a bad dream and return to normality was just around the corner.

“Go open the bathroom window and wait for me.” Dean instructed him, swiftly packing up the first aid kit and handing it and the duffels to him. Once Avery took them and headed out of the room Dean pulled Sam up into a fireman’s hold again and followed.

It took a little bit to get his deeply unconscious giant of a brother out through the bathroom window, the doctor not doing much more than giving him a much gentler trip to the ground.

“What now?” Avery asked, picking up the bags and first aid kit again. If his expression was anything to go by he had a new appreciation for Dean being able to carry Sam, fireman’s hold or not.

“Now we borrow a car, since mine is cut off by demons.”

“Borrow?”

“Not much choice. Don’t worry, they’ll get it back. Hopefully not much worse for wear. Come on.”

Extremely cautiously Dean found a decent size car that let him stash both his brother and the doctor out of sight in the back and drove as close as he dared to the cabin, concealing it and making a mental note to come back and move it later when he didn’t have a civilian in tow and carrying his unconscious brother.

The cabin was well hidden in the forested area it was situated in. Dean freed the Colt just in case as he approached, making sure the doctor was out of sight behind him before knocking on the door.
“Glad you could make it.” Ruby stated, answering the door. She looked at his burden as he cautiously entered, “that’s a little more than ‘asleep’ Dean, why didn’t you tell me he was that badly hurt?”

“Oh I don’t know, because you’re a demon maybe?” Dean returned sarcastically, glancing around to find a reasonably comfortable place to put Sam.

“What the…?” The exclamation had Dean turning on alert once Sam had been deposited safely to see Ruby staring at the doctor as he entered.

“Yeah, the meat suit survived. He’s with us until we can get him back to normal life safely.” Dean replied, carefully not mentioning what had happened with Alastair.

He saw the slow rise of anger in the demon’s face and had the feeling the game was up. Ruby turned to glare at him.

“You…I’d have felt it if someone as powerful as Alastair was exorcised! Sam’s the only one who could have done that, but if he hasn’t been doing it my way he’s unshackled!”

With no more warning than that she leapt at him, fortunately he didn’t need more warning and he already had the Colt in his hand. Dean fired before she was even half way.

Anna gave a small scream as the demon lit up and pulsed a few times before dropping to the floor.

“You okay?” Dean asked Anna as he put the Colt away.

Avery looked wide eyed between Dean and the body of the dead demon.

“Yeah, I think so.” Anna replied, “I thought Ruby wasn’t like other demons. She did save my life.”

“Ruby had her own goals.” Dean explained, “and while she thought she could get Sam to go along with them she played the good guy. We always knew she’d turn on us eventually, especially if she figured out we knew what her goal was.”

“What did she mean by Sam was the only one who could have done that? Done what?”

Dean hesitated but they’d already seen enough to figure it out, “kill Alastair without killing the meat suit. Don’t pass that on.”

“Pity about her meat suit.” Avery commented hesitantly, as he almost habitually checked Sam’s condition.

“Her meat suit has been dead since before she took it. Sam took issue with her possessing a person and her goal led to her catering to that, she took a coma patient who’s plug had just been pulled. Presented the hospital record as proof. She’d been brain dead for quite a while.” Dean replied, doing his best not to get angry, “and given the consequences to Sam, killing demons with his mind isn’t going to be happening very often.”

“That’s what caused this?” The doctor asked.

Dean nodded, “can’t think what else could have. How’s he doing?”

“Still out, and without more equipment I can’t tell you more.”

“What type of equipment?”
“An EEG and a pathology lab to start. But you don’t want him in hospital.”

“Unfortunately we can’t risk the people at a hospital.”

“Um…do you think it’d be safe to make a quick call?” Anna interrupted hesitantly, “just to tell my parents I’m okay? They must be completely freaked.”

Dean wished Sam was awake, he definitely had the skill needed for this. Not that he could do much about that, Sam would wake when he woke.

“I’m sorry, Anna.” Dean told her with a sigh, blunt was about the only way he could actually handle this, “the demons got to them before we arrived.”

“They’re…they’re…”

“I’m sorry. We’d have saved them if we could.”

Her cry of utter grief was more than he really knew how to deal with, with someone other than Sam anyway. Not that Sam was that demonstrative even with the devastating losses he’d endured.

“Why is this happening to me?” She cried and Dean sat awkwardly down next to her.

“Wish I knew.”

She sobbed for a moment then suddenly sat up like she’d been electrocuted.

“They’re coming!” She gasped before Dean could ask.

“Damn!” Dean grabbed the black light pen out of his duffel and quickly scrawled the angel warding sigils.

“What?” Dr McGarn asked.

“She can hear angel radio.” Dean replied.

“Uh…she’s hearing voices?”

“She’s not crazy. She really is hearing angels. It’s why the demons want her.”

The lights started fritzing as he finished.

“Stay out of sight.” He ordered as he pulled out a knife, sliced open his palm, which drew a protesting squeak from the doctor, and started drawing the banishing sigil next to the door.

From what Sam and Bobby had dug up, he’d have to open the door in order for it to affect those outside but it was better than nothing. Of course, Anna might have heard the angels noting the movement of demons but he doubted they’d get that lucky.

He freed the Colt again as the whoosh of wings outside announced the arrival of angels. Peeking out the small window in the door he saw Castiel and another man, presumably another angel. He swore silently, if it was just Castiel they’d have a chance to get some answers, assuming he hadn’t been reprogrammed.

“You cannot hide forever, Anna.” Castiel called.

Dean saw the girl go white as she realised they were after her, that angels not only knew of her but
knew where she was.

He opened his mouth but Anna held her finger to her mouth.

“It’s been working fairly well against demons so far.” She called back.

“It will not work against us, even if you have remembered wards to keep us out.” The other angel growled, “come out here and save us all the trouble.”

‘Remembered?’ Dean mouthed at her silently as she went even whiter as it sunk in they weren’t there to help.

“Yeah, that’s not happening.” Dean called. He saw Castiel stiffen imperceptibly but the other angel gave a vicious grin.

“Ah, Dean Winchester. How nice a surprise to stumble across you while on a mission to deal with this little situation. Where’s your brother?”

“Nowhere you can get to. Why do you want Anna anyway, I know she’s wiretapping your angel chats or whatever but that's no reason to gank her.”

“Don’t worry.” The angel replied, “I'll kill her gentle.”

“What is it with you guys and wanting to kill innocents?” Dean demanded.

“Both of them are far from innocent, as you well know.” Castiel put in, hidden conflict in his eyes.

Dean tried to figure out what message the angel was trying to send him, they knew what was being said about Sam so what was he trying to convey about the girl. They knew that at some point in the future she’d be an angel, and an angel that referred to the current girl, as far as they could tell, that they were trying to save as herself, and from what they understood transforming into an angel was something that just didn’t happen. Add in that she could tap into angel radio and Dean was sure he was missing something.

“Which means?”

“It means she’s worse than the abomination you call your brother.” The other angel declared, “now give us the girl and your brother.”

“Sorry. Not happening. Go get your jollies elsewhere, try JDate.”

“Who’s going to stop us? You? You have to come out eventually.”

“Okay, enough.” Dean declared, he opened the door and slammed his hand onto the prepared sigil before either angel could react. A searing bolt of light and they were both gone.

Dean sighed then turned back to the room, “okay, time to go…again.”

Avery blinked at him a few times then picked up the duffels and first aid kit without a word while Dean hauled Sam up into a fireman’s hold yet again after wrapping a handkerchief around the still bleeding wound on his hand.

They were nearly back to the borrowed vehicle when Sam began making small noises. Dean put him down, either his brother was stirring or…

He barely had enough time to lean him over before Sam was retching up bile onto the forest floor.
“If that keeps up…” the doctor said hesitantly.

“He’ll get dehydrated, I know. Especially if we can’t get any fluids into him.” Dean returned worriedly, supporting his brother and rubbing his arm soothingly. Unfortunately it didn’t look like Sam was waking anytime soon.

“Hospital…”

“Too dangerous. Might be able to get some supplies though, once we’re somewhere secure.”

Once Sam had finished throwing up again and he’d cleaned him off as well as possible in the circumstances Dean pulled him back into the fireman’s hold and they finished the journey to the borrowed car.

He drove it to a concealed alley close to where they’d borrowed it from then made a cautious dash to retrieve the impala. The demons had apparently figured out they’d left because there wasn’t any about anymore and he got back to them with minimal issues.

Anna in the passenger seat while Dr McGarn was in the back with Sam and a bowl they’d picked up somewhere for something that had ended up stashed in the boot for some reason.

Dean’s phone rang as he was about to get into the car. A glance at the caller id had him cautiously answering it.

“Cas?”

“I am alone. If you have not left already you need to do so.”

Dean hesitated for a moment, “gohol laiad.”

“Authority has been misused. False orders have been given. The hierarchy has betrayed their charge.”

“Sorry.” Dean told him softly, he hated what that command did.

“Do not be. I gave that to you willingly. It will be a couple of hours before we can fly but Uriel will not hesitate to return once he can and I will need to do so also or be suspect.”

“So that’s chuckles’ name. Why the hell are you after her anyway? And please tell me you won’t follow through on that.”

“I…I really do not know anymore.” If anything the angel sounded tired, “and she chose to tear out her grace, fall, and be born a human. She chose to disobey.”

“And that’s bad?”

“For an angel, yes.” The angel sighed, “I do not know anymore whether it is the right thing.”

“I’d love to chat more, Cas, but I got a bunch of people I need to get somewhere safe. You call me later, okay? I doubt I really know what you’re dealing with but a friendly shoulder can’t hurt.”
“I will. Dean…is Sam alright? I noticed he did not appear to be with you.”

“He’s with me. Injured though, out cold.”

“I see. Keep him safe please.”

“I will.”

The angel hung up. With a sigh Dean hopped in the driver’s seat and started them in the direction of Bobby’s.

Chapter End Notes

Comments, constructive criticism, and questions always welcome.
Chapter 41: Answers

A couple of hours out from Bobby’s Dean gave him a call to give him the heads up that they were coming, potentially coming in hot, and then put the doctor on to him to list the supplies that he thought were needed. Sam had thrown up a couple of times during the drive and it had been nearly more than Dean could manage to not pull straight over each time; they still weren’t safe and doing so would put them all in danger, Sam included.

Bobby met them as they arrived.

“Got what supplies I was able to get my hands on downstairs.” He told them gruffly, “wasn’t able to get that EEG thing the doc wanted, got the next best thing though. Since it’s Sam I called Pamela, she’ll be here soon. You’re lucky I’m even here, there’s a case out in the Dominican. If there hadn’t been a Hunter I could send I’d have gone myself.”

“Great.” Dean returned, ushering Avery out of the car so he could get Sam out, he introduced his other passengers almost absently, “Dr Avery McGarn, former meat suit. Haven’t had time to sort out what kinda mess they left him with. Anna Milton, can hear angel radio, demons want her, angels want her dead. What’s downstairs anyway?”

“Secured room.” Bobby returned, somehow managing not to do a double take at the girl.

He led them down to the solid iron door and ushered the lot of them in. Dean spotted a bed off to the side, already with a bucket next to it and an IV pole, and deposited Sam gently there. Avery came over and between the two of them they got the IV inserted.

Dean looked around at the room; he could see three devil’s traps without even looking, a small arsenal of weapons lined one side, a table and a pile of books in another area, there was even a small section for replenishing ammunition set up. The walls were covered in warding sigils of various types, including angel warding. The walls themselves looked like iron, he raised an eyebrow at Bobby.

“Solid iron.” Bobby answered the silent question, “completely coated in salt.”

“Since when have you had a panic room?” Dean asked.
“I had a weekend off.” The older hunter replied uncomfortably.

Dean chuckled, “Bobby.”

“What?”

“You’re awesome.”

Dean pulled a chair up to Sam’s side and sat in it, now that he wasn’t the only one able to get everyone to safety he could watch over his brother like he’d wanted to since he went down.

“What happened?” Bobby asked.

“Best guess? He killed a demon.”

“Why’d he try something like that after what tackling the ghost sickness did?”

“Because Alastair was about to kill him.”

“Who’s Alastair?”

“The demon Sam killed. He was wearing the doc over there. White eyes.”

“Holy…you don’t get involved in anything small do you?”

“Ruby called him hell’s top torturer.”

“Ruby’s involved in this too? Be careful…you can’t trust that she won’t choose the other demons over you.”

“Don’t have to worry about that anymore, she attacked when she figured out Sam killed Alastair. I shot her.”

“One less headache to deal with anyway. So what do we do now?”

“Catch our breath, figure out exactly what’s going on with Anna, find out whether the doc has any crap messing up his life from Alastair, and hope that Sam wakes up.”

“I can help with some of that.” Bobby told him then looked up as a knock sounded upstairs, “that’ll be Pam. You get your brother’s laptop fired up, Sam ain’t gonna wake up any faster with you staring at him.”

Dean sighed but figured that was a good idea. He mightn’t be as good as Sam at computers, hacking, and the like but that didn’t mean he was a slouch either. The computer was just booting up when Sam actually leant over the bucket and threw up. Dean was by his side instantly, preventing him from tipping over further and rubbing his arm soothingly.

“Hey, Sammy. Easy, easy.” He murmured, this was the most awareness his brother had shown since he’d passed out in the church.

Sam blinking at him blearily without any true recognition in his pain filled eyes once he was done.

“Hey, Sammy. Stay with me, bud.” Dean urged gently even as he wiped his brother’s face with a cool face washer that Avery handed him. A couple more blinks and Sam passed out again.

Dean sighed before carefully repositioning his brother back in the recovery position.
“Dean?” Bobby called from the door, Pam hovering behind him.

“He’s out again.” Dean told him.

“Thought I told you that if you wanted to see me you didn’t have to go around banging your brother’s mind on various entities.” Pamela stated as she stepped around Bobby.

Bobby grabbed the bucket and stomped off to empty it.

“Trust me, neither of us planned this. Far as I can tell he killed a demon in a last ditch attempt to keep it from killing him.”

Pam laid her hand on Sam’s head and concentrated for a moment, Dean found himself holding his breath.

“He’s still in there, Dean, don’t worry.” Pam told him as she took her hand away, “might be a while before he wakes but he’ll still be him.”

Dean let out his breath in relief.

“So who are your friends?”

Bobby returned and deposited the bucket back at Sam’s side as Dean made the quick introductions again.

“Dr Avery McGarn, former meat suit of the demon Sam killed. Anna Milton, can hear angel radio, demons want her, angels want her dead.”

“So just a typical day in the life of the Winchester brothers, huh?”

Dean gave a half laugh, “starting to look like it.”

He shook himself and returned to the computer now that Sam was out to it again, though always with part of his awareness on his brother.

“Okay, doc, looks like there’s no crimes been linked to you. There is a missing person’s report though and an active search.” He told the doctor after a bit of searching.

“That’s good, right?” Avery asked hesitantly.

“Mean’s you’ll be able to go home. We’ll figure out some way of getting you back there once this is over.”

“What about me?” Anna asked hesitantly.

“Don’t know yet. We’ll figure it out though.” Dean told her, “this place is demon proof and angel proof.”

“The angel proofing is because they want to kill Sam?” She asked.

Dean nodded, “yeah. Needless to say I took issue with that.”

“Why do angels want to kill either of them?” Avery asked.

“Because they’re dicks with very little resemblance to the greeting card angels we know.” Dean replied, wondering whether it would be a good thing to explain about the apocalypse.
“Uriel was certainly happy to have run across you.” Anna noted.

Dean looked at her puzzled, “how’d you know his name?”

“I…I don’t know…it just popped into my head.”

“Well he did mention you possibly remembering stuff, anything else like that?” Dean asked.

“Well…when you did that symbol in blood, it was familiar.”

“Any idea why you’d be remembering stuff like that?” Dean asked, half wondering if he should mention the information he’d got from Castiel. If various movies were anything to go by telling her would make it difficult to retrieve it herself.

“If I knew my life wouldn’t have been levelled.” Anna returned.

“I might be able to help with that.” Pam put in, “I’m not going anywhere until Grumpy over there can eye off my rack again after all.”

“How?” Dean asked.

“Hypnosis.” She replied.

“I’m game.” Anna said.

They dragged in another bed, shoving it haphazardly on the other side of the room from where Sam slept. Pam dragged a chair over to that bed and Dean took a seat next to Sam, gently rubbing his brother’s arm in case he was aware at some level.

Anna hesitantly lay down and Pamela got to work.

“Nice and relaxed.” Pam stated soothingly, “now, I’m going to count down from five to zero. When we’re at zero, you’ll be in a deep state of hypnosis. As I count down, just go deeper and deeper, okay? Five, four, three, two, one. Deep sleep.”

She leant over and gently closed the reclining girl’s eyes, “deep sleep. Every muscle, calm and relaxed. Can you hear me?”

“I can hear you.” Anna replied absently.

“Now, Anna, tell me…how can you hear the angels? How do you know what you do?”

“I don’t know. I just do.”

“Alright. I want you to look further back, to when you knew that stuff, when you understood how.”

“I don’t wanna.” Anna sounded scared and Dean frowned in concern.

“It’ll be okay, Anna.” Pam soothed, “just one look, that’s all we need.”

“No.” The fear was increasing and Anna turned her head as though trying to hide from something.

“How do you know what you do? How do you remember it?”

“No. No. No! No!” She actually bucked on the bed as she screamed.

“Calm down.” Pamela told her.
“No, he’s gonna kill me!” Anna screamed.

Dean wanted to ask, or get Pam to ask, who the hell wanted her dead.

“Anna? You’re safe.” Pamela insisted.

“No!” Anna screamed, either not hearing Pam or not believing her.

The door to the panic room abruptly slammed shut and Dean nearly leapt out of his skin.

“No!” Anna screamed again, sitting up and every light in the room blew in a shower of sparks, “he’s gonna kill me!”

Dean leant protectively over Sam wishing he’d thought to move his brother outside for this. He knew she was a depowered angel after all and there’d been hints that some of her powers were still present. He’d just never thought something would scare her like this.

“Calm down.” Pamela told her firmly, “it’s alright, Anna.”

Anna was slipping into more non articulate screams despite Pam trying to calm her down.

“Wake in one, two, three, four, five.” Pamela intoned, obviously deciding this had gone far enough.

Anna fell quiet and for a sec Dean thought she’d fallen unconscious.

“Anna?” Pam asked, the girl exhaled and relaxed, “Anna?”

Anna opened her eyes.

“You alright?” Pamela asked.

Anna looked at her then carefully sat up. Dean nearly did a double take at the change in her demeanour, he wasn’t moving from where he was protectively bent over Sam until he knew everything was okay though.

“Thank you, Pamela.” Anna stated calmly, “that helped a lot. I remember now.”

“Remember what?” Dean asked.

“Who I am.” She replied.

“I’ll bite.” Dean responded, probably more calmly than otherwise, “who are you?”

“I’m an angel.” Anna stated. She looked around at them, “don’t be afraid. I’m not like the others.”

“Not exactly reassuring after what just happened.” Bobby noted from the door where he’d opened it once stuff had calmed down.

“Is he…?” Anna asked, looking at Dean where he was still protecting Sam.

“He’s okay. Some warning of the light show would have been nice.” Dean responded, sitting back in the chair.

“Sorry.” She apologised.

Dean nodded that he accepted it, catching the surprised look from Bobby as he did so. Nearly anyone else would have got yelled at, but this was the girl who’d appeared from the future and
healed Sam 2 years ago.

“So, Castiel, Uriel, they’re the ones that came for me?” Anna more stated than questioned as she changed the subject.

“You know them?” Dean asked.

“We were kinda in the same foxhole.” She explained half embarrassed.

“So, what were they, like, your bosses or something?” Dean asked, wishing Sam was awake for this. His brother would be fascinated.

“Try the other way around.” Anna replied with a self-conscious smile.

“Look at you.” Dean replied, that he definitely hadn’t seen coming.

“But now they wanna kill you?” Pam asked.

“Orders are orders.” Anna answered almost dismissively. The same sort of acceptance Dean had seen in Castiel, “I’m sure I have a death sentence on my head.”

“Why?” Pamela asked.

“I disobeyed.” Anna replied, the same thing Castiel had said, “which, for us, is about the worst thing you can do. I fell.”

“Meaning?” Dean asked.

“She fell to Earth. Became human.” Pamela stated as if she knew for sure, and given she was a psychic she probably did.

“Angels can just become human?” Dean asked.

“Kinda hurts.” Anna replied, “try cutting your kidney out with a butter knife. That kind of hurt.”

She looked at them and saw they didn’t get what she was meaning, “I ripped out my grace.”

“Come again?” Dean asked, he hadn’t understood that when Castiel had mentioned it and a second mention didn’t make it any clearer.

“My grace. It’s…energy.” Anna tried explaining, “hacked it out and fell. My mother, Amy, couldn’t get pregnant. Always called me her little miracle. She had no idea how right she was.”

“So you just forgot that you were God’s little Power Ranger?” Dean asked.

“The older I got, the longer I was human, yeah.” Anna replied then sighed, “I’m sorry you’re involved in this. Heaven wants me dead.”

“And hell wants you to torture.” Dean pointed out, “and we did know that before we went in. Only difference is you’re an angel, a depowered angel but still an angel. Be kinda hypocritical to be annoyed at heaven wanting you dead, they want Sam just as dead too.”

“One side or another is going to find her sooner or later.” Pamela noted.

“I know.” Anna replied, “and that’s why I’m gonna get it back.”
“Get what back?” Dean asked.

“My grace.”

“You can do that?”

“If I can find it.”

“So…what…? You’re just gonna take some divine bong hit and shazam, you’re Roma Downey?” Dean asked, trying to figure it out.

“Something like that.” She confirmed.

“Alright. I like this plan.” Dean replied, glad to have a plan, “so where’s this grace of yours?”

“Lost track. I was falling about 10,000 miles per hour at the time.”

“Oh…” Dean tried to figure out some way to work that out. Sam would have picked something out of the statement that would let him track it down nearly instantly, he wasn’t the genius his brother was though.

Before he’d got very far he felt Sam start to stir.

“Sammy?” Dean turned towards his brother. He felt him start to gag then Sam was lurching forward over the bucket. Dean immediately shifted to supporting him and soothingly rubbing his arm as he brought up bile, “easy, easy, just relax.”

If there was a worse time for his phone to ring Dean didn’t know it, so of course this is when his phone rang. He nearly threw the offending device at the wall of the panic room. One glance at the caller id and he knew he had to answer.

“Now is really not a good time. If it’s not an emergency could you call back later?” Dean answered without preamble.

“I…is that Sam?” Castiel replied hesitantly on the other end of the phone.

“Yes.” Dean told him shortly hoping the angel would get to the point quickly.

“I will call back later. It is not an emergency nor particularly immediate.” He hung up without signing off and Dean wasn’t put out at that.

Avery pushed his way past Bobby back into the room with a wet face washer in his hands. Dean took it from the doctor and gently wiped his brother’s face when he stopped gagging up bile.

“Hey, Sammy, stay with me, okay?” He urged as Sam blinked painfully and blankly at him.

Just like last time Sam passed out again after a couple of minutes.

“Damn.” Dean sighed as he eased him back into the recovery position.

“Maybe…” Avery started.

“No. Too dangerous.” Dean replied with a sigh, but oh how he wished it wasn’t. He hated seeing Sam in pain.
Comments, constructive criticism, and questions always welcome.
Chapter 42: Life

Would have been nice to wake up pain and nausea free but at least he was on something soft and when he opened his eyes a slit he could actually focus. At least well enough to see the bucket beside him.

He hadn’t noticed his brother close by but as soon as he lent over the bucket and threw up, again he thought, Dean was right there physically supporting him and whispering soothing words.

A cool, wet cloth wiped over his face when he rolled back onto his back when he was done. He squinted up at his brother’s worried face.

“How you feeling Sammy?”

“Like crap. Did you get the number of the truck that hit me?”

“How is he?” A strange voice asked, Sam tried to look around to see who it was.

“Relax. It’s the doc Alastair was wearing.” Dean told him.

“Oh.” Sam replied and hunted through his memories with difficulty, “I remember…lashing out with my mind…Alastair was going to kill me.”

“Do you remember what happened with Alastair?”

“I remember…tearing through his essence…it dissipating…then the pain hit.” He tried to sit up and aborted the movement as his headache increased. He hissed in pain.

“Here.” Dean said, handing him a small number of pills and a glass of water, “doc knew which over the counter meds would help with a migraine.”

“Really?” Sam asked even as he took them.
“More correctly the ones most likely to help.” The doctor spoke up, “it’s just treating the symptoms. If they don’t help you’re going to need to try some prescription ones.”

“Hopefully it won’t come to that.” Sam answered, trying to squint in his direction, “don’t think running head on into demons like that is going on my list of things to do very often.”

“I’ll say. You’ve been out two days.” Dean told him.

“If you’d let me phone in a prescription I’d have got you some injectable pain killers and antinauseacs.” The doctor said.

“You’re a missing person. One phone call would bring the police in and we can’t risk bringing more innocents into this demon and angel battle. Especially as Ruby won’t be giving us the heads up about demon movements anymore.” Dean told him.

Sam frowned as he sorted through that slowly, “what happened with Ruby?”

“She got a message to us about where Anna was hidden. But when she saw doc she knew something was up, she knew Alastair hadn’t gone back downstairs and figured out your powers were still very much in evidence and nowhere near hobbled like she’d been trying to convince you to do. I shot her when she attacked.”

“Oh. Good. Now I don’t have to worry about continually peeling her influence crud off our minds. How’s Anna?”

“I’m okay.” The girl in question called over, he hadn’t even noticed she was in the room.

“Oh. Good. Dean?”

“Yeah?”

“Think I’m gonna pass out again.”

“You do that.”

Darkness.

Dean sighed and ran his hand gently through his brother’s hair before manoeuvring him back into the recovery position. Would have been nice if Sam had stayed awake a bit longer but at least they’d got the tablets down so hopefully he’d improve a lot more rapidly than he had been.

“That’s a good sign.” Dr McGarn pointed out.

“I know. Doesn’t stop me wishing he was up and about though.” Dean replied, “if him being my brother isn’t enough he’s a damn genius, he’d probably figure out how to find Anna’s grace in nothing flat.”

Almost as if summoned his phone bleeped an arriving message.

“Damn I’m popular today.” He sighed and grabbed it. At least it wasn’t a phone call while Sammy was puking his guts up. He raised an eyebrow in surprise when he saw that Castiel had managed to figure out how to text.

/"Dean. Uriel is still concentrating on finding you. It has not occurred to him yet that you will need to go after Anna’s grace. It might not keep her safe but it is the only chance she has. I know you will be able to figure it out sooner or later but it would be best if you got there before Uriel does. I hope Sam
is feeling better.”/ Attached to the end of the message was a set of coordinates.

“Bobby.” Dean called, handing over the phone when the older Hunter stomped over.

“Could be a trap.” He pointed out even as he noted down the coordinates.

“It’s also our best lead.” Dean replied, “they was still their own person when we last actually spoke.”

“Who?” Anna asked.

“Uh… you know how they know we have an ally?” Dean replied, picking his words carefully. She nodded, “that’s who the message is from. They told us where to find your grace.”

“How would they know that? How could they find it?”

“They didn’t specify.” Dean replied and looked at Bobby, “you okay with getting her there?”

“Yeah. Been fortifying one of my cars just in case.”

“Good.” Dean pulled the Colt out before the other Hunter could head out and handed it to him, “oh, and if it is a trap… shoot.”

Bobby nodded and took the antique weapon before leading Anna from the room.

“How do you know you can trust your informant?” Pamela asked and Dean hoped it wasn’t because she was picking up on something with her abilities. Not that he really understood how even Sam’s worked.

“I don’t.” He answered bluntly, “they’re running a huge risk, risking more than just their life. And for no other reason than they believe it to be the right thing to do. Sam would be dead if they hadn’t.”

“So why don’t you trust them?”

“Because they can be reprogrammed, it was one of the first things they told us.” Dean replied grimly, “at any moment their choices and will could be stripped from them and they could be forced to betray everything they holds precious. And there’s nowhere they can go to seek assistance.”

“There’s you.”

“Fat lot of good that’ll do them. Don’t have the mojo to fight for them, can’t speak in their defence without condemning them further.”

“You actually answer the phone to them and listen. That’s more than they get anywhere else.”

“Maybe.”

It was shortly before Dean was going to try waking Sam to get the next dose of medicine down him that he woke up on his own and, for the first time since he’d taken out Alastair, without throwing up.

“Sammy.” Dean put his hand on the side of his brother’s face.

Sam blinked a bit before managing to locate his face.

“Dean.”
“How are you feeling?”

“How are you feeling?”

“Better, I think.” Sam frowned a little confused, “I seem to remember throwing up…a lot.”

“Better, I think.” Sam frowned a little confused, “I seem to remember throwing up…a lot.”

“That’s an understatement.” Dean told him, “do you remember last time you woke?”

“That’s an understatement.” Dean told him, “do you remember last time you woke?”

Sam thought for a bit, “I think so. You said I’d been out for a couple of days and poured a small handful of tablets down my throat. And something about shooting Ruby?”

“Your brain’s working again then.” Dean quipped.

“Your brain’s working again then.” Dean quipped.

Sam reached up and grabbed his brother’s shoulder, using it and the instant support Dean gave him to lever himself into sitting position.

He looked around a little blearily, still having a bit of difficulty focusing. His eyes found Pamela first.

“Hi Pam. What are you doing here? Where are we anyway?”

“Hi Pam. What are you doing here? Where are we anyway?”

Dean laughed, “Bobby called her to make sure your brains hadn’t been scrambled. And, believe it or not, we’re in a panic room under Bobby’s place.”

“Dr Avery McGarn.” Dean supplied, “Alastair apparently had other things to do other than kill him or destroy his life fortunately. Once we’ve got things settled we’ll get him back to his life.”

“Dr Avery McGarn.” Dean supplied, “Alastair apparently had other things to do other than kill him or destroy his life fortunately. Once we’ve got things settled we’ll get him back to his life.”

“Good. Don’t often get to do that, if the damn demon riding them hasn’t killed them first then they’ve left them with a string of bad crimes that’ll destroy any chance at reclaiming it.” Sam replied, “glad that it isn’t the case for once.”

“Good. Don’t often get to do that, if the damn demon riding them hasn’t killed them first then they’ve left them with a string of bad crimes that’ll destroy any chance at reclaiming it.” Sam replied, “glad that it isn’t the case for once.”

Avery gave him a hesitant smile.

Sam looked around again but couldn’t see anyone else, “wasn’t Anna here last time? And where’s Bobby?”

“Well, turns out Anna was an angel. She tore out her grace, the thing that makes her an angel, which was pretty painful from what she said, fell, and was born a human.” Dean explained, “Bobby took her to reclaim her grace, which our friend who taught us the banishing sigil tracked down.”

“Well, turns out Anna was an angel. She tore out her grace, the thing that makes her an angel, which was pretty painful from what she said, fell, and was born a human.” Dean explained, “Bobby took her to reclaim her grace, which our friend who taught us the banishing sigil tracked down.”

“That’s real…straightforward.” Sam replied.

“That’s real…straightforward.” Sam replied.

“Hungry?” Dean asked.

“Hungry?” Dean asked.

“Now that you mention it, yeah.”

“Now that you mention it, yeah.”

“Something light.” Avery put in as Dean hopped up and headed out of the massively fortified room.

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“Okay, time to get back to meditating.” Pamela stated as she got up and came over, “we should have plenty of time while Dean grabs whatever. You’re a bit shaky, I’ll help.”

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“Porridge then.” Sam replied then with a deep breath took himself into meditation.

Pam was right there being a metaphorical supporting shoulder so the sheer power that was his didn’t topple over while he tried to find his feet again.

*You’ve grown stronger.* Pam noted.

*I’m sure it’ll stop at some point.* He replied.

*You’re not exactly typical in any other aspect, why would you be in this?*

A wordless sigh was Sam’s only response.

Dean came back into the room then, and stopped inside the door as he saw they were meditating. Sam could see the murk around him that indicated Ruby had tried the influence thing on him again, not much though. Just trying to get him to trust her again. Without even really thinking about it he reached out and flicked it off, Dean’s defences having already got it mostly off his mind on their own.

*Sam!* Pam scolded, even as supporting power flowed from her, *no more straining yourself. Come out of it now.*

He pulled himself out almost embarrassedly.

“No more of that.” Pam scolded again, “let yourself recover first. His defences almost had that off all on their own anyway,"

“Sam?” Dean growled, figuring out what had happened fairly easily and not particularly happy about it. His brother had just been unconscious and puking not that long ago, so he wasn’t impressed at the strain Sam had put on himself.

“Don’t fret, Dean, it wasn’t much. Just trying to get you to trust her yet again.”

“Then you didn’t need to mess with it, she’s dead so fat lot of good that would have done her even if it sunk in.” Dean retorted and handed him the porridge, “once you’ve eaten you can take the next dose of medications.”

“Dean.” Sam protested even as he took the bowl.

“Let’s play it safe, okay? You just spent two days in severe pain, I don’t want you back in that once the pills wear off.” Dean urged.

“I’m actually not feeling too bad.” Sam told him.

“That might be because we finally got that cocktail of pills down your throat.” Dean pointed out.

“I agree.” Avery put in, “you need to break the cycle of pain first before we ease back on that.”

Sam tilted his head at the man curiously even as he started eating, “Dean mentioned you were a doctor. A doctor of what, if I may be curious?”

“Medicine. I’m a paediatrician.” He replied, “I assure you I’m fully qualified to treat adults.”

“I know.” Sam replied, “you’ll have had more training than a straight GP.”

He gave him an appreciative smile, “Dean said you were smart.”
“Full ride to Stanford.” Dean put in.
“Really?” Avery asked, continuing when Sam gave an embarrassed nod, “studying what?”
“Pre Law.” Sam told him quietly.
“Why are you not a lawyer?”
“Because I’m an idiot who couldn’t handle looking for our dad on my own when he lit out for the ends of the earth.” Dean told him caustically.
Sam shook his head, “Dean, don’t. Wasn’t your fault. Azazel wasn’t about to let me get away from his plans for me no matter what you’d have done. At 22 years to the day there’s no way that was an opportunistic attack simply because you’d taken me away for the weekend.”
“Who’s Azazel? What did he do?” Avery asked, looking back and forth between the brothers.
“A demon. A now very dead demon who killed our mother on my 6 month birthday and killed my girlfriend 22 years to the day later in the exact same way.” Sam told him woodenly. Dean reached over and squeezed his shoulder supportively.
“Exact same way?” Avery asked hesitantly.
“Pinned to the ceiling and set on fire.” Dean told him blandly.
The doctor winced, “a week ago I would have sent you to a psych ward for saying that. Now I’m wondering how many people have crap like this happen and can’t get help.”
“Too many.” Sam told him.
“Tends to be where Hunters come from.” Dean put in.
“I’m sorry.” Avery replied softly.
“Not your fault. Most of the world has no idea of the dangers in the dark and they’d panic if they did.” Sam replied.
Anything more they might have said was interrupted by the front door slamming and Bobby’s heavy footsteps on the stairs down.
Dean took the opportunity to shove the handful of medications at Sam along with a glass of water. Sam gave him a glare but took them anyway, it generally wasn’t worth arguing with his brother when he was in a mother hen mood.
“Good to see you up, Sam.” Bobby stated as he entered.
“How’d it go?” Dean asked.
“Information was good, she pulled her grace right out of the tree.”
“So I guess she’s some big-time angel now, huh?” Sam asked.
“I see Dean brought you up to date.”
“Yeah. Sorry I missed most of it. Wish I could have helped.”
“Try not to go bashing your mind on another demon anytime soon would ya? We weren’t sure you were going to wake up, had to rig up an IV to make sure you didn’t get dehydrated.”

“Sorry, Bobby.” Sam apologised then looked at Dean, “you too, Dean. I didn’t mean to worry you.”

“I know you didn’t.” Dean told him with a sideways hug, “and I can’t really argue with why, I prefer sick little brothers to dead little brothers any day after all. Just scared me, especially when you weren’t there behind your eyes for a bit.”

“Sorry.”

“Take it easy for a bit, will ya. Try to avoid demons and angels.” Bobby told them.

Pamela stuck around for several more days to make sure that Sam was up to meditating on his own again and wasn’t straining himself.

It took a little bit to arrange the doctor’s ‘rescue’. They actually tied him up and coached him to struggle in order to get the signs of restraints then literally carried him in unconscious to a random hospital in a random town. By the time the police had been summoned, when the restraint signs had been spotted, the ‘rescuer’ was gone. Avery himself had stuck to the story they’d worked out; he’d never seen who took him, he didn’t know how he’d been rescued or by who. The news articles covering the story actually called for the rescuer or rescuers to come forward so they could be honoured with some speculating that it was military or ex-military who’d done so when no one did.

Chapter End Notes

As always comments, constructive criticism, and questions welcome.

If anyone is curious, this is the chapter that was the inspiration for Fire and Cinders.
Chapter 43: Crazy

Would have been nice if waking up himself and pain free had been the end of the after effects but of course they couldn’t be that lucky. And thus Sam was currently holed up in the bathroom of a random motel room in the middle of the night hoping he wouldn’t disturb Dean while he rode out the latest.

There was a knock on the door.

“Sam? You okay?” Dean’s voice came through the door.

“Yeah, just give me a minute.” Sam replied, trying to force his voice to be steady. Apparently he didn’t manage to since Dean pushed his way into the small room a moment later, or maybe it was just because Dean had got used to this over the last month.

“Shit, Sammy, again?” Dean was instantly by his side and putting his hand on Sam’s back where he crouched in front of the toilet.

Sam just sighed. They’d been getting less frequent but since he’d recovered from the encounter with Alastair he’d been getting migraines, actual migraines not the vision headaches that so closely mimicked migraines back when he first started getting them, as some sort of aftershock from what happened. Dr McGarn was of the opinion they were stress triggered and had reiterated his offer to get them injectable pain killers and antinauseacs, which Dean had said he’d take him up on once the turmoil of getting him back to normal life had died down. Assuming the good doctor wanted anything to do with them once things had settled down anyway.

“Puked yet?” Dean asked, his tone a weird mix of gentleness and annoyance. They’d quickly found out with these that Sam couldn’t keep anything down until after he’d thrown up without any external influence, so while drinking some water would get him to puke it wouldn’t let him take tablets until it happened ‘naturally’, much to Dean’s frustration.

“Would I still be sitting here if I had?” Sam replied tiredly.

“Any idea what triggered it this time?”
“Think it was I got caught up reading and missed the cue to sleep.” Sam answered with frustration.

“So your body has a hissy fit over you not sleeping and deprives you of more sleep? Yeah…that makes sense.” Dean complained.

“Yeah…” Sam replied a little breathlessly and Dean rubbed his back knowing what was coming. Sure enough Sam threw up a moment later, at least this form meant it was over relatively quickly.

“Gah.” Sam wiped his mouth then flushed the toilet, standing and going to the sink to rinse his mouth.

“I’ll get you some meds.” Dean told him, heading out of the bathroom to grab the various medications from their first aid kit.

Sam was seated on his bed by the time Dean had retrieved the glass of water along with the cocktail of medications that helped.

“Sleep.” Dean told him once he’d downed them and they didn’t look like they were coming back up. Sam just nodded and climbed into the bed wearily while Dean watched him with worried eyes.

Once his little brother had dropped off Dean settled at the table, after making sure there was a bin next to Sam in case it was needed, to go through some newspapers by torchlight since he wasn’t going to relax enough to sleep after that for a bit. He’d never been able to convince his own mind and body to relax quickly once a crisis had passed.

Even once he did climb into bed and sleep he was still awake again before Sam woke. He went out to grab some coffee and breakfast, he was just setting them out on the table after he returned when Sam woke up.

“Hey, how are you feeling?”

“Better.” Sam replied, rubbing sleep from his eyes, “I’m so ready for that to just go away as abruptly as it started.”

“You and me both.” Dean agreed, “quit trying to hide it when it ambushes you though, I swear my heart near stops every time I can’t find you.”

“Sorry. I just didn’t want to wake you, bad enough I gotta deal with it.” Sam replied apologetically, climbing out of bed and making a quick stop by the bathroom before joining his brother at the table.

“So…think you’re up for a job?” Dean asked hesitantly.

“What have you got?” Sam returned, helping himself cautiously to the meal that Dean had got for him. Fortunately it appeared that his stomach had settled over night with the help of the medications.

“Stratton, Nebraska. Farm town.” Dean replied, “man gets hacked to death in a locked room inside a locked house. No signs of forced entry.”

“Sounds like a ghost.” Sam responded, pretty hard combination to achieve for something corporeal.

“Yes, it does.” Dean agreed.

“We going to check it out?”

“If you think you’re up to it.”
“Dean, I’m not an invalid. And they’re becoming less frequent.”

“So that’s a ‘you are up to it’?” Dean quipped, “eat up then and we’ll head.”

Arriving they let themselves in and started poking around. Dean found a walled up dumbwaiter then they headed upstairs to the room where the murder had happened. The EMF meter was going nuts but Sam wasn’t sensing anything even remotely ghost like. For a terrifying moment he thought his senses had got blinded then he consciously made himself aware of the sense of where his brother was.

“Got powerlines.” Dean noted, looking out the window.

Sam released the breath he hadn’t quite been aware he’d been holding. That got Dean’s attention.

“Sammy?” There was worry in his eyes.

“Sorry.” Sam replied.

“Don’t apologise. What’s wrong?”

“With the EMF going nuts but me not sensing anything even remotely ghostly I thought for a sec…” he trailed off.

“That your senses had got blinded?” Dean finished, “they haven’t, have they?”

He was wary of relying too much on his brother’s extra senses; that would leave him fumbling if they were separated or something else happened, but their presence was becoming reassuring.

“Can still sense you.” Sam replied, “and…”

He trailed off and frowned. It wasn’t so much a new sensory contact, more that it was only notable because it wasn’t supposed to be there.

“And?” Dean asked.

“It’s not a ghost.” Sam told him, “start checking for hidden doors or something.”

“Okay.” Dean replied, looking closer at the walls, “what are you sensing though?”

“Not something new, more notable because there’s not supposed to be anyone here other than us.”

“You can sense people?” Dean asked in surprise. Then he considered that it wasn’t that odd, his brother could sense him after all and Bobby. And while he might be explained by being blood Bobby, for all their closeness with him, definitely wasn’t.

“Don’t normally really note it, only really notable this time because it shouldn’t be there.”

Dean opened the door to the closet and pulled a face at the decapitated dolls head sitting there before kicking it out of the way.

“What do you think we’re dealing with here?” Dean asked as he ran his hand over the walls in the closet. He gave it a thump when he felt a slight unevenness and the hidden door released, “Yahtzee.”

“Not our usual bailiwick that’s for sure.” Sam replied, coming over to look down into the opening revealed, flicking his flashlight on so he could see. He could hear movement further down and could also see evidence of occupation.
“Baili-what?” Dean asked.

Sam rolled his eyes at his brother, Dean definitely was not stupid even if he liked to play up being the simple man, “what we normally deal with. This is humans, probably insane murdering humans but still humans.”

“So what do we do? We can’t just leave it…but if we call it in anonymously who knows how long the cops will take if they even believe us.”

Anything Sam could have said in response was interrupted by the sound of vehicles pulling up. Looking out the window they could see a car and a moving van approaching.

“Uh oh.” Sam commented.

“I thought you said this place was still for sale.” Dean stated.

“Apparently it’s not.” Sam returned with resignation. They couldn’t just let them walk into the middle of this, whoever that was in the walls had already killed one person. A mischievous grin flashed across his face as something occurred to him, “follow my lead.”

“What?” Dean asked with a worried look, it might be infrequent but his brother did have a sense of humour.

Sam headed back down to the front door with Dean following.

“Can I help you?” One of the adult men in the small family asked as they came out.

“Oh I wish you could.” Sam replied mournfully, “see…my brother and I heard the story of this place and thought this was our chance to get a ghost on camera. It would have sent our YouTube channel through the roof. No such luck though, it’s just someone living in the walls.”

“What?” The other adult man asked, coming forward.

“Yeah, you can see for yourself in the closet up in that room.” Dean backed his brother up, pointing at the room in question.

“Stay here.” The first man ordered the rest of the family then he and the other man headed inside, with one last instruction for the brothers, “and you…don’t go anywhere.”

They waited as the two men disappeared inside, Dean glowering at Sam from behind his poker face. About 10 minutes later they both returned.

“Okay, back in the car. Now.” The first man ordered while the second headed straight for the moving van.

“What’s going on?” The woman asked even as she started to herd the kids and the dog back to the car.

“They were right, there is someone living in the walls.” He replied, “we’re heading back to town and calling the cops as soon as we have signal.”

In their rush to get the small family away from the danger they forgot to say anything to the brothers. Soon as the vehicles were out of sight they hopped straight in the impala and slipped away. Sam switched on the police scanner as soon as they were moving.

“A YouTube channel? Really?” Dean grumbled, “why didn’t you just say we were the Ghost Facers
“It didn’t give them a name to remember and people expect idiot folks with YouTube channels to do stupid crap in the name of hits.” Sam replied with a grin.

They hid on another road and listened to the police radio as the excitement broke out following the phone call from the family. They left the town behind after the police found the evidence of occupancy that they’d pointed the family at. A newspaper reported a few days later that the small police station had found two kids living in the walls and foundation of the house, and from a diary that was found in the attic it was revealed that they were kids of the deceased former owner and his own daughter.

“I’ll say it again. People are crazy.” Dean grumbled as they read the news.

Chapter End Notes

Comments, constructive criticism, and questions always welcome.

Currently looking nervously at my story...I've run out of my buffer. The bunny better stop sulking or I'm going to be late with next week's *chuckle*
“That’s odd.” Sam commented as he read the article on his laptop. There were few true hobbies that he allowed himself to have, he certainly hadn’t expected to come across this as he indulged the holdover from a far more innocent time.

“What?” Dean asked, looking up from tending to the weapons.

“Stage magician died to multiple stab wounds, no witnesses, and not one stab tore his shirt.”

“That is odd. Any ideas?”

“Ghost? Magic? Demon? Angels probably could too though you gotta wonder if they’d bother.”

“Doubt it. They’ve left other Hunters alone when they’ve come across them, admittedly that was Cas but in general they seem to be willing to leave the uninvolved alone. Where?”

“Sioux City.”

“Wonderful, fake magic central.” Dean complained but didn’t hesitate about gathering up his things so they could head there.

Arriving they were greeted with one of the ‘magicians’ plying their art on the street, doing some kind of card trick.

“What a douche bag.” Dean grumbled as they approached as he dramatically unfolded his spiel.

“That’s Jeb Dexter.” Sam told him, a little hesitantly. This wasn’t a hobby he’d really revealed to his brother that he’d held onto.

“I don’t even wanna know how you know that.” Dean returned.

“He’s famous…Kinda…”

“For what? Douche-baggery?”
With a few more dramatic lines and some dramatic deep breathing the street magician launched into what most people associated with possession, even if it came nowhere close. Dean didn’t even need to glance at Sam to know that it wasn’t even remotely in the ballpark. He was sure his brother could tell him how the card appeared to end up inside the glass after the idiot finished his fake possession sequence. The crowd seemed to appreciate it though.

“You gotta be kidding me. A fake demon possession?” Dean grumbled at Sam.

Sam gave him a hesitant smile.

“I can’t believe people fall for that crap.” Dean continued.

“It’s not all crap.” Sam refuted quietly.

“What part of that was not a steaming pile of BS?” Dean asked, though part of him wanted to let it drop. Sam knew too much about this for it to be from regular research.

“Okay…that was crap. But that’s not all magicians.” Sam replied, “it takes skill.”

“Right…you were actually into this stuff when you were a kid, weren’t you? You had, like, a deck of cards and a wand…” Dean teased.

“Dude, I was 13. It was a phase.” Sam retorted defensively. That wasn’t the reaction Dean had been going for and he wondered what he was missing.

“It just bugs me. Actually…it offends me.” Dean said, changing tack a bit, “you know, playing at demons and magic when the real thing will kill you bloody.”

“Like a guy who drops dead of 10 stab wounds without a tear in his shirt?” Sam pointed out, a little annoyed at this intruding into what he could admit to himself was a bit of an escapism.

“That’s what I’m talking about.” Dean returned and, much as he wanted to figure out what it was he was missing with his brother, led the way to the office of the deceased stage magician. They found the assistant packing up the various props.

“So did your boss have any…uh…enemies that you know of?” Dean asked once they’d introduced themselves.

“Vance had plenty of enemies.” She returned with barely a pause in the packing.

“How so?” Sam prompted.

“He would steal from other magicians. All the time.” She told him with resignation in her voice.

The string of handkerchiefs she was gathering up seemed endless and Dean threw an annoyed look at it.

“What would he steal?” Sam asked.

“Stage effects, close-up techniques. Anything he could get his hands on.”

“Is that enough to get him killed?” Dean asked as she finally came to the end of the string.

“These guys take this stuff pretty seriously.” She uncovered a fluffy white rabbit and picked it up with a genuine smile, “there you are.”
“Did you find anything weird in Vance’s stuff?” He realised that that description probably covered a lot of the equipment of a stage magician, “well…weirder…?”

“Matter of fact, I did.” She returned as she settled the rabbit into a bag. Then she dug through the pile of stage clothes, pulled a tarot card out, and showed it to them. It showed multiple swords stuck through someone.

“I’m guessing this didn’t belong to Vance.” Sam stated, now that it was out he could sense the faint aura of magic that clung to the piece of card. He cautiously reached out and took it.

She shook her head, “he hated card tricks. Never wanted them around let alone in his precious cape.”

“Mind if we keep this?” Sam asked.

She just waved her permission and kept packing as they showed themselves out.

Dean managed to hold his tongue until they got back to the motel room and scanned for bugs.

“Well?”

“Faint sense of magic clinging to that tarot card, not as much as with a hex bag but it’s obviously been used as a conduit.”

“Any chance you can…I don’t know…trace it back to the witch or something?”

“Not as far as I know, and certainly not something I’d want to experiment with against a witch that would be quite happy to kill me rather than help.” Sam returned.

“Okay. No problem. Just was hoping to have some clue who the bad guy was before getting blindsided by them.” Dean stated. He was silent for a moment, studying his brother, “what’s got you so…unsettled about this?”

Sam sighed before looking at him, “just a hobby…something that isn’t so…connected…to the reality we live every day. Something that is just normal, human, skills…nothing weird…you pay enough attention and you can figure out how it’s done…”

“I see…and the bastard behind that tarot card just had to intrude into that sanctuary…” Dean noted, there was a time when he’d have just laughed that off but that was before his brother’s entire life had been turned upside-down and then almost completely submerged in the strangeness that had taken over his life. To lose even such a tiny slice of normality…he didn’t think he wanted to know what it was doing to Sam.

“It doesn’t matter…” Sam tried to shrug it off.

“Yes it does. We’ll deal with this then these guys can get back to happily playing pretend.”

“Easier said than done.”

“One step at a time. Identify the witch or witches.”

“No, first defences, then identify them.” Sam corrected, retrieving the little kit from his duffel. After the incident with the witches trying to summon Samhain he’d insisted on stopping by a calligraphy shop with Hunter signs in the window to get some proper ink and brushes. There might be a way to strengthen the sigils but he hadn’t come across that in his study of the warding techniques yet if so.
Dean stripped off his shirts and let Sam paint the complicated symbols carefully onto his skin. He watched his brother repeat the process on himself as he waited for the ink to dry before pulling the shirts back on.

“Any idea where we should start?” Dean asked.

“Check who benefits from Vance’s death and start there.”

“What benefits could there be? He was a pretend magic user…”

“His time slot…his assistant…his office…hell…even good old fashioned revenge for the things he stole. And that’s just the purely human reasons, a witch might have more…esoteric reasons, which I couldn’t even guess at right now.”

“Okay. So where do we start?”

“Check who got his time slot would be my guess, then see whether anyone has taken his assistant or office. After that…digging into who he stole from is going to be painful.”

“Maybe ask around about where to go to find real magic?”

“We do that and we’ll get laughed at in the very least.” Sam told him with a chuckle, “this isn’t a place where someone would come to find real magic…this is a place to see illusions, sleight of hand, and showmanship.”

Dean reminded himself that that was the entire reason this hobby had been his brother’s sanctuary.

“Okay. So let’s find out who got his slot.”

Sam nodded and went to his laptop to hunt down the information.

“While you do that, how about I go see what I can hear?”

“Just don’t…”

“Ask about real magic, gotcha.”

“Don’t go flashing that tarot card about either, it’ll tip off the witch and we have no idea who it might be.”

Well that shelved what his immediate plans had been.

“Gotcha.”

Chapter End Notes

Comments, constructive criticism, and questions always welcome.

Sorry about how short this is, the bunny was adamant that the chapter would finish there.

This was nearly really late not because the bunny was sulking but because I got a migraine cluster...that was 'fun'.
Chapter 45: Real Magic

Dean ditched his jacket on the way out the door, this wasn’t a time to shove his presence in people’s faces or wave his fake FBI ID around. Not if he wanted to pay attention to what his brother had said, in the back of his mind it occurred to him that with just slight differences it would have been so easy for him to dismiss what Sam had said and just gone with his original plan.

He might look small next to his brother but compared to everyone else he was quite tall. He was more than capable of being unobtrusive however and that was exactly what he did, drifting unnoticed at the edges of conversations to see if there was anything unusual being commented on.

A comment that chilled him to the bone was the various discussions about an escape trick called the table of death performed by an older magician the night before involving multiple swords that would have impaled him if he hadn’t managed to get out of the cuffs fastening him down in time. From the descriptions the audience had been convinced he’d been skewered until the obscuring curtain had been pulled back and he’d stepped forward completely unscathed.

"Check time of Jay’s show last night." He messaged to Sam.

"Same time as the death. Find something?" Came back a few moments later.

"Maybe. Going to check out the interview with him."

"OK. Want me to join you?"

"Should be OK. See whether he has another show scheduled."

"Will do. Want tickets?"

"Unless you found a better lead"

He slipped into the near empty stage where the interview was taking place, he rolled his eyes as he recognised the interviewer as the idiot faking the demon possession that they’d seen performing on the street earlier. The grey haired man across from him was obviously Jay. There were two other grey haired men watching also who obviously weren’t part of the crew filming the interview.
Slipping close Dean realised they were giving cynical commentary about the interviewer and he involuntarily gave a small snort of laughter as they described the guy as a ‘douchebag’ when he mangled the magician’s name, obviously their friend. They turned in their seats to regard him.

“Couldn’t have said it better myself.” Dean stated.

“Can we help you?” One of them asked.

“Oh, sorry. Didn’t mean to intrude.” Dean replied, “I’m Dean. My brother loves all this stuff and when I heard that Jay was being interviewed I couldn’t resist coming to check it out. My brother is going to be so jealous I got to see him and he didn’t.”

He wasn’t sure whether they believed him but they appeared pleased with the flattery.

“I’m Vernon, this is Charlie.” One introduced and Dean filed the names away to ask Sam later, “our friend, Jay, is the one being interviewed by the douchebag at the moment. Hey, if you really want to make your brother jealous, he’s doing another show tonight.”

Dean grinned, “he’s due to meet up with me this afternoon so I might just surprise him with tickets. I still owe him a birthday present since our plans fell through.”

“Hope to see you tonight then.”

“I hope so too.”

Dean slipped out rather thankfully, he had no idea if there was an actual witch in that room but he was more than happy he hadn’t needed to test it. The wardings may have allowed Sam to get out of a full blown magical attack with little more than mild burns but he sure didn’t want to trust his life to that if he didn’t have to, especially on his own.

He messaged the two names to Sam then headed back to the room.

“Well?” Dean asked after he entered and closed the door.

“Both of them were magicians with their heyday at around the same time as Jay.” Sam answered, “currently they help out with each other’s shows. And Jay has another show tonight, I managed to get tickets. It was surprisingly difficult for a supposedly struggling stage magician.”

“Last night’s show might have something to do with that, you ever heard of the ‘Table of Death’?”

“It’s a dangerous escape artist trick. Jay is actually connected to it, he nearly died to it 30 years ago when he attempted it for the last time. It consists of being handcuffed to a table with multiple swords or spikes suspended over it. A wick is lit and the escape artist has until it burns through the rope to get out of the cuffs or they get skewered.”

“Apparently Jay performed that last night, and no one that’s talking about it can figure out how he got out unscathed.”

“The show that was at the same time as Vance’s death? Shit…”

“Yeah…that’s either an enormous coincidence or…”

“Or he’s connected to what happened.”

“Think you’ll be able to tell if we see his performance tonight?”
“Maybe. Here’s hoping it doesn’t mean someone else dies though.”

“Even if it does…there’s no way we’ll be able to stop it without identifying the witch. It won’t be your fault.”

Shortly before they would need to leave to get to the scheduled show Sam insisted on checking and renewing the wardings in case they’d worn thin or become obscured. He’d been rather amused at the story Dean had given the older magicians.

Jay wasn’t in sight as they slipped into the audience area for the show but the other two magicians were there helping out.

“I see you managed to get tickets.” Vernon commented as they spotted them, “this must be your brother, the one you had to reschedule his birthday present.”

Sam gave a chuckle, “yeah, sometimes it seems that if it wasn’t for bad luck we’d have no luck at all. At least that’s not the case this time, he’s found the perfect replacement. I’ve loved magicians since I was a kid, probably would have tried to become one if dad hadn’t been so set on us following in his footsteps. I’m Sam.”

“Well it’s never too late, I’m Vernon and my friend here is Charlie. Hope you enjoy the show.”

“I’m sure I will.”

Sam and Dean shook their hands and located their tables, if one of those two was the witch Sam couldn’t sense it. At least yet anyway, it would be nice to have a sure fire way to detect a witch. Particularly before having to dodge their magical attacks but they couldn’t have everything.

“Well?” Dean asked softly as they sat down.

“Can’t tell.” Sam replied.

“Figures.” Dean complained.

“Yeah, well…life would be boring if it was easy.”

“I could put up with more boring in my life.”

Sam chuckled in reply then the lights dimmed and ‘The Incredible Jay’ was announced.

“Whoa.” Sam mumbled as he took in the contraption behind Jay as the magician rattled off his introductory spiel.

“What?” Dean asked softly.

“That’s The Executioner.”

“Which means?”

“It’s an escape artist trick that Houdini refused to attempt because it was too dangerous.”

A few seconds later Jay’s introduction gave out the same information but somehow the information coming from Sam had more weight to Dean, from the magician he could dismiss the claim as showmanship, from his brother he understood without a doubt there was a good chance Jay wasn’t walking off that stage.
“More dangerous than that table thing?”

“Definitely.”

“Why would he do something so dangerous?”

“Maybe he wants to go out with a headline or something. Or maybe he knows there’s real magic at work.”

They watched as the magician was strapped into a strait jacket and the noose of the contraption secured around his neck. Vernon actually picked Sam as the audience member called to the stage to check that the items were completely real, his status as being there for a belated birthday present apparently believed. Worryingly both items were completely genuine, there were no slip knots, or break away sections for Jay to use to get out. The only way the magician was getting out was with the skills of the escape artists. Sam also couldn’t sense any magic clinging to the contraption itself or the strait jacket.

“Completely real and nothing magical about anything up there.” Sam told Dean in a murmur as he returned to his seat.

“So how’s he going to get out?” Dean asked quietly as Jay told the audience he had 1 minute to get out of the death trap he’d willingly entered.

“With the skills of an escape artist…or he won’t get out at all.”

“Shit.”

The curtain was drawn leaving Jay silhouetted by a light behind him and the clock mounted above the contraption began counting down. As the seconds counted implacably down the magician didn’t seem to get any closer to getting out of the death trap.

“I don’t think he’s gonna make it.” Dean commented worriedly as the clock hit 5 seconds to go.

The clock buzzed as it hit the end of its minute and the trap door opened, hanging the magician in silhouette. Sam had a hard time not jumping out of his skin, even though he’d been expecting it, as he felt the sudden burst of magic suddenly burst over the room then race out to some target elsewhere. His eyes flew to the origin of the magic, and it astoundingly wasn’t Jay.

He watched as Charlie stepped forward and pulled back the curtain to reveal Jay free of both the strait jacket and noose. The audience burst into applause.

“Shit.” Sam mumbled, his voice lost in the noise. He wasn’t at all sure how he was going to deal with this.

“Tell me that wasn’t what I think it was.” Dean said softly to Sam.

“Wish I could.”

As the audience began to file out Vernon came over to introduce them to Jay. Sam left Dean joking with the old magician about the pretentious magicians they’d both encountered the last few days and slipped over to where Charlie was dealing with some stage dressings.

“That was quite some illusion.” Sam commented to the magician.

“Oh, Jay doesn’t do illusions with this stuff. It’s all skill.” Charlie replied.
“Of course…it doesn’t hurt to have some real magic to help things along does it?”

“What do you mean? There’s no such thing as real magic.”

Only because Sam knew what the man in front of him was did he see the slight stiffening of his posture.

“What I don’t understand is why now? He obviously doesn’t know what you’re doing so why?”

“Because he was ready to die and I couldn’t let that happen.” Charlie growled at him, “not that you’ll get the chance to tell him or anyone else.”

He gestured at him and Sam felt the wards heat slightly as they deflected whatever magic it was he’d directed at him.

“I’m sorry.” Sam said sadly to his confused expression, “I can’t let you keep killing people.”

Taking a breath he reached out with his telekinesis, as he’d realised he’d have to do when he figured out that Jay had no idea what his ‘friend’ was doing, and stopped the witch’s heart. There was no way they could deal with the witch in the normal way without involving the other two.

He caught the magician as he fell and lowered him to the floor with another wordless apology. After waiting for a beat he called for someone to call an ambulance.

Vernon and Jay shouldered him out of the way in their haste to get to Charlie and Sam let them. He and Dean were shooed out after the rest of the audience once he’d told the ambulance personnel what had happened, and given it actually had he didn’t need to fabricate what the magician had done.

“I’m sorry.” He said to Jay and Vernon as they left, though the magicians had no way of knowing it was more than expressing sympathy for their friend suffering a heart attack.

“Well that was unexpected.” Dean commented once they were in the impala, “makes me wish we didn’t have to do something about Jay.”

“It wasn’t Jay.” Sam said softly. Now that it was just the two of them he could feel his façade crumbling rapidly.

“What?” Dean looked at him puzzled.

“It wasn’t Jay.” He stated softly again and Dean chanced a glance at him from the driver’s seat to frown worriedly.

“Sammy?” Dean asked, “what’s wrong? Another migraine?”

“No…” Sam replied painfully softly, “I… I stopped his heart. He was the witch.”

“I see.” Dean took his hand off the wheel briefly to squeeze his shoulder reassuringly. He might be scared and worried if it was someone other than his brother that had just revealed that sort of ability, but it was Sam and someone less likely to abuse it he couldn’t think of, “well… can’t say I’m exactly comfortable at that aspect of your abilities…but I can definitely see why you did. Wouldn’t exactly be easy to deal with him and keep the other two uninvolved, and not like we could explain to them what he did either. Why are you sitting there like you’re in trouble? He hurt you before you took him out?”
“No…I…feel dirty…I…like I’ve…misused…”

“Oh…okay, take a breath for me okay?” Dean could tell his brother was losing control, the quicker he got Sam to think rationally about what had happened the better, “it was going to happen one way or another and at least this way you spared his friends finding out he was a murderer.”

“But…”

“No buts. Just breathe, okay? If I’d bothered to think about it I’d have realised it was a possibility long ago. It’s not like you’re the kinda person who’d go around using that on anyone who looked at you sideways, hell…you’re torn up enough at using it on a witch who’s killed at least one person, maybe more. You want to try to convince me that it wasn’t because there’d be no way to keep Jay and Vernon out of it that you acted?”

“Just…”

“You spared them even more pain. And there’s going to be another body found in the morning isn’t there?”

“Yeah…”

“So he’s killed two people that we know of.”

“He only wanted to keep Jay alive…”

“Still doesn’t give him the right to take other people’s lives, no matter how much of a douchebag they are.”

“So what gives me the right…?”

“Don’t do this to yourself. He killed first, remember.”

“Yeah…tried…tried to take me out too when I confronted him…”

“So self-defence in every sense of the word. How’d the wards hold up? You got burnt last time a witch zapped you…”

“They got a little warm but that was all.”

“Okay. I want to check them before you go to sleep though.” Dean pulled into the parking lot at the motel and turned to regard his brother, “time for bed now I think, everything will look better after a decent sleep.”

“Doubt it…” Sam let Dean coax him out of the car and into the motel room anyway though, not even putting up a token struggle when his big brother insisted on him getting straight in the bed furthest from the door once he’d performed a bug sweep and checked he hadn’t got burnt.

The morning paper brought the two announcements of Jeb apparently hanging himself in his room the night before and Charlie’s death by heart attack following his friend’s show. It also contained the announcement that Jay was retiring, which was a relief for Sam given that the witch’s stated reason for his murder spree was to keep the magician alive. At least Jay and Vernon still had each other, somehow that didn’t feel particularly reassuring to Sam.
Comments, constructive criticism, and questions always welcome.
Chapter 46: School Memories

Dean jumped and looked up from the paper he was going through as Sam abruptly got up from his laptop and stalked into the small kitchenette of the motel room they were currently in. Things had been pretty quiet since the case involving the magicians, Dean nearly labelled that case ‘disastrous’, even though it was a pretty successful conclusion as things go, with how much Sam had beaten himself up over how he’d dealt with the witch.

“Everything okay, Sammy?” He called.

“It’s Sam.” Sam snapped in response. Dean rolled his eyes.

“Okay. Is everything okay, SAM?” He repeated with emphasis.

Sam reappeared with a beer and gestured grumpily at the laptop, “take a look.”

Dean went over and had a look at the article Sam had open. A teenager drowned another teenager in a school bathroom and claimed to be possessed upon arrest, he didn’t immediately see what could be bothering his brother then he spotted it.

“One of our high schools?” Dean asked nearly incredulously.

“Another trip down memory lane.” Sam stated with a cynicism that Dean was unused to hearing from his little brother.

“Sammy…”

“Don’t. Let’s just fix whatever the problem is and see if we can avoid destroying any more good memories…”

Dean wouldn’t have called that high school a good memory and he could have sworn Sam wouldn’t have either.

“Okay, well if we’re going to do this I guess the first thing we need to do is figure out what possessed her if anything.”
Sam snorted, “if?”

“Well it is a possibility, plenty of murderers have tried claiming that to try getting out of the death penalty.”

“Not any time recently. And since when does anything like that ever happen to us?”

“Always a first time, right?”

“We’re definitely not that lucky. Better talk to her and find out whether it’s demon, or something else, that’s decided to pop its head up.”

“So how are we going to do that?”

Sam went back over to his laptop and fired up another one of his custom programs that Dean didn’t have a hope of following what the purpose was. Sam had left him in the dust with that a while ago now even if he was no slouch on the hacking front.

“Well?” Dean asked when his brother sat back after a long silence broken only by the tapping of keys.

“I’ll go in as a clinical psychologist, they’ve received a notification of my arrival that appears genuine. They have Bobby’s number if they decide to check on my credentials, shot him an email also so he knows.”

“Okay, great. What about me?”

Sam shook his head, “they don’t come in pairs, and going in FBI or police isn’t going to get us in to interview her let alone a civilian.”

“But…you can’t go in on your own…”

“Any why not?”

“Because…” Dean stumbled over his words, he couldn’t think of something to say that didn’t sound like he doubted his brother, “just because.”

Sam gave him a look and Dean squirmed uncomfortably.

“…I just don’t like it…” Dean mumbled.

“I’ll be fine. The day I can’t handle a demon is the day you’ll lock me in Bobby’s panic room to keep me safe.”

“I know…I know…hell, Sam, don’t get me wrong. I know you’re more than competent to deal with anything we’re going to be facing…got more in your arsenal than me with more than a few things…I just…hate not being there to have your back…”

“I know.” Sam looked at him seriously, “and to be completely honest I hate not having you at my back too. Most of the things I’ve done…I only have enough confidence to risk them because I know you have my back if something goes south.”

“Is that supposed to make me feel better about this?”

Sam gave him a lopsided smile, “well if you want something to make you feel better…you’ll be right outside, if something happens you’ll know about it.”
“Very reassuring.” Dean returned dryly, “need anything beyond the usual?”

Sam shook his head and went to his duffel, pulling out a medical outfit from the same place he stored his FBI outfit.

Dean rolled his eyes but checked on their weapons anyway, “when are they expecting us…you?”

“This afternoon.”

“Okay. Guess we’d better get moving.” Dean started to clean up the salt lines, Sam joining him. Bare minutes later they had everything odd tidied up and headed to the impala with their duffels.

Sam continued hacking on his laptop as Dean pointed them at the town from their childhood he hadn’t expected to revisit.

“So what are you doing there?” Dean asked after they’d been driving for a while.

“Just digging into the records about the victim and perpetrator.” Sam replied, “remind me to show you how to use this program just to be safe.”

“You anticipating not being around?”

“I’m anticipating making sure you can use it if you need to and hoping you won’t need to.”

Dean chuckled; that was definitely his brother. Contingency plan on contingency plan.

Arriving at the town they first got themselves a motel room and fortified it then Sam got ready, checked all the IDs were right, and headed to the institution where the young girl was incarcerated. Dean waited, unhappily, in the impala as he headed in.

The girl, April Dawkins, resignedly looked away from him after he was shown to her.

“I’m not talking about it anymore.” She stated unemotionally, facing the window rather than Sam, “I already told the cops and the doctors. No one believes me. They think I’m crazy.”

“Well, I’m a little bit more open-minded than most.” Sam told her calmly, he’d told the staff that his research was on people who claimed to have experienced possession, “April, why did you tell the police you were possessed?”

“It doesn’t matter.” She replied, still in that resigned unemotional tone.

“It matters to me.”

For the first time since he’d entered she looked at him and the careful unemotional façade she had cracked.

“When I…when I hurt Taylor…I was there…in my head…but I couldn’t control my body.” She said slowly, “I could see what I was doing…but I couldn’t stop…I just wanted to stop…”

She looked at him anguished for a moment before looking down again with a sigh, “I’m sorry.”

“You don’t need to apologise.” Sam told her, that was one of the hardest things about being possessed after all, seeing your own hands hurt people, even kill people, and not being able to do a thing to stop it. He of all people understood that, “April, some of the kids at school told the police that you and Taylor didn’t get along.”
“Well, yeah.” April confirmed in a ‘well duh’ tone, “but I never wanted to kill her. Never.”

She looked at him pleadingly, “do you believe me?”

“Yeah, I do.” Sam told her without hesitation. He continued as she gave a relieved sigh, “just a couple more questions. On the day this happened, did you happen to smell anything?”

“Anything? Like what?” She asked, obviously confused.

“Like…rotten eggs or sulphur?”

“No…” April replied after a moment of puzzled thought.

“Okay did you notice any black smoke?”

“What, are you crazy?” She retorted.

“It’s a frequent theme in possession stories.” He explained, “they did explain that’s what my research is in, right?”

She nodded.

“So no black smoke?”

She shook her head.

“Anything strange? Out of the ordinary?”

Again she shook her head, “Taylor had been ostracised by the popular crowd the day before, but that’s not exactly unusual. It’s real easy for them to decide someone is no longer good enough even if they had let them in in the first place. Maybe she shouldn’t have lashed out and called me a fat pig but if I was going to kill everyone who called me that half the school would be dead. She was hurting, people often hurt others when they’re hurting. It’s human nature.”

“I see. Well, thank you for your time.”

“Did that help?”

“Yes, it did.”

“If it’s possible…could I see the results of your research when you’re finished?”

“I’ll see what I can do.”

“Thank you.”

Sam nodded and got himself shown out, wishing there was a paper or something at the end of the research that he could give her.

“So?” Dean asked when he got back in the impala.

“I think she’s telling the truth. She talked about being there mentally but not physically. Sure sounds like possession.” Sam told him, forcing himself not to dwell on the memories of his own possession episode.

“But…” Dean picked up on him holding something back.
“She didn’t see any black smoke or smell sulphur.”

“Maybe it wasn’t a demon. I mean…kids can be vicious.”

“She didn’t strike me as that type of person, not without some sort of external influence. As she said, if she was going to kill anyone who called her a fat pig half the school would be dead. And she was understanding of why Taylor did so. Her anguish at not being able to stop her own hands from hurting Taylor seemed genuine enough.” Sam replied, “and we’re here anyway, we may as well check out the school.”

“Right…the school.” Dean replied with a faint sigh, if he was honest with himself he had been hoping they could conclude just from the interview that nothing their kind of weird was going on and they could head for the horizon.

Sam gave him a puzzled look, “what?”

“Truman High, home of the Bombers.”

“What’s your point?” Sam asked, normally he could figure out what his brother was getting at but not this time. Dean seemed rather reluctant to revisit the school, which puzzled Sam. His brother had been one of the cool kids, he was always one of the cool kids using his status to protect his little brother, who actually was smaller than him at that time in their lives.

“I don’t know…we went there for…like…a month, a million years ago. Why are you so jazzed to go back?”

“I’m not…I just think it’s worth looking into.” Sam replied, “to make sure nothing weird is going on before heading out if nothing else.”


Sam nearly started laughing at that last one, “don’t worry, I got an idea.”

Dean shot a worried look at him as he recognised his brother’s rare sense of humour making an appearance.

“Okay.” He stated resignedly and took them back to the motel room.

Chapter End Notes

Comments, constructive criticism, and questions always welcome.

Sorry about this being a little shorter than usual.
Chapter 47: Ghost Resolution

As they drove up to the school Dean couldn’t help but remember arriving all those years ago that first time. He’d been in his last year of school, he could have easily dropped out, less than half a year before his 19th birthday, and joined his father in Hunting full time but that would have left Sam alone. Sam who’d only been 15, and a very small 15 at that, when they’d washed up here. Already wishing for something different, something more, than the life their father, and Dean himself, embraced. Scholarly and small all too many bullies assumed his little brother was an easy target, and for some reason Sam had been incredibly reluctant to use the skills their dad had relentlessly drummed into them. Turning up here had been just like the start of any of the dozens of schools they’d been to over the years, Sam sulky and withdrawn and Dean the epitome of the cool teenager without a care in the world. In some ways it was correct when it came to school work and other mundane things, in others it couldn’t be more wrong. Even then his family had mattered more than anything else in the world.

How Sam had managed to wrangle inserting them in as staff he’d never be able to figure out, how he’d managed to fudge the credentials to get Dean in as a substitute teacher, even a gym teacher, was particularly baffling. Sam hadn’t managed to get as good an entry, going in as a janitor, though he had to have put just as solid a blind with that as with Dean’s. How on earth there wasn’t someone being missed or an unfilled vacancy somewhere he didn’t know, all he did know for sure was that Sam hadn’t done something to ensure the vacancies.

Of course, he knew nothing about actually teaching, even gym class and in the back of his mind he thought Sam would have been better in this role and he in the janitor. Then he did what he did best when improvising, he quoted a movie. Dodgeball to be specific. The results were…less than cinematic.

Sam meanwhile used the invisibility of his role as janitor to go over the entire building systematically, twice, before slipping quietly into the gym and the insane scene that was Dean’s gym class. Dean instructed the class to start playing and came over.

“Having fun?” Sam asked as Dean joined him.

“The whistle makes me their god.” Dean stated almost happily.
“Right.” Sam returned, almost sarcastically, “nice shorts.”

Dean glanced down uncomfortably, he usually avoided shorts if he could. Something his brother wasn’t afraid of poking at, which Dean suspected was part of the reason Sam had slotted him in as the gym teacher.

“Find anything?” Dean asked.

“Been over the entire school twice, no sulphur.” Sam reported, “no residual demon feel either.”

“No sulphur, no sense, no demon.” Dean stated, almost relieved. That meant they could shelve this and get the hell out of this town, “no demon, no case.”

“I don’t know…maybe I was wrong…” Sam returned, his voice trailing off as if he had something to add but wasn’t.

“What?” Dean prompted with a sinking feeling, “Spidey sense?”

“Yeah…but it’s so nebulous that I can’t really put my finger on it…feels familiar though…”

“Super.” Dean sighed, “guess we’ll have to look deeper. But after lunch, it’s sloppy joe day.”

They both winced at a crash and cry from the class. One of the kids headed out of the gym towards the closest bathroom with a bloody nose.

“That’s going to be some fun paperwork.” Sam commented to Dean once the kid was gone.

“Paperwork?” Dean asked with more than a little trepidation.

“Be thankful you’re not a real teacher…” Sam trailed off and frowned.

“What?” Dean asked, there were some things he’d really learned about how his brother reacted to his abilities.

“Something’s happening.”

“Okay, let’s go.”

“You gotta stay with the class.” Sam stated with a shake of his head before ducking out of the door, leaving Dean swearing under his breath behind him.

Even without his senses Sam wouldn’t have had any problem locating the origin of what was happening, the screams of the various students being a decent guide to the location. He arrived to the flood of students fleeing the home economics classroom, the teacher rushing an obvious jock out whose left hand, or former hand rather, was a complete mess of blood. Now that he was so close to an event he knew what the familiar sense he’d encountered was. Inside the classroom the only student not fleeing was covered in blood spatter. Even as he watched the student collapsed and he sensed the force that had been controlling him fled.

Sam swore under his breath and went to the student’s side, he had a feeling the kid’s life had just been destroyed by that outside force and there was nothing he could do to fix that. The kid looked blearily up at him.

“What happened?” The student asked in confusion. Some black goo seeped out of his ear, confirming what Sam had sensed.
“I’m the wrong person to ask, kid.” Sam told him with a sigh before moving aside as several teachers piled into the room to contain the kid. As they hauled him out they instructed Sam not to clean up the mess as the police would want to take a look at it.

The afternoon timetable for all students was abruptly changed, apparently two acts of violence on the school grounds warranted a ‘non-violence assembly’. Not that it would do much unless they could take care of what was actually causing the violence. Dean managed to slip out of it after a while to join Sam, his brother had only managed to give him a couple of words in explanation as to what was going on before he’d had to corral his class into the assembly. Sam would have spent the time hunting for the anchor except he already knew it wasn’t on the school grounds from his earlier search.

“How’s the non-violence assembly going?” Sam asked when Dean wearily joined him.

“Apparently shoving a kid’s arm into a Cuisinart is not a ‘healthy display of anger’.” Dean returned, “you said it’s a ghost?”

Sam nodded, “yeah, could sense it when it acted. Plus, the kid had ectoplasm come out of his ear.”

“Ectoplasm? Shit.”

“Yeah, which only comes from a seriously pissed off spirit.”

“Ghost possession is pretty rare.”

“Yeah, but it happens. They get angry enough, they could take control of a person’s body. I felt it flee after it was done and before I could do much more than register what was actually going on.”

“So…we got a ghost in the building?”

“Don’t think it’ll be that easy. I went over every inch of this place, if it was anchored here I’d have found it. Aside from the vague residual sense, which I could barely place as being familiar let alone as ghostly until it acted, there’s nothing here.”

“Okay, so guess we look the old fashioned way. See whether there’s been any violent deaths around here.” Dean held up a hand as Sam opened his mouth, “I know, I know. You said it’s not anchored here, but it’s somewhere to start. Besides, I broke into the principal’s office.”

Dean pulled out a folded piece of paper from his pocket, “oh…and…uh…FYI…three of the cheerleaders are legal. Guess which ones.”

Sam rolled his eyes, one of these days his brother’s libido was going to get them into trouble, “no.”

Dean looked like a scolded kid for a moment before clearing his throat and looking at the piece of paper again, “so there was only one death on campus. It was a suicide back in ’98. Some kid named Barry Cook.”

Sam felt like he’d been punched in the gut and grabbed the page out of his brother’s hands.

Dean looked at him worriedly, “what?”

“I knew him.” Sam told him quietly, “how’d he die?”

“Uh…he slit his wrists in the first floor girls’ bathroom.”

“Same place…”
“That the chick got swirled to death.” Dean finished.

“But that was one of the first places I checked, nothing clinging there.”

“Maybe it can hide from your senses…?” Even to Dean that reasoning sounded shaky.

“Then why could I sense it when it acted and when it fled? I also sensed the residual even if I couldn’t place it straight away.”

“Yeah…that kinda made no sense even as I said it…”

“I get why though. This isn’t making any sense, the attacks are here so the ghost should be here…but it isn’t.”

“Okay, back to basics. So this ghost is possessing nerds?”

“And using them to go after bullies, yeah.” Sam confirmed a little reluctantly, Barry had been a victim of bullying and a suicide was a definite recipe for vengeful ghost. Maybe he had some sort of mental blind spot because the boy had been his friend all those years ago, which wasn’t a comforting thought.

“Well, does that sound like Barry’s MO?” Dean asked, wishing he didn’t have to. They’d never had to go after a ghost of someone they knew, and he suspected the boy had been his brother’s friend, which would make it doubly hard. He wondered if he’d been the boy he’d seen his brother with a few times.

“Barry had a hard time.” Sam told him slowly, when he knew him he’d been holding out for graduation, planning on going to Michigan State to study Veterinary Science. What had happened after he left that had driven him to take his life less than a year later? Sam had to concede that maybe he’d just lost the fight against the tide of despair rather than some event, though enduring bullying wouldn’t have helped, and he wished he’d stayed a little longer, maybe he could have helped, “he was bullied, picked on just because he was small and studied. He planned to go to Michigan State and study to be a vet.”

“Hate to say it, Sammy, but…”

“Perfect recipe for a vengeful ghost, yeah, I know. I’ll…look up where he’s buried.”

They split back up, Dean back to looking after his class and Sam back to his invisible rounds as the janitor. After the day had finished Sam looked up the location his teenage friend was buried and they snuck into the cemetery once it was dark then salted and burned him. It was a very uneventful operation, which was unusual for vengeful ghosts, not even an appearance by the ghost.

It was raining as they drove back to the motel room, something that struck Sam as rather fitting. Dean had been shooting worried glances at him since he’d admitted to knowing the kid and if he knew his brother he wouldn’t stay quiet on it much longer.

“You all right?” Dean asked, right on cue.

“Barry was my friend.” Sam told him sadly, “and I just burned his bones.”

“We.” Dean corrected, he wasn’t about to let his brother start blaming himself, “and he’s at peace now, Sammy.”

“Maybe if dad had let us stay just a little longer…” Sam voiced the thought that had been running
around his mind since he’d found out about Barry, “maybe I could have helped him…you know?”

“You read the coroner’s report too.” Dean pointed out, “Barry was on every anxiety drug and antidepressant known to man. School was hell for that kid, his parents had split up. He just wanted out. It’s tragic, but it’s not your fault.”

Sam wasn’t sure he believed him but he appreciated the effort.

“To tell you the truth.” Dean continued, “I’m glad we got out of that town. I hated that school.”

That was news to Sam, his brother had always milked the bad boy image for all it was worth and was always accepted, always one of the cool kids.

“It wasn’t all bad.” He replied, once he’d dealt with the bully, much as he hadn’t wanted to stand out, things had smoothed out considerably.

“How can you say that after what happened to you?” Dean asked incredulously, it had been one of the few times he hadn’t been there when someone tried to pick on his little brother and Sam had paid the price. His brother even then had been more than capable of protecting himself but his desire to not be, in his words, a freak had led to him not fighting back more than once.

Sam lay awake for a long time after he went to bed, staring at the darkened ceiling with its odd water stains. If there was one thing he remembered about that school, more than Barry, more than the bully, Dirk, it was the teacher that had encouraged him to live his own life. And he’d seen that same teacher still there during his rounds that day. The blind would come down during the night, he’d simply hacked into the substitute system and altered the dates that the substitutes were needed for, as far as the actual officials knew there’d been no substitutes the day just gone and the school had thought they were the ones assigned.

He told his brother he wanted to go see that teacher when they packed up the next morning. Dean gave him an odd look but shrugged and took him there anyway.

As he reached the door he silently swore as he felt the ghost approach him from behind. Obvious it wasn’t sorted, it wasn’t Barry or he was tethered to something else. Quickly he reached into his pocket and hit the quick dial on his phone for Dean, he might need back up and it would be hard to do so in a bit.

“Excuse me, sir?” The possessed girl spoke up and he turned to regard her, “can you tell me how to find room 305?”

“I know what you are.” Sam stated calmly.

“Of course you do, Sam.” She returned harshly, and he made a quick mental note that obviously they knew him, before pulling out what looked like a maths compass in the brief glance he got at it and lunging forward to stab him. He dodged backwards and she snarled angrily, “you got tall, Winchester.”

She went to kick him in the balls and he barely managed to block it.

“Sam!” Dean’s voice was very welcome. The ghost apparently decided that both of them was more than they wanted to deal with and fled, Sam barely caught the girl as she collapsed.

“You okay?” Dean asked as he skidded to a stop beside Sam as he propped the girl up against the wall, then pulled out a handkerchief and wiped off the ectoplasm that was oozing out of her mouth and eye.
“Yeah, but without my senses that ghost riding her would have got the drop on me.”

She looked blearily around then looked up at them with frightened eyes, “what happened?”

“A form of sleepwalking.” Sam fudged hastily, “I suggest you go see the nurse.”

He helped her gently to her feet and she gathered her things before scampering off in the direction of the office.

“You okay?” Dean asked as she disappeared.

“Lot better than I’d have been if I hadn’t known it was the ghost instead of a little girl.” Sam replied, giving his leg a rub where she’d connected instead of his balls before turning and heading towards the exit. His desire to speak to the teacher shelved for the time being.

“So the ghost ain’t gone. Figures.” Dean commented with a sigh following him, he wanted this over and done with.

“It knew my name, my real name.” Sam stated once they were back in the impala, “we burned Barry’s bones, surprisingly uneventfully I might add.”

“Maybe it wasn’t Barry.” Dean suggested, anger simmering in him at the attack on his brother but nowhere near as blazing as it would have been if he’d got more than a bruise. A bruise was nothing when tangling with a ghost, Sam wasn’t even limping. He found somewhere to park and pulled out the documents they hadn’t got rid of yet, “maybe I missed something. We just gotta dig deeper.”

“We, Dean, maybe we missed something.” Sam corrected, though he had a feeling his brother had done that deliberately.

Adding in the third victim a pattern emerged that Dean hadn’t seen before, “huh.”

“What?”

Dean handed over the pages, “check it out. Martha Dump truck, Revenge of the Nerds, and Hello Kitty all rode the same bus.”

“So maybe the bus is haunted, would explain why we’re not finding anything at the school.”

“Yeah, but not the attacks. Ghosts are tied to the places that they haunt, they can’t just bail.”

“Unless this one can.” Sam suggested, Dean gave him a puzzled look, “there’s lore about spirits possessing people and riding them for miles. Then when they leave the body, they’re bungeed back to their usual haunt. Until then…the ghosts can go wherever they want.”

“So a spook grabs a kid on the bus and walks right into Truman?”

“It’s possible. Certainly explains why they’re possessing people, why there’s no ghost hot spots there, and why they leave so quickly when they let the kid go.”

“Ghosts getting creative…well, that’s super.” Dean complained.

“I should have just snapped the tether when it confronted me.” Sam sighed, he hadn’t wanted to risk it without his brother close by and the ghost had fled too quickly once Dean had turned up.

“Are you trying to give me a heart attack?” Dean growled, “come on, the busses should be back to the depot by now, let’s find that bus.”
Finding the bus was easy enough but Sam took one look at it and sighed, “it’s all residual, the anchor isn’t here. Or not right now at least.”

“Damnit. Carried by someone perhaps?”

“Possible.” Sam agreed.

Dean broke in and rifled through the documents, unless this bus served another school at the same time it was most likely that it was the driver rather than another student. He found something useful at least.

“Got a new driving permit, issued two weeks ago.” He called to Sam.

“Just before the first attack.” Sam noted.

“Yeah.” Dean agreed, “name of the bus driver is Dirk MacGregor Sr. 39 North Central Avenue.”

Sam nearly did a double take, “MacGregor?”

“Yeah.” Dean confirmed, shooting him a concerned look, “what?”

“I knew his son…” Sam told him, trying to figure it out. That made no sense.

“You knew everybody at this school?” Dean asked, a little startled. His little brother’s reserved nature usually meant he didn’t have any friends before they were uprooted again.

“No.” Sam replied almost absently, “and it’s not like he was a friend. You didn’t like him either.”

“I didn’t like him? Since when did I know any of your classmates?”

“I believe your exact words were that you were going to rip his lungs out.” Sam told him with a chuckle.

Dean made the connection instantly, “that guy? Guess we’re still looking then, it can’t be him if he’s even dead. It’s going after bullies not harassing the nerds.”

They resecured the bus, leaving no sign they’d been there, and headed back to the impala. A few moments searching by Sam on his laptop turned up that Dirk Jr hadn’t long survived poor Barry, only a couple of years, and he’d been cremated.

“Well that makes less than no sense.” Dean commented.

“Tell me about it.” Sam grumbled, “we burned the bones of my friend for nothing and the only connection we can find is to the school bully. It makes no sense, even given how warped vengeful ghosts view things, for him to be going after bullies.”

“We’ve got some time before the afternoon shift of the bus drivers, how about going and talking to him. See if there’s something that explains this.” Dean suggested.

“Well it’s not like we’ve got a better lead.” Sam agreed reluctantly. It didn’t promise to be an easy conversation after all.

It didn’t take long to find the address, though Sam had to take a breath to steady himself before knocking.

“Yes?” The older man asked as he answered.
“Sorry to bother you, sir. I…was in the same class as your son back in ’97, we were just passing through and decided to look up our old classmates. We were surprised to learn what happened and wanted to offer our condolences, belated as they are.”

“Oh, well, come on in.” He waved them in, “I’m Dirk Sr. Junior never introduced me to any of his school mates. You were friends with Dirk?”

“Uh…as much as anyone I guess. I never bore him any animosity.” Sam replied, finding that he couldn’t bring himself to lie to the man.

“Well can’t say I’m surprised. He never had many friends at Truman. That you cared enough to look him up probably says you were the closest thing he had to one.”

He waved them to the couch, “sit down. Did you want something to drink?”

“Thank you but no, it’s fine.” Sam declined, “may I ask what happened?”

“He was 18.” Dirk Sr. stated sadly, “and…uh…well…first there was drinking, then drugs…then too many drugs…he just slipped through my fingers. It was my fault. I should have seen it coming, you know. Dirk…he…uh…he had his troubles.”

“What kind of troubles?” Dean asked.

“School was never easy for Dirk. We didn’t have much money…and…well…you know kids…they can be cruel. They picked on him.”

Sam barely managed to keep a straight face, “they picked on him?”

Dirk Sr. nodded, “they called him poor, and dirty, and stupid. They even had a nickname for him. Dirk the Jerk.”

Sam felt like he’d been kicked in the gut.

“After what happened to his mother…he…”

“His mother?” Sam asked.

“Jane, my wife. She died when Dirk was 13. Cancer.”

Sam made a mental note that that was about 2 years before his brief encounter with him.

“I was working three jobs, so it fell to Dirk to take care of her.” Dirk Sr. continued, “and he was a great kid. He made sure Jane got her medicine. He helped her, cleaned up after her. But…you know…you watch somebody die…slow…waste away to nothing. It does things to a person. Horrible things.”

That certainly explained the attitude of the teachers towards him from what Sam could remember.

“I didn’t know about his mother.” Sam said softly. Though he wasn’t sure if he would have acted differently if he had known, or if he could have acted differently. Dirk had pushed that confrontation even if Sam had finished it.

“He…wouldn’t talk about her…not even to me.” Dirk Sr. explained. He caught Sam’s glance over at the photos of Dirk, “lot of anger in that boy.”

“I’m sorry.” Sam offered, feeling inadequate.
Dirk Sr. nodded his acceptance, then continued after a long silence, “he was no saint, I accept that. Used to get notes from the school all the time trying to deal with his…anger issues. Looking at you I guess you never had to put up with that side of him. Only them knowing about the cause kept him from suspension…or worse. Sometimes I wonder if that would have been better…”

“I knew him for only a short amount of time.” Sam said.

“Back in ’97 you said?”

“Yeah. Our father travelled for his work so we bounced through a number of schools.” Dean explained, “came to Truman in November, we were gone by early December.”

“You missed most of the cruelty directed at him then. ’98 was when that really started. After he started drinking…he always blamed this one kid…never said his name…but far as I could tell all he did ‘wrong’ was stand up to him. I sure never blamed the kid…I knew what Dirk was like when he acted out.”

Sam swallowed, trying to think of something to say and not sure he’d be able to get the words out.

“Did you keep a keepsake?” Dean asked.

Dirk Sr. nodded, “a lock of his hair. I keep it in my Bible on my bus most of the time. Was missing him so I took it with me over lunch, dropped it back off before I came home or I’d show it to you.”

They had to have only just missed him at the depot.

“Now…I hate to rush you, it’s not often I get to talk to people, but I need to get going to the afternoon shift.”

“Of course, sir.” Sam replied agreeably while swearing silently, that ruled out sneaking back to the depot to break in and grab it. The place had to be swarming with the afternoon drivers all getting ready to run the various school kids home.

Back in the impala Sam didn’t need to keep his face impassive anymore and Dean paused as he went to start it up.

“What?”

“I’m the one who tagged him with that.” Sam stated shortly.

“What?”

“Dirk the Jerk. I’m the one who came up with that. I’m the one who showed the school they didn’t need to fear him.”

“Hold on Sammy, he’s the one who went after you day after day. You could have torn him to pieces and for some reason that completely baffles me you never did.”

“I did actually. He was picking on Barry and I intervened, he shoved me to the ground when I tried to walk away…then…he called me a freak…and I lost it.”

“Correct me if I’m wrong…but I don’t remember a kid being taken to hospital in an ambulance.”

“Didn’t break anything. Just put him on the ground.”

“Then you were holding back, he should have been grateful. You could have easily have put him in
the hospital if you’d truly ‘lost it’.”

Sam just looked out the window and Dean was sure he hadn’t taken the reassurance to heart.

“So what now? There’s going to be drivers everywhere if we go back to the depot.” Dean asked as he started up the impala and got them moving.

“We know the bus route, we could sit beside it, maybe pretend we’ve broken down, and deal with him when he comes after us. He was certainly angry enough with me at the school, he’ll probably take the opportunity to come after me.”

“That doesn’t get us the lock of hair, he’d be stupid to bring it with him.”

“Dean…I really don’t want to deprive him of his keep sake…he’s lost enough…”

“Dirk is anchored to that thing, only way to deal with him is to burn it.”

“There is another way, remember.”

If Dean hadn’t been driving he’d have rolled his eyes, “no, Sammy. This isn’t an emergency, I’m not risking scrambling your brains. You’re still getting migraines occasionally from the run in with Alastair.”

“Dean…”

“The answer is no.”

“Then how do you plan on getting your hands on the hair?”

“We’ll break back in after everyone’s gone after the homeward school runs.”

“Except that bus is scheduled to take the football team to an away game straight after.”

“Shit.”

“Exactly. An entire bus load of the type of kids he’s been targeting. There’s no way he’s not going to do something.”

“Damnit, Sammy.”

“Face it, Dean, this is the only way we’re going to take him out without having to do something crazy.”

“Damnit. Okay, where?”

“Take the right just up ahead and stop near the park. Pop the bonnet so it looks like you’re trying to fix the car.”

“My baby wouldn’t break down on us!”

“Dirk doesn’t know that.”

Grumbling Dean did as Sam suggested and a little while later as he pretended to work on the engine, and Sam leant against the boot, the bus they were interested in trundled past. He wasn’t sure whether to hope the ghost took the bait or not.
A little while later a tall teenage boy approached and Dean knew the bait had been taken when Sam straightened and turned to face them.

“Dirk.” He stated calmly, Dean didn’t know how he could be so calm.

“Winchester.” The ghost of Dirk snarled through the kid. He started to move forward to attack only to have Sam’s telekinesis effortlessly hold him in place. Another layer, this time of his spiritual manipulation power, prevented the ghost from exiting.

“Sam Winchester, still a bully.” Dirk snarled and Dean straightened angrily. Sam had never been a bully. Even though he could have handed the toughest jock their head all through high school he’d never been a bully. Dirk continued oblivious to the older brother’s anger, “you…you jocks. You popular kids, you always thought you were better than everybody else. And to you, I was just Dirk the Jerk, right? Now you evil sons of bitches are gonna get what’s coming to you.”

“I’m not evil, Dirk.” Sam stated and Dean relaxed a bit. The last thing he wanted was his little brother taking the venom of a vengeful ghost to heart, “I’m not. And neither were you. Trust me. I’ve seen real evil. We were scared and miserable and we took it out on each other. Us and everybody else. That’s high school. But you suffer through that…and it gets better. I’m just sorry you didn’t get a chance to see that. You or Barry.”

“Nothing is gonna get better for me.” Dirk snarled, “not ever.”

“Yes it will.” Sam stated more calmly than he felt, “you will gain peace.”

Before he could second guess himself, or have Dean try to argue him out of it again, he reached out with his mind and snapped the tether holding him to this world. Dirk was gone in an instant and Sam could only hope that he would find some sort of rest wherever he ended up. Darkness rushed in from the edges of his vision and he felt Dean catch him before everything went completely black.

“Damnit Sammy.” Dean grumbled as he shifted his hold on his now completely unconscious brother. Hauling the back door awkwardly open he manhandled his much larger brother inside, laid him on his side, and secured him before closing the door gently.

“Oh…what’s going on?” The teenager asked in confusion.

“Call it a waking dream and go home kid.” Dean told him.

“He…okay…” The kid, who Dean wasn’t even interested in learning the name of at this point, headed off, presumably in the direction of his home.

Dean just hopped in the driver’s seat and did what he’d wanted to do right from the start, got the hell out of town.

A couple of hours later, and a couple of towns over, he booked them into a random motel then dragged Sam into a fireman’s hold and deposited him on the bed furthest from the door. Sam hadn’t stirred in the entire drive and Dean was starting to worry.

Just like last time when Sam woke he went from unconscious to fully awake in less than a second.

“Where are we?” Sam asked.

Dean shoved a glass of juice into his hand and waited until he grudgingly sipped it before answering.

“Motel a couple of towns over. Figured we weren’t needed there anymore, unless you knocking
yourself out was for nothing.”

“Dirk’s gone, and hopefully at peace now.”

“Good. Now how are you feeling?”

“I’m fine.”

“Uh huh, I’m sure.”

“What are you getting at, Dean?”

“Tell me completely truthfully you didn’t take that load of crap Dirk threw at you to heart and I’ll just
go grab your dinner for you.”

Sam opened his mouth to say just that then closed it again as he realised he couldn’t truthfully say
that and he simply couldn’t bring himself to lie to his brother.

“Yeah, I thought so.” Dean sat down next to him, “you do know you’re not a bully, right? Not then.
Not now.”

“I beat him up in front of the whole school.”

“After how long letting him shove you around and refusing to let me step in?”

“That doesn’t matter.”

“Sure it does. You could have easily broken a bone, or put him in hospital, on the first day and you
wouldn’t have got in trouble since you were simply defending yourself and of course it must have
been an accident given he was twice your size.”

“Exactly. I was more than capable of hurting him, and hurt him I did.”

“You never go out of your way to hurt someone. The only thing you go out of your way to do is
protect someone. Then and now.”

Sam just looked away and Dean nearly growled in frustration.

“Fine.” Dean stated, “if you’re going to insist that you’re a bully then I am too.”

“What?” Sam looked at him startled, “you’re nowhere near being a bully…”

“Closer than you are.”

“Dean…”

“Take it or leave it, Sam, either we’re both bullies or neither of us are.”

“Dean.”

“Both or neither.”

“…neither.”

“Good.” Dean got up and headed into the kitchenette and the takeout he’d got delivered for them
while waiting for Sam to wake.
Chapter End Notes

Sorry this is a little late, the plot bunny did not want to cooperate.

As always questions, constructive criticism, and questions are welcome. Hope you enjoy.
Chapter 48: Addictive Song

Chapter Notes

Story Name: Pivot Point
Pen Name: ElenaRoan
Disclaimer: Don’t own any of them, written purely for enjoyment.
Warnings:
Summary: What if Anna decided to derail the apocalypse by intervening to help rather than trying to make the brothers never having existed.
Timeline: Season 4
Note: I’m Australian and I can’t bring myself to use USA spelling, sorry.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Chapter 48: Addictive Song

Sam had woken early for some reason that he couldn’t place, no dream, vision, or even a migraine. Rather than disturb Dean, he hopped on the laptop to see whether there was anything new. He didn’t particularly feel like diving into another case right now, but weird crap didn’t stop just because a Hunter wanted a break. So, of course, an unusual article popped up. The third such incident in the last few months. With a sigh, he glanced over at his brother. Dean was still sleeping soundly, and Sam was not about to disturb him if he didn’t need to. Grabbing his phone, he slipped into the bathroom; Dean would wake instantly if he opened the outside door and was nearly paranoid about Sam being outside on his own regardless of Sam being able to protect himself and called Bobby. Some inconsiderate driver blaring a horn outside brought Dean awake with a start. Grumbling he glanced around and froze when he saw Sam’s bed was empty, and his brother was nowhere to be seen. The faint sound of movement brought his attention to the bathroom, and he sat up in preparation for going to check on his brother, the last migraine had been quite a while ago, but that didn’t mean it couldn’t strike again. Especially as the previous few cases had put more stress on Sam than he’d like. The soft words of his brother reassured him slightly; it sounded like he was on the phone, though why he hadn’t woken him, Dean couldn’t figure out.

Finishing up the conversation Sam slipped out of the bathroom and sighed as he saw that Dean was awake.

“Sorry, man, I didn’t want to disturb you.”

“Truck horn woke me. Though you being nowhere in sight didn’t help my relaxation levels.” Dean told him, “you okay?”

“Yeah…just woke up and couldn’t get back to sleep, so I did some hunting on the laptop.”

“Found anything?”

“Unfortunately. Bedford, Iowa. A guy beat his wife’s brains out with a meat tenderiser.”

“Yikes.” Dean held onto a forlorn hope that it was just regular human on human violence.
“And get this; third local inside two months to gank his wife. No priors on any of them, all happily married.”

It was sounding less and less like something not in their ballpark, but he could hope, “sounds like Ozzie and Harriet.”

“More like The Shining.” Sam replied, dashing that hope.

“Okay, we’d better have a look.” Dean stated with a sigh; he was pretty sure Sam didn’t particularly want a case at the moment, so this had to have popped up rather than being searched for.

“How about I go grab some coffees, and you get ready to get out of here?” Sam suggested.

“Nuh Uh, you’re not going anywhere alone.”

“Dean, I’m not about to get in trouble just going to the diner. You need to start trusting me.”

Dean swore quietly, “that is definitely not what I think. I do trust you. It’s all the bozos out there that I don’t.”

“And why am I more at risk than you are?”

“Because…because…damnit…protecting you is what I do…” Dean blew out a frustrated breath, giving the impression that he didn’t trust his brother was the last thing he wanted to do. Besides, he was right. Dean was no more safe on his own than Sam even if his brother was the one heaven and hell both wanted dead; they were more than capable of using Dean to get to him, “okay, okay. Point taken. How about…we both go have the coffees, actually sit down and enjoy them before we hit the road?”

Sam visibly relaxed, “sounds good.”

“Great. Well, you get started while I go take care of the call of nature.”

Sam gave a light chuckle, “you do that.”

Most of the salt had been cleaned up by the time Dean came out of the bathroom again; they didn’t need to worry about the wardings since they wrote them with UV pen. Would probably startle a police forensics team if they ever were required to investigate one of the rooms they’d been in though. He helped finish up, get their things all into the duffel bags, and stowed in the impala.

Then they went to the diner and took over a booth in a back corner after grabbing some coffees.

“So we go in as FBI?” Dean asked after making sure there was no one close enough to overhear.

Sam shook his head, “be easier to get in to talk to the guy without running the jurisdictional pissing contest gauntlet.”

“So…?”

“The one group of people who get in to talk to any prisoner without any questions are lawyers.”

“Would we be able to pull that off?” Dean asked, “well…you would…you never forget anything you’ve learned…but I wouldn’t know anything.”

“It’s not like we’re going to go into court after all. And the article mentioned he’s been rejecting all representation that’s been assigned to him.”
“Okay. You’re the expert.”

It didn’t take long to get to Bedford, Iowa once the coffees, and the breakfast that Dean insisted on, were done. Their FBI clothes doubling easily for the role of public defenders.

“Why does the PD keep sending you guys?” Adam asked flatly when they were shown into a private room where he was waiting, “I already said I don’t want a lawyer.”

“They’re lining up the firing squad.” Dean pointed out.

“I’m pleading guilty.”

“All right, look. You don’t want us to represent you, that’s fine.” Dean told him, “in fact, it’s not a bad idea, between you and me.”

Sam pointedly cleared his throat to get Dean back on track, if the prisoner realised they weren’t really lawyers they wouldn’t get anything out of him.

“We just wanna understand what happened, that’s all.” Dean stated.

“Mr Benson.” Sam prompted when the man stayed silent, “please.”

“What happened was…” Adam said after a long moment, “I killed my wife…and you wanna know why? Because…she made plans without asking me.”

“Then when it happened, how did you feel?” Sam asked, “disoriented or out of control?”

“Like something possessed you to do it?” Dean added.

“I knew exactly what I was doing. I was crystal clear.”

“Then why’d you do it?” Dean asked.

“I don’t know…I loved her. We were happy.”

Dean glanced at Sam to see if it was time to spring the little gem that his little brother had dug up during the drive. A slight not had him pulling the document out of the briefcase they’d made a quick stop for before coming to the jail to see him. He put the printout down in front of Benson and tapped it.

“Nine G’s.” Dean commented almost casually, “that’s a hefty bill.”

“Where did you get that?” Adam asked nervously.

“Doesn’t matter. We have it.” Dean told him, continuing when he looked resigned, “see, certain charges, ones you don’t want the missus to know…they show up under shady names like ‘M & C Entertainment’.”

“I…I don’t know what you’re talking about…” Adam stammered.

“Like dropping plastic at a nudie bar for instance.” Dean stated, cutting him off.

“We just want to know the truth, Mr Benson.” Sam added.

“Her name was…Jasmine.” Benson told them with a sigh.
“She was a stripper?” Sam asked, more surprised than he should be given the finances.

“Dude, her name was Jasmine.” Dean pointed out.

“I didn’t mean f…for it to happen…” Adam stammered, “I don’t…don’t like to go to strip bars…but my buddy was having a bachelor party…and…there she was.”

“Jasmine.” Sam more stated than asked.

“She came right up to me.” Adam continued, apparently becoming lost in the memory, “and…I…I don’t know…she was just…perfect. Everything that I wanted.”

“Pay enough; anybody will be anything.” Dean stated.

“It wasn’t about the money.” He refuted, “it wasn’t even about the sex. It was…I don’t know…I don’t know what it was. It’s hard to explain.”

“And…your wife found out?” Sam asked. That would at least make some sort of sense, out of their bailiwick sure but make sense.

“No. She never had a clue.” Adam replied.

“Then why’d you kill her?”

“For Jasmine…she said we would be together forever…if…if only Vicki was…”

“Muerte.” Dean mumbled, the Spanish word fitting better to his mind.

“Afterwards, me and Jasmine were supposed to meet, and she never showed…” Adam continued, “I don’t know where she lives, her last name, I don’t even know her real first name.”

“I’m an idiot.” He stated with a sigh after a pause.

“And you didn’t think to tell this to the cops?” Sam asked.

“What for?” Adam asked bitterly in reply, “the stripper didn’t do it. I did it. And I know what I deserve. The judge doesn’t give me the death sentence…I’ll just do it myself.”

Sam winced internally at that despairing sentence.

They excused themselves as the guards arrived to escort them back out, barely concealed surprise that they hadn’t asked to leave 10 minutes ago on their faces, the fact that Adam was rejecting all representation was well known.

“You might want to put him on suicide watch.” Sam commented softly as they walked away from the room.

“He already is.” The guard replied, “you’re not the first he’s said that to.”

Locating a motel they got a room, the first thing Dean did once inside was ditch the jacket, even before setting up the salt lines while Sam started drawing the various wards in the black light pen. The four that Sam always put up first lighting up briefly no longer startled him, though he did always make sure the curtains were closed.

“So what now?” Dean asked as they finished up.
“Go see the coroner I guess.”

“She won’t talk to a pair of lawyers.”

“She will talk to a pair of FBI though.”

“I knew that…”

“Of course you did.” Sam dug out the FBI IDs and tossed Dean’s to him.

They tracked her down in her office at the morgue, obviously nursing a hangover.

“Rough night?” Sam asked, he knew that feeling and felt a rough sympathy for her, she didn’t even have the joking support of a brother to help.

“Fun night.” She corrected, “rough morning. Can I help you?”

“Uh…yes. Um…I’m Special Agent Stiles, FBI.” Sam replied, pulling out the ID and showing it to her, “you’re Dr Cara Roberts?”

“Far as I know.” She replied.

“You do some work with the sheriff’s department?”

“Yeah, when I’m not slogging it through the ER.” She looked at his confused expression and gave him an amused smile, “it’s a small town. We multitask.”

“Well, I have some questions about a case. About several cases, actually.” He got back on track, “do you mind if I sit?”

She just waved at the seat on the other side of her desk.

“Great.” Sam sat in the indicated chair and pulled out a notepad, “uh…Adam Benson, Jim Wylie, and Steve Snyder.”

“Oh, yeah. The men who killed their wives.” She commented in recognition.

“You handled the workups, right?”

Cara made an affirmative sound, “autopsies for the wives and tox screens for the perps. Two-for-one special.”

Sam barely kept himself from chuckling, he liked her sense of humour, “you find anything?”

“Not really.” She replied with a shake of her head, “I mean, COD in the women was pretty clear. There was nothing unusual in their system.”

“What about the husbands?”

She hesitated, “can I see your badge again?”

Sam calmly pulled out the ID again and showed her, if she was acting cagy it was likely because there was something unusual she’d found.

“There was one thing…” she said after carefully looking at the badge again then turning to dig through her files, “um…an anomaly in the blood work. And I remember thinking how strange it was
that it showed up in all three of the men.”

“That what showed up?”

“Oxytocin. And their levels were crazy high.” She answered, handing over the files.

“Uh…oxytocin?” Sam asked, he tried to recall if he’d come across anything about that at some point. Nothing came to mind, not that chemicals were often spoken of in the lore.

Cara made another affirmative sound, “it’s a hormone that’s produced during childbirth, lactation, and sex.”

“O…kay…” Sam said slowly, the first two obviously weren’t possible and he had a feeling it was way too high for the third.

“People call it the love hormone.” She told him, “um…you know how it feels when you first fall in love? The whole weak-in-the-knees, tattoo-you-on-my-chest thing? That’s oxytocin. Of course, it eventually fades, and then you’re stuck with every relationship ever. That and the painful regimen of tattoo removal.”

This time Sam couldn’t contain a smile at her humour. Anything he could have said was interrupted by Dean coming in the door.

“What’d I miss?” He asked, visibly lighting up at the sight of the pretty lady coroner.

“Uh…this is my partner, Agen Murdock.” Sam introduced.

“Please, ‘agent’ sounds so formal.” Dean stated, turning on the charm and holding out his hand to her, “you can call me Dean.”

“I’m Dr Roberts.” She told him as she shook his hand before turning back to Sam, “so can I help you with anything else?”

Sam saw the frustrated consternation on his brother’s face.

“Uh…sure. Just one more thing. This chemical…” he deliberately pretended he couldn’t remember the name in part to soothe Dean a little as he handed the files back.

“Oxytocin.” She supplied promptly even as she turned to stow them back in the filing cabinet.

“Oxytocin.” Sam repeated, “what would cause those high levels that you found?”

“Nothing that I’ve ever seen.” She answered with evident confusion.

Sam made a thoughtful noise before continuing, “okay, That’s it. Thanks, doc.”

He started to follow his brother out the door before turning to address her again, “by the way…uh…try a greasy breakfast. Best thing for a hangover.”

“Watch it, buddy. I’m the only MD here.” She retorted with a chuckle.

Sam gave her a grin before joining his brother. Dean near glared at him.

“Dude, you totally C-blocked me.” Dean grumbled.

Sam swallowed a sigh; sometimes his brother forgot he might find someone attractive also or that
they might be more attracted to him instead of Dean. Admittedly he needed far more than just physical beauty, but it wasn’t unknown.

“So…uh…Wylie and Snyder fessed up, huh?” Sam asked, changing the subject as they headed out of the hospital.

“One emptied his IRA, the other, his kid’s college fund, all on the same thing.” Dean confirmed.

“Live nude girls?” Sam asked, not that he really thought it was going to be anything else.

“Club called the Honey Wagon.” Dean answered.

“These guys have affairs with the stripper also known as Jasmine?”

“Yes and no. This is where it gets interesting. Each guy hooked up with a different chick.”

Sam shot him a confused look, “so, what, these girls all connected somehow?”

“Well, they all described their stripper in the same way, the exact same way; perfect and everything that they wanted.”

“Yeah…at least ‘til dream barbie convinced them to murder their wives.”

“There’s that.” Dean agreed.

“You know, it’s almost like they were under some love spell.”

“Sure seems that way.”

“Which caused them to become totally psychotic.”

“Absolutely.”

Sam gave Dean an odd look as they reached the impala, “you seem pretty cheery.”

“Strippers, Sammy. Strippers.” Dean told him happily, “we are on an actual case involving strippers. Finally.”

Sam nearly rolled his eyes, almost wondering if his brother had forgotten that those strippers had apparently been able to talk three men into killing their wives. At least he seemed to have forgotten his small fit of pique.

Dean’s good mood lasted all the way to the strip club the strippers apparently worked at. He headed inside while Sam did some research.

“I’m looking for three girls; Jasmine, Aurora, and Ariel.” Dean asked the manager once he found them.

“You seriously think those names mean anything to me?” The manager asked.

“One’s a redhead, about 5’9”. The other one’s Asian, about…”

“Do you have any idea how many girls I deal with? Fake names, fake hair, fake…” he didn’t finish the sentence, instead gesturing in the general area of his chest.

“You gotta have some paperwork, check stubs.” Dean pressed, “some way to keep track of the
“Please, ‘exotic dancers’.” The manager corrected fastidiously, “independent contractors working for cash. I stay out of their hair, they stay out of what little I have left.”

“Three of your customers murdered their wives.” Dean pointed out, starting to get frustrated, “you don’t think that’s weird?”

“Yeah, I think that’s super frigging weird. But you know what it ain’t? My problem.”

Dean glared after the manager as he walked off, then he spotted Sam across the room and headed over to his brother.

“Any luck?” Sam asked as he came up.

“No. You?” Dean returned.

“A little. Just talked to Bobby. We officially have a theory.”

“What’s that?”

“Siren.”

“Like…Greek myth siren? The Odyssey?” Dean asked with surprise, which surprised Sam. It must have shown on his face because Dean continued, “hey, I read.”

“Yeah…but the siren’s not actually a myth. It’s more of a…beautiful creatures that prey on men, entice them with their siren song.”

“Let me guess. ‘Welcome to the Jungle’? No, no. Warrant’s ‘Cherry Pie’.” Dean joked.

“Their song is more of a metaphor, like their call, their allure, you know?” Sam explained, refusing to let his brother’s compulsion to find something to joke about annoy him.

“They shake their thing, the guys zombie out?”

“Basically, yeah. Sirens lived on islands. Sailors would chase them, completely ignoring the rocky shores and dash themselves to pieces.”

“Sounds like Adam and his buddies.”

“Yeah. If you were a siren in ’09 looking to ruin a bunch of morons where would you set up?”

“So whatever floats the guy’s boat, that’s what they look like?”

“Yeah. You see, sirens can read minds. They see what you want most, and then they can cloak themselves. You know, like an illusion?”

“So it could all be the same chick? Morphing into different dream girls?”

“Yeah, actually. Probably. Sirens are usually pretty solitary.”

Dean wanted to sigh, “how do we kill it?”

Sam wished he actually had something to tell his brother, “Bobby’s working on it. Even if we figure that out…”
“How the hell we gonna find it? It could be anybody…” Dean finished, the music was loud enough to cover their conversation and no one looked to be paying any attention to them, “think your abilities will be able to spot them? Or protect you?”

“No idea.” Sam replied with a sigh.

They weren’t going to find anything more here, if the siren was present Sam couldn’t sense her, so they headed back to the motel room to do some more research and get some shut-eye. The next morning brought a report of another man killing at the request of a stripper, this time it was his mother. A quick stop by the coroner and then the Sheriff’s Department confirmed their suspicions; he was another victim of the siren. This time the name was ‘Belle’.

“He killed his mum?” Dean asked incredulously when they were back in the impala.

“The woman he was closest to.” Sam reasoned. His phone ringing interrupted anything more he could have said, he answered and switched it to speaker, “hey, Bobby.”

“Sam.” Bobby’s voice came over the tinny speaker, “did you find her yet?”

“No.” Sam told him, they really weren’t sure how to go about finding her either, “and…it doesn’t seem like she’s slowing down any. What about you? Got anything?”

“Well some lore from a dusty Greek poem.” Bobby replied, “shockingly, it’s vague. It says you need ‘a bronze dagger covered in the blood of a sailor under the spell of the song’.”

“What about that mean?” Dean asked.

“You got me.” Bobby replied, “we’re dealing with 3000 years of the telephone game here.”

“Best guess?” Sam asked, what they’d do if he wasn’t around to help them he didn’t know. The old Hunter had forgotten more about the lore than they’d learned.

“Well…the siren’s spell ain’t got nothing to do with any song. It’s most likely some kind of toxin or venom. Something she gets into the vic’s blood…”

“That makes them go all *Manchurian Candidate.*” Sam finished, “Uh…what do you think, she infects the men during sex?”

“Maybe.” Bobby agreed.

“Supernatural STD.” Dean commented.

“Well…however it happens once it’s done, the siren’s gotta watch her back. She gets a dose of her own medicine…”

“It kills her.” Sam concluded.

“Like a snake getting iced by its own venom.” Bobby confirmed.

“So we just gotta find a way to juice one of the OJs in jail.” Dean suggested.

“Not that easy.” Bobby replied, “none of those guys are under the spell anymore. Haven’t got a clue where you’re gonna get the blood you need.”

“I think I might have an idea.” Sam told him, though he wasn’t going to say much in case it didn’t pan out.
“Be careful.” Bobby warned, “these things are tricky bitches. Wrap you up in knots before you know what hit ya.”

Bobby rang off then, and Dean looked at Sam, “where to?”

“The coroner.” Sam answered, “think the blood samples she took might work.”

“Good idea.” Dean agreed.

Arriving Sam saw a slight grimace cross Dean’s face as he got out of the impala.

“What’s wrong?”

“Just getting a bit of a headache.” Dean answered giving his forehead a quick rub before turning towards the building.

“You okay? Do we need to go back to the room?”

“Nah, I’ll be fine. It’s only a headache, Sammy, just took me by surprise.”

Sam absently noted he had a slight headache too as they headed in.

“Dr Roberts.” Sam greeted the coroner as they saw her.

“Agent Stiles.” She replied with a smile, “can’t stay away, huh?”

Sam saw a grin flit across Dean’s face as he realised that they were both attracted to each other, his annoyance from earlier forgotten.

“Actually…we’re here on business.” Sam told her, “about the…the blood samples. The ones with the high…uh…you know…uh…oxytocin?”

“You still have them?” Dean asked with a bit of amusement at his brother for getting tongue-tied.

Cara made an affirmative sound.

“Good, we need them.” Dean stated.

“What for?” She asked.

“Excuse me, Dr Roberts.” Another voice interrupted, and she turned towards the man in the suit who’d approached.

“Yeah?” She asked.

“Excuse me.” Dean interrupted, pulling out his ID, Sam following suit, “we’re a little busy here, buddy.”

“Yeah.” He pulled out a badge of his own, “so am I, pal.”

Both brothers firmly kept a straight face, this had a huge chance to get really awkward, and they couldn’t afford that. Not if they were going to keep more people from dying.

“Doc, could you give us a sec please?” Sam asked.

“Sure.” She answered and moved away.
“What’s your name?” Dean asked confrontationally.

“Nick Munroe. What’s yours?”

“I’m Special Agent Sam Stiles.” Sam inserted before Dean could be more confrontational, and showing the ID again, “this is my partner, Dean Murdock. What office you from?”

“Omaha, violent crimes unit. My SAC sent me down here to see about the murders. You?”

“DC. Our assistant director assigned us.” Dean answered.

“Oh, which AD?”

“Mike Kaiser.” Sam answered giving the name Bobby used.

“What are your badge numbers?”

“You’re kidding, right?” Dean asked incredulously, if he was seriously going to run the numbers they were going to be in trouble.

“I’m just following protocol.” Nick replied.

“Look, man.” Sam interjected, pulling out an official looking business card and handing it to him, that it went to one of the phones at Bobby’s rather than a government building people never picked up on, “whatever. Just call our AD, he’ll sort things out.”

Nick walked away and put the number into his phone. They couldn’t hear the conversation but could guess at its content; Bobby was very good at sounding like a pissed off supervisor. It apparently worked since he came back over apologetically.

“I’m sorry, guys.”

“Yeah, just don’t let it happen again.” Dean returned gruffly.

“So where are you at with this?” Nick asked.

“Where are you at with this?” Dean threw the question back at him.

“Well, I was just about to run the perps’ blood work.” Nick stated.

“I already checked. Dean end.” Sam told him.

“Oh, yeah?” Nick asked.

“Yeah.” Sam confirmed.

“But get this. I feel like I found something that…uh…connects all the murderers.” Nick stated.

“Really?” Sam asked as if they didn’t know the connection already.

Nick nodded, “they were all banging strippers…from the same club.”

“You don’t say.” Dean said, following Sam’s lead and pretending they didn’t already know.

“What do you say we go down there and check it out?” Nick suggested.

“Well, here’s the thing, Nick.” Dean started to reply, “see…we’re kind of lone wolves…”
“That sounds like an excellent idea.” Sam interjected, and he could tell that Dean nearly dropped the act to glare at him, “just give me a second with my partner and we’ll…uh…one sec. Come here.”

Sam pulled Dean away.

“What?” Dean asked quietly not sure whether to be concerned or annoyed. This arsehole was going to get in their way if they didn’t run him off, “Spidey sense?”

“No. But you gotta keep him out of the way.”

“What? Why me?”

“Because I gotta get the blood samples and we’re not going to be able to do that with him hanging around.”

“What am I supposed to do with him?”

“Just take him to the strip club…keep an eye out for the siren.”

“That leaves you unprotected.” Dean softly growled.

“I’m a big boy; I can take care of myself. Anyway, you know you’ve wanted to go look at them since you heard there were strippers involved.”

“Yeah…but not without you.”

“You know full well I’d just drag the laptop along and research while you drooled.”

“I don’t drool.” Dean gave him a glare that didn’t truly have any heat before sighing, “fine. But stay safe.”

“Of course.”

“Why does that not reassure me.” Dean grumbled softly before turning to Nick and raising his voice, “okay, you coming or not?”

Nick appeared to jump at the chance and followed Dean out to the impala.

Chapter End Notes

Comments, constructive criticism, and questions always welcome.
Chapter 49: Different Love

Dean didn’t particularly want to be babysitting a random fed who’d wandered into their case. He had to admit that Sam had a point though, if they didn’t ride herd on the agent he’d poke around on his own and get tangled up in the case. Being with Nick wasn’t as bad as he’d expected, he definitely didn’t have a stick up his arse like their first impression of him had suggested.

As he started to relax, enjoying the girls and the discussion he hadn’t expected actually to be enjoyable. He wondered how Sam was doing with his part.

Sam was frustrated; he’d managed to talk her into giving them the samples only to discover all four were missing. They went tediously through every single camera footage for the day, even his preference for computers and scholarly pursuits didn’t make that enjoyable. He ditched his uncomfortable jacket partway through. Several hours later, after they’d gone through the footage twice, they had to concede that whoever had nabbed the blood had also tampered with the tapes. They couldn’t even narrow down the suspects as she didn’t lock the door to her office, Sam wasn’t sure the small town mentality was a good thing or a bad thing.

“What is so important about the blood anyway?” She asked as Sam tried to figure out what to do next.

“I think someone drugged the men.” Sam explained, automatically editing what they’d deduced for his non-Hunter audience, “made them commit murder.”

“What?” Cara asked incredulously, “what kind of drug?”

“Oh…I’m not sure yet.” Sam fudged, she definitely wasn’t unintelligent. Something that just made her more attractive to him. He was more than aware that if the siren did target him, intelligence would be one of the ways it would undoubtedly use. However, he doubted she was it. There would have been far better ways for it to target him and throw suspicion elsewhere than what she’d done. Substituting the blood vials rather than making them disappear was just one way he could think of off the top of his head. She had easy access to the means for producing substitutes, and no one would bat an eye while someone from outside wouldn’t have that ability.
“I don’t know…” she all but mused out aloud, “I mean, I interviewed those guys, and they had their reasons.”

“Yeah, but they all loved their victims.” Sam pointed out.

“I’m sure they did.” She agreed almost sarcastically, looking up at Sam’s expression she chuckled, “come on. Haven’t you ever been in a relationship where you really loved somebody and…still kinda wanted to bash their head in?”

Sam wasn’t sure he managed to keep his face straight, the number of women he’d loved you could count on the fingers of one hand with some left over, and he wasn’t sure he had ever felt that sort of dialectic emotions she described.

“Sounds like you’re speaking from experience.” He managed.

“Yeah.” She agreed, an almost dreamy expression on her face suggested that it wasn’t all bad memories. She got up with a sigh and started looking through a nearby cabinet and Sam got the feeling he’d upset her.

“Look, I’m sorry…I didn’t mean to pry.” He apologised.

“It’s okay.” Cara replied, brushing it off and depositing a bottle of whiskey and two glasses on her desk, “I’m the one who brought it up.”

Sam watched a little bemused as she poured a couple of shots into the glasses.

“Really?” He asked.

“It’s medicine.” She told him with a grin before handing him one of the glasses, “I’m a doctor.”

Sam hesitated for a moment before taking it, after the frustrating few hours he certainly could use it he just hoped it wouldn’t blow his image as an FBI agent.

“His name…was Carl.” Cara explained, “and we were married.”

“What happened?” Sam asked as he took a sip.

“Life happened.” She answered with what sounded like a verbal shrug, “I don’t know. I mean, I loved him. I still do I guess but…um…I don’t know…it’s like one day…I looked up, and I was living with a stranger and…you know what I mean, right?”

“I guess…” Sam stumbled, “or…I don’t know…maybe…”

“People change.” Cara stated, “God, I know I did. But it’s nothing to feel guilty about. It happens.”

“So you two split up?”

“Yeah, I suppose that’s a word for it.”

She started pouring more of the whiskey as Sam’s phone rang.

“You need to get that?” Cara asked as Sam checked the caller ID.

Sam hesitated before hitting the button to hang up and also send the signal to Dean that he wasn’t alone and couldn’t answer. Their cases could often mean any conversations would be confusing at the least to alarming at worst.
“No. Not right now.” Sam replied, Dean would call back if it was an emergency and required him to
ditch whoever was with him pronto.

“Whatever.” Cara answered with a smile, “we’ve all got our own sad stories so…screw it. Have fun,
no regrets and live life like there’s no tomorrow.”

She clinked her glass with Sam’s before leaning close, “for instance, I have been thinking about you
all night. Well…parts of you.”

“Just parts?” Sam asked. Based on the fact that there wasn’t even a message from Dean following
the call it was probably his brother wanting to tell him not to wait up. And while he was concerned
about Dean possibly hooking up at the bar the siren had been stalking he wasn’t getting any danger
sense him his brother or himself, and he didn’t see any problems with, for once, emulating Dean.

She made an affirmative sound, “like your lips. They’re very…distracting. It’s a problem.”

She pulled off his tie before continuing, “I can’t stop thinking about…kissing them.”

“That so?” Sam asked.

“So…what the hell, huh?”

Sam found himself returning her smile. She wasn’t perfect, in fact, if she had been he’d have backed
off just in case, but she was exactly the type of person who he’d want as a friend, or more. And for
once he wanted just to follow it and not reason everything out.

When Nick handed over an evidence bag with a flower in it after several hours, Dean felt himself go
cold as he recognised it. When Nick went to the bathroom, Dean tried to call Sam, only to get the
signal that he wasn’t alone. He almost called him back to get him to ditch whoever he was with,
probably the coroner, but he didn’t want to tip her off. Sam wouldn’t risk her getting control over
him, he hoped.

He tried to massage away the growing headache that had been plaguing him all night as Nick
returned.

“You okay?” Nick asked.

“Just a long day.” Dean replied, for a moment feeling eerily like his brother was asking and nearly
got caught out by his impulse to answer as he would to Sam.

Once he and Nick parted for the night, Dean drove around in the rain trying to patrol for the siren.
He had to hope that Sam had managed to get the blood samples so they could prep a blade to take
out the siren when they found her.

The motel room was empty when Sam got back to it; he figured that his thought as to how his
brother was spending the night was most likely correct. He pulled out his phone and called Dean, if
he was busy he’d use the same signal that Sam had earlier.

Dean answered the phone promptly once he saw it was his brother, he didn’t even bother pulling
over.

“Sam? Where the hell you been?”

“With Cara.” Sam answered, frowning at the concern he could hear in his big brother’s voice. He
wondered if he’d read Dean’s joy at seeing him even mildly attracted to someone wrong.
“Oh, it’s Cara now?” Dean demanded.

“We were trying to find the blood samples.” Sam explained, “someone stole them.”

Dean nearly swore out aloud; the siren had obviously acted to remove the threat. And possibly distract Sam at the same time, “yeah…I’ll bet.”

Sam frowned in confusion; he wondered if he was missing something, “What’s that supposed to mean?”

“Nick found flower petals at the crime scenes.” Dean snapped, “hyacinths.”

“So?” Sam asked, he couldn’t think of the significance of the flower.

“Hyacinths.” Dean repeated urgently, “Mediterranean. From the island where the whole frigging siren myth started.”

“Okay…” Sam replied, starting to see where his brother was going with the connection but still couldn’t figure out what Dean thought it was pointing to nor why he thought Sam would twig immediately.

“Sam, Cara had hyacinth flowers!”

“You think Cara’s the siren?” Sam asked a little incredulously. He nearly swore as he realised that Dean wouldn’t accept any of his reasoning for it not being her.

“I did a little checking up on her.” Dean continued, “she’s only been in town for two months.”

“And…?”

“And she has an ex-husband. A dead ex-husband. Carl Roberts. Dropped like a stone, no warning. Supposedly a heart attack.”

“Maybe it was a heart attack.” Sam pointed out, trying to be logical and reasonable, “marrying someone is hardly the MO of the siren.”

“You kidding me?” Dean demanded, and Sam did his best not to sigh.

“I honestly don’t think it’s her.” Sam replied calmly.

“And what makes you so sure?”

“If she was the siren there’s plenty of things she wouldn’t have drawn our attention to. Including the theft of the blood, she could easily have replaced them, and no one would have known the difference least of all us. And I just really think it’s not her.”

“Seriously?” Dean demanded, he had a sinking feeling in his gut, “did you sleep with her?”

Sam sighed, he wanted to be able to say he hadn’t but he couldn’t without lying to his brother, and it had been a long time since he’d been able to even contemplate outright lying to Dean.

“Holy crap, you did…”

Most people would only have heard the anger in Dean’s voice, but Sam could hear the fear in it also.

“Middle of Basic Instinct and you bang Sharon Stone.” Dean continued, “Sam, you could be under
her spell right now!

“I’m not under her spell.” Sam stated calmly, though he had a feeling Dean wouldn’t accept it.

“Unbelievable, man.” Dean grumbled, “I just don’t get it.”

“What?” Sam asked, doing his best not to sigh.

“Nothing.” Dean all but mumbled after a pause.

Sam had a bad feeling, “what?”

“Just…first Madison, now Cara…what is it with you and banging monsters?”

Sam felt like he’d been punched in the gut and reminded himself as he took a calming breath that Dean got angry when he got worried. That didn’t make it hurt less.

“Dean, I feel fine. I’m sure it’s not Cara.”

“I bet you do.” Dean snapped back, and Sam could almost have said it with him. His brother had to be thinking Sam didn’t have control anymore.

“You don’t trust me…”

“Not right now.” Sadness crept into Dean’s voice along with everything else, “this could be the siren talking.”

“It isn’t.” Sam protested though he knew it was probably fruitless. Knowing where his brother was coming from didn’t make it feel better, “tell me where to meet up, and you can see that for yourself.”

It took a while for Dean to answer, the situation felt like it was gutting him and he didn’t know how to save his little brother, “no.”

“Are you serious?” Sam asked incredulously.

“I wish I weren’t.” Dean replied sadly, “go back to the room if you’re not there and STAY there. I’ll fix this.”

“Dean…” Sam didn’t get a chance to finish as his brother hung up. He tightened his hand around his phone; he wasn’t sure whether he wanted to cry or punch the wall.

Dean hung up before he could hear any more protests or arguments from Sam, his natural inclination to trust him was at war with what he knew the situation was. He tried desperately to think of who the siren would try to get his brother to kill; it wasn’t like Sam was close to many women. Pam and Missouri probably didn’t qualify for the type of love the siren focused on, not like they were anywhere near anyway. He needed to figure it out though, if he knew his little brother at all Sam wouldn’t be able to handle it if he couldn’t keep it from happening. Dean’s mind flew back to what Sam had admitted after the Groundhog Day Tuesdays and felt himself go cold. He couldn’t let that threaten his little brother again; he didn’t know if Sam could withstand it again. He didn’t even know if he’d even come close to keeping his brother from that path if he couldn’t stop it. The possibilities terrified him; he needed to deal with the siren before she played Sam like a puppet and destroyed him.

Making a quick decision Dean hit another contact on his phone. Unfortunately, he didn’t get the older Hunter, just his message bank.
“Sam’s in trouble, Bobby.” Dean stated without preamble, “I think the siren’s worked her mojo on him. Give me a call as soon as you get this.”

Hanging up he ran through his options, tackling anything supernatural solo wasn’t a good idea. Of course, there were plenty of Hunters who made a habit of hunting solo; their dad had been one of them. He and Sam had got used to having someone at their back though. After a moment’s thought, he hit the newest contact on his phone, he usually wouldn’t even think of involving a non-Hunter, but he didn’t have many options. Especially if he was going to keep his brother from being destroyed.

“Hey, man. What’s up?” Nick answered promptly.

“I need your help.” Dean told him.

“Uh…sure. With what?”

“Canvassing. We gotta find somebody.”

“Okay. Who?”

“Dr Roberts.”

“Okay…did you try her home?”

“Pretty sure she won’t be there.”

“So where do you think she’ll be?”

“At a bar, unless I miss my guess, just need to find which one.”

“Can’t you just wait until tomorrow for whatever it is you want to ask her?”

“I would…if I wanted to ask her questions. I have reason to suspect she has something to do with this case, and not as the coroner. Her office is where I saw that flower.”

“If you say so, man.”

Dean was striking out at all the bars he tried then Nick sent a text that he’d found the bar she frequented. Arriving at the location, he slid into the passenger seat of his car where he was keeping watch on the entrance.

“She went in just a second ago.” Nick reported.

“Nice work.” Dean complemented, the headache coming back with a renewed vengeance as he tensed up in anticipation. He grumbled silently to himself as he realised he’d have to take a painkiller at some point if he wanted to deal with the siren tonight.

“Should we follow her in?” Nick asked.

“No, no, no, I don’t wanna tip her off.” Dean replied, he really wished Sam hadn’t got tangled up, it would be a lot easier to work with his brother instead of having to edit his every thought for the consumption of a layperson, “we’ll just wait and see who she comes out with.”

“So you think…what? She’s drugging these guys?”

“Pretty much.” Dean agreed, it was as good a description as any to give someone who wasn’t a
Hunter.

Nick gave a sceptical noise in response.

“I know how it sounds.” Dean said scepticism was something a Hunter got used to.

“You sure about that?” Nick asked, “because it sounds like crazy on toast. All these different strippers, they’re magically the same girl…but then they’re not strippers at all; it’s Dr Quinn?”

“It’s kinda hard to explain, but I have my reasons, and they’re good ones. You’re just gonna have to trust me on that.” Dean opened up his flask in preparation for taking a painkiller; Sam would probably have yelled at him for mixing it with alcohol if he was here, but he didn’t have anything else to drink.

“Yeah, okay. I guess.”

“Thank you.” Dean replied, surprised at the concession. It wasn’t something normally seen in civilians, “that’s actually nice to hear.”

Dean offered him the flask so he could take a drink as he pulled the painkillers out then accepted it back to swallow the tablets. His headache suddenly spiked to blinding level then faded away; he shook his head to clear it.

“So let’s say she is drugging her vics.” Nick said, a different quality in his voice, “how’s she pulling that off?”

“She could be injecting them.” Dean suggested though he was pretty sure it was more organic than that, “you know…or passing the toxin through…uh…physical contact.”

“Or…it could be her saliva.” Nick suggested an indefinable tone of menace in his tone.

Dean glanced down at the flask as he made the connection and swore silently, Sam wasn’t the one in trouble, he was. His automatic reaction was to go for his gun, but his arm wouldn’t move even as a strange reasoning seemed to take over his thinking.

“You really should’ve wiped the lip of that thing before you drank from it, Dean.” Nick gloated.

“I should be your little brother.” Nick suggested, switching to a coaxing tone, “Sam…you can’t trust him. Not like you can trust me.”

Coming from Nick’s mouth, it was the most reasonable argument in the world. A tiny part of him cringed away from the suggestion, but that part of him, his true self, was not in charge right now.

“In fact,” Nick continued, “I really feel like you should get him out of the way…so that we can be brothers…forever.”

It made so much sense; Nick was his real brother. The man he’d thought was his brother had obviously managed to take his place and brainwash him into thinking he was his brother. He had to protect his brother.

“Yeah.” Dean said, a tiny part of him railed against it, “yeah, you’re right.”

When they got back to the room they found that Sam hadn’t stayed put, Dean wasn’t sure whether to be annoyed or thankful. The man posing as his brother was no slouch in a fight and it would be easier to take him by ambush rather than a frontal assault.
When Sam returned, he’d gone to a diner to grab some coffee and settle down after the telephone confrontation since Dean wasn’t going to accept his help anytime soon, he was met with the sight of Nick sitting on his bed. He noted the headache returning as he tensed up, he wasn’t looking forward to dealing with his brother and the fact that he’d brought in the FBI agent as back up did not promise an easy conversation. Though he could have sworn he’d only sensed his brother in the room.

“Nick.” Sam said, “what are you doing here?”

Though he’d been on edge, he’d expected a verbal confrontation and his brother suddenly attacking from behind and holding a knife to his throat was completely unexpected.

“Dean?”

It took him a moment to connect the dots, his mind working slower than usual thanks to his shock at Dean, of all people, holding a knife to his throat.

“I gotta tell you; you’re onebutt ugly stripper.” Sam told the fake FBI agent he now knew was the siren they were hunting.


Sam switched tack, “Dean. Come on, man. This isn’t you. You can fight this. Let me go.”

He hoped that the defences Dean had on his mind would help to break him free, he nearly swore aloud as he realised the headaches that both of them had had were because of the siren being present, presumably because its illusions and knowledge had to get past their defences.

“Why don’t you…cut him?” Nick suggested almost casually, “just a little, on his neck right there?”

Sam felt a bolt of fear go through him as Dean obeyed without any hesitation, the knife slicing shallowly into his neck.

“Dean’s all mine.” Nick told him.

“You poisoned him.” Sam growled at him.

“No, I gave him what he needed.” Nick corrected, “and it wasn’t some bitch in a G-string. It was you. A little brother that looked up to him, that he could trust. And now he loves me. He’d do anything for me. And I gotta tell you Sam, that kind of devotion? I mean…watching someone kill for you? It’s the best feeling in the world.”

“Is that why you’re slutting it all over town?” Sam asked caustically.

“Um…I get bored, like we all do…and I wanna fall in love again…and again…and again.”

“I tell you what; I have fought some nasty sons of bitches but you…are one needy, pathetic loser.” Sam told him.

“You won’t feel that way in a minute.” Nick declared before forcing his mouth open then spraying some saliva from his mouth into Sam’s.

Sam could feel the venom stabbing into his mind, trying to twist his thinking, control his actions. Desperately he used his mental abilities to hold it at bay even as Nick unwound Dean’s arms.

“So I know you two have a lot you need to talk about.” Nick stated, Sam barely heard him beyond his struggle, “so why don’t you discuss it…and…whoever survives can be with me forever?”
Sam felt Dean begin to move in for the attack again and froze him in place with his telekinesis. He also wrapped it around himself just in case and even Nick as the siren realised something was wrong and started to flee. He didn’t know how he was going to take out the siren, all of his strength and abilities were being directed towards keeping all three of them motionless and the control from the venom out of his mind. At least they had a supply of the toxin required to kill the siren, just no way to utilise it. He tuned anything Dean was saying out, Dean wasn’t in control.

Sam wasn’t sure how long he’d been like that, his entire being poured into the abilities that were keeping his brother and him from killing each other when the door suddenly swung open. Bobby strode through, a bronze dagger already in his hand. He jabbed it into Dean’s arm, him being closest to the door, before jamming it into the siren’s heart. Sam felt the grip of the venom immediately release his mind, and he let that fight and the telekinetic holds drop with a gasp.

“Holy crap…” Dean stammered out as he regained control of his mind, “Sammy? You okay?”

Sam nodded shakily, “shit… I never want to do anything like that again… thanks, Bobby.”

“No problem.” Bobby replied, “now you idjits had better help me get this cleaned up.”

They helped drag the body of the siren, now looking like what it actually did rather than one of the illusions it had projected, down to Bobby’s car then out to a secluded area to salt and burn it.

Sam was incredibly glad they didn’t have any stairs to climb as they returned, his head was swimming. He clumsily tripped over his feet and barely managed to catch himself on the wall.

“You okay?” The older Hunter asked gruffly.

“Yeah, just tired.” Sam answered softly. He tried to start moving towards the room again only to stumble again, this time having his feet go out from under him.

Bobby caught the younger brother as his legs went from under him, “hell, Sam, some warning would have been nice. Take a sec to find your feet would ya.”

Bobby propped him against the wall, he pushed Sam’s head up gently when the younger brother made no response nor effort to lift it himself.

“Shit.”

Dean was instantly at his side, and between them, they eased Sam down to the floor.

“Sammy?” Dean tapped Sam’s cheek gently, hoping to bring him around. That his brother had so abruptly passed out was seriously worrying him, especially as he had no idea what could be wrong.

“Let’s get him back to the room; the corridor isn’t a good place for this.” Bobby said.

Dean nodded, he should have thought of that himself, and pulled Sam into a fireman’s hold before going into the room and depositing him gently on his bed. Bobby closed the door and joined him.

“What’s wrong with him, Bobby?” Dean asked worriedly.

“Hell if I know, did he get any other injuries aside from that scratch on his neck?”

“Not that I know of… aside from also getting dosed with the damn siren’s venom.”
“He got dosed?”

“Yeah…damn siren tried to set us on each other. He immobilised me, and I’m guessing kept the venom from warping his thinking.”

“Maybe some kinda reaction to the venom? The lore has barely anything on sirens let alone the response of psychics to sirens.”

Sam groaned as he started to come around. Dean helped him sit up once he’d blinked blearily at them for a few moments.

“You okay, Sammy?” Dean asked.

“Mmm…” Sam mumbled blearily.

Bobby frowned and moved off. Dean didn’t notice, his attention solely on his brother who didn’t appear to be managing to stay very alert even now he’d woken up again. He tapped Sam’s cheek urgently but gently, “hey…stay with me, Sammy.”

“I…” Sam swayed, and Dean steadied him worriedly.

Bobby appeared at Dean’s shoulder and held out a mug to Sam.

“Drink this.” Bobby ordered.

“What is it…?” Sam asked, blinking blearily at him.

“Tea with as much sugar as I could get to dissolve. Unless I miss my guess, you burned through all your energy pulling what you did, and you need to replace some before you pass out again, idjit.”

“Oh…” Sam took the mug, Dean had to help steady it initially, and sipped at it.

“Feeling better?” Dean asked once his brother looked steadier.

“Yeah, sorry.”

“Good.” Dean looked over at Bobby, “how’d you figure that out?”

“If Sam could have moved to take out that bastard he would have, he would have known you were dosed, and you both had appropriate daggers. That tells me everything he had was being poured into keeping the two of you from fighting and keeping the siren immobile. Of course, I’d have been a real idjit busting in to save you when he didn’t need saving if he’d been able to do so.”

“How did you know we’d need help anyway?” Sam asked.

“Only took one phone call to figure out that Agent Nick Monrow wasn’t real and he sure as hell wasn’t a Hunter. You two sure as hell wouldn’t be expecting the siren to come at you from that angle, hell if he hadn’t attracted my attention I wouldn’t have expected him to come at you from that angle. We all expected it to stick to using girls, who’d have thought it could shift to using brotherly love.”

“I see…” Sam managed around a yawn.

“You. Are going to bed.” Dean ordered, pointing a finger at him. He didn’t even want to think about what would have happened if Sam hadn’t frozen them, though that didn’t mean he liked what that level of energy expenditure had done to his brother. And when he got a chance he owed Sam a
ginormous apology for the crap that had come out of his mouth during the confrontation, he cringed inside every time he remembered it, and he didn’t blame Sam for flinching away from him.

“Sounds like a really good idea, man.” Sam mumbled, “you sticking around, Bobby? It’s pretty late.”

“Crashing on your couch would be mighty appreciated, drove straight here once I realised you were in trouble.”

“You’re definitely welcome to it.” Dean told him as Sam crawled under the covers, “or you could have my bed and I’ll take the couch.”

“Nah, it’s your room. And you’re way too tall for the couch anyway.”

Dean didn’t sleep well, waking up multiple times to check that Sam was sleeping peacefully. Eventually, he gave up trying at some point before dawn, retreating to the kitchenette for a coffee. Bobby joined him a few hours later.

“Couldn’t sleep, huh?” Bobby asked softly as he grabbed a coffee for himself.

“You should have taken the bed.” Dean returned.

“That bad, huh?”

Dean just shrugged and took a sip of his coffee, he wished he had something stronger to put in it but the only alcohol he had right now was in his flask, and he shuddered every time he thought about it let alone looked at it. He nearly couldn’t believe he could have been that stupid.

“Want to talk about it?”

“What’s to talk about? The son of a bitch played me like a fiddle even before he managed to dose me.” Dean replied, anger in his voice that was obviously directed at himself, “had me thinking it was the coroner, Dr Cara Roberts. First person Sam’s even been mildly interested in for…well over a year I think…and the damn siren had me wanting to kill her, AND thinking Sam wasn’t in control.”

“Don’t blame yourself; they have centuries of practice at tying people up in knots.”

“Yeah…that’s going to be real useful trying to get Sam to trust me again…if he even should.”

“He’ll understand.”

“Maybe. Spend all this time trying to protect him, turns out I’m the one he needed protecting from.”

“Dean…”

Anything more Bobby might have said was interrupted by Sam stirring.

“Sammy?” Dean got up and headed closer to the bed, though he carefully allowed his brother his space, “how are you feeling?”

“I’m okay.” Sam replied sitting up, “kinda hungry though.”

“That I can fix.” Dean replied with the first grin he’d managed since the venom had let him go.

“Thanks.” Sam flashed him a grin before clambering out of bed and heading into the bathroom. The meal was ready a couple of minutes after Sam returned.
Bobby waited until after Sam was pretty much finished before he spoke up again.

“You boys gonna be okay?”

“Yeah.” Sam answered, “that son of a bitch blindsided us, but we survived. Hope we don’t need to deal with another one of those, it was utterly invisible to my senses.”

“Well, they’re not exactly common outside of Greece.”

“So here’s hoping that’s the only one.” Dean agreed.

“Well, I’d better get going. Not like I’m a legitimate guest here. You two might want to take a couple more days though.” Bobby stated.

Dean shook his head, “nah, someone is bound to notice ‘Nick’s’ disappearance, and then it won’t be long before it’s discovered that he’s not a real FBI agent, then they’ll want to talk to us and possibly find out we weren’t either.”

“Okay. Drive safe.” Bobby returned before slipping out of the room and silence fell between the brothers.

“Sam, I’m sorry.” Dean said after a long moment.

“For what?” Sam asked, “it was entirely reasonable for you to suspect I’d been taken over, and you couldn’t trust any of my arguments because you had no way of knowing if I was speaking the truth. Did it hurt? Sure, but I knew why. I don’t need an apology.”

“Well…thanks…but I wasn’t referring to that, not entirely, not even mostly.”

“Then what?”

“The crap that came out of my mouth when that bastard had control of me.” Dean replied with a perplexed look on his face.

“Oh…that. I tuned that out. You weren’t in control, and I had my attention on keeping all three of us stationary and keeping that poison out of my mind.”

“Really?”

“Really. Didn’t hear a word.”

“Okay. Good.” Dean stayed quiet for a moment, “you gonna say goodbye to Cara?”

Sam hesitated, part of Dean’s apology had been about what he’d said when he suspected Dr Roberts. And while he understood his brother’s reasoning it had reminded him of what happened to women who loved him, “nah.”

“Really? Why not? Please tell me it isn’t because of what I said about thinking she was the siren.”

“What’s the point?”

“You sure?”

“Yeah. You said it yourself; we need to leave town soon. It’ll be easier for her with any investigation if we all disappear at the same time as far as she knows.”
“That’s a point. I’ll get the salt cleaned up.”

“I’ll help.”

“No, you finish your coffee.”

“Dean…”

“Sam, you passed out on us last night. And…and maybe you don’t remember the crud I said, but I do…and…I wasn’t sure I’d get to apologise. It scared me, Sammy. I want…I need to know you’re okay.”

“Dean, I’m okay. Bobby figured it out, and now we know for if it happens in the future.”

“Yeah…I know…just…take it easy for a bit, okay?”

“Okay.”

They slipped out of the room a little while later without bothering to check out; Dean forced himself to keep going until there were a few towns behind them before he booked them into another motel, using a different name.

Chapter End Notes

Comments, constructive criticism, and questions always welcome. There were several parts of this chapter that were difficult to get my head around, I hope I didn't mess them up.
Chapter 50: Something Different

Chapter Notes

Story Name: Pivot Point
Pen Name: ElenaRoan
Disclaimer: Don’t own any of them, written purely for enjoyment.
Warnings:
Summary: What if Anna decided to derail the apocalypse by intervening to help rather than trying to make the brothers never having existed.
Timeline: Season 4
Note: I’m Australian and I can’t bring myself to use USA spelling, sorry.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter 50: Something Different

Sam kept an eye on the situation back in Bedford while Dean kept them moving as he hunted for a new case, unfortunately for him, it had gone quiet. Cara herself had been the one to raise the alarm over the missing FBI agents since she’d been expecting them back to follow up on the lost blood. Ironically enough they’d had trouble confirming whether or not the two of them had been actual agents, but that had fallen by the wayside the moment that Nick had been revealed as a fake. Sam had ensured that there was no video footage of the two of them just in case, which from the police reports being filed were being attributed to Nick’s actions along with the disappearance of the blood. There was currently a manhunt on for Nick, which was rapidly going cold. Cara’s report of their theory of someone drugging the perpetrators along with their subsequent disappearance, which was believed to be at the hands of Nick, actually had the men being transferred to a psych hospital for treatment rather than awaiting trial.

Dean tossed his newspaper down on the table of their latest motel room in frustration, “tell me you have found a case for us.”

“Sorry.” Sam replied he could guess why Dean was antsy. That was the way he dealt with a case that bothered him, “it’s been real quiet. The good news is they’re winding back the manhunt for Nick; they figure he’s long gone.”

“The only good thing from that mess was those guys being put into therapy rather than stewing in jail awaiting trial.” Dean grumbled.

“How about, since we’re just twiddling our thumbs anyway, you checking out the local bar?” Sam suggested.

Dean hesitated for a moment before replying, “nah, it’s just a two-horse town. Probably won’t even be any decent beer. Since when are you the one suggesting that anyway?”

“Since you’re all but climbing the walls.”

“I’m fine. Just want a case is all. What are you doing anyway if it’s all quiet?”

“Just research, stuff we’ve come across that was interesting. If we had a case, there wouldn’t be time
to read up on it so while it’s quiet, I’m doing that.”

“Oh. Anything good?”

“Some interesting leads, plus a book I’m getting delivered to Bobby. Won’t know for a bit whether anything will be useful, this is crawl through a massive maze research rather than find critter and how to kill critter research.”

“Okay.” Dean hid his disappointment, more stuff in their arsenal would be almost as good as a case.

“I’ll let you know if anything is useful.” Sam told him with a smile.

“Thanks.” Dean returned, not sure whether he was supposed to feel uncomfortable that his brother could read him like a book.

“So there’s no reason you can’t go have some fun. I’ll let you know if something comes up.”

Dean shook his head, “I’m not leaving you alone again.”

“Well, that’ll make going to the bathroom real awkward.”

“You know what I mean.”

“Yeah. But it wasn’t your fault, Dean. I’m the one who sent you off with Nick, remember. Neither of us picked that he wasn’t what he said he was. Though next time we both have headaches we need to take a step back and check for what might be causing it.”

“You think the headaches were from the siren?”

“Nearly positive. It needs to find out what its target wants after all and also needs to project the illusion of its physical appearance, and with us it had to get past our defences to do so. I just didn’t realise until it already had you under its spell. I should have realised earlier.”

“Sam.” Dean chastised him, “it’s not your fault.”

“It was invisible to my senses.”

“There you go.”

“I mean completely invisible, it didn’t even register as human, and I missed that because I’m so used to tuning out humans.”

“So? Learn from it, that’s what you do. You’ve said it yourself there’s no instruction manual for this. You saved our bacon regardless.”

“Bobby saved our bacon.”

“Not to downplay Bobby’s contribution, who knows if he’d got here in time to do so if you hadn’t put that whammy on the three of us.”

“And if he hadn’t come right when he had I’d have probably run out of strength and passed out, letting the siren make you kill me. That doesn’t change you being able to go have some fun.”

Sam didn’t need any sort of psychic powers to read the conflict on his brother’s face, “I’ll come with you. Admittedly I’ll just sit in the corner on the laptop, but I’ll come.”
Dean gave a faint laugh, “okay, if you insist.”

“Good.” Sam sent the laptop into sleep mode and slotted it into its carrier efficiently.

At the bar he found a sheltered corner to set up his computer while Dean grabbed them a couple of drinks and looked the crowd over. There wasn’t a huge crowd and those that were there spared them some curious glances. Sam had to smile as he noticed his brother got more than a few interested looks from the ladies around the room. If any sent any his way he didn’t bother to note, he wasn’t interested.

Over the course of the night, it was evident that Dean appreciated the glances, but he hesitated every time he looked like he was going to approach one. Instead he played some pool and gathered a little extra money for them.

“You know not only are sirens really uncommon outside of Greece we’re really not likely to encounter one again this soon.” Sam commented after a while as Dean brought more drinks over.

“Well…” Dean returned hesitantly, “can never be too careful…there’s more than sirens out there.”

Sam chuckled, “they’re human. Trust me on that, I checked.”

“No need to go all paranoid on me, Sammy.”

“Not going paranoid, it was a wake-up call for me though. I too often tune out humans instead of checking that everyone does a signature before tuning them out. I won’t let you down like that again.”

Dean shook his head, “you didn’t let me down. You ensured that we both survived long enough for Bobby to save us. Maybe you made a few mistakes, but I did too…much bigger ones.”

“Be that as it may it still means you don’t need to deny yourself what you need.”

“Need?”

“I’ve been your brother my entire life, Dean; I’d have to be blind to miss that. Now stop second-guessing yourself, just let me know if you’re not coming back tonight.”

“I wouldn’t do that to you.” Dean returned, but he was smiling.

Sam noted when he slipped off with one of the ladies of the inviting smiles sometime later and when the two slipped back in a while later.

“You ready to head back?” Dean asked finally sometime after midnight.

“Sure.” Sam packed up the laptop and joined his brother for the trip back to the motel room.

Dean waited until after he’d run a bug scan once they arrived back to ask anything, “so did you find anything interesting?”

“Think so, yeah.” Sam replied, pulling the laptop out and setting it up so his brother could see, “remember when we took the dream walking potion then I had the unexpected dream walk later in Concrete?”

“Yeah. You said you were going to do some looking into it? Turned something up?”

“In a way. Nothing that really explains about it…however I did manage to turn up a tribe where the
stories indicate that’s there’s a strong tradition of dream walking.”

“And you’d like to go take a look?”

“As long as we’re not doing anything anyway…”

“Well, it sure beats cooling our heels here.” Dean returned, leaning forward to take a look at the information that Sam had arranged for him. Noting, in particular, the location, “looks doable, we can head that direction once we wake up in the morning…later this morning.”

Sam chuckled, “thanks, Dean.”

“No problem. Now get some sleep.”

Chapter End Notes

My apologies for how late this is. Not only did the plot bunny decide to sulk I came down sick; that was gone pretty quick but the exhaustion afterwards stuck around for ages. I’m really hoping things will settle down, and the plot bunny cooperates, so that I can get back to posting a chapter a week.

As always comments, constructive criticism, and questions are more than welcome. Apologies again for the wait.
Chapter 51: Unknown Problem

This was the third reservation that they’d tried and looked like they’d fallen on worse times than the previous two, even the tourist attractions had shuttered windows, and the lonely motel looked like it was being held together with spit and string.

“Whatever it is you’re looking for you won’t find it here.” The manager of said motel told them tiredly as they checked in.

Sam raised an eyebrow at her, “and what exactly are we looking for?”

“How would I know, I’m not the shaman. If I were you, I’d keep going.”

“Has something happened?” Dean asked. He’d nearly bet money that they’d walked into a case. Though tribes, the ones that had kept in touch with their real roots anyway, were usually more than capable of handling any supernatural issues that arise on their lands. Many of the more commonly used defences against various threats had their origins in Native American lore.

“Even if something had there’s nothing you could do about it.”

“We’re Hunters.” Sam told her bluntly, his thoughts following the same path as Dean’s and played a gut feeling.

“All the more reason you should get back in that big black car of yours and keep going. This is out of your league. This is out of the Shaman’s league.”

“Maybe if you tell us what the issue is we might be able to help.” Sam pressed.

“Not for me to say.” She told them with a sigh, “you’re not going to be dissuaded are you?”

“Helping people is what we do, won’t be the first time we’ve taken on something that should have killed us.”

“An attitude like that’ll see to it that we’ll be burying you also before the week is out.”

“Maybe. But if we can help then it’ll be worth it. Not planning on dying though.”
She shook her head and handed over a key without bothering to take their payment details, “you’re definitely Hunters that’s for sure. Here, on the house. Whatever outcome we wouldn’t be charging you anyway. No point trying to get money out of a corpse and if you manage, by some million to one chance, to actually fix it, we wouldn’t be making you pay anyway. You got next of kin we can contact?”

“Hopefully it won’t come to that, but if necessary Bobby Singer. I have his number in my phone…” Sam told her, reaching for said device.

“No need, THAT is one Hunter pretty much everyone knows. If we thought there was anyone out there that could help he’d be the one we’d be contacting to track them down.”

“Okay then.” Dean commented.

“But if you’re smart you’ll head out. If you do insist on sticking around don’t have a drink with anyone, don’t fool around, and for goodness sake don’t piss anyone off.”

Sam raised another eyebrow at her but just thanked her and took the key.

“That was different.” Dean commented once they got to the room and finished securing it.

“Yeah. What do you think we’ve stumbled into?”

“No idea. But it’s bad if they can’t take care of it. You didn’t get a hint of something being amiss in your researches?”

“Nothing. I’ll take another look though.”

“Okay. While you do that I’ll go see what I can hear.”

“Dean…”

“I’ll be careful. Your Spidey Sense going off?”

Sam shook his head.

“Well then, I’ll be fine.” Dean gave him a confident grin before slipping out of the room.

When he returned an hour later neither of them had turned up much. The newspapers were deathly silent on whatever the situation was aside from the surprisingly unremarked disappearance of a prominent community member. And try as he might Dean hadn’t dug up anything from the community members themselves, the Shaman wasn’t willing to see an outsider and no one else was talking, either to Dean or each other.

Dean’s phone rang as they were trying to figure out what to do next. He glanced at the caller id and sent a surprised look Sam’s direction then answered and switched it to speaker.

“Bobby? Why do I not think this is a coincidence?”

“Because it’s not. What have you two idjits got yourselves into now?”

“That’s what we’re trying to figure out.” Sam stated.

“Well, I got a call from the Shaman of the tribe you’ve washed up at. He told me to tell you to, quote, get your stupid arses out before you end up dead, endquote.”
“Did he happen to tell you what the problem was?” Dean asked.

“Not beyond saying that no one could do anything, not even him.” Bobby returned, “I know better than to think either of you are gonna drop it, and if anyone can pull off a hat trick like this when even the tribe’s shaman has given up it’s you two. You managed to dig up anything yet?”

“Whatever it is they’re not talking about it, and they’re keeping it out of the papers. The only odd thing I’ve found is the disappearance of a prominent community member. It wasn’t even remarked upon just notices talking about upcoming events stopped mentioning them one day and switched to someone else in the role. Across the board.”

“Any chance it’s just backrooms politics?”

“Not when it’s the tribal Chief.”

“Very odd.”

“Yeah, but from what I can’t figure. The list of things that can make someone vanish is very long, but the list of things that can make a Native American community clam up about it and be unable to deal with to boot I would have sworn was empty.” Dean stated.

“Same here.” Bobby agreed, “I’ll do some digging on my end too. You keep in touch. And if I get the call that I have to come collect your bodies to give you a Hunter’s funeral I’ll kill you myself.”

Sam chuckled, “okay, Bobby.”

The older Hunter rang off.

“So where to now?” Dean asked.

“I’m thinking of checking out the library, see if they have anything on local lore that may explain this.”

“Sounds like a plan.” Dean agreed, standing and collecting his gun, slipping it unobtrusively into his belt.

“You’re coming also?” Sam was a little surprised, even given how protective Dean could get his brother disliked research.

“Of course. Whatever this is has even the shaman running scared. I’m gonna watch your back.”

Sam shook his head in amusement but decided not to comment, instead collecting his laptop and own weaponry.

Arriving at the library, the librarian looked down her nose at them and pointedly asked if they needed assistance. Sam politely declined and set them up in a corner out of direct line of sight of the front desk. Unfortunately, there was a dearth of books available of local myths and legends. Almost strangely so. The few books Sam did manage to track down were in sections where they had either been misfiled somehow or not where he would usually have expected them to be. Unfortunately, those books didn’t give any clues as to what might be plaguing this community.

“Was it just me or did it look like you didn’t find anything useful?” Dean asked once they were back in the motel room.

“Wasn’t just you. Almost as if the books were deliberately unavailable.” Sam grumbled before
setting up his laptop again and hacking his way into the records of the local medical facility and morgue. There were no unexplained deaths nor unusual medical admittances, the police didn’t have any record of an ongoing search for missing persons, not even the Chief that had so abruptly vanished from the papers.

Dean nearly chuckled as Sam glared at the computer even though it meant they weren’t getting anywhere with the investigation, “time for bed anyway, maybe we’ll have figured out another approach by the time we wake-up.”

“You’re probably right.” Sam conceded and shut down the laptop.

Chapter End Notes

Comments, constructive criticism, and questions always welcome.

My apologies if I got anything wrong. Being on the other side of the world means the extent of my exposure to what I’m sure is a vibrant culture is limited to what appears in TV and movies. None of my friendship group were familiar enough with the culture for me to pepper with questions. If I’ve got something wrong feel free to correct me and I’ll do my best to fix.
Chapter 52: Dream Combat

Chapter Notes

Story Name: Pivot Point
Pen Name: ElenaRoan
Disclaimer: Don’t own any of them, written purely for enjoyment.
Warnings:
Summary: What if Anna decided to derail the apocalypse by intervening to help rather than trying to make the brothers never having existed.
Timeline: Season 4
Note: I’m Australian and I can’t bring myself to use USA spelling, sorry.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Chapter 52: Dream Combat

The sky was a vibrant purple that multi-coloured stars shone down out of. Rippling iridescent aqua coloured grass-covered rolling hills. Sam almost absently noted that he was dreaming, his own if he had to guess though it didn’t match any other dreams he remembered having.

“You shouldn’t have come here.” The unknown voice sounded from behind him, and Sam turned to regard them. Abruptly everything made sense.

“You would be the reason the community cannot protect themselves.” Sam stated.

The man gave him an evil grin, “they cannot stop me. They cannot find me. They cannot outrun me. And now, neither can you. Nor your brother.”

“Get out of my mind.” Sam told him calmly, refusing to rise to the bait, “leave my brother alone and let your victims go.”

“You can’t stop me.” He grinned at him then summoned a vicious looking axe into existence and lunged at him.

Sam reacted almost without thought, using his telekinesis to shove the other dreamwalker out of his mind. Immediately the fantastical scenery around him disappeared, and he was lying awake in his bed.

Shakily he pushed himself up into sitting position. A rogue dreamwalker indeed explained a lot of things. And if this was the tribe they had been searching for it clarified why they hadn’t attempted to contact outside help, they didn’t think there was outside help to reach. A glance showed that Dean was still sleeping peacefully, something he was rather relieved about since he really didn’t want to talk to his brother about what had just happened just yet. He knew what kicking someone out of his mind did, and even though he’d given them a chance to desist, warned them, it still bothered him that he’d killed someone.

Slipping silently out of bed he retreated to the bathroom, closing the door he didn’t bother switching on the light. Sitting on the closed toilet, he stared into the darkness and tried to come to terms with being forced to take another sentient life.
It might have been only a couple of minutes, it might have been half an hour, it might even have been a couple of hours later for all Sam was aware of it, when a soft knock at the door came.

“Sammy?” Dean’s voice was barely audible, migraine protocol.

“Not a migraine.” Sam replied softly, and Dean stepped through the door and flipped the light on.

“If it’s not a migraine why are you hiding in the bathroom with the light off…and looking like someone just shot the dog that we don’t have?”

“I know what it is that has been holding this community hostage.” Sam told him almost inaudibly.

“You turned up some information after I went to sleep?”

“No…they decided to show up in my dream and try to kill me.”

It only took Dean a few moments to put the pieces together, “a dreamwalker. A rogue dreamwalker. And you had to boot him out of your mind.”

Sam merely nodded in answer.

Dean sighed quietly, it didn’t take a genius to place what was bothering his brother, “it was self-defence, Sammy, you warned him, and he attacked anyway.”

“How do you know that?”

“Because I know you. There’s no way you’d have just booted him out as soon as you placed what he was without giving him a chance to stop and release his victims. He attacked, and you had to respond. He made that choice, not you. You just have the strength to retaliate.”

“Doesn’t make me feel any better about knowing there’s a body waiting to be discovered somewhere out there.”

“Of course it doesn’t, you wouldn’t be you if it did. Come on, stop staring into the dark thinking over it and come have a coffee.”

“I’m fine…”

“So you’ll be even better once you have something warm, sweet, and caffeine-y in you.” Dean wasn’t taking no for an answer, pulling his little brother up off the toilet and ushering him out to the kitchenette where he promptly made them both a coffee.

The coffee did help and by the time he was halfway through Sam was feeling on much more of an even keel. That still didn’t mean he was okay with having to take a life, yet again, but he was much more able to look at it the same way he looked at the various creatures they took out routinely. Regular law enforcement couldn’t deal with them, so it fell to Hunters. And as they’d found out several times sometimes, humans were the worst monsters.

“Feel like grabbing some breakfast then tracking down someone to talk to?” Dean asked once he finished.

Sam nodded, “the shaman would be the best bet if we can convince him to talk to us.”

“That’s my thought too. Want to check out the local eatery? Seems that many locals like it.”

“As good a place as any to start. It should attract the attention of the rogue dreamwalker’s allies at the
“You think they have allies?”

“Do you have another explanation for him getting some of our hair or whatever it was he used? Whether they’re willing or unwilling is another thing though.”

“Hang on, he had something from me too?”

Sam nodded, “specifically stated that neither you nor I could stop him or escape him. He was wrong, but he couldn’t know that.”

“Huh…not sure if I should be relieved or not that he went after you first.”

“Be relieved, since I couldn’t be sure I’d be able to reverse it if he’d trapped you in a dream. I don’t understand very much of this talent yet.”

“Ah…well first step is breakfast, we’ll figure out where to go from there once you’ve eaten.”

“Aren’t you leaving someone out there?”

“Since when do I forget a meal? Come on, Professor X, time to eat.”

Sam chuckled as he collected his phone and weapons, “Professor X is a telepath, I’m not a telepath or an empath.”

“Maybe I should call you Phoenix then, would go with your hair anyway.” Dean retorted as he stowed his own weapons.

“Also a telepath.”

“Whatever.” Dean shooed him out the door with a chuckle.

They weren’t even halfway to the small eatery that served the community when Sam sensed someone approach them from behind, they were human but shrouded in a lot of power as well. His steps slowed, and he turned to regard the man, Dean also turned a moment later as he registered that his brother wasn’t beside him any longer.

“You’re the shaman I take it.” Sam stated calmly.

“Yes. I’d hoped you’d have left already, but I now see that nothing less than speaking directly to me has a hope of convincing you to do so.”

“Because of your rogue dreamwalker problem?” Sam asked, and Dean decided to stay quiet, his brother was the one the shaman was most likely to treat as an equal.

“How did you find that out? I thought I’d made sure any information that Hunters might latch onto to keep them here was unavailable.”

“Because I had to kick him out of my mind last night.”

The shaman sighed, “then it is too late. Might I invite you for some tea?”

“That would be appreciated.” Sam told him, and the brothers followed him to his home.

“What do you mean by it’s too late?” Dean asked once there were teas all ‘round.
“Because it means he at least has your brother’s key. He has made sure that we can’t find him physically in order to remove the threat.” The shaman explained, then looked at Sam, “you must be a dreamwalker of some power yourself to be able to evict him from your dream like that. I was not aware there were any outside the tribes, who taught you? And how long have you trained?”

“Uh…” Sam shared an uncomfortable look with Dean, “I wasn’t…a little over a year ago we got a call where another Hunter had lapsed into a coma. Turned out a doctor at the local university had been doing research into dreams using dreamroot, one of his subjects had been unable to dream naturally until he started taking the tea and when the doctor had moved to cut off his supply had killed the doctor by making him not wake up. We took some of the tea to get into the dream and wake Bobby up.”

“Bobby? As in Bobby Singer?”

Sam nodded.

“I take it you managed to take care of the rogue dreamwalker back then.”

Sam looked down at his hands nervously, “in a way. He…attacked me while we were in Bobby’s dream and I…evicted him.”

“You managed to evict an experienced dreamwalker on your first dreamwalk?” The shaman asked in surprise, “how…? Wait…when you found him…was he dead?”

Sam nodded silently with shame colouring his cheeks, and Dean squeezed his shoulder reassuringly.

“He had no way of knowing that would happen.” Dean told the shaman almost defensively.

“Of course not, it was his first dreamwalk, and aside from that, only a natural dreamwalker has the level of power that causes that. And the fact that it obviously upsets him tells me he wouldn’t go rogue himself. Is that why you came here? Looking for help dealing with it?”

“A few months back I was…sick…and experiencing fever dreams…” Dean started to explain a little hesitantly.

“I went to wake him when he became distressed…” Sam continued, “and I somehow ended up in the dream also…I calmed everything down and somehow managed to get back out. Since I hadn’t taken any of the tea, I knew there was something odd going on, so I started researching. When I came across some information that indicated that a tribe somewhere in this area had a strong dreamwalking tradition we decided to come see what we could learn.”

“That’s all?” The shaman asked with shocked surprise.

“Yeah…why?” Dean asked slowly.

“Because naturals have a hard time controlling the ability if they’re able to control it at all. I have never heard of one who is able to control it with no effort. It’s part of why they’re rare, there are even stories of them getting lost on walks and being unable to return to their bodies.”

The brothers shared another uncomfortable look before Sam spoke up again, “um…if you don’t mind I need to call someone…”

“Of course.”

Sam rose and slipped out of hearing range, leaving Dean to watch the shaman. His call was picked
up after only a couple of rings.

“Sam? Everything okay?” Bobby asked.

“Yeah…settling down anyway. Turned out to be a rogue dreamwalker, I booted him out of my head last night.”

“Ah, good. One problem sorted, and it’s all on him. Don’t blame yourself, you got a right to defend yourself and others after all.”

Sam gave a half chuckle, “you and Dean reading off the same script or something?”

“Knew there was something I liked about him. Now…I’m sure you didn’t call just to update me on that.”

“I need to ask you about the shaman.”

“Good guy. Not really one for giving up easily, so I knew it was bad when he called. He’s one of the people I called for advice when your abilities manifested, so he knows about you just not that it’s you. He okay?”

“Yeah…we got talking about dreamwalking, and he placed me as a natural dreamwalker…said he’d never heard of one who didn’t have difficulty with it…”

“Ah…so you wanted to find out whether you could trust him with the full story.”

“Yeah.” Sam answered even though it was a statement rather than a question.

“You can. He might even have some tricks he can teach you that Pam doesn’t know about.”

“Thanks, Bobby.”

“No problem, kid. And tell him to not be an idjit next time and actually TELL me what the issue is, funnily enough, I might actually know something he doesn’t.”

Sam chuckled, “like a dreamwalker strong enough to take on the rogue terrorising his community.”

“Exactly. You relax now, he’s one of the good guys.” Bobby hung up then, and Sam headed back into the dwelling.

“So did Bobby vouch for me?” The shaman asked when he returned.

“Yeah…said you were one of the people he contacted a couple of years back about…a situation…”

“The psychic who’d just come online?”

“Yeah. He also said to tell you not to be an ‘idjit’ next time and actually tell him what the issue is…he might actually know something you don’t.”

“Like a dreamwalker that can take out a rogue without having to find them physically, point taken.” The shaman replied with a chuckle, “he obviously trusts you if he told you about the psychic.”

“Bit hard for me not to know about it when it’s me.”

“Ah…I see. Pam was able to help you?”
“She was able to give me some guidelines, and has helped me get back on my feet after some of the more…spectacular missteps.”

“She didn’t teach you any techniques?”

“Sam eclipsed her, power wise, within a couple of weeks.” Dean interjected, “the rule book kinda doesn’t exist for him.”

“She taught me how to sense whether something was dangerous or a bad move.” Sam added, “she taught me how to meditate. Everything else…is kinda trial and error.”

“I see. You mentioned missteps, feel comfortable with telling me about those?”

“Well…I guess the first one, though I’m not sure ‘misstep’ is really the correct word for it or the others, was when we were dealing with a ghost. It had managed to separate us, and I’d ended up tied up along with a member of an idiot group who’d decided the house was a great place to film an episode or something. We hadn’t been able to convince them to leave before the ghost locked down the house. The ghost went to kill the guy, and I could sense it’s tether…so I snapped it.”

“What Sam isn’t mentioning is that it knocked him out.” Dean put in when it became apparent his brother wasn’t going to detail that bit, “scared the hell out of me when I found him and he was out cold, he didn’t wake up for hours.”

“As consequences go that seems fairly mild. I’m sure you realise that there’s no other psychic I’ve ever heard about who could even contemplate pulling something like that off.”

“It is. Even peeling demonic influence off people has worse, if briefer, side effects.” Sam stated.

“Which are?”

“Headache, nausea, spikes a temperature, occasionally pukes.” Dean listed before Sam could even think of downplaying the severity.

“I see. Have you tried either more than once?”

“The ghost tether thing a second time a few weeks back, the peeling off influence was done multiple times. I’m not sure the exact count.” Dean told him.

“Did either get easier?”

Sam shook his head, “not that I’m aware of. There were other factors in play also though for the influence peeling.”

“Like?”

“Exhaustion made it more difficult, peeling it off others was a lot more difficult, Dean developing defences of his own made it easier with him. The amount of influence also affected it.”

“Found putting a cool cloth on his head before he starts at least helps with the temperature anyway.” Dean added, “not sure if it helps with the rest of the symptoms since we’ve only used that once.”

“I see. I take it there’s been more episodes of unfortunate consequences?”

“Yeah…next thing was we had to deal with a…ghost sickness infection.” Dean told him, “I’d got infected…apparently, it decided I was a dick…”
“You’re not a dick.” Sam interrupted, “it focused on fear used as a weapon and missed the reason behind it. Sure bullies use fear to intimidate, but that’s not the only use, you, and police if you recall, use it to protect. I thought I’d pointed that out at the time…”

“Yeah, you did…just kinda hard to forget being lumped with bullies and the like…” Dean shook his head to get himself back on track, “anyway…there was only…what…four hours left before my heart would explode…Bobby was on his way to help figure out how to take out a ghost who’s remains were spread to kingdom come, but he was still 2 hours away. That was probably the all the sheriff who was infected had left too…and Sam decided to try snapping the ghost’s tether.”

“Even Bobby agreed it was probably the right call; figuring out how to scare a ghost to death on such a tight deadline could have gone really wrong.” Sam argued.

“What happened? I’m guessing it wasn’t the simple passing out that occurred when Sam previously snapped a tether.”

“Not even close.” Dean replied, “he had a full-blown seizure. Took ages for him to wake up afterwards, we weren’t sure whether to risk taking him to a hospital or not…who knows what that sort of medication would do when interacting with his gifts…”

“Hey…it worked.” Sam refuted, “and Pam said the seizure was caused by the sickness impacting on my shields when it exploded because it didn’t have an anchor anymore. Not sure if that happens when you take out the ghost normally…maybe it just burns up along with it.”

“Wouldn’t be able to tell you that, until you mentioned it I’d never even heard of ghost sickness.”

Dean shrugged, “we always seem to get the weird crap.”

“I take it that’s the only time you’ve taken on ghost sickness?”

Dean nodded, “hopefully if we ever encounter it again the ghost will be able to be taken out in a more normal manner. I sure as anything don’t want Sam to ever have to deal with it that way again.”

“I was fine.”

“And next time you mightn’t be.”

“Anything else?” The shaman interrupted before they could start arguing about it.

“The time he took out Alastair.” Dean replied promptly.

“What was Alastair?”

“A white-eyed demon. Not like he had much choice though…the bastard was about to kill him and had thrown me through a window, so I wasn’t anywhere near either.”

“He killed a powerful demon with his mind?” The shaman sounded even more surprised than with anything that had been previously said.

“Wasn’t exactly easy…and I was just trying to get it to let go of me…didn’t think it was even possible to actually kill demons with my mind…” Sam said, somewhat embarrassed.

“I’m guessing it wasn’t without consequences.”

“Not even close. By the time I got back in the room he was on his knees clutching his head.” Dean replied, “then he puked everywhere, was barely able to communicate with me, and passed out. It was
two days before he actually woke up, though he’d kinda roused several times to puke. We got lucky in that the guy Alastair had been wearing was a doctor, he was able to suggest some over the counter medications that might help. Once Sam woke up enough for us to get them down him anyway. He even gave us a prescription for injectable antiemetics and painkillers once we got him back to his life and things had quietened down. Sam started getting migraines afterwards, still does occasionally.”

“It’s been months.” Sam interjected.

“I can understand why he is still distressed by it.” The shaman stated.

“I know.” Sam replied with a sigh, “I can too…I was kinda wonky on my mental feet for a little bit afterwards…but I can’t say I wouldn’t do so again if I had it over…because the alternative was death…”

“True…I much prefer sick little brothers to dead little brothers.” Dean agreed.

“Little?” The shaman asked with a smile, and Dean grinned.

“Hey…I pretty much raised him…and I think I did a good job even if I do say so myself.”

The shaman chuckled as Sam nodded in agreement.

“Any other incidents?”

“Not unless you count using up so much energy he fainted a week or so ago.”

“What did he do? Contain a nuclear blast or something?”

Dean laughed, “no…nothing quite so dramatic…and don’t get any ideas, Sammy…”

“I doubt that telekinesis is capable of neutralising radiation anyway.” Sam replied.

“A siren had managed to get a dose of its venom into both of us, Sam immobilised both of us and the siren and managed to keep the venom’s influence out of his mind while Bobby took out the siren.”

Dean elaborated.

“A siren?”

Dean nodded, “from the Greek Myths, no idea how it got here, and hopefully, it was the only one.”

“You weren’t kidding when you said you always got weird cases.”

“The Winchester luck.” Dean told him resignedly, “if we didn’t have bad luck we wouldn’t have any at all. At least we can generally deal with the crap that comes our way.”

Ths shaman shook his head in amusement, “well…Sam, since you aren’t having difficulty with the ability, I’m going to suggest we try something different than how I’d usually approach teaching a natural dreamwalker.”

“I don’t understand very much about it at all, the things I’ve done I suspect are more flukes than anything else.” Sam replied.

“That you aren’t going on involuntary dreamwalks is a big indication that you have far more control than you think you do. Undoubtedly the meditation you do with your other abilities is a large factor in that.”
“Involuntary dreamwalks does not sound good.” Dean noted.

“It isn’t. Dreamwalkers don’t just have the ability to enter other people’s dreams they are also able to slip between worlds. And, especially for natural dreamwalkers walking involuntarily, it is possible for injuries sustained to the dream self to manifest physically.”

“Crap…what do I do if that does happen?”

“Try and wake him is about all you can do, and come get me if that doesn’t work. With the demise of the rogue, I am the strongest dreamwalker here. Though I have a feeling that if Sam can’t deal with something I have no chance of doing so.”

Dean did not look happy, and Sam spoke up before his brother could say anything else, “since that hasn’t been happening it isn’t likely to start, is it?”

“It shouldn’t from what I understand, but this is uncharted territory.”

“Sometimes I think that’s your middle name…Sam ‘uncharted territory’ Winchester.” Dean grumbled.

Sam rolled his eyes at his brother, “so you were going to suggest we do something?”

The shaman nodded, “there are currently seven trapped in dreams thanks to the rogue, and it’s been too dangerous to try going in to try to wake them since if he caught the one trying they’d be the next victim. Plus because he was the most powerful dreamwalker they’re in deep enough it’s difficult to get to them. Three of them are there because he did catch them.”

“And you’d like me to try? You do know I don’t know what I’m doing?”

“I’ll be right there with you.”

“Okay, let’s try.”

“Sam…” Dean said worriedly.

“I’ll be okay, he’ll be there to make sure I don’t mess something up. And if I can help I gotta.”

Dean sighed, “doesn’t mean I like not being able to protect you…”

“You can watch our bodies while we walk.” The shaman told him with a smile.

Dean somewhat grumpily agreed and they followed the shaman to another building. A young woman who was inside tending to the rows of unconscious people did a double take at them as they followed the shaman through the door.

“Shaman?” She queried hesitantly.

“Sam and Dean Winchester, turns out Sam’s a natural dreamwalker. He booted our rogue out of his mind last night.” The shaman explained to her before looking at the brothers, “this is my apprentice.”

It took the information a few moments to sink into the young woman’s mind, but when it did they could see her posture relax, “it’s over?”

The shaman nodded, “we’re going to see if between Sam and I we can wake those trapped.”

“But…if he’s a natural…?”
“He has a surprising amount of control, and I’ll be there with him.”

She threw a surprised look at Sam before moving off, “I’ll get the tea ready.”

The shaman led Sam over to an older gentleman with Dean following a bit behind, “this was the first victim, he’s the one most at risk of becoming disconnected from himself and passing on.”

“So he’s the one it’s most urgent be woken.”

“Yes. Go in then wait for me, I’ll join you as soon as I’ve had the tea.”

“How do I do that?”

“Touch him and will yourself into his dream. It is probably what you did inadvertently that time with your brother, you wanted to sooth his sleep and waking him wouldn’t actually achieve that. Given he was ill, he needed the rest.”

“That makes sense. Okay, I’ll try.”

Sam put his hand on the man’s forehead and focused on going into his dream, abruptly he felt like he was hanging over a yawning chasm. He flinched back and felt like the world was spinning around him for a moment before he managed to clear his senses.

“Sam!?”

Almost embarrassedly he realised that Dean’s hands were steadying him and the shaman was in front of him.

“I’m okay, sorry.” Sam managed, taking his own weight again.

“What happened?” The shaman asked.

“Felt like I was hanging over a…chasm or something. Sorry…I’ll try again.”

Dread flickered across the shaman’s face, “wait, let me check something.”

“Damn, Sam.” Dean growled at him quietly as the shaman went over to the man on the bed and put his hands on either side of his face.

“I’m okay, Dean, it just disorientated me a little.” Sam reassured his big brother, he could sense the spiritual power that was the shaman’s wreathing around the man. The shaman’s shoulders slumped as he withdrew the power back to himself.

“He’s gone.” He stated, turning to look at the brothers, “I’m sorry…I’d realised I wouldn’t have had you attempt it with him, he’s not there to slip into a dream with anymore.”

“That explains the feeling of a chasm then.” Sam commented.

“Yes, I’m sorry…I thought we still had a little time before he would slip away.”

Sam shook his head, “don’t worry. I thought the reason I wasn’t sensing a signature from him was that he was trapped too far in the dream, I know better now. Who next?”

“Sam…” Dean growled.

“I’m fine, Dean, but the rest of these people mightn’t be if I don’t try. And also how am I supposed
to learn if I hesitate to actually do anything?”

Dean huffed out a frustrated breath even as the shaman indicated another bed, taking the precaution of checking that the body was still occupied before letting Sam close. The young lady returned with a pot and a small cup right then.

“He’s gone.” The shaman told her softly, gesturing at the first patient, and she gasped, “could you also get a sweet drink ready for Sam?”

“What about…?”

“Dean will protect our physical forms while we walk.”

She nodded and left.

“Ready?” The shaman asked as he poured the pungent tea into the small cup and plucked a hair from the young man’s head to add to it.

“As I’ll ever be.” Sam replied and put his hand on their forehead after taking a steadying breath. This time it felt like he was falling forward briefly then he was standing in a different landscape.

The shaman swallowed the tea in one gulp once he saw that Sam had successfully entered the dream, and assumed a meditation position. Leaving Dean abruptly to watch over two forms where their beings had gone elsewhere. He shivered slightly, part creeped out, partly worried for his brother. All he could do now was wait, and make sure nothing happened to their bodies.

Chapter End Notes

Comments, constructive criticism, and questions always welcome.

This chapter, and the shaman, surprised me *chuckle* I have a feeling the shaman is going to insist on sticking around...and I don't even know his name yet *lol* can anyone help me out there?
Chapter 53: Retrievals

Chapter Notes

Story Name: Pivot Point
Pen Name: ElenaRoan
Disclaimer: Don’t own any of them, written purely for enjoyment.
Warnings:
Summary: What if Anna decided to derail the apocalypse by intervening to help rather than trying to make the brothers never having existed.
Timeline: Season 4
Note: I’m Australian and I can’t bring myself to use USA spelling, sorry.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Chapter 53: Retrievals

Even the resolution of the first dreamwalk was rather uneventful from Dean’s perspective, the young man abruptly sat up, and both dreamwalkers slumped a little as they emerged. The shaman put a steadying hand on Sam’s shoulder as he moved to the side of the young man.

“Are you okay?” He asked and the man, a boy really, nodded shakily.

He glanced across at the older man they’d attempted to retrieve first and stiffened, “father!”

He scrambled off the bed and over to his side before looking accusingly at the shaman, “why didn’t you retrieve him first?”

“I’m sorry…”

“Give me a cup…I’ll retrieve him myself…”

“Awan.” The shaman’s serious tone stopped him in his tracks, “he’s gone. I’m sorry.”

Awan looked at him in anguish, tears beginning to brim in his eyes, “no…”

Dean moved over to Sam while the shaman comforted the bereaved young man, “you okay?”

Sam nodded, “kinda tiring, but I’m good.”

“We tried to retrieve him as soon as we knew that Sam had taken out the rogue.” The shaman explained, Awan’s eyes flicked over to the two strangers in the room and hardened.

“Why did you bring outsiders in?”

“Awan.” The shaman scolded, “Sam is a natural who actually has control, without him I wouldn’t have been able to retrieve you. You were down far deeper than I would have been able to make it on my own.”

“Why couldn’t he have done something sooner then?”
Dean squeezed Sam’s shoulder reassuringly as his brother flinched.

“If you’re going to blame anyone blame me.” The shaman stated, “if I’d taken them into my confidence three days ago when they arrived we’d have had several more days to work with, and that may have saved your father. Or if I hadn’t been so sure that I knew every dreamwalker available and let my Hunter friend know when it started they’d have been sent my direction even earlier.”

“Hindsight is 20 20.” Dean stated reassuringly, almost bemused that he was reassuring a shaman of all things, “you couldn’t have known.”

The apprentice handed Sam a glass of juice.

“Thank you…” he replied, “I’m sorry…I don’t know your name.”

“Enola.” She replied.

“Thank you, Enola.” Sam repeated before drinking the juice, he was going to need it he knew. The retrieval had taken a decent chunk of energy, not enough that he felt like sleeping or anything, but large enough for him to be able to anticipate it was going to be a strenuous exercise.

“Which one next?” Sam asked before the young man could start up his recriminations again.

The shaman frowned, “you sure you don’t want to take a few minutes to rest? I know you’re strong, but that had to have taken a decent chunk…”

Sam shook his head, “we don’t know how much time we have to work with, best to get it done as quick as we can.”

“Well, if you’re sure…” the shaman gestured at another bed, this one occupied by a young woman, then poured another cup of the tea.

“I could help…” Awan interjected as Sam walked over to the bed indicated.

“No.” The shaman replied, “for one we only just got you back, and two Sam’s the one doing everything, I’m just along to advise.”

He saw Sam put his hand on her forehead and enter, he quickly downed the cup of tea and joined him.

Dean sighed and settled down to wait for them to return.

“This…Sam…he’s a good man?” Awan asked after the silence had stretched for a while.

Dean looked at him, “Awan, right?”

“Yeah.”

“Sam’s my brother. And I’d say he’s a better man than any of us, and with less reason.”

“It’s just…he’s probably going into my sister’s worst nightmare right now…”

“Sam will get her out if it’s even remotely possible.”

“When I went in to get my father he was the only victim…I foolishly refused to wait for the shaman. He came after me inside my father’s mind. My guess is I’ve been trapped since then, I do not recall waking until your brother pulled me out.”
“The shaman did say that three of the victims were targeted because they tried to pull other victims out.” Dean returned, he hesitated for a moment before continuing, “level with me, how hard is this going to be on him?”

“If I was as far down as Shaman indicated…I’m surprised he’s still on his feet let alone able to think of going again. If Shaman wouldn’t have made it to me on his own, I can’t even guess at how hard it would have been…my guess is he’ll have to take a break after this one, or the next at most.”

Dean gave a frustrated sigh, “you don’t know my brother, he’s as stubborn as they come. Unless I miss my guess…he’s not going to stop until they’re all back unless he physically can’t continue.”

Awan blinked at him for a moment like he couldn’t comprehend what the older brother had said, “you serious?”

“Unfortunately.”

Enola returned with another glass of juice ready for Sam when he returned then fusses about readying and then moving the bed of the first victim out of the room. Undoubtedly she’d learnt the lesson of Awan’s waking to see him and wasn’t going to subject more of the family to it.

Sam was noticeably weary when he returned this time, Dean pushing the glass of juice into his hand before his brother could even think of doing anything else. While he did that Awan went to his sister’s side to soothe her and break the news of their father’s death to her as gently as possible.

The shaman left her in the hands of her brother and came over to Sam, “how are you doing?”

“I’ve been worse.” Sam managed in reply once he’d downed the juice, “give me a minute or two to be ready for the next one though…”

The shaman frowned, “that mightn’t be a good idea…you should probably grab some sleep before we go again.”

Sam shook his head decisively, “we mightn’t have the time for me to sleep. Just give me a few minutes, and I’ll be ready to go.”

“But…”

Sam just looked at him and the shaman apparently tabled what he was about to say, instead he met Dean’s eyes and the older brother gave him a resigned look in return.

True to his word the younger brother was back on his feet and asking which victim they were retrieving next just a couple of minutes later.

“You sure you don’t want to at least take a few more minutes?” Dean pressed as the shaman poured another small cup of the tea.

“I’ll be fine.” Sam told him stubbornly.

All Dean could do then was watch almost helplessly as his brother slipped into the dream of the next victim, this one a young girl. The shaman joined him a moment later.

“That’s her mother just over there.” The young woman they had just pulled out commented.

“Undoubtedly she did what I did and tried to retrieve her, only to get caught.” Awan added.

They waited in silence for the walkers to return after that.
The first indication that Dean got as to their return was Sam’s knees buckled, and he barely managed to catch his brother before sitting him securely on the floor. The girl woke with a cry for her mother and the brother and sister hastened to soothe her.

“Sammy?” Dean asked worriedly, tapping his cheek gently.

Sam looked at him groggily, and Dean snagged the latest glass of juice, helping his brother drink it. It didn’t seem to help anywhere near as much as it needed to.

“Sorry…” Sam mumbled, sitting forward and putting his head in his hands, “give me a bit…”

The shaman crouched in front of them, “okay, definitely time for you to get some sleep.”

“No…the other’s mightn’t have the time…”

“Sam…you can’t even stand on your own. It won’t help them if you make yourself sick, or worse.”

A stubborn look appeared on Sam’s face, and he went to push himself to his feet. Dean managed to stop him from actually rising, just.

“Oh for the love of…” Dean grumbled, he glanced around and spotted the shaman’s apprentice, “Enola, right? Could you grab us a cup of tea? Not that stuff…normal tea…and put as much sugar as you can get to dissolve in it?”

“Of course.” She replied, with a hasty nod, and disappeared out the door.

Dean turned his attention back to his brother, “you. Are going to just sit there until she gets back with that tea. Then you are going to drink it. And you are not going to even think of getting up until you’re not shaking anymore. Then, and only then, are we going to even contemplate letting you continue today.”

“No arguments.” Dean continued, cutting Sam off as his brother opened his mouth to protest, “I get that you feel the need to rescue them all, but you won’t get to if you push yourself into fainting. This is the only way I’m going to let you continue without getting some shut-eye, and a decent meal. So let us take care of you, or I’m going to find a bed to stuff you in and sit on you until you fall asleep.”

“Yes, mum.” Sam returned with a half grin, and Dean rolled his eyes at him.

The shaman watched the entire conversation with a perplexed expression, he evidently wasn’t sure why Dean was even contemplating letting Sam continue.

Awan regarded them thoughtfully for a moment before slipping out of the room, he returned a moment later with a chair, one of the office type chairs with wheels. Dean gave him a grateful nod.

Enola returned a little while later with the requested tea.

“I’m not sure you’ll be able to taste the tea…” she said hesitantly.

“Taste isn’t the goal, readily available energy is the goal.” Dean replied, taking the cup and handing it to Sam. Fortunately, for his little brother’s dignity, he didn’t need to steady it for him, even though Sam required both hands to do so.

His hand was steady when he handed the cup back, “okay…let’s do this.”

“Sam…” the shaman started with a frown, only to stop when Dean waved him off.

“First things first.” Dean stated, his tone clearly indicating he would brook no arguments, “Awan
very kindly got you a chair, so you are going to use it. If you pass out I’m calling it off for the day, don’t even think about arguing that they mightn’t have the time. These are the ones who haven’t been trapped as long; if they can’t make it another day, it won’t be your fault. And you better damn well come back to me.”

Any rebellion in Sam’s eyes died at the last sentence as he looked at his big brother, “always, Dean.”

Dean nodded, “okay. Awan, could you help me get him on his feet and to the chair?”

“I’m not that unsteady.” Sam protested.

“Humour me, Sammy. Let’s conserve as much of your energy as possible.” Dean told him even as Awan came to give him a hand getting his giant of a brother on his feet. It didn’t take much to get him into the chair and positioned beside the next victim.

“Are you sure this is wise?” The shaman asked.

“No. I’m pretty sure it’s not wise.” Dean replied with resignation, “however I’m sure you’ve noticed one thing about my brother by this stage, he’s as stubborn as they come and probably too selfless for his own good.”

The shaman gave a resigned sigh, nodded, and went to fill up the tiny cup with the tea again. Sam waited until he was ready then reached out and slipped into the woman’s dream, the shaman downed the tea and joined him.

“Should I get some juice? Or more of the ultra sweetened tea?” Enola asked.

“The tea.” Dean replied.

“Okay.” Enola slipped out of the room to see to it.

“Might it be a good idea to get something like…I don’t know…muesli bars or something for him to eat. Not a full meal but it is a concentrated lump of food…” Awan suggested.

“Yeah, good idea.” Dean agreed.

“I’ll go get some.”

“Wait, send Enola when she comes back. You get seen, and they’ll flood here before we’re done.”

“Oh…yeah…you got a point there.” Awan conceded, when Enola returned with the tea he collected it and spoke to her quietly. She nodded in agreement and headed out again.

She returned a few moments before the end of the dreamwalk.

Sam didn’t faint when he came out, but only just. Dean grabbed the cup of tea and helped him, as subtly as possible, to drink it.

“How’s he doing?” The shaman asked, coming over to crouch in front of them.

“Well he didn’t faint, so I’m counting that as a positive.” Dean replied.

“I’m fine.” Sam interjected.

“Yeah…I’ll believe that when I can’t keep you in your seat with one hand anymore.” Dean told him, taking the now empty cup and handing him a muesli bar from the pile that Enola had brought back,
“here, get this into you.”

“That’s a good idea.” The shaman noted as Sam resignedly started munching on it.

“Awan suggested it.”

“He’s got a good head on his shoulders.” The shaman stated with a nod, “he’ll make a decent replacement for his father, much as I know he hates the idea.”

“Damn.” Dean sighed as the penny dropped, “the one we couldn’t save…that was the chief wasn’t it?”

The shaman nodded in confirmation and Sam swore tiredly.

“Not your fault.” The shaman told him bluntly.

“He’s right.” Dean added, before turning to the shaman, “how come it’s not draining you like this?”

“Because Sam’s the one doing the heavy lifting. I wouldn’t have made it to Awan, but if I had, I wouldn’t have even been able to think about even going after his sister, if I’d even still been conscious, without a full 8-hour rest.”

“I see.” Dean turned back to his brother as Sam finished the bar, “how are you doing?”

“I’m…”

“Don’t even think of saying you’re fine. I want the unadorned truth, Sammy.”

“A little shaky, but I’m okay. Ready for the next one.”

“Maybe you should take a few more minutes.”

“I’m good. Only a couple left, and they’re getting easier.”

They certainly didn’t appear to be getting easier to Dean, Sam barely kept from fainting at the end of the next two walks also. The shaman offered to put them up for the night but settled for helping Dean get his brother back to the motel room once he’d been told of the fortifications the brothers put up routinely. Once they’d put Sam into the bed, he left them there with a promise he’d come see them the next day.

Chapter End Notes

As always comments, constructive criticism, and questions always welcome.

Looking into Native American names I came across an article saying that ‘shaman’ isn’t an appropriate title for a Native American in that sort of position, though they didn't say what the correct term actually was. Until, and if, I manage to find it and edit the chapters using it please take it as I intend it, a title of respect and wisdom.
Chapter 54: Consequences

Sam stumbling into the bed woke Dean somewhere in the very early hours of the morning.

“Sammy?” He asked worriedly after grabbing the weapon under his pillow and scanning for dangers.

“Aura…” Sam barely breathed in reply, and Dean swore silently. Though he couldn’t say he hadn’t been anticipating the potential with the amount of stress Sam had put on himself the previous day.

“Okay.” Dean stated quietly, stowing the weapon quickly and getting out of bed and over to his brother’s side in one quick motion. He steadied him gently, “I gotcha. Let’s go.”

Gently but efficiently he guided him into the bathroom and deposited him in front of the toilet. That he’d even attempted to move during the aura stage said it was bad. Neither of them would have even known the term for it if Dr McGarn hadn’t explained it.

“You going to be okay on your own for a sec while I go grab the meds?” Dean asked quietly.

“Yeah…” Sam replied even more quietly.

“Okay.” Dean replied then slipped quietly back into the main room and hurriedly located the first aid kit. He didn’t bother finding the medications right then, instead picking the entire thing up and returning to his brother. He saw Sam’s shoulders jerk with a heave as he came through the door, that there was no accompanying splash told him it was dry and he winced in sympathy. He wasted no time setting the kit down next to his brother and sorting through it quickly to find the antiemetic injections. Avery had kindly arranged for his practice nurse to give them instruction on how to administer the injections correctly, not that Sam had needed to so far.

“Okay, here we go.” Dean stated soothingly as he smoothly injected the medication. He rubbed Sam’s shoulder as he slowly relaxed, “now for the pain, scale it for me 1 to 10…how bad?”

“12…”

Dean nearly swore aloud, for it to be off the scale for his brother he didn’t even want to imagine how painful it was. Quickly he found the injectable painkillers and repeated his actions.
Sam finally sat back after the painkiller started working a few seconds later.

“How are you doing?” Dean asked quietly.

“I’ve been better.” Sam replied, “sorry.”

“You apologising because you got a migraine or apologising because you set off the trigger?”

Sam just looked embarrassed, and Dean chuckled softly.

“Yeah…I thought so. No need to apologise for getting a migraine if you weren’t going to try to avoid the trigger.”

“Dean…”

“I know…I know. You wouldn’t be you if you had actually been able to allow yourself to take a break. Hell…if you had been willing to take a break I’d have been checking to see if you were possessed or something.”

Sam chuckled quietly, and Dean counted that as a win.

“Okay…let’s get you back to bed. Want a drink first? Enola brought over some of the juice along with the muesli bars.”

“I just want to sleep…but I’ll have a drink if you insist…”

“Probably a good idea.” Dean told him even as he helped him to his feet, leaving the first aid kit where it was to be dealt with later. Depositing Sam back on his bed he quickly grabbed a small glass of the juice and gave it to him. Sam gave him a grateful look that he could drink it relatively quickly, downed it, handed the empty glass back, and curled up under the covers again. He was out again before Dean returned from the kitchen. The older brother shook his head in amusement, though he did grab the room’s bin and put it next to Sam just in case, before returning to his own bed and slumber.

Sam was still sleeping when Dean woke up next to the rays of the sun, after the previous day and interrupted night he declined to wake his little brother, instead making himself a coffee quietly and digging out a newspaper to go through.

A knock at the door made him swear silently, though it didn’t look like it had disturbed Sam at all. Quickly he made his way to the door prepared to send whoever it was away. He motioned for quiet as soon as he saw it was the shaman, all thoughts of preemptively dismissing the person knocking vanishing immediately, and stepped outside to talk softly with him, leaving the door cracked so he would hear if his brother needed him.

“What’s wrong?” The shaman asked in a murmur.

“Migraine.” Dean told him, “can’t say I wasn’t half anticipating it after yesterday since stress is the trigger…but man is it a doozy.”

“Damn…he okay?”

“Sleeping right now. Had to give him both injections, the pain was off the scale.”

“You…try to avoid giving them? Are they hard to replace?”

“Not hard to replace, though we do try to avoid using the painkiller injection unless it’s actually
needed…it can be addictive, so Sam prefers using over the counter stuff unless it’s necessary.”

“Ah. Smart.”

The first thing he was aware of was that it was too bright, light lancing into his head and magnifying the pain that was already there. Vaguely a remote part of his mind noted clinically that it hadn’t settled down with the sleep, which would have been frustrating if he hadn’t already been near overwhelmed by the pain and nausea. He brought an arm up to cover his eyes, not that it really worked, as he tried to work out what to do about the other unpleasant experiences of being in the middle of a migraine. Even thinking about moving to the bathroom increased his nausea almost unbearably, there was clearly no way he was actually going to be able to do so without making a big mess. He wondered where Dean was; that his brother wasn’t immediately by his side when he stirred said he wasn’t in the immediate vicinity, perhaps he was taking care of the call of nature himself, or busy in the little kitchenette.

“Dean?” His voice sounded painful and barely audible even to him, and he wasn’t sure that it would be possible for Dean to hear more than a meter or two away if that.

The soft call had Dean immediately abandoning the conversation to go to his brother’s side, the look of surprise on the shaman’s face telling him that the other man hadn’t heard the call if he’d bothered to pay attention to it.

“Sammy? I’m right here.” Dean soothed softly, he wanted to swear. The migraine apparently hadn’t gone away with the sleep, and both injections would have worn off a few hours ago, “still hurting?”

“I’m gonna…I’m gonna…” Sam cut himself off with a hard swallow, and Dean wanted to swear again.

If there was one thing he surpassed Sam in it was being able to put signs together in a split second and act on them. If his brother had been able to get up, or even move for that matter, he wouldn’t have called to him.

“Okay, I gotcha.” Dean soothed even as he snagged the bin from beside the bed, “bin’s right here. Just hang tight for a second.”

Sam was pretty much solid muscle, and they’d been teenagers the last time Dean had been able to carry him without resorting to a fireman’s hold. But that didn’t even enter his thoughts as he slipped his arm under his brother and brought him up, so his head was over the bin he was holding. There seemed to be no gap between that and Sam violently throwing up into said bin.

“Can I help?” The shaman asked softly, and Dean looked at him in surprise, he’d actually forgotten the other man was there.

“First aid kit’s in the bathroom.” Dean told him, it was almost a relief that there was someone else there. Soon as his brother stopped vomiting, he could get an injection into him to get him feeling a bit better without having to go get it.

The shaman quickly retrieved the kit then came around to the other side of the bed after depositing it next to Dean.

“May I?” He asked.

Dean wasn’t sure what he was asking permission about, but there was one thing he knew for sure was that if he could help Sam, he was welcome to do whatever strange shamany things he knew even if they utterly baffled Dean himself.
“If you can help him then, by all means, be my guest.” Dean told him, “I’m not going to even think of pretending I know what you can do.”

The shaman nodded then held out a hand to hover over Sam’s shuddering shoulder. Dean couldn’t see anything happen, and he half wondered what Sam would have sensed if he wasn’t so busy trying to turn himself inside out. Slowly he felt the heaves wracking his brother’s frame gradually peter off, and the tenseness bleed out.

Dean was able to gently clean Sam up a bit before he slipped off into sleep again.

“Thank you.” Dean said with utter sincerity.

“It’s the least I could do after he saved us all.”

“You know that’s not why either of us do this, right?”

The shaman chuckled quietly, “no Hunter does.”

Dean took the bin into the bathroom, emptied it, cleaned it out, then returned it to beside Sam.

“Demon killed our mother.” Dean sad abruptly, if still incredibly quietly, “pinned her to the ceiling and set her on fire in Sam’s nursery. I was 4, Sammy 6 months. Dad found out about the supernatural after that, became obsessed with killing the thing that killed her. Trained us in how to fight monsters soon as he deemed us old enough. I’m sure there’s some who would think we were too young.”

“What do you think?”

“I think…that whatever his faults…it could have been a lot worse. For me…I never even thought twice about being anything else…not sure what I’d do if I wasn’t a Hunter…”

“External influences on your life…they don’t change who you are fundamentally.”

Dean gave a wry snort, “I’m a killer, I know that. Without the supernatural…I probably wouldn’t like who I was…”

“You really think that?” The shaman asked, surprise in his expression.

“No point hiding from reality.”

“You’re loyal. You don’t give up. You don’t back down. You got lines you won’t cross. You’re smart. You think fast on your feet. Your first instinct is to protect. Know who often fall into that same kind of description?”

Dean shook his head, not sure what the shaman was getting at.

“Law enforcement.”

Dean raised an eyebrow at him.

“Oh sure, there are some bad apples. But I’m talking about the good ones, the ones who care about justice, who keep hunting for years after many would have given up on a case to get the one who destroyed someone’s life.”

Dean stayed quiet, he wasn’t sure what to make of the assertion. But he couldn’t just dismiss it, not from the source it was coming from. This wasn’t one of the dime a dozen, claim the title with no
power or learning to back it up, print as many books as they can before the fad fades away ‘shamans’. This was a real one, with both power and learning. Completely accepted and at home in his tribe. And way too perceptive for Dean’s comfort.

“And what did Sam think about how you were raised?” The shaman broke the silence after a while.

“He hated it. He loves learning, thinking, reasoning. Dad…dad was a marine. Orders were what he saw as keeping us safe. Sam wanted the reasons, dad…he always saw that as rebellion. They locked horns on many occasions. Worst was…”

“Was?” The shaman prompted after Dean’s voice trailed off into silence.

“Sammy…he got a scholarship. Full ride to Stanford. Considering we never stayed in one place more than a few months that’s definitely saying something.”

“Your dad…wasn’t happy?” The shaman asked with evident confusion.

“He was damn proud…eventually anyway…not that he ever told Sam that. Most Hunters, I’m sure you’re aware, are more than a little on the paranoid side. Dad was definitely no exception, with a good dose of isolationism, and an absolute conviction that if he let Sam out of his sight that something terrible would happen to him.” Dean sighed, “maybe he was right there…”

“What happened?”

“Four years after Sam went to Stanford…dad disappeared. I’d started working solo cases occasionally, so I didn’t think much of being out of contact with him to begin with. Then I got a weird voicemail from him and couldn’t get him on the phone. I…I was already a decent Hunter, but I couldn’t face investigating if something had happened to him. I roped Sam into helping me over the weekend…and pretty much regretted it ever since.”

“Had something happened to your dad?”

Dean shook his head, “no. Not then anyway.”

“So?”

“When I brought Sam back late Sunday…I still to this day don’t know what made me turn around after I dropped him off…there were flames everywhere. It…was like I was 4 again and my dad’s order to get Sammy outside as fast as I could still ringing in my ears…I didn’t stop to think…I just got through that door. Found Sammy in the bedroom he shared with his girlfriend…the poor girl was pinned to the ceiling surrounded by flames. Sammy…he was just staring at her crying out his denial…I grabbed him and hauled him out of the building. Sam…turned his back on university that night. For the longest time I blamed myself for taking him away and leaving her vulnerable…”

“Not anymore?”

“Sam pointed out the timing. It was on the 22nd anniversary of our mother’s death. The demon who killed them, Azazel, he…had plans for Sammy…and they didn’t include him becoming a lawyer, getting married, and having kids.”

“I take it you’re still trying to dodge his machinations? That’s the problem with demons…you can exorcise them, but they’re not gone for good.”

“Unless you happen to have a demon-killing knife or the Colt.” Dean replied.
“The latter is a legend, pretty sure the former doesn’t exist…or are you about to tell me otherwise?”

Dean pulled out the demon-killing knife and showed it to him, “got it off a demon that was pretending to be a good guy. Not sure of its origins but it works.”

Dean left the shaman examining the weapon and dug the Colt out of where Sam had stashed it the previous night and returned to show that to him too.

“Legend says there were only 13 bullets made for it.” The shaman commented as he looked over the antique weapon.

“There were.” Dean confirmed, “we found out how to make more, or rather…Bobby found out how to make more.”

“I see.” The shaman handed the weapons back, “and Azazel?”

“Dead. Shot him myself with the Colt about 2 years back. Sam’s racked up a much higher count with it though. When they realised their plans had misfired, they tried throwing massive demon sieges at us, not many actually survived. Sam was able to bullseye hellhounds, and he’s had it ever since. Made a lot more sense to have the gun in the hands of someone with extra senses after all. Don’t mention it to Sam though…it really bothers him that we don’t know how many of the meat suits were still alive, not that there’s a huge chance of that with how the demons always seem to operate. The doc was the exception there…”

The shaman nodded then frowned at the door as the noise of a large number of people started filtering through. It didn’t take much for it to be louder than their soft voices and Sam began moving restlessly with a pain filled whimper. Dean went instantly to his side.

“I’ll deal with that.” The shaman stated and headed out the door.

The crowd were jubilant at the discovery that they’d been freed from the rogue’s control and wanted to meet their rescuer, and weren’t prepared to give any thought to whether said rescuer wished to meet them just yet. Awan was trying to talk some sense into them, but his voice was lost in the din.

The shaman strode up to them and glared the lot into silence.

“Is everything okay, Shaman?” Awan asked nervously.

“Sam pushed himself into a migraine with what he did yesterday.” The shaman told him, still glaring at the crowd, “he’s in a lot of pain. And this din is threatening to wake him up and magnify that pain.”

The crowd had the grace to look shamefaced.

“He going to be okay?” Awan asked worriedly.

“Yeah. He just needs time to recover.”

Awan nodded then turned to the crowd, “you heard him. Go home. We’ll let you know when you can meet him once he’s feeling better. And no one is to harass either him or his brother, he refused to stop until he’d rescued everyone he could, and as you heard he’s now paying the price.”

The crowd dispersed in silence and Awan turned back to the shaman once they were gone, “may I come in?”
“Let me see what Dean says.”

Dean answered the door to the shaman’s very quiet knock, “thanks for that.”

“My pleasure. Awan would like to join us if that’s okay with you.”

Dean nodded, “as long as he’s quiet.”

Awan joined them, and they talked in hushed voices about different things until Sam woke up again that evening.

Dean was by his side instantly, “hey, how are you doing?”

“Better.” Sam told him, pushing himself up, “the pain’s pretty much gone.”

“And your stomach?”

“Not about to declare independence.”

“Okay…injection or tablet?”

“Tablet will be fine.”

Dean dug out the antiemetic and painkiller tablets and helped his brother take them.

That done Sam glanced around and saw their audience, he flushed slightly that he hadn’t noticed them immediately.

“Hey.” Dean scolded him lightly, “no need to feel embarrassed.”

“How are you feeling?” The shaman asked.

“I’m…” Sam started, only to be interrupted by Dean pointedly clearing his throat. He rolled his eyes at his brother before amending what he’d been about to say, “I’m getting there.”

“We were worried.” Awan said.

“Don’t do that again.” The shaman added.

“No promises.” Sam replied.

Dean just snorted and handed his brother a glass of juice. He knew Sam well enough to know that if his brother thought it important enough he would do exactly the same thing again.

Chapter End Notes

As always comments, constructive criticism, and questions welcome.

Apologies for how late this is, I got stuck in the conversation between Dean and the shaman.
Chapter 55: Back to it

They’d stayed there far longer than they would have otherwise, and even though Dean was getting antsy, his usual recreations not possible for the most part, the last thing he wanted to do was drag Sam away. His brother was relaxed in a way he couldn’t remember the last time he’d seen. The shaman, and this tribe, were good for him, and Dean was loath to pull him away before they had to. That they’d have to eventually was pretty much a given, their luck ensured that. Sometimes he wondered if it was a curse, or something else more complicated, but that was something he’d probably never figure out even if he did mention it to Sam.

The members of the community, especially the children, seemed to regard Sam almost with a reverence matched only by the one they had for the shaman, and there was generally several to be found watching in silence while Sam and the shaman trained, regardless of whether it was the more physical forms or not. Like the scene that came into view for Dean now.

Sam was meditating with the shaman. Not the same as the meditation sessions he did with Dean nearly without fail every morning. No, this was like a scene out of Star Wars or something. The shaman had explained it as practising splitting his attention, and Dean could see how that could be an advantage. But if Sam was going to continue meditating in mid-air once they left Dean was going to have to be doubly vigilant about making sure the curtains of whatever motel room they were in were drawn tight.

Sam’s eyes opened as he approached and his little brother grinned at him mischievously.

“Lunch.” Dean said simply. That was another one of the good parts about being here, actually being able to make proper meals, and that had been one of the things the shaman had worked with him on; figuring out the adjustments that needed to happen to Sam’s nutrition intake. It didn’t seem like many outside the tribes had ever given thought to that sort of thing. Definitely made sense that the tribes, and in particular this tribe, had paid attention to that. Sam’s tastebuds inclining him towards more healthy foods stood him in good stead there, but there were still adjustments there needed to be made. Like increasing in proportion to his expenditure, much like professional athletes. And figuring that out had been an adventure in itself, Dean had never deluded himself that what his brother did was easy, but it had been eye-opening just how much energy he used even if it was much easier for him than any other psychic that could be thought of. If it weren’t for the shaman’s trained powers neither
of them would have even twigged to it.

The shaman, Awan, and Enola, the shaman’s apprentice, regularly joined them for meals also, something that surprised Dean. Especially as Awan was now the Chief, with all the demands on his time that went along with that. Dean figured maybe it was Enola’s presence more than theirs that was in aid of that, but he wasn’t sure how social conventions worked in this tribe and wasn’t going to presume.

Sam, in particular, liked the conversations after meals with the three of them, and Dean sure wasn’t going to interrupt even if he only vaguely followed the discussions at the best of times. He wasn’t dumb by any means, but if these last few weeks had made anything definite, it’s that his little bother left him in the dust even more than he’d been aware.

Dean’s phone ringing interrupted the animated discussion following lunch, and he nearly swore aloud as he saw the caller ID, unless he missed his guess their respite was coming to a close.

“Gohol laiad.” Dean answered without preamble as he got up. He saw Sam’s expression turn serious, and his brother motioned the other three to silence before they could even think about expressing their curiosity.

“Authority has been misused. False orders have been given. The hierarchy has betrayed their charge.” Castiel replied woodenly on the other end of the line. Dean relaxed slightly.

“Everything okay, Cas?”

“I…am not sure. I am kind of at a loss as to what to do…”

“You in trouble?” Dean wasn’t sure what they would be able to do if that was the case, but they’d definitely try.

“No…well…no more than any other. Angels are dying, Dean, and none of us knows why.”

Dean blinked, “it wasn’t us. Even if we knew how to kill them we’d just sigil and run, death is a bit high a price to pay for believing lies after all.”

“No…I know it wasn’t you. I’ve been given orders to locate a demon they think might know…but I haven’t been able to trace them. I…my friends are dying…I need help.”

He might be their ally, but Dean wasn’t about to expose their new friends here, not with the understanding that the Hierarchy could strip his choices and obtain his knowledge in a heartbeat. He walked over to the road atlas and flipped it open to the appropriate location. Finding a nice out of the way town several hours drive away he gave that name to the angel.

“Wait for us, we’ll be a few hours.”

“Thank you, Dean.” Castiel hung up, and Dean looked down at the phone with a sigh.

“Not like we didn’t know something was coming eventually.” Sam commented.

“Who’s ‘Cas’ and why did it sound like you were talking to some kind of supernatural creature?” The shaman asked.

“Castiel.” Dean told him, “he’s an angel. Really an angel. His bosses…well…they want the apocalypse. He was ordered to kill Sam, he didn’t when he realised they’d lied to him about Sam. It’s…complicated. Officially he’s still hunting us down to kill Sam, in reality, he’s helped us escape
several times. It’s dangerous for him though...if his bosses find out he’ll be reprogrammed, his words, if not outright killed. Which is why we’re not going to risk bringing him here.”

The shaman stayed silent for a moment as he assimilated the information, “is anyone at risk?”

“Not at this point.” Sam told him, pulling a piece of paper out of his sketchbook and quickly drawing the sigil, “but we can’t be sure it’ll stay that way, especially if they get more desperate. Which is why we do our best to keep them from knowing about our allies. If you do end up having to deal with them, draw that in blood and put your hand in the middle of it. Then run. That banishes them, but they can teleport again in a few hours.”

Sam handed him the piece of paper, “and...could you do something for us?”

“What?”

Sam hesitated a little about asking, but it was better to cover all bases, “if they do end up getting to me...to us...make sure we get a Hunter’s funeral?”

The shaman sent a started look at Dean before understanding dawned in his eyes, and he gave Sam a solemn nod.

“Thanks.” Sam said simply, then joined Dean in gathering up their stuff in preparation for moving out.

“Stay safe.” The shaman told them once they’d stowed their belongings in the impala and were ready to go.

“Always.” Dean told him with a confident grin, “and if you need us...you have our numbers.”

“Goes both ways.” Awan put in.

“Thanks.”

They hopped in, and soon the impala was flying down the roads towards the tiny town they’d arranged to meet Castiel in.

“You going to miss it?” Dean asked after a long silence.

“Yeah. But it’s not like we didn’t know it was going to come to an end probably sooner rather than later, the shaman knew it too.” Sam replied, “and it’s not like we can’t go back, if life lets us, at some point.”

They spent the rest of the trip discussing what they knew of the angel’s problem, which wasn’t a tremendous amount. It was pretty much guaranteed it wouldn’t be a considerable amount of time sunk into it, Castiel couldn’t risk spending too long in their presence.

No sooner had they checked into the motel and entered their room then Castiel was knocking at the door.

“Not wasting any time, I see.” Dean commented as he let him in, “we haven’t even put the fortifications up yet.”

“Apologies. Would you like me to allow you time to do that?”

Dean blinked at him for a moment, “when we can we really need to teach you how to recognise humour. Come on in.”
“Gohol laiad.” Sam said once the door closed behind the angel.

“Authority has been misused. False orders have been given. The hierarchy has betrayed their charge.” Castiel replied woodenly for the second time that day.

“Sorry.” Sam apologised, “needed to be sure.”

“Quite alright, that is a sound tactical decision.” Castiel told him.

“That doesn’t make me feel any better.” Sam mumbled to himself.

“You said something about angels dying?” Dean interrupted as he waved Castiel to a seat, the gesture just got a puzzled look from the angel, “friends of yours?”

“Yes. They were all angels from the garrison.”

“Which means?”

“You are aware that angels were forbidden to…interfere…down here for 2000 years?”

“We are aware of that, yes.”

“There was a section of angels that were stationed on earth to watch over people. They were required to do so from invisibility and unable to act without direct orders. They were the garrison. I was among them.”

Dean took a moment to process the information, “so…these are guys that you’ve spent the better part of the last 2000 years with as your only company?”

“They are not ‘guys’ as you understand the term.” Castiel replied, “sex, gender, orientation…they’re all meaningless to us.”

Sam had to stop himself from laughing at the baffled look on his brother’s face, Dean undoubtedly hadn’t even been thinking along those lines.

“That’s not what he was asking about, Castiel.” Sam corrected, trying to keep the mirth out of his voice. From the glare Dean shot him he didn’t succeed, “he was confirming that the angels in the garrison were your only real companionship for 2000 years.”

“Oh. Then, yes.”

“How many dead?” Dean asked, reminding himself that the angel was incredibly literal in how he took things.

“Seven so far.”

“They were all friends of yours?”

“Yes.”

Dean gave him a sympathetic look, “sorry, that’s gotta be rough.”

“I do not need condolences, I need to locate this demon so the deaths can end.”

“I’ve done a lot of reading up about angels since we met you, and I haven’t come across anything that even hints at a way to kill angels.” Sam told him, “not even to confirm or deny whether the Colt
works on them, and I’m not about to shoot one to check.”

“Ordinarily I wouldn’t think a demon would have either the knowledge or the technology to locate or create a weapon like that. However, this one is different. Knowing how to create pain, how to keep his victim just short of death, has been his sole consuming desire throughout the millennia of his existence. If anyone knows it, it’s him. He’s known as the grand torturer of hell, and it’s come to our attention that he was sent up here for some reason that we are unaware of and has not returned yet.”

Dean traded a surprised look with Sam, “grand torturer of hell? You mean Alastair?”

It was Castiel’s turn to look surprised, “yes, you’ve encountered him?”

“Yeah…” Dean replied slowly, “and if the deaths were in the last few months…he very definitely wasn’t responsible for them.”

“He has not returned to hell. We would be aware of a demon that powerful entering hell either voluntarily or involuntarily.”

“Not exorcised.” Dean corrected, though he very carefully didn’t detail how, “killed. By Sam a few months back.”

Sam nodded in confirmation when the angel looked at him.

“I see. My apologies then, I have endangered you for no reason and am no closer to an answer.”

“Hey, no, don’t think like that, Cas.” Dean protested, “we want you to call if you need help.”

“We’ll look around, see if we can find any whispers of demons or otherwise doing anything like that.” Sam added, “check back with us every couple of days, as long as it’s safe for you, and we’ll let you know what we’ve dug up.”

“You would do that? Even though any of them would have attempted to kill you if they had encountered you?”

“They’re your friends. And can’t really blame them for believing the falsehood’s they’ve been fed.”

“Thank you.” Castiel replied, then looked at the door, “I have stayed too long already…”

“No problem.” Dean told him, calling after him as he started to leave, “and Cas, stay safe, okay?”

“I will endeavour to.” The angel replied before stepping through the door and vanishing in a soft rustle of feathers.

“That was different.” Dean commented, then pulled out the black light pens and lights, tossing one to Sam, and set about fortifying the room for the night.

Chapter End Notes

Comments, constructive criticism, and questions always welcome.

Apologies for this being a little late again, two migraines in the last week severely reduced my writing time. Maybe it was the universe getting back at me for inflicting
such a bad one on Sam last chapter *chuckle* hopefully I'll be back on time next week.
Chapter 56: Angels Everywhere

Chapter Notes

Story Name: Pivot Point
Pen Name: ElenaRoan
Disclaimer: Don’t own any of them, written purely for enjoyment.
Warnings:
Summary: What if Anna decided to derail the apocalypse by intervening to help rather than trying to make the brothers never having existed.
Timeline: Season 4
Note: I’m Australian and I can’t bring myself to use USA spelling, sorry.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Chapter 56: Angels Everywhere

It wasn’t three towns in three days, but this was the third library in as many towns that Sam hadn’t turned up any useful information. They had to be careful about how they went about trying to find out who or what was killing angels, any angel other than Castiel, or Anna for that matter, that found out they were looking into it would probably assume they were the ones killing them. He wasn’t sure if they could be in more danger than them already wanting him dead, but he didn’t particularly want to find out.

Shoving the book disgruntledly back onto the shelf he gave Dean a quick head shake. Dean just shrugged and inclined his head to the door.

“So…no luck?” Dean asked as they got back in the impala.

“Closest I’ve found is the article on the police finding the murdered girl in the middle of a bunch of totalled cars, and the weird scorch marks that resembled wings. We might have more luck at the location of the first death rather than the most recent.”

“Two days drive to get there.” Dean more reminded him than pointed out, Castiel had given them the list of locations last time he’d called and they’d asked. The distance involved was why they’d come here first.

“Sooner we start the sooner we’ll get there.” Sam replied with a sigh.

“Tomorrow.” Dean stated, “may as well use the room we have and get a decent night’s sleep.”

“I’m not going to argue.” Sam returned, not even hacking into the police report had turned up any answers. The soot had some compounds they hadn’t been able to identify or trace. The report had barely concealed bafflement in its formal wording, including surprise that the wings had turned out to actually be soot rather than some sort of paint job. They hadn’t even been able to determine who the girl was and a forensic analysis of her tissues had turned up a complete absence of any modern environmental factors. Sam figured the vessel could have been taken easily up to 2000 years previously, or even before for all he knew. The case was undoubtedly destined to be dumped in one of the ‘too weird to chase’ cold case shelves and forgotten.
Sam made a point of paying attention to the food that Dean put together for dinner instead of allowing himself to be distracted trying to dig up anything on the web. The memory of the disappointed fall of his big brother’s face when he had done so and completely missed registering what he was eating let alone being able to tell whether it was tasty or not being a massive incentive. Dean had tried to hide it, but Sam was familiar with the expression to spot it regardless from the all too many times he’d put his foot in his mouth with regards to his brother. The amusement he’d expressed at the EMF meter Dean had made out of an old walkman still haunted him, his brother hadn’t made anything since and he couldn’t help but think that was his fault.

“Okay, enough of you staring at that screen until you go cross-eyed.” Dean declared as he cleared away the rubbish, “bedtime.”

Sam had to smile, “what am I? A toddler?”

“No, just someone who forgets to take care of himself when he’s preoccupied.” Dean retorted with a teasing note in his voice, though the concern underneath it was apparent to Sam.

Sam shut the laptop down with a chuckle, he wasn’t getting anywhere anyway, and his brother probably had a point.

Being aware that he was dreaming, lucid dreaming was the technical term, had started happening to Sam much more frequently since working with the shaman. He didn’t go wandering, to other people’s minds or other worlds, without deciding to though. And it was rare that he had anyone visit him. Tonight was an exception.

As he looked warily at the man who’d intruded he made a mental note that angels apparently had their own form of dreamwalking.

“I know you’ve got no way of finding me physically, so how are you here?” Sam asked calmly. More calmly than he actually felt, he had no idea if his abilities would let him eject the angel or protect him if they could actually do something while in his dream.

“I tire of this cat and mouse game.” Uriel told him, “reveal where you are and I will make it painless.”

“And why would I do that?”

“You should be honoured for the role an abomination like you has been given in bringing about heaven on earth.”

Sam noted to himself that Uriel apparently knew about the plan to bring on the apocalypse, and any sympathy he felt for the angel, who he’d thought was just unwittingly believing lies he’d been fed, died. Time to see if he could find out more.

“Gohol laiad.”

Shock raced across Uriel’s face even as his mouth opened and replied against his wishes, “Lucifer was right. The mud monkeys must die. Any who disagree must die.”

Sam stepped back as anger flooded the angel’s face; that was far worse than he’d thought possible. The angel was working with, or for, hell.

The angel pulled a shining silver blade out and moved towards him. Sam wasn’t sure if the angel would be able to hurt or kill him while inside a dream, there was a reason he’d been trying to get his location out of him after all, but he wasn’t about to risk it. He evicted the angel from his mind and
was a little surprised that it actually worked. Perhaps he’d just caught Uriel by surprise, in which case he shouldn’t stick around to wait for him to come back. It didn’t take much concentration to bring himself awake, the darkness surrounding him as he sat up telling him it was still early morning. Glancing across at Dean it occurred to him that with him awake the angel might try to get at him via his brother. Dean wouldn’t give him up, but who knows what angels were capable of inside dreams. One thing every source he’d looked up concerning angels had agreed on was that there was not very much angels couldn’t do.

“Dean.” Sam called.

Dean was on his feet, knife in hand before Sam had finished.

“What?” He demanded irritably once he’d established there was no imminent threat.

“We’ve got a problem.” Sam told him, climbing out of bed and heading to the kitchenette to grab a coffee.

“Couldn’t it have waited until morning?”

“No. And don’t even think about going back to sleep, you mightn’t wake up.”

Dean frowned, either he needed a lot more coffee than he thought, or his brother wasn’t making sense, “since when is there a dreamwalker you can’t deal with?”

“Since the visitor to my dream just then was an angel. And he’s angry. I booted him out, but who knows if that’ll do more than annoy him.”

“Angels can dreamwalk?” Dean demanded incredulously.

“Some form of it, anyway.” Sam returned, finishing up the coffee’s and handing one to his brother.

“Well, hell, you okay?”

Sam nodded, “I don’t think they can outright kill inside someone’s dream, but I’m not banking your life on that assumption. I’m guessing they can at least hurt people since Uriel pulled out some kind of shiny silver blade when I upset him.”

“How did you do that anyway? Them already wanting you dead not good enough for you?”

“I used the truth command on him after he indicated that he knew the goal was actually to bring about the apocalypse.”

“Wow…and?”

“His reply was, I quote, ‘Lucifer was right. The mud monkeys must die. Any who disagree must die.’ End quote.”

“Holy crap…”

“Yeah…that’s a lot more than I expected…”

“Um…” Dean said as something occurred to him, “presumably angels can kill angels, right?”

“Yeah…but why…oh crap…an angel on hell’s side the other angels wouldn’t see coming would they? And they wouldn’t suspect an angel of the killing…”
“We need to warn Cas…”

“How? It’s too dangerous to call him…”

“We’re going to have to wait for him to call and hope it’s not too late…”

Sam swore and finished off his coffee.

Dean finished off his own coffee, “since we can’t go back to sleep…shall we start driving? Even if we don’t need to go to the first death anymore, it’ll give us something to do.”

“And put some distance between us and here on the off chance he’s able to trace us from turning up in my dream.”

“Another good point.” Dean deposited the cups in the sink and turned to start tidying up the salt lines everywhere. Sam collected their belongings while he did so and soon they were in the impala putting the town in their rearview.

“Think it’s safe to chance a motel in another town tonight or should we make for one of Bobby’s cabins?” Dean asked as the sun started peaking over the horizon.

“I’m not getting any sense of warning, but let’s play it safe and head to a cabin.”

They stopped a few times during the day to eat and replenish their caffeine levels, Dean’s phone rang during one of these stops.

Dean shared a worried look with Sam after checking the caller ID before answering, “gohol laiad.”

“Authority has been misused. False orders have been given. The hierarchy has betrayed their charge.” Came the almost reassuring answer from Castiel.

“Glad you called…” Dean started.

“Uriel died last night.” Castiel interrupted, “I’m still no closer to finding the culprit…have you found anything?”

“Yeah…we found something…we need to talk to you.” Dean told him, though he did relax a little to know the dangerous rogue angel was out of the picture.

“I’m talking to you now…”

“In person.”

Sam had pulled up a map of the town on his laptop, located a small motel, and booked them in a room. Dean gave him an odd look before giving Castiel the address and instructions to wait for them.

“Well…guess it’s motel after all.” Dean commented after he hung up.

“This is going to be a difficult conversation…” Sam noted as his brother dropped down some money to cover their meal.

“Yeah.” Dean agreed. He decided not to let his little brother know that Uriel was out of the picture, the surprise when Castiel told him would hopefully convince the angel they were telling the truth.

Again Castiel was at their door the moment they entered the room.
“You said you found something?” Castiel asked Dean once the door was closed behind him and his status confirmed again via the truth command.

“Yeah…” Sam answered a little reluctantly, “I had a visit from Uriel in my dream last night…”

Castiel tilted his head, “what happened?”

“He…said some things that indicated he knew the goal was to bring on the apocalypse…”

Pain flashed across the angel’s face for a moment before he gestured for Sam to continue.

“I used the truth command on him…which made him angry. He drew some kind of blade and moved to attack me. I had to evict him from my mind.”

“You’re a dreamwalker?” Castiel asked in surprise, and Sam nodded, “he would not have been able to actually kill you, but he could have injured you, perhaps severely depending on the location. Even removed your memory of his response if he got you in the head. At least that explains how he ended up dead.”

“He’s dead?” Sam asked in shocked surprise.

“You did not know?” Castiel asked with a puzzled look at Dean.

“No…I mean…I knew when I kicked humans out it killed them…but I didn’t think that would happen with angels…”

“It was self-defence, Sam, he attacked you.” Castiel told him.

“I thought it would be better if the information came from you.” Dean commented almost apologetically.

“You desired that I could see his surprise was not faked?” Castiel asked.

Sam turned wounded eyes on his brother, and Dean immediately came over to him, squeezing his shoulders reassuringly, “wasn’t like there would be a huge delay. Plus I thought it would be easier for you to detail what happened without the knowledge that he was dead getting in the way.”

“What was the response that angered him so much he would risk attacking in a dream state?” Castiel asked.

“You’re not going to like it…” Sam hedged, he wasn’t real sure the angel would believe him. Especially now that he knew Uriel was dead.

“It does not matter if I like it or not.” Castiel returned, he tilted his head as he regarded the younger brother, “you are concerned I will not believe you?”

“It is kinda a curveball…”

“I do not see any balls here, curved or otherwise.”

Dean couldn’t suppress a chuckle, “it’s an expression, Cas. It comes from cricket where the bowler puts a spin on the ball, which results in the ball bouncing in a direction that the batter wasn’t expecting.”

Castiel was quiet for a moment, “so…in this analogy…the information was so unexpected you did not expect its contents?”
“Definitely one way of putting it.” Sam replied.

“Then might I make a suggestion?”

“Depends on what it is.”

“Allow me to see the memory of what occurred.”

Sam hesitated, allowing the angel access to his memories had the potential to expose a lot more, things they didn’t want him to know because of the risk he could be reprogrammed.

“I will not go digging through other memories.” Castiel assured him, “I could not guarantee their protection if I am found out. I will limit myself to that memory only. Since you are a dreamwalker, you will be able to confine me there also.”

That covered all his concerns, and Sam nodded, “okay.”

Castiel stepped forward and touched his forehead gently. Reliving the experience was unquestionably not the most pleasant experience Sam had ever had, but from the expression on Castiel’s face when he stepped back he was sure the angel had had a worse time with it.

“I…never would have picked…to give his allegiance to…” Castiel sounded completely lost.

“Sorry you had to find out like this.” Sam told him quietly.

“There are worse ways to find out.” Castiel replied, “at the point of his blade would be one. Like our comrades undoubtedly did…”

“Figured it was probably something like that once we found out what he truly believed.” Dean said sympathetically.

“Thank you for finding answers, even if they were ones I would have preferred were not in existence.” The angel said to both of them.

“Our sympathies.” Sam told him softly.

Castiel nodded, “I should go, the longer I stay, the more danger I put you in. Please keep yourselves safe, I have no wish to see Lucifer wandering free.”

They nodded, and he left with a flutter of feathers.

They’d put up the fortifications and were settling in for the night when there was another knock at the door. Dean traded a confused look with Sam before going to the door to carefully check who was there while his brother readied the Colt just in case. He gave a grin when he saw who it was.

“Anna! Good to see you. One sec…” Dean grabbed the black light lamp and pen to cross out the sigils that would allow her to enter.

“Thank you.” She said with a smile as she entered.

“Um…sorry about this….but…gohol laiad.” Sam said apologetically once the door was closed behind her.

She looked surprised even as she answered woodenly, “the hierarchy has got it wrong. Emotions are amazing.”
“Sorry about that.” Sam apologised again, “needed to be sure…”

“Don’t worry, it’s a sensible precaution. Though if they’d caught me I’d more likely be imprisoned or killed rather than reprogrammed.” Anna replied with a grin.

“What are you doing here?” Dean asked, even as he pulled out one of their burner phones and set it up before handing it to her.

“I could ask the same thing of you, isn’t Castiel supposed to be trying to kill Sam?”

“What have you heard?” Dean asked worriedly.

“Oh, it’s not on angel radio if that’s what you’re worried about. I had myself a little chat with him and he suggested I come to this town. I was rather surprised to see your car.”

“Wasn’t that a little dangerous?” Dean asked, “isn’t he supposed to be hunting you down too?”

“I gambled on our past friendship, and looks like I hit the jackpot. He’s your ally isn’t he?”

“He was told I was the general of a demon army and that I had demon blood in my veins.” Sam explained a little reluctantly, “a powerful demon did dose me with demon blood when I was a baby…but it was cleared from me a while back. When he touched me he could tell I didn’t have demon blood and thus knew his orders were based on a lie.”

Anna chuckled, “always did have just a touch too much compassion for the hierarchy’s comfort, I always did like that about him. Not going to ask how the blood got cleared, had to have been an angel and I’d bet you protect their identity even more fervently than you protect Castiel’s.”

Both of them gave her relieved looks at that.

“Well…” she waved the phone at them, “I’ll keep in touch. You need me, call.”

Dean shook his head in amusement as she left in a flutter of feathers then redid the sigils.

Chapter End Notes

As always comments, constructive criticism, and questions welcome. I hope you enjoy.
Chapter 57: Hard Bank to the Left

Chapter Notes

Story Name: Pivot Point
Pen Name: ElenaRoan
Disclaimer: Don’t own any of them, written purely for enjoyment.
Warnings: The end of the laundromat scene delves into some mildly dark topics, please skip if that disturbs you. AKF.
Summary: What if Anna decided to derail the apocalypse by intervening to help rather than trying to make the brothers never having existed.
Timeline: Season 4
Note: I’m Australian and I can’t bring myself to use USA spelling, sorry.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter 57: Hard Bank to the Left

As far as Sam was concerned one of the most useful talents he’d learned about his dreamwalking ability was being able to take control and neutralise nightmares when they appeared. Of course, it didn’t stop them from appearing, just meant he didn’t have to ride them out. Which also had the added benefit of minimising the chance of disturbing Dean’s sleep.

Waking to find his brother watching him reminded him that minimising did not equal completely.

“Having fun there?” Sam asked a little irritably, the latest nightmare had been somewhat disturbing before he took control.

“You’re having nightmares again, aren’t you?”

“Did they ever actually stop?” Sam asked with an unamused snort before taking himself into the bathroom to take care of the necessary morning business.

“They stopped at the reservation.” Dean told him when he came back out as if there hadn’t even been a pause, “didn’t start back up until after Uriel was stupid enough to challenge you on your own turf."

“I killed an angel, Dean.”

“An evil angel. No different from any other evil thing we hunt.”

“You really believe that? An angel is no different from a demon…or a werewolf? A warrior of heaven? One of the beings specifically created by God to be His messengers, His hands in the world?"

“Okay…you’re the one who’s paid more attention to the Bible than I have…so correct me if I’m wrong…but the single most dangerous being in existence…is an evil Archangel, right?”

Sam reluctantly nodded, he could guess where his brother was going with this.

“And that being is the one that Uriel gave his allegiance to. I doubt God would consider him His
messenger or warrior anymore, and if anything would want the threat removed. He did lock away Lucifer after all.”

“Not that easy to just rationalise away, Dean…”

“I’m pretty sure you don’t think that God, Himself, has ordered your death. I know Cas doesn’t think so.”

“I…no…I don’t. It’s just…”

“The angels are very different from what we expect, I’m sure you’ve noticed that. The majority are undoubtedly operating under the mistaken belief that their orders are real, but the ones giving those orders, and obviously some receiving them, know full well they’re not coming from the proper place. I’m pretty sure that God would not like false orders being given in His name, why He hasn’t done anything about it I’m not sure, but if that’s not a definition of evil…”

“In opposition to God’s will…yeah.” Sam confirmed softly.

“There you go.”

“Knowing it and feeling it are two different things…”

“Okay. Well I know one thing that’ll help make things easier to put in perspective…breakfast.”

Sam rolled his eyes at his brother but didn’t protest as Dean headed into the kitchenette of their latest motel room. Food was always one of his brother’s solutions, even more so now that they knew how much energy his abilities took. At least he was careful to pick foods Sam actually liked, even if Dean didn’t understand that liking.

“So turned up anything?” Sam asked as he finished up the breakfast that Dean had fixed, it hadn’t helped like his brother had wanted, but distracting himself would get his mind off it long enough for Dean to stop worrying.

“Yeah, actually.” Dean replied, picking up one of his papers and tossing it to him, “possible haunting.”

Sam took a look at the article. It was a fair way back from the front page, like most of their jobs, about a small block of shops that was having electrical problems that electricians were not having much luck tracking down. Some woman getting scared silly late one night had prompted the work. The town wasn’t far away either.

“Okay. It may not be anything, but it couldn’t hurt to check it out.” Sam agreed.

They went in posing as FBI agents. Dean stopped and looked at the building as they arrived, many small shops were pitchforked into the building.

“Anything?” He asked Sam as his brother joined him.

“Not sensing anything.” Sam answered, “but that doesn’t mean there’s nothing, it might be only active at night.”

“Wonderful.” Dean grumbled, not that he was unaware of that particular tendency of ghosts, “any suggestions about where to start?”

Sam nodded at a shop in the middle of the block, “the comic shop.”
“Any particular reason? Or just you being geeky?”

Sam rolled his eyes, “one, it’s the most crowded place in the block. Two, they’re more likely to have noticed anything strange given their…interests.”

“Good point.” Dean agreed then headed towards the shop indicated, Sam following in his wake.

“Uh…can I help you?” The man at the register asked as they approached him.

“I sure hope so.” Dean told him, pulling out his current ID, “agents DeYoung and Shaw. Just need to ask you a few questions.”

“Have you noticed anything strange in the building the last couple of days?” Sam asked, sometimes the fishing questions seemed really…obvious. At least most people don’t connect it to the real purpose, and the ingrained response to authority meant they usually got answers.

“Like what?” The employee asked with evident confusion.

“Some of the other tenants reported flickering lights.” Dean stated.

“Ah…no…I don’t think so.” He replied hesitantly, “Why?”

“What about noises?” Sam interjected before the man could start thinking, one of the downsides of talking with a comic fan. They were more likely to note the stuff they were after but also more likely to connect it with what they really wanted to know. They were also more likely to survive an encounter for exactly the same reason, “skittering in the walls, kind of like rats?”

“And the FBI is investigating a rodent problem?” He asked sceptically.

“What about cold spots?” Sam pressed, though he was starting to think the employee was way too smart to be useful to them without clueing him in as to what reality actually was, “feel any sudden drops in temperature?”

A slow grin spread across his face, and both brothers nearly blinked in surprise and confusion; that definitely wasn’t a typical reaction.

“I knew it!” He exclaimed, “you guys are LARPing, aren’t you?”

That nearly provoked blatant looks of confusion, only their control for when playing a role kept their disconcertion from breaking their cover.

“Excuse me?” Dean replied, managing somehow to keep a straight face.

“You’re fans.” The employee responded, not clearing it up at all.

“Fans of what?” Sam asked.

“What is LARPing?” Dean added.

“Like you don’t know.” The man replied with a grin. The brothers gave him a couple of blank looks, and he continued, sounding incredulous, “live action role play. And pretty hardcore too.”

“Sorry, I have no idea what you’re talking about.” Dean told him, for once his confusion was genuine.

“You’re asking questions like the building’s haunted.” The employee explained, and both of them
felt the hair on the back of their necks stand on end, “like those guys from the books. What are they
called…? *Supernatural.*”

Neither of the brothers had heard of the series, not even to know if it was some graphic novel series,
or a more regular type, or some combination of the two. It had been a long time since they’d had the
spare time to even think of following a series of whatever form, even the bite-sized comic book form.

“Two guys use fake IDs with rock aliases, hunt down ghosts, demons, vampires.” The employee
elaborated, "what are their names…? Uh…Steve and Dirk…? Uh…Sal and Dane…?"

Sam sent a worried sideways glance at his brother before asking almost hesitantly, “Sam and Dean?”

“That’s it!” The employee confirmed enthusiastically.

Dean returned his glance with a disconcerted one of his own, “you’re saying this is a book?”

“Books.” He corrected, “it was a series. Didn’t sell a lot of copies though. Kinda had more of an
underground cult following. Ah…let’s see…”

He energetically got up, went over to the bargain bin, and started sorting through it. With his back to
them, the brothers shot somewhat spooked looks at each other.

“Ah! There!” The employee pulled out a paperback novel and handed it to them, “that’s the first one,
I think.”

Dean took it and looked at it, the picture on the front looked nothing like them, though baby was
clearly recognisable. Even though he loved his car that wasn’t likely to lead to them, it wasn’t like it
was a unique car after all.

“*Supernatural* by Carver Edlund.” He read out, then flipped it over and started reading out the blurb
on the back, feeling himself go cold as he did so, “along a lonely California highway a mysterious
woman in white lures men to their deaths.”

Sam did a double take between his brother and the employee, more than a little spooked, the chances
that this was a coincidence was shrinking rapidly by the second. He snatched it out of Dean’s hands,
“give me that.”

Dean looked at the employee as his brother finished reading the blurb on the back silently, a blurb
that confirmed that somehow it was talking about them.

“We’re gonna need all the copies of *Supernatural* you got.” Sam declared once he finished reading.
Dean was already reaching for his wallet, since he carried the majority of their finances.

“Sure thing.” The employee declared happily, already sorting through the bargain bin again.

All up there were 24 of the paperback books, a disconcerting amount given more brief glances at
what the books were about confirmed they were detailing even more parts of their lives. Dean had to
fork out much less than he expected, each book wasn’t even $10, and the employee was surprised
they had a copy of every book.

Stuffing the books in the back of the impala they quickly returned to the motel room and started
going through them. Dean made sure he took that first book, plus any others he could recognise as
being about a time that had been particularly hard on his brother. Much as he wasn’t one for staying
still and reading there was no way he was letting Sam go through those. Even without that, he was
pretty sure his brother’s nightmares were going to increase, again.
“This is freaking insane.” Dean grumbled several hours later, and a number of the books checked, “how does this guy know all this stuff?”

“You got me.” Sam replied from where he was on the laptop, he’d opted to run down the information on the author first.

“Oh…check it out…there’s actually fans. Not many of them, but still. Did you read this?”

“Yep.” Sam returned, he wasn’t sure how he felt about that. He had a pretty good idea his brother wasn’t sure either.

“Although for fans they sure do complain a lot.” Dean continued. The brief glance over the forums had shown that the general consensus was that the brothers had died during the demon standoff, “listen to this. Simpatico say ‘the demon storyline is trite, clichéd, and overall craptastic.’ Yeah…well…screw you, Simpatico, we lived it.”

Sam couldn’t help but give a chuckle at that, his brother could focus on the strangest things, “yeah…well, keep on reading. Gets better.”

“There are Sam Girls and Dean Girls.” Dean commented after a moment, “and…what’s a slash fan?”

“As in…Sam-slash-Dean.” Sam explained reluctantly, he’d felt like he’d needed a shower after he’d tracked that particular information down, “together.”

Dean looked at Sam a little wide-eyed, “like…”

“…‘together’ together?”

“Yeah.” Sam confirmed.

“They…do know we’re brothers, right?” Dean asked, horror tinging his voice and all over his face.

“Doesn’t seem to matter.”

“Oh come on. That’s…that’s just sick.” Dean couldn’t even contemplate feeling that way about his brother, and couldn’t even begin to fathom someone fantasising about that sort of thing. He needed a shower. He closed the laptop with its disturbing content, “we gotta find this Carver Edlund.”

“Yeah…that might not be so easy.” Sam told him.

“Why not?”
“No tax records, no known address. Looks like Carver Edlund is a pen name.”

“Somebody’s gotta know who he is.” Dean stated once he’d stopped swearing silently.

Sam took the laptop back, “the publisher has to at least know who to pay the rights to at the very least.”

“Okay. You track that down?”

“Yeah. What are we going to do about the haunting?”

“Swing by after dark, see whether anything trips your Spidey sense?”

“Sounds good.” Sam focused his attention on tracking down the publisher, or rather who had the publishing rights to the books after the publisher had gone under.

Surprisingly enough they were located in the very town they were currently in, as was the original. Explained why the books were so concentrated here. They headed there first thing the next morning, after a quick midnight excursion that cleared the building of any actual ghost activity. Sam guessed there was a loose wire somewhere that only sometimes acted up, no wonder the electricians were having a hard time tracking it down. Flickering lights on a windy night with all the bushes around and it was a recipe for the mind’s own pattern recognition to turn on them. At least they could file that under ‘not our problem’ and continue on.

“So you published the Supernatural books?” Sam asked once they’d managed to find who they needed to talk to with the story of being reporters.

“Yup.” The lady confirmed, “yeah. Gosh, these books.”

She led the way over to a bookcase where they recognised the now familiar spines of every single story in the series, they had a feeling they were talking to someone who was also a fan.

“You know, they never really got the attention they deserved.” She continued, “all anybody wants to read anymore is that romance crap.”

Both brothers would have preferred people were reading romance crap rather than stories taken straight out of their own lives. They took care to keep their real feelings off their faces as she turned back to them and continued.

“You know…Dr Sexy, MD. Please…”

“Right…well we’re hoping that our article can shine a light on an underappreciated series.” Sam told her, sticking with their cover story.

Her face lit up, “yeah…because you know, if we got a little bit of good press then maybe we could start publishing again.”

“No, no, no…God no.” Dean returned almost without thinking and nearly blowing their cover, he caught himself and backtracked quickly, “why would you wanna do that? You know…it’s such a complete series…what with them staring down a tidal wave of demons at the end. Trying to continue after that would be completely unbelievable, who could have survived such a massive onslaught after all.”

“Oh, my God.” She gushed, “that was one of my favourite ones…Dean was so strong…and sad…and brave. They both were…with the forces of evil, the army of Hell itself, stretching as far as the
eye could see. And neither of them were going to back down or surrender, they were going to go out fighting no matter what.”

Both of them barely managed to hide a wince, going out fighting had been an all too real possibility at that time. It was a blessing that the story had stopped during the first, and smallest, siege and hadn’t detailed Castiel’s arrival on the scene. Anna’s appearance had shown up, but fortunately, it didn’t give her name and them finding her was after the series had finished.

“I mean…the best parts are when they cry.” She continued, and both of them braced themselves for whatever she was about to talk about, “you know…like in Heart…when Sam had to kill Madison, the first woman since Jessica he really loved.”

Dean had to fight to keep from reaching out and squeezing his brother’s shoulder reassuringly. That was one of the books he had saved Sam from reading, and he hated it was getting shoved in his brother’s face now.

“And in Home, when Dean had to call John and ask him for help.” She continued obliviously. Dean shot a look at Sam as she got really caught up in the stories she was relaying. She turned away sniffing, “gosh. If only real men were so open and in touch with their feelings.”

“Real men?” Dean asked incredulously, though he was honestly surprised anyone could describe him, or even his brother, as ‘open and in touch with their feelings’. They definitely talked a lot more than they used to, though he had a feeling the daily meditation sessions had a large part to do with that. But they were Hunters; emotions, pain, even trauma had to be put on the back burner at times.

“Uh…” she turned back around as she realised what she’d said, “I mean…no offence…how often do you cry like that, hmm?”

Dean managed not to point out that she’d read 3 years worth of them and said instead, “well, right now, I’m crying on the inside.”

She didn’t take it in the manner he intended it, “is that supposed to be funny?”

“Lady, this whole thing is funny.” Dean retorted, Sam shot him a look reminding him they still needed to get the information out of her regarding who Carver Edlund actually was.

“How do I know you two are legit, hmm?” She asked harshly, and Sam nearly winced. Dean was usually a lot better at staying in character, this entire situation had a surreal feel to it though.

“Oh…trust me. We are. We’re legit.” Dean told her.

“Well, I don’t want any smartarse article making fun of my boys.” She declared as she sat down with a flounce.

“No, no, no.” Sam was quick to assure her, “never.”

“No, that’s…” Dean backed him up, not quite sure where his brother would take this.

“We…we are actually…um…big fans.”

Sam could see the panic spark into his brother’s eyes but couldn’t change to another tack thanks to Dean’s stumbles.

“Hmm.” She looked sceptical, “you’ve read the books?”
“Cover to cover.” Dean told her.

“What’s the year and model of the car?” She challenged.

“1967 Chevy Impala.” Dean answered promptly.

“What’s May 2nd?” She continued.

“That’s my…” Sam caught himself quickly, “uh…that’s Sam’s birthday.”

“January 24th is Dean’s.” Dean put in, partially to avoid a similar misstep.

“Sam’s score on the LSAT?”

The brothers shared a look, Dean had actually read it the night before, but it was now buried under the rest of the information. Sam had to think, it was a long time since the score had landed him the interview, and nearly guaranteed full ride, to Law School had crossed his mind.

“One…seventy four.” Sam stated hesitantly. He apparently remembered correctly as she continued.

“Dean’s favourite song?”

Dean grinned; that was an easy question to answer, “it’s a tie. Between Zeplin’s ‘Rambling on’ and ‘Traveling Riverside Blues’.”

She grinned, their answers seemed to have banished her wariness, “okay. Okay. What do you wanna know?”

“What’s Carver Edlund’s real name?” Sam asked, going straight to the information they really needed to know.

Her face fell, “oh…no. No, sorry, I can’t do that.”

“We just wanna talk to him.” Sam tried to convince her, “get the Supernatural story in his own words.”

“He’s very private.” She returned, “just like Salinger.”

“Please.” Sam came close to begging, “like I said, we are…uh…”

He gave an embarrassed half laugh then started unbuttoning his shirt, he saw the instant Dean realised what he was doing.

“Big…” Sam continued uncomfortably, pulling his collar open to show the anti-possession tattoo, “big fans.”

With a resigned look, Dean also pulled down his collar to show his own.

“Awesome.” She said after nearly drooling over the tattoos, then she stood up, “one sec. You know what?”

She apparently didn’t expect an answer as she swiftly turned around and dropped her pants to display her own tattoo in a rather…intimate…location. Both brothers had the thought that at least she was safe from possession flit through their minds.

“I got one too.” She stated happily.
“Wow…you are a fan.” Dean stated.

She beamed, apparently talking with people she believed were also massive fans caused her to drop all her defences.

“Okay.” She picked up a small pad of paper and scribbled something down then handed it to them, “his name’s Chuck Shurley. And he’s a genius, so don’t piss him off.”

It didn’t take them long to find the address she’d given them, again in the same town. The house had obviously seen better days and neither of them were sure what they’d find inside. Dean shared a look with Sam before pushing the doorbell, his brother gave him a small shake of his head to indicate he wasn’t sensing anything unusual. After a moment a scruffy looking man in a dressing gown answered with a puzzled look.

“You Chuck Shurley?” Dean asked bluntly as a small breeze blustered around them briefly before the air stilled again.

“The Chuck Shurley who wrote the Supernatural books?” Sam added.

“Maybe. Why?”

Dean took a breath, now that they came to confronting the guy he was unsure about how he’d react, “I’m Dean. This is Sam. The Dean and Sam you’ve been writing about.”

“Yeah.” He mumbled with a tired expression and promptly shut the door.

Dean hit the doorbell again.

Chuck opened the door again with a resigned look, “look…uh…I appreciate your enthusiasm. Really, I do. It’s always nice to hear from the fans. But for your own good, I strongly suggest you get a life.”

He went to close the door again, Dean blocked it from closing this time.

“See, here’s the thing…”

“Dean, stop.” Another voice interrupted from behind them and both brothers did a double take at Castiel suddenly standing there, “Sam, get out of here. Now.”

“What…” Sam stammered.

“Gohol laiad.” Dean snapped out quickly.

“Authority has been misused. False orders have been given. The hierarchy has betrayed their charge. Sam is in deadly danger.” Castiel answered woodenly.

Dean looked at Sam worriedly, “is the car safe enough?”

“Yes.” Castiel answered, and Sam headed to the car, getting in and securing the doors quickly.

“What’s going on, Cas?” Dean demanded, Chuck was looking back and forth between them in shock.

“He’s a Prophet of the Lord.” Castiel stated.

“A what?” Dean asked, that was a new one.
“A Prophet of the Lord.” Castiel reiterated. One day, Dean decided, when spending time with the angel didn’t risk getting him killed they were really going to have to educate him on idioms and humour.

“Does that have something to do with why our lives are detailed with pinpoint accuracy in his books?”

Castiel nodded, “one day the books he’s writing will be known as the Winchester Gospels.”

“Wait…Winchester?” Chuck interrupted, “how do you know that?”

Dean looked at him, “I’m Dean Winchester, that’s my brother Sam in the car.”

Chuck looked between all of them with confusion, “the last names were never in the books…”

Dean’s phone rang, and he put it on speaker as soon as he saw it was Sam.

“You're on speaker.” Dean told him.

“Great.” Sam replied, “Cas, is it still safe if I’m on the phone?”

“Yes. The danger is attached to your physical presence.”

“Okay. So what’s going on?”

“Cas says Chuck here is a Prophet of the Lord.” Dean answered.

“Huh…okay.” Sam returned.

“Wait…you actually know what that is?” Dean asked.

“I read the Bible, remember.” Sam retorted, “but I hadn’t come across anything indicating that there were any around now though.”

“Look, can we go inside where we’re not visible to every passing agent of Heaven?” Castiel asked, “Anna will keep an eye on Sam.”

“Anna’s here too? Isn’t it dangerous for the two of you to be in the vicinity of each other?” Dean asked worriedly even as Chuck opened the door wider so they could enter.

“Yes. But I wouldn’t have known about the situation without her, and she couldn’t intervene directly without prompting an even faster response than Sam.” Castiel returned.

“The danger has something to do with Chuck’s presence?” Sam asked.

“Yes.” Castiel answered, “there is an archangel that is tasked to respond if anything threatens a Prophet. Archangels are fierce. They’re absolute. They’re heaven’s most terrifying weapon. As an angel classified as a rebel by Heaven’s hierarchy, Anna would provoke an instant response. Likewise Sam’s presence would also be classified as a threat, however erroneously he’s been labelled as such by the hierarchy, though given the protections on both of you the response would be contingent on the archangel checking on Chuck.”

“Awesome.” Dean grumbled, “is that likely to happen even without his presence?”

“Yes.”
“Then you’d better go.”

“I agree. The order is to keep you alive even if resurrection is necessary, but that doesn’t mean you won’t be taken prisoner in an attempt to locate Sam.” Castiel told him before vanishing in a flutter of wings.

“Awesome.” Dean grumbled again before looking at Chuck, “you had to know all this…”

“Well…” Chuck replied, looking defeated, “I had no idea it was real…I’m so sorry. The things I put you through…”

“A prophet only records, Chuck, they don’t cause the events to happen.” Sam told him, “we should keep the in-person conversations to a minimum so the being taken prisoner thing doesn’t happen.”

“Good idea.” Dean located a scrap of blank paper and jotted down their numbers, Chuck reciprocated with his own.

“Did you…really kick an angel out of your mind?” Chuck asked.

“Yeah.” Sam answered, and Dean could clearly hear how uncomfortable his brother was at the question even over a phone connection, “if I’d known it would kill him…I’m not sure I’d have been able to do so…”

“His next target was Castiel…what do you think the chances are that he’d have seen it coming any more than his other comrades?”

“That’s a point.” Dean noted.

“For what it’s worth…I think you’re doing the right thing…trying to stop the apocalypse from ever even starting. I hope you succeed.”

“Thanks.” Sam replied, “wait…if you know about the stuff with Uriel…you kept writing didn’t you?”

“Yeah…” Chuck answered uncomfortably.

“Are you working on anything right now?” Dean asked. He saw the realisation settle on his face.

“Holy crap…” Chuck mumbled.

“What?” Dean asked, hoping they were going to get enough time to prepare for whatever it was.

Chuck picked up a small sheaf of papers off his desk, “the…uh…latest book. It’s…uh…it’s kinda weird.”

“Weird how?” Sam pressed.

“It’s very Vonnegut.” Chuck explained hesitantly.

“Slaughterhouse-Five Vonnegut or Cat’s Cradle Vonnegut?” Dean asked.

Sam wanted to shoot a surprised look at him, not that he could out in the car and a wall between them. The last thing he expected was for his brother to know the names of several stories, short stories sure but Dean was too action orientated to really enjoy reading for its own sake, “what?”

“What?” Dean returned sounding confused.
“It’s…uh…Kilgore Trout Vonnegut.” Chuck replied before Sam could come up with something to say, “I wrote myself into it. I wrote myself…at my house…confronted by my characters.”

“Wait a minute…if you knew about this…you had to know about the prophet thing.”

“I…yeah…I dreamt about it…” Chuck confirmed hesitantly.

“It’s in the chapter?” Dean asked, gesturing at the papers in his hand.

“No way.” Chuck protested immediately, “it was too preposterous. Not to mention arrogant. I mean…writing yourself into the story is one thing but as a prophet? That’s like…M. Night level douchiness.”

“You said you dreamed it?” Sam asked.

“Yeah…well…eventually.”

“Eventually? What came before?” Sam prompted.

“Well…it usually starts with a headache.” Chuck replied, Sam felt goosebumps run down his arms, “a really bad headache. Aspirin is useless, so I drink until I fall asleep. At first, I thought it was just a crazy dream.”

“First time you dreamt about us?” Dean asked to clarify.

“It flowed.” Chuck said even as he nodded, “it just…kept flowing. It still does. I can’t stop it, really.”

“So you decided to turn it into a book? A series of books?” Dean asked, more than a little frustration creeping into his voice against his wishes.

“I had no idea what I was seeing was real. Who would?”

“He’s got a point there, Dean.” Sam pointed out, “it’s not many who even know that what we fight are real at all.”

“True.” Dean conceded with a sigh.

Chuck wordlessly handed Dean the sheaf of printouts.

Dean made a face as he looked at it, it was dotted with editing notations. He wasn’t much of a reader at the best of times, reading about himself and his brother, their future no less, was not something he particularly wanted to do.

“You sure you don’t want to keep the editing note stuff?” Dean asked, “not that I really want you to keep writing about us…but I get the impression we don’t have much choice in that.”

“Well…the images won’t go away until after I’ve written it down accurately…so I don’t think either of us has a choice in that.”

“No more publishing.” Dean told him firmly.

“If I could have published more it would have happened before now.”

“Right…” Dean mumbled before letting himself out of the house and joining Sam in the car.

“More than a little weird.” Sam commented as he hung up, “even for us.”
“You’re telling me.” Dean grumbled, “if that guy has an archangel tethered to him… I feel like making for the hills. Who’s to say it won’t widen its view while checking on him and spot us?”

“Well… we are effectively invisible to those guys. From what Cas said if we’re not physically in Chuck’s presence when the archangel checks on him we’re safe.”

“Very reassuring.”

“Well… whatever else we do about this… we need to get the washing done regardless.” Sam pointed out.

Dean grumbled but had to concede the point, they were each on their last set of clean clothes. And while in an emergency they’d made for the hills with the same amount, this wasn’t an emergency. Not yet anyway.

Dean started reading the printed pages while Sam sorted their clothes and stuffed them into various machines, he wasn’t letting his brother read it until he knew there was nothing in there that would torture him. He skimmed through the things they had already lived through and paused when he got to the laundry scene.

“I’m sitting in a laundromat, reading about myself sitting in a laundromat reading about myself. My head hurts.” Dean complained.

Sam chuckled without looking around, “you did volunteer… I could have read through it instead.”

He stuffed the bundle in his hands into the first available machine even as his mind chewed on the question that had bugged him ever since Chuck had mentioned it. Why did visions always have to hurt?

“Sam tossed his gigantic darks into the machine.” Dean read out, causing Sam to freeze, “the question of why visions always had to hurt gnawing at him.”

“That’s more than a little spooky.” Sam told him without turning around.

“‘That’s more than a little spooky.’ Sam said.” Dean continued, “guess what you do next.”

Sam refused to turn around, instead moving to the next machine and sticking their next load in.

“Sam kept his back to Dean, his face brooding and pensive.” Dean continued, “he really knows… I can’t see your face, but those are definitely your brooding and pensive shoulders.”

Dean, Sam decided, was having way too much fun with this.

“Hey… there’s no such thing as having too much fun.” Dean protested.

Sam thought for a second he’d actually spoken, “yeesh, a guy can’t even have privacy in his own thoughts?”

He closed the door on the second machine and started it going then plopped down next to Dean. His brother looked over at him.

“This really bothers you, doesn’t it?”

Sam shrugged, “in a way, I guess. The last thing I want is my thoughts on display for the entire world to see. But I think what bothers me more is… why do visions always have to hurt so much?”
"They don’t always.” Dean replied, “yours don’t anymore.”

“The keyword there is ‘anymore’. They really hurt before the demon blood was blasted out of my system, I can remember them near laying me out more than a time or two.”

“You’re telling me. I was kinda freaked that your head was going to explode a few times there.”

“There were a few times I thought that would be better for everyone.”

Dean shot a concerned look at his brother, “Sam…”

Sam shook his head, “it was a dark time for us. What with dad…and what he feared I’d turn into…and I was terrified I couldn’t avoid it no matter what I did…”

“And…?”

“And then a miracle happened. And neither of us needed to worry about me going dark side despite my wishes. Sure…we got some huge problems we have to deal with…but I’ll take those over wondering every day if the darkness implanted in me when I was a baby was going to creep out and take me over without me even realising it.”

“Wouldn’t have happened.” Dean told him firmly, “even without that miracle, not on my watch.”

Sam wanted to protest that there was no way he could know that, but he held his tongue and took it in the spirit he knew his brother intended it.

Dean went back to reading once it became clear Sam didn’t want to continue the conversation, this time silently. He pulled a face at their discussion being detailed in the printouts, especially as they made it clear the trip down memory lane had resurfaced his brother’s self-doubts.

Once the washing was done and dried, they headed back to their motel room, even though Dean was giving serious thought to just heading for the horizon. When he’d raised the possibility, though, Sam had vetoed it with the simple soft statement that he had a feeling they needed to stay. So stay they did.

Even with Sam’s warning, Dean didn’t expect to receive a phone call from Chuck first thing the next morning.

“Why do I get the feeling this is going to be a coffee required discussion?” Dean asked after he heard the hesitant way Chuck had greeted him.

“Yeah…sorry.” Chuck mumbled in reply.

Dean sighed, stuck the phone on speaker so Sam could join in from where he was at the laptop and went into the kitchenette to make some coffee for both of them. Sam and Chuck talked about inconsequential things until Dean returned.

“Oh, okay, hit us with it.” Dean stated as he returned, handing Sam’s coffee to him and taking a seat near the phone.

“I’m guessing you wrote another chapter.” Sam put in.

“This was easier before you were real.” Chuck replied with a sigh, “before I knew you were real…”

“We’re big boys.” Dean told him, “We can handle it.”
“You’re not gonna like this.” Chuck hedged.

“You wouldn’t have called us if it was going to be sunshine and butterflies.” Dean replied.

“It’s Lilith.” Chuck stated with a sigh, and both brothers stiffened and sat up straighter, “she’s coming for Sam.”

“Coming to do what?” Dean demanded.

“When?” Sam added.

“Tonight.” Chuck answered, dodging Dean’s question.

“She’s just gonna show up here?” Dean asked worriedly, “how? We’re pretty much invisible to their abilities.”

“I gather she’s had minions physically tracking you when you’ve entered their location. Not even she has been able to get them to actually follow you though, you have a reputation.”

“So is it a battle? Or do we manage to trap her?” Sam asked intensely.

“No…it’s…uh…” there was a rustle of pages over the line as Chuck apparently leafed through the printout he’d made before continuing hesitantly, “’Lilith patted the bed seductively. Unable to deny his desire, Sam succumbed, and they sank into the throes of fiery demonic passion.’”

Sam shared a worried look with Dean, there was no way he’d willingly do something like that. Which meant either heavyweight demonic influence, or possession.

“Fiery demonic passion?” Sam asked worriedly.

”It’s just a first draft. It’s not…” Chuck hastened to explain.

“Wait, wait…” Dean interrupted, Chuck didn’t seem to get that it wasn’t the wording they were worried about, “how does she get to him? Where am I in this?”

“Is her vessel still alive?” Sam added. Dean rolled his eyes at him, his brother was in deadly danger, and he was worried about whether the vessel could be saved.

“Well…she jumped out of the little girl, who survived in case you’re curious, severely traumatised but alive, and took a comely dental hygienist from Bloomington, Indiana fairly recently.” Chuck replied, “and I’m not sure where you are, Dean…just that she comes to Sam in a motel room.”

“Great.” Dean grumbled, “so what happens after the fiery demonic whatever?”

“I don’t know.” Chuck replied, “it hasn’t come to me yet.”

“Wonderful.” Dean groused.

“You said that Lilith has been having minions track us when we cross their paths, any idea where that happens?”

“Happened last night actually. Woman with a contract that Lilith promised to tear up if she let her know where you were.”

“Did she?”
“Let Lilith know? I would have thought that was obvious…”

“No…did Lilith tear it up?”

“I didn’t see.” Chuck said apologetically, “one thing I did see is that she won’t approach until Sam is alone.”

Dean swore, the last thing he wanted was for Sam to face that hell bitch alone.

“Actually…she only needs to think I’m alone.” Sam put in.

It took a second for Dean to get what his brother was getting at, “to pull her into a trap.”

“Exactly.”

“Anything else we need to know about, Chuck?” Dean asked.

“Not that I can pick…but you might spot something I wouldn’t.”

“That’s a point.” Sam stated, “think you could email it to us?”

“Yeah…I think so…where should I send it?”

Sam carefully told him his email address, and a little while later his laptop registered an email, a quick check showed that it was the chapter they’d been discussing.

“We’ve got it.” Sam told him.

“Great. Uh…is there anything else I can do?”

“Well…I’m sure you’ll see how this ends eventually…worst case scenario, could you get a hold of either Bobby or the shaman? I’m sure you know how after all this time watching our lives…” Sam said.

Dean made a face but didn’t protest.

“Yeah…yeah…I can do that. Hope I don’t…but I can do that…”

“Thanks.” Sam hung up.

“I hope he doesn’t have to either.” Dean commented.

“Me too.” Sam agreed, “well…let’s start getting set up.”

“You sure you’re ready for this? We can head for the hills if you have even the slightest doubt.”

“When are we going to know she’s coming again?” Sam replied, “besides, I have a feeling that even if we try, we won’t be able to. This isn’t one of my visions here, Dean, which can be changed. This is a vision from a prophet, revelation direct from God if the Bible is to be believed. And as far as I know, those visions are unable to be changed.”

“That’s a point.” Dean conceded, “so what do you want me to do?”

“Clean up the salt, we want her to get in after all.” Sam told him even as he rolled back the rug on the floor.

Dean started cleaning up the salt as Sam grabbed out the black light spray paint he’d tracked down a
Carefully he started laying out the elaborate symbol that would form the centre of the trap with the spray paint. Next, he carefully inserted the sigils into the symbol then went around the room with the black light pen drawing even more sigils on the walls while he waited for the spray paint to dry. Once it was, he carefully rolled the rug back over it, making sure it couldn’t be seen, even though with the lamp off it was effectively invisible.

“All done?” Dean asked when Sam closed the notebook.

“Yeah, except for the incantation anyway.” Sam confirmed with a sigh, sitting on the bed.

“You know…I was thinking about what you said about how Chuck’s visions work.” Dean commented.

“What did you come up with?”

“Well if I understand what you said correctly…Chuck’s visions are imposed from an outside source while yours come from inside you.”

“Yeah.”

“That might explain the pain.”

“I got pain too, remember.” Sam pointed out.

“Back when the blood tether was still on your abilities, and I’d bet that Azazel didn’t actually want you to have those visions. The ones you did have clued us into what he was doing with the other kids, if you hadn’t had them you’d have been in the same boat as the rest of them when you got kidnapped with no idea what was going on. My guess is that the pain was the strongest visions breaking through the control he imposed.”

Sam thought for a moment, “that makes sense.”

“Of course it makes sense, I came up with it.” Dean replied with a grin, drawing a chuckle from his brother.

It was hard to concentrate on anything other than the impending confrontation, so Dean dug up a horror movie out of the motel’s system for them to watch after they’d both scoured what Chuck had sent over for clues.

As dusk settled in Dean looked over at his brother, “you ready?”

“As I’ll ever be.” Sam replied, “just remember, don’t bring the impala back, that’ll spook her.”

“Don’t worry, I’m not an amateur at this. Just don’t get killed.”

“Do my best.”

Sam watched, keeping his nervousness under control, as Dean headed out the door. A moment later he heard the impala roar out of the parking lot, ostensibly to go grab dinner. Not even two minutes had passed before there was a knock on the door. He had felt her presence approaching, she could move at a decent clip. As he opened the door he felt her shift to immediately behind him, he closed the door and turned to face her. Underneath the almost overwhelming sense of demon pouring out from Lilith, he could feel a slight sense of a human.
“Hello, Sam.” Lilith said as if they weren’t bitter enemies.

“Lilith I presume.” Sam responded. Her eyes shifted white in confirmation.

“Where’s the knife, Sam?”

“Dean has it.”

“And the gun?”

“Ditto.” They hadn’t wanted to risk killing her so Dean had both killing weapons and would stow them in the boot before he returned.

“I see.”

“Why are you here?” Sam asked, getting tired of the cat and mouse game.

“To talk.” Lilith responded.

“Whatever it is I’m not interested.”

“Why don’t you wait until I tell you what I’m offering before you turn me down?”

“And what is that?”

“To stop trying to start the apocalypse up.”

“And why would you do that?”

“Turns out I don’t survive this war. Killed off…right before the good part starts.”

Sam noted that she apparently had found out about her being the final seal, “and exactly what do you want in exchange?”

Sam had absolutely no intention of acquiescing to the deal, but he needed to keep her talking long enough to get her into the trap.

“Your head on a stick.” She stated, Sam had to admit she didn’t beat around the bush, “Dean’s too. Call it a consolation prize.”

He looked at her silently, even as he wondered to himself how she could possibly think he’d give Dean up even if he’d been willing to go to his own death, which he most definitely wasn’t.

“So, what do you say, Sam?” Lilith prompted, “self-sacrifice is the Winchester way, isn’t it?”

“You really think I’m stupid enough to fall for this?” Sam asked calmly.

“I make a deal, I have to follow through.” Lilith replied, “those are the rules, and you know it. Are you really so arrogant that you would put your life before the lives of 6 billion innocent people?”

“And will you leave all 6 billion of them alone?”

“Well…mostly.” She replied with a grin. Apparently, she thought she’d won something with that question. She turned away and moved towards the bed, Sam managed not to hold his breath as she stopped at the edge of the rug and pushed it back, she sent a surprised look at him, “no defences? That’s either incredibly brave or incredibly stupid of you.”
Sam just shrugged.

“By the way, a contract with me will take more than a kiss. A lot more.” Lilith stated seductively backing towards the bed.

As soon as she reached the centre of the trap, the symbol lit up, and Lilith’s expression shifted in an instant from seductive to shocked.

“Amphan.” Sam stated. He’d practised the pronunciation carefully. The lit up trap rose up and curled around her.

“No!” Lilith exclaimed, trying to throw herself at Sam only to bounce off the trap.

Dean slipped quietly into the room behind him.

“Zirop allare caosga, caosga.” Sam continued, a quarter of the extra sigils around the walls lit up. Dean swore quietly, he hadn’t been expecting that. Not that Sam had either.

“Zirop allare zong, zong.” Another quarter lit up.

“Zirop allare zilda, zilda.” A third quarter lit up.

“Zirop allare malpirg, malpirg.” The final quarter lit up.

“Adarepane donasdagama-tastos.” The floating glowing trap folded in on itself and there was an explosion of light. Sam felt the strength leave him abruptly and his knees buckled, Dean caught him with one of the inventive swear words he’d picked up from their dad.

“Sammy?” Dean asked worriedly.

“I’m okay.” Sam managed to reply, “just took a bit out of me…I can see why it’s not a commonly used exorcism.”

“Okay…” Dean responded sceptically.

Sam’s glanced over the scene, they’d have to leave fast and soon. The rug, and the bed, were scorched. The woman Lilith had been using as a vessel lay untouched in the middle of it.

There was a banging on the door, “Mr Young! What’s going on in there?”

Dean swore quietly as he recognised the manager’s voice. He left Sam on the floor and dashed to the door before the manager could force her way in.

“What?” Dean demanded, opening the door such a small sliver that the carnage in the room couldn’t be seen.

“What’s going on? There was a loud noise.” The manager demanded.

“Uh…” Dean improvised hastily, “my brother is epileptic, he had a bit of a turn.”

“Oh…is he okay? Do I need to summon medical aid?”

“He’s fine, just needs some time to recover.”

“Very well, but if there are any more disturbances, I’m going to have to ask you to leave.”
“Understood.”

Dean thankfully closed the door and heard the woman retreat back to the office. He returned to his brother.

“Epileptic?” Sam asked amused.

“Yeah…well…I had to get her to piss off, and most people find epilepsy this scary unknown thing. Most don’t have any problem believing any odd noise could be due to that either.”

“Point.” Sam conceded tiredly, “check the woman would you, I think she’s still alive.”

“Okay. You doing okay?”

“Yeah, just tired. Nothing to worry about.”

Dean nodded his acceptance and went to the woman crumpled in the middle of the mess, he was surprised to note that she was actually breathing. A quick check revealed no significant injuries either, even more surprising. She was solidly out though.

“Think you’re okay to get to the car on your own?” Dean asked Sam, his brother nodded as he easily followed what Dean was planning. They needed to get out of there quickly before the manager decided to call the police just in case. It would be easier if they could all go to the car in one go, hence Dean’s question.

“Okay, get ready.” Dean hoisted the woman over his shoulder and snagged their bags, he wasn’t going to let his brother take the bags after how much the ritual had taken out of him.

The impala was fortunately out of view of the office as Sam clambered into the passenger seat and Dean tossed the bags on the floor of the back seat then carefully deposited the woman on the back seat and secured her before hopping into the driver's seat. Starting it up he headed directly for the road out of town. There was evidence of recent repair on the bridge as they left the town behind them.

Chapter End Notes

My deepest apologies for how late this chapter it. I've been battling a lot of exhaustion lately, which has been interfering with my writing, then landed in hospital on Tuesday. I haven't bounced back from that as fast as I'd like, so I'm going to say it's unlikely I'll manage a chapter by next week at my current rate of writing, which is less than half what I can usually manage, I'll do my best to get a chapter done by the week after though. If anyone has any advice on how to let you know of any unexpected stuff popping up please let me know, I'm not sure whether editing a note on the previous chapter or leaving a comment would be best.

Major thanks to Litiel of the Supernatural Amino community for helping with the Enochian exorcism.
Chapter 58: Choices

The woman didn’t stir before they got to Bobby’s, and when she was still unconscious a day later, Dean got Dr McGarn on the phone to get advice on what to do other than taking her to a hospital. They had no idea, without knowing her name, whether Lilith had left her with a dirty reputation. With Bobby’s help, they got her hooked up to a couple of drips that Avery suggested, and a couple of days passed before they got any hint she was still in there.

Sam was reading as he watched over her in the panic room when she woke with a scream. He dropped the book and went straight to her side, though he was careful not to grab her.

“Whoa, whoa, it’s okay. You’re safe.” He kept repeating it, his hands held out with his palms in clear view, as she pushed herself back against the wall and looked wildly around.

Sam held up a hand to keep Bobby and Dean from entering as they arrived at the door with a clatter.

“It’s okay. You’re safe. She’s gone.” He soothed and she finally actually looked at him.

“How do I know that for sure?” She asked, her voice sounded broken.

Sam pulled open his collar to show the anti-possession tattoo, “this means I can’t get possessed, by Lilith or any other demon. My brother has one too.”

She stilled as she looked at it, “I want one.”

“Okay. I can do that for you, no problem.” Sam assured her, “for now though, do you feel up to having something to eat?”

She shook her head, “now, I want it now. So…so…IT can’t get me again.”

“Lilith is so deep in hell she won’t be able to get out again anytime soon.” Sam told her calmly, “also, this room is completely demon proof. The walls are solid iron, coated with salt. There’s a demon trap on the floor and in the fan. There is also one right outside the door. No demon can get to you here, not even Lilith. I’ll have to get some tools before I can give you the tattoo anyway.”

She nodded jerkily, “okay…okay.”
“Dean, could you grab her something? Easy on the stomach.” Sam called to the two at the door, his voice still carefully calm.

“Yeah, I can do that. I’ve got some tomato rice soup simmering on the stove.” Dean replied, heading back upstairs.

“Bobby, think you could track down a tattoo gun for me?”

“Yeah…give me a bit. I’m guessing you’ll want any special ink I can find too.”

“Please.”

“So what’s your name?” Sam asked as Bobby also disappeared from the doorway.

“A…Ashley…Ashley Cooper.”

“Okay, Ashley, my name’s Sam Winchester.”

“I…I know that name…she…she hated that name…it scared her.”

“Well…can’t say I’m unhappy about that.”

She gave a hesitant smile.

Dean knocked on the door softly, and she jumped.

“It’s okay.” Sam soothed, “that’s my brother, Dean. Is it alright if he brings the soup in?”

She took a shaky breath and nodded her head. Dean slowly brought the bowl over and set it on the table nearest the bed, placing the spoon so she could reach it easily.

“Dean, this is Ashley Cooper.” Sam told him softly.

“Nice to finally meet you, Ashley.” Dean replied just as softly.

Ashley picked up the spoon, but her hand shook so much it was obvious she wouldn’t be able to get any soup to her mouth.

“I’ll get a mug.” Dean stated quietly before heading back out of the room, a moment later he reappeared with a ceramic mug. Being careful not to make any unexpected moves he poured part of the bowl of soup into the mug and put it on the table with the handle towards her.

“Thank you.” Ashley replied hesitantly and picked up the mug with both hands, sipping it cautiously.

“Will you be happy to stay here while I go take a look at the mess Lilith might have left you with?” Sam asked gently.

Ashley’s face fell, “I can’t go home, can I?”

“We don’t know for sure yet. We know at least one possession victim who was able to reclaim their life.” Sam reassured her.

Ashley shook her head, “no…I can still see it…my hands…”

“It wasn’t you.” Sam told her firmly.
“How could you possibly understand what that’s like?” Ashley demanded.

“Because I’ve had it happen to me.” Sam told her calmly, “I know what it’s like to watch my own hands kill people. I know what it’s like to be beating on the inside of your own skull while someone else is in the pilot’s seat.”

“You’re…you’re the one who got to reclaim their life, weren’t you?”

“No. The person I was referring to is a doctor.” Sam told her calmly, “me…I hadn’t had a regular life for a long time before Meg jumped me and took me on a killing spree. I was just lucky it didn’t get the police involved, though it almost brought Hunters down on my head other than Bobby and Dean. They’re the ones who saved me by the way. I got the tattoo shortly after.”

“And talked me into joining him in getting one done too.” Dean added.

“Well…I wasn’t about to risk having you experience it, bad enough I experienced it. If I could manage to start a fad of that tattoo, I would.”

“Well, there is a small one now.”

“Not nearly big enough, but it’s better than nothing.”

Ashley giggled at the soft banter between the brothers, and they smiled at her.

“So shall I go see if we can get you home or if we need to get you a new life?” Sam asked, “it’s okay if you don’t feel comfortable with me leaving.”

“It’s okay…I’d…I’d like to know one way or another…and…well…I know he’s not a demon…he couldn’t have entered otherwise…”

“Room is also fortified against pretty much everything there’s a warding symbol or material against.” Dean added.

“Okay. I’ll let you know when I can.” Sam assured her before slipping out of the room and upstairs to begin the hunt on his laptop.

He was still at it when Bobby came in from his ‘office’ in the kitchen.

“It’ll be here tomorrow.” Bobby told him, “you looking into whether Lilith left her a mess?”

“Yeah. And unfortunately she did, Lilith had a…liking…for babies.” Sam replied, the first thing he’d found with a simple search was a wanted poster for her.

“A liking? For a demon?”

“To eat.” Sam clarified.

“Wonderful.” Bobby grumped, “guess we’ll have to see if we can get a new identity set up for her.”

“Mightn’t be as easy as that, they’ve got her fingerprints on file. And they’re never going to stop hunting for her.”

“Can you do anything about the fingerprints? Delete them or something?”

“If I delete them they’ll just replace them from the physical copies.” Sam replied, “but…I might be able to replace them. If I substitute some from someone who’s dead…can’t do anything about the
physical copies though…”

“What’s the chance they’ll refer to the physical copies?”

“If something happens to remove or corrupt the digital. If an investigator gets suspicious and compares the digital to physical.”

“You didn’t answer my question.”

Sam sighed, “I’m not sure, it’s not insignificant…but it’s not massive either. And it’ll reduce once the case goes cold.”

“Thought you said they’d never stop hunting her?”

“They won’t, but there are degrees of active investigation. Once they exhaust their leads, they’ll wind back until they get a lead.”

“Like the fingerprints matching somewhere.”

“Exactly.”

“So the sooner you can substitute some the better.”

“Yeah.” Sam got working on it, he’d have to be very careful not to leave any trace that he’d done it. Eventually, he sat back.

“Done?”

“Done. You got any contacts for Hunter aware psychologists?”

“Yeah…there’s a few around. Not many Hunters ask for them though.”

“Pick the one you think would connect to Ashley the best, if her reaction to waking up, and what is known of what Lilith did in her body, is anything to go by she’s going to have a lot to work though. And she’s no Hunter.”

“Don’t think she’s fragile though, Sam, she did stop panicking and responded to you.”

“That’s a point.” Sam agreed, “but I, of all people, knows it’s not something easy to move on from even without Lilith’s sadistic tendencies.”

“We never really talked about it with you did we?”

Sam shrugged, “you were busy dealing with saving me and the crap that Meg threw in your faces. Then we were having to dodge the Hunters who wanted blood regardless of where it came from. Whatever did happen with them anyway?”

“They got a rough and ready lesson in demons after the opening of the Devil’s gate, don’t think we’d have the same problem with them now.”

“Okay.” Sam nodded and got up, “guess I’d better go tell her the bad news.”

“You do that. I’ll look through my list.”

Dean looked up as he came through the door. Sam noted almost absently that his brother wasn’t flirting with the traumatised woman, his protective nature was in full swing.
“So good news or bad news?” Dean asked.

“Uh…both. Which would you prefer first?”

“Bad news.” Ashley decided firmly.

“Okay. Lilith created a mess, not only can’t you go home but you can’t contact anyone you knew either.”

Ashley nodded resignedly, “figured as much. What’s the good news?”

“I managed to substitute the fingerprints of a deceased person for the fingerprints they have for you. Now…it’s not perfect, if they go back to the physical copies they’ll find out about the substitution and will potentially lead to you in your new identity.”

“New identity? What…do you have some sort of post demonic possession witness protection or something?”

“No,” Dean told her with a chuckle, “nothing anywhere near that official. But Sammy here is a tech genius, he’ll build you a new identity that should let you start over.”

Sam nodded, “Bobby is tracking down a therapist who knows about this sort of crap for you to see, then when we know where you’ll be going we’ll get you a new name, social, and start building you a history.”

“Then what do I do?” Ashley asked.

“I might be able to get you set up as a dental hygienist again.” Sam replied, “might need to choose an alternative though and get you the training if you need some. It’ll take a few days to build a history for you, the tattoo equipment will be here tomorrow also.”

“And what about the demons? There’s more than just that bitch running around isn’t there?”

“Yeah.” Dean confirmed, “but don’t worry, there’s more than just us on the job.”

“You always need more help, though, don’t you?”

Sam shared a surprised look with Dean.

“That’s…probably not a good idea, Ashley.” Sam said, “this life…it’s dangerous, and not at all easy. The law…most of the time they think we are the problem instead of trying to fix the problem.”

“It’s really not something you should be considering getting yourself into.” Dean backed him up, “you’re young, you have plenty of time to rebuild your life and forget about all this.”

“How am I supposed to go back to telling snot-nosed kids getting a filling to rinse and spit?” Ashley asked, “when I know there’s demons and worse hiding in the corner?”

“A lot of people feel like that.” Bobby put in from the door, “does tend to be where Hunters come from. I do suggest taking some time to think about it though, and talk to Alison.”

Bobby came over and handed over a small slip of paper with a mobile number on it.

“And if I still want to after that?”

“Then I’ll put you in contact with Ellen, and she and her daughter will train you.”
“Okay.” Ashley nodded, “sounds like a plan.”

Chapter End Notes

Comments, constructive criticism, and questions always welcome.

Well...this is the second time a character has surprised me in this story.

Had blood taken today for tests, I'll find out in a couple of days the results. I'll try to get the next chapter done by next week, but I probably won't manage it so if it doesn't turn up next week I should hopefully have it done by the week after.
Chapter 59: Early Warning

He wasn’t expecting to wake up, jerked suddenly from a dream that for once wasn’t the nightmares that still occurred with all too regular frequency, even if he could derail them when they happened now. Then the headache hit and the pictures started flashing in front of his eyes, and he knew what was going on, even if both were stronger than he’d become used to.

Sam’s gasp of pain woke Dean instantly, he’d been sleeping lighter since Sam had taken to cutting off his nightmares shortly after they started. Much as he preferred Sam not having to go through the entire ordeal, he couldn’t help but feel that the fact they were still happening with regularity indicated a problem that Dean wasn’t sure he could fix. That his brother was sitting bolt upright in his bed and didn’t seem to be focusing on anything was his next clue as to what was wrong. Dean was out of his bed and by Sam’s side in an instant. As soon as he touched his brother Sam’s hand closed tightly on his arm, giving him an idea of how much pain his brother was in.

“Sammy?” Dean tried to get his attention, he didn't like how his brother didn’t appear to be looking at anything actually in the room with them. But he seemed to be in a lot more pain than his visions usually caused now, though still less than the amount he got at the start. He figured maybe a migraine, or some weird combination of both, or perhaps even something they hadn’t seen before. Which he hoped wasn’t the case since every new quirk tended to take it out of his brother until Sam figured out how to deal with it.

With a gasp Sam came back to himself, he turned towards Dean and buried his head in his brother’s shoulder. Dean’s arms reflexively closed around him, and he could feel the tension slowly bleed out of Sam’s shoulders.

“Migraine?” Dean asked softly. Sam shook his head.

“No.” Sam sat back wearily, “just a stronger than usual vision.”

“Okay.” Dean replied worriedly, he hoped it didn’t mean his brother was going to be returning to the near-crippling version he’d had before Anna had performed her miracle on their lives, “how’s the headache?”

“Gone.”
“Okay, I’ll get your sketchpad. Just rest.”

The sketchpad was downstairs near the laptop, Dean decided to wake Bobby on the way.

“What?” The older Hunter groused when Dean knocked on his door.

“Sam had a vision, a strong one.”

There was a moment of silence then he heard Bobby come over to the door.

“A strong vision? What does that mean?” Bobby asked as he opened the door, “aside from waking him up at some God forsaken hour of the night?”

“The headache was worse, I thought it was the start of a migraine initially.”

“Balls, how is he?”

“Well, the headache still disappeared once he came out of it, which is a good sign at least.” Dean told him, “but…could you…?”

“Go keep an eye on him while you grab his sketchpad? Of course I will, do I look like an idjit?”

“Thanks, Bobby.” Dean replied before continuing downstairs and hearing Bobby go to their room.

Sam looked up as Bobby came through the door, he’d been working over the pictures he’d received in his head while waiting for Dean to return.

“Bobby? What are you doing awa…damn…Dean woke you didn’t he?”

“As well he should.” Bobby replied, grabbing one of the chairs and pulling it over to next to Sam’s bed before sitting in it, “one, I’m probably going to have to help deal with whatever situation your vision is throwing you at this time. And two, you were in more pain than normal. How are you feeling?”

Sam sighed, “I’m fine. Was just a strong vision, they’re more forceful the closer they’re tied to me from what I gather. Which is why I only got visions of old yellow eyes machinations back before his blood hobble got cleared from me, it was the only stuff that was strong enough to get through, from what we can figure out anyway.”

“Tied to you in what way?”

“Here we go.” Dean announced, coming back into the room with the sketchpad. Sam was grateful for the reprieve, though judging by the look Bobby gave him the older Hunter wasn’t going to forget he’d asked.

Sam took a steadying breath then pressed the pencil to the blank page to cause what he’d seen to appear, it took 4 pages for him to get all the images out.

“Uh…Sam…aren’t your visions supposed to be about the future?” Dean asked, picking up one of the sheets.

“It is.” Sam replied, not meeting his brother’s eyes, “just somehow the past has something to do with what’s happening now.”

Bobby pulled the page out of Dean’s hand and looked at it, “well…there’s a date here…what does the journal say?”
Sam started to move to get up and find said journal only to have Dean wave at him to stay put and go to fetch the book from his duffel. Sam rolled his eyes at his brother’s mothering tendencies. Dean checked the date in the picture before flipping open the journal.

“Okay…January 1990…headed to Minnesota to check out a case.”

Bobby picked up another sheet, this one showing a town sign as one of the pictures. Windom, Minnesota was clearly visible.

“So this could be related to that case of Dad’s?” Sam suggested, “what does it say about the case?”

Dean flipped it around to show him the tattered remnants of the following pages, “would be more useful if he’d left the pages there.”

“What the hell? Since when did dad ever remove information?”

“Yeah…more likely to get too much information rather than too little.” Dean agreed, “so now the question is…what was dad hiding?”

“Probably something to do with these people.” Bobby noted, indicating the sheet with a picture of a woman, a man in a police uniform, and a young man probably late teens or early twenties.

“So who are they?” Dean asked.

Sam took the page from Bobby, “I’ll get working on that.”

“Sam…” Dean started.

“Enough, Dean, I’m fine.” Sam interrupted, “I know it was more than a little disturbing with it being more painful than normal and startling you out of sleep. But I’m not about to shatter. I’ll look up the information while you get some more sleep, I can sleep in the impala on the way there in the morning.”

“But…”

Bobby chuckled, “I think you got your orders, Dean, and Sam has a point. You’re going to need your rest if you’re driving. And it’s just a vision, a stronger and more painful vision than usual…but still the same thing that he’s dealt with a dozen times over. Hovering over him like a hen with chicks isn’t going to help either of you.”

Dean blew out a frustrated breath, but he had to acknowledge that Bobby had a point, much as he didn’t want to.

“Fine.” He grumbled, “but wake me if anything else happens.”

“As if I’d have a choice about that.” Sam replied with an amused snort, gathering up the pages and getting up.

Bobby flipped the light back off as he followed Sam out the door.

It took a few hours for Sam to adapt the drawings for searching and get useful results. By the time Dean got up again, he’d amassed a small store of information.

“So what do we have?” Dean asked as he came in with a coffee for himself, though he handed a hot chocolate to him. Sam gave him a look after glancing at the contents of the cup, “what? I’m not giving you caffeine when you gotta catch up on the sleep you lost last night when we hit the road.”
Sam rolled his eyes at him but turned back to the information anyway, “okay. The man is Joe Barton, a former deputy in Windom who has since retired and become a bartender. He went missing a week ago.”

“Okay.”

“The woman is Kate Milligan. She works as a nurse in the Windom hospital and has for several decades, including during the time we think dad was there.”

“She’s still okay?”

“Not missing at least.”

“Okay. And the kid?”

“Adam Milligan. Born to Kate Milligan on September 29, 1990, no father listed on the birth certificate. He currently goes to the University of Wisconsin as a Pre Med Biology major.”

“He’s also okay?”

“So far.”

“Okay. Do we know what dad was doing there?”

Sam nodded, “searched through the newspaper archive. There was a rash of grave robberies, 17 in all. And I’m pretty sure dad was involved in sorting it out.”

“Okay, why?”

Sam pulled up a scanned in photo from a newspaper, the article was honouring the now missing deputy for solving the grave robbing case back in 1990. It didn’t take Dean long to spot their father lurking in the background of the picture. The project to make the archive available online must have been massive.

“Okay. So that’s the case dad was chasing. Any idea why he removed the pages?”

“Nothing in the papers or any other records I’ve been able to dig up from the town. Except… maybe…uh…”

“What?” Dean looked at him puzzled, Sam wasn’t ordinarily hesitant about sharing his theories.

“Uh…well…you did notice that Adam was born about 9 months after dad was there…right?”

“What? You think he’s dad’s kid?”

“It would explain why dad removed the pages, if even we didn’t know about him, there’s no way monsters could track him down. And…well…dad wasn’t a monk…maybe he slipped one past the goalie…”

“Sam…stop…now I’m thinking about dad sex, and it’s going to give me nightmares. Just…drink your hot chocolate while I get our crap into the car…you’re obviously sleep deprived. It’s a small town…there’s plenty of other reasons why there wasn’t a father listed that doesn’t include our dad getting frisky.”

“Dean…”
“Just…don’t. We need a lot more information before we can conclude anything one way or another about that. Now…unless there’s something about the case, then or now, I’ll go get our stuff ready.”

“There is something actually. Whatever it was back in 1990…it’s back. There were 3 grave robberies before Joe’s disappearance.”

“And Joe was obviously his local contact for getting it dealt with…wonderful. Either the creature somehow survived dad, unlikely, or there were more than one and the one or ones that escaped are back for revenge now.”

“Anything I need to know?” Bobby asked as he came back into the room.

“Emailed you all the information I’ve dug up.” Sam told him.

“Wonderful.” Bobby grumbled, obviously seeing a lot of reading on the computer in his future, “when are you heading off?”

“Soon as I get our stuff in the car and Sam finishes his hot chocolate.” Dean told him.

“Okay. Well, keep me updated.”

“Will do.” Dean replied, “drink up Sammy.”

Sam rolled his eyes, downed the last of the hot chocolate, packed up the laptop, and headed out to the impala.

He did curl up and go to sleep while Dean drove them, waking up when his brother stopped at a random roadside diner for lunch.

“Want me to get take out or actually go in?” Dean asked, almost not needing to look at him to know he was awake.

“I could do with a stretch.” Sam replied, “and I’m sure you could do with a bit of a break so let’s go in.”

“Okey-dokey.” Dean got out, and Sam followed suit.

Taking in the near-empty state of the diner they stuck to the safe options on the menu, stuff that was fully cooked. They didn’t need to risk a bout of food poisoning when they were heading into an active case. Though Dean did have to remind Sam to up his calories given the vision the night before and the case. What the waitress thought of the interaction they couldn’t care less.

Meal eaten it was back in the car for another few hours in the car to get to their destination. They slipped into the bar, it being the only thing still open as well as being a significant stop in their hunt not just for whatever took him but also for the other people who’d featured in Sam’s vision.

The lady behind the bar took one look at them then pulled a beer for each of them.

“First beer’s on the house for cops. Feds too.” She stated as she did so.

Sam managed to hide his surprise, while he wasn’t surprised at Dean giving off that vibe he was surprised that he had been associated with it also.

“Are we that obvious?” Dean replied.

“I know all the local badges.” She returned as she set the glasses in front of them, “and you’ve got
that law-and-order vibe.”

Dean smiled in appreciation, and Sam had to grin also. It wasn’t often Dean had that pointed out to him. He was pretty sure he’d only been included because it was apparent he was there as Dean’s partner.

“So…what’s the FBI doing in Windom?” She asked.

“Looking into the disappearance of Joe Barton, and the grave robberies since some brainy tech back at headquarters thinks they’re connected.” Dean replied, showing her the printout of the missing man. From the way her face fell it was easy to guess she had a closer connection to him than co-worker.

“I take it you knew him?” Sam asked gently.

“A little.” She replied, with a tinge of sarcasm in her tone, “I’m his wife, Lisa.”

Dean folded up the page, no need to have a reminder right in front of her eyes.

“Is there anything you can tell us about his disappearance?” Sam asked, still gently.

“Same thing I told the sheriff. He stayed late on Friday last week to do inventory…never came home.”

“And the police?” Dean asked.

“Nothing. Truth is, I was scared they stopped looking.” She replied, “but now you’re here.”

“We’ll do our best.” Dean told her, “professional courtesy and all that.”

“Oh, he’s long retired from being a deputy.”

“He worked the grave robbery case back in ’90 didn’t he?” Sam asked.

“He did, yeah.” Lisa confirmed, “Joe was the one who found those bodies. He got an award for that.”

“That was an interesting case.” Dean noted, “he ever talk to you about it?”

“Most of the time he’d say ‘good solid police work.’” She replied, “but after a few beers he’d admit he had a little help.”

“From who?” Dean asked, he was pretty sure it was their dad but was curious to know what information was generally known.

“A specialist. That’s all he’d say.”

That was one way to describe a Hunter Dean had to concede. Might have been a little easier if the name had been available, but probably wouldn’t have helped much.

“Cops ever find the guy that stole the bodies?” He asked instead of pursuing the question.

“No. But when I asked Joe about it, he’d say not to worry. That ‘we took care of what done it’.”

“Thank you.” Sam told her.
“No problem. You find my Joe, and you’ll never have to pay for beer here again.”

“Didn’t need any extra incentive, but thanks.” Dean told her.

Once they left they tracked down the local motel and booked in.

“So what next do you think?” Dean asked once they’d settled in.

“Might be hard to track down Kate, nursing shifts are notoriously unpredictable.” Sam replied, “Adam is on holidays at the moment so finding him might actually be easier if he’s relatively social.”

“Would he be studying medicine if he wasn’t?”

“You’d be surprised.”

“Well…that’s a problem for tomorrow, let’s grab some sleep. Hopefully, your visions will leave you alone tonight.”

Chapter End Notes

Seems to be getting to be a regular thing with the story surprising me *chuckle* though it was the plot bunny rather than a character this time. Got to the end of the chapter and it just went 'that's the end of the chapter', I was expecting to get onto Adam this chapter, oh well...gives me a little more time to keep trying to feel him out as to what he might be like without the ghouls or angels interfering.

News on me: The blood test results said my liver function was back to normal, so from what the doctor said it's just recovery now. Wish it would hurry up *chuckle* I've had enough of being tired all the time. Going to try to go back to a chapter a week, if it doesn't work I'll stay at one every two weeks for a little bit longer.
Chapter 60: Encounter

Since they actually knew what he looked like it was relatively easy to spot Adam the next day as he moved around the small town.

“Adam?” Dean asked as they approached.

“Yeah…who are you?” Adam replied warily.

“I’m Dean, this is Sam.” Dean told him before handing over a photo of their dad, “we were wondering if you knew this man?”

“That’s my dad, John Winchester.” Adam replied after a brief glance at it, “why? Is he okay? I haven’t heard from him in a few years…”

The concern appeared genuine if distanced. Dean turned away from the kid to try to gather himself. Apparently, Sam raising the possibility hadn’t been enough to prepare him. Not that even Sam was fully prepared himself, it was one thing to contemplate it intellectually and acknowledge the reason for the strength of the vision was because he might be family, it was another to have it confirmed.

“I don’t believe this…” Dean muttered, not quite softly enough to escape the hearing of the young man.

“Dean.” Sam scolded gently.

“No, Sam…why the hell wouldn’t he tell us?” Dean retorted.

“We can make a pretty good guess as to why.” Sam replied, “he had something more than just him, and he wasn’t going to tear him away from that.”

Dean glared at the ground.

“What’s going on?” Adam asked, confusion evident in his voice.

“How about we go grab a coffee and talk?” Sam suggested.
Adam nodded and indicated a diner called Cousin Oliver’s before leading the way. Dean grabbed hold of Sam’s arm before his brother could follow.

“Is he…?” Dean asked very softly.

“He’s human.” Sam confirmed, and his brother let go.

“If it weren’t for your vision I’d bet on this being a trap to get to us.” Dean grumbled before heading into the diner with Sam in tow.

Adam was evidently well known, and apparently liked, in the diner.

“Just some coffees for now.” He told the waitress that enquired after what they wanted, Dean having a hard time summoning his usual easy smile for her.

“So what’s going on? Do you know my dad? Is he okay?” Adam asked once the coffees arrived.

“We…uh…” Sam glanced at Dean, not at all sure where to start.

“Um…hate to be the one to break it to you…but he died over 2 years ago now.” Dean spoke up finally.

“We didn’t know about you, or we’d have been here a lot sooner.” Sam added.

“What…You’re his executors or something?”

“No…we…uh…how long did you know him?” Sam stumbled over what to say.

“I only met him a few years back.” Adam replied warily, “mum never talked about him. I only knew some basic stuff about him…”

“Like what?” Dean asked.

“My mum’s a nurse, and he came into the ER pretty torn up. A hunting accident or something. All I really knew was his name; John Winchester.” Adam supplied, “when I was 12 I found one of his old numbers that my mum had. After I begged her for what seemed like 24/7 for the longest time, she finally called him. When he heard he had a son he dropped everything and raced to town. After that, he’d swing by once a year or so and call when he could.”

Sam could see Dean was getting uncomfortable, the description was so far from what they knew of their dad. Though he had a feeling it wasn’t protection on their dad’s part, there was every chance he’d looked at the skinny twig of a boy, mentally compared him to the sons he’d had with Mary and concluded Adam wouldn’t be able to protect himself. He’d like to think the man that was their dad had learnt his lesson with Sam having run away to college the year before but he doubted it.

“You didn’t try calling him when he stopped swinging by and calling?” Sam asked.

“I thought about it…yeah. But I wasn’t sure he was actually missing…he said he was a mechanic, and he certainly kept his car in tip-top shape. He had a beautiful ’67 Chevy Impala. But…well…there’s no such thing as a travelling mechanic and he’d call from all over.” Adam replied, “so why are you here if you didn’t know about me and he didn’t tell you?”

“Well…we’re…uh…” Sam stumbled.

“We’re Sam and Dean Winchester.” Dean stated, taking over, “John Winchester’s sons.”
Adam couldn’t have looked more stunned if their dad’s ghost had popped up to claim them.

“I have brothers?” He asked in a stunned near whisper.

“If John Winchester is your dad…then yeah…guess we’re your half brothers.” Sam told him.

“Wait ‘til mum finds out…” Adam started, then his face fell, “wait…does that mean my mum was the other woman?”

Dean shook his head immediately, “our mum died in ’83 and dad never remarried.”

“You’re taking this pretty well for having it sprung on you.” Adam commented.

“Oh trust me...we’re not.” Dean told him, “well…Sam might be…he’s all into that Zen meditation stuff. Me...if we hadn’t found out about you from our own sources, I’d have thought this was a trap.”

“A trap? So dad was involved in something dangerous?”

“Not what you’re probably thinking.” Sam was quick to assure him, “it’s a long story…”

“Pretty sure dad wanted to keep him out of it, Sam.” Dean interrupted.

“It isn’t a story to be shared in public, is it?” Adam asked.

“No.” Dean answered shortly, “and it probably shouldn’t be shared at all.”

“Dean…” Sam started.

“Sam.” Dean returned, looking seriously at him.

Adam glanced between the two of them a few times apparently trying to figure out these brothers he’d suddenly ended up with, “how about coming back to my place. Mum should be there currently, she has a shift in a few hours, and then you can argue all you want away from prying ears.”

“Good idea.” Sam agreed before Dean could veto it. His brother just grumbled and finished off his coffee. Adam gave him a grateful look.

Kate looked at them curiously when Adam brought them to the house, “who are your friends, sweety?”

“This is Sam and Dean…Winchester.” Adam told her a little hesitantly.

“Winchester? Any relation to John Winchester?”

“He was our dad.” Dean answered.

“Your…I didn’t know he had kids…” she looked a little flustered.

“Mum died in ’83.” Dean told her, “dad never remarried. We knew he wasn’t a monk…but never knew he’d had another kid.”

“If we had we’d have definitely contacted you when…he died a few years back.” Sam added.

“He died? I’m sorry to hear that…he was a good man. How did he die, if I may ask?” Kate asked.

“Hunting accident.” Dean answered.
“Like how he met me? I know he helped out Joe back then…”

“Wait…you mean the case that Joe got an award for?” Adam asked, glancing between them all, “Joe…took credit for what dad did?”

“Um…honey…” Kate started.

“Dad never wanted credit.” Dean stated, “none of us do. Harder to do what we do if your face is known.”

“You followed him into the trade I take it?” Kate asked.

“Uh…yeah…he trained us.” Dean confirmed reluctantly.

“Why didn’t he say anything to me?” Adam asked, almost petulantly.

“Uh…our guess is he wanted you to have something else.” Sam said, “something other than this life. And, presumably, didn’t want to tear you away from your mum. Not telling you about the stuff he did, and not telling us about you, was his way of keeping you safe.”

“But…”

“Sweety…why don’t you go get your keepsakes to show your brothers?”

Adam looked like he was going to protest before heading out of the room almost sulkily.

“He’s still a teenager.” Kate told them a little defensively when he was gone.

“That’s normal, I remember how moody Sam was when he was a teenager.” Dean commented with a grin at his brother.

“Dean.” Sam complained with a roll of his eyes.

“Still is.” Dean teased. Sam ignored him.

“I knew John’s life was dangerous…that’s why I didn’t tell him to start with…why I resisted calling him when Adam asked.” Kate explained, “it wasn’t that I thought he wasn’t good enough or anything…I…didn’t want Adam to get attached only to lose him…I didn’t want to get attached…”

“Understandable.” Sam replied, “it can be…dangerous to be close to people in our profession. Us more than most.”

Dean felt his heart sink as he realised that Sam was thinking about the people he’d lost, again.

“Must be very lonely.” Kate commented.

“We have each other.” Dean stated, “most of the time that’s enough.”

Kate nodded in acceptance, “I’m guessing the grave robberies and Joe going missing are what brought you here?”

“Partially anyway. Then when we found out dad had been in the area last time something similar happened, we knew there was something odd about it when the pages of his journal for the days relating to what happened had been removed.” Dean replied, “did he ever speak to you about what happened back then?”
“Not to the point of telling me what it was or how the two of them tracked it and the bodies down.” Kate told him, “but I did treat him in the ER.”

“What were his injuries?”

“Someone or something had managed to take a few slices out of his arms and torso.”

“So…claws?” Dean suggested.

Kate shook her head, “not claws. A knife of some sort. If Joe hadn’t been the one to bring him in, I’d have had to call him.”

“Well…that counts out quite a few things.” Sam commented.

All three of them fell silent as they heard Adam returning. The teen was carrying a framed photo. Dean did a double take at it when he showed them.

“He took you to a baseball game?” He asked incredulously.

“Yeah, when I turned 14.” Adam confirmed, “he was around for a few of my birthdays.”

Sam flipped open the journal to the appropriate date before his older brother could get his nose out of joint at how normal their dad’s interactions had been with Adam, “September 29th, 2004. One word; Minnesota.”

“He took you to a freaking baseball game?” Dean demanded, not able to drag his thoughts away from the utter incongruousness of it all.

“Yeah…” Adam confirmed hesitantly, not quite sure what the problem was, “why? What did dad do with you on your birthday?”

“Dean. Leave it.” Sam interrupted before turning to Adam with a brief comment, “dad was different with us.”

“Why?” Confusion was plain on the younger man’s face.

“Probably because their mum died when they were so young, sweety.” Kate interrupted, “I’ve seen it a few times, the surviving parent gets overprotective and forgets how to give their kids space to be kids.”

“One way to describe it.” Sam agreed. Obsessive was a better way, but he wasn’t about to say that out loud.

“Well…much as I hate it, I’ve got to run. I’ve got a shift at the hospital. No need to go though, any kids of John are family.” Kate stated, “you staying anywhere?”

“We have a room at the motel.” Dean told her.

“Okay. Well, I hope to see you around, don’t disappear without giving us your numbers.”

Sam nodded, and Kate let herself out of the house. They spent the rest of the day chatting with Adam and getting a sense of the unexpected young man who they’d just learned was part of their family.

Chapter End Notes
I'm actually surprised I got the chapter completed. I'll try to have the next chapter done by next week too :-) getting a sense of Adam has been hard though. I hope you all enjoy.
Chapter 61: Targets of Danger

First thing the next morning they met with the cemetery's caretaker to see if they could unearth any clues that could lead them to what had taken not just the bodies but Joe Barton. That combination of targets didn’t line up with any creature that Sam had been able to dig up information on, and the limited amount of CCTV footage he’d retrieved hadn’t given them anything to go on either. The most he’d got was a shadow on the footage from the bar and all that told them was it was roughly human-sized.

“This tomb was built in 1926.” The cemetery's caretaker told them stuffily as he let them into the gated crypt, “four generations of the Millsap family were interred here.”

“They don’t build them like this anymore.” Dean commented.

“Tell me, agents, have you thought about where you might like to spend eternity?” The caretaker asked, and both of them nearly did a double take as he pulled out a card from his jacket.

“Uh…we’re doing our best to delay that for as long as possible.” Dean told him with a strained smile. Now was not the time to get into the number of things trying to kill them, and even if they failed a grave or crypt somewhere wasn’t where their physical remains were going to end up. A Hunter’s funeral and their ashes buried somewhere by the only people who’d care they’d lost the fight; other Hunters. Officialdom probably wouldn’t even know they no longer existed.

The caretaker put his card away with a disappointed look as the brothers entered the structure.

“Three bodies went missing, correct?” Sam commented as they looked around, “any idea who took them?”

“Hooligans.” The caretaker answered promptly, “sick, deranged hooligans.”

Accurate, unhelpful, but accurate.

Dean moved over to one of the severely damaged sarcophagi and crouched to look at the fluid that had spilled out of it, Sam at his shoulder. The strong smell of whatever it was had him flinching back from it.
“That’s not blood.” He noted with a cough.

“Embalming fluid I think.” Sam said, looking at the caretaker for confirmation.

The elderly man nodded, “yes. Whoever committed this crime didn’t just take the corpses, they opened them up.”

Dean felt a little sick, at least the list of creatures with a taste for decaying flesh was pretty small. Even smaller was the list of those that could branch out to fresh kills even if they didn’t usually. They thanked the elderly man and headed out of the cemetery.

“Well, that counts out any hiding spots in town.” Dean commented, “the stench would give them away within hours.”

“Agreed.” Sam replied.

“Your Spidey sense picking anything up?”

“Nothing aside from the unusual for a cemetery. Caretaker was human.”

“Okay. So guess our next step is to see if we can find some likely places where the critter with the taste for dead people could have holed up.”

“Remote cabins, caves, mine shafts.” Sam suggested.

“Okay…so let's stop by the local tourist information.”

A quick stop by the small building got them all the information they needed, they didn’t even have to bother the staff member on duty.

Back in their room, Sam went through the information they’d collected and checked what satellite images of the area were available.

“You know…I can’t help feeling like we’re missing something…” Sam commented once he’d finished.

“Spidey sense feeling or Hunter instincts feeling?” Dean asked from where he’d been cleaning the weapons while Sam worked. Sitting still had never been a strong point for him, plus his brother was a much better researcher.

“The latter I’m pretty sure.”

“Okay. So where do you think we need to look for whatever it is we’re missing?”

“Local knowledge maybe?”

“Check with Kate and Adam?” Dean suggested, “would be a good time to check on them anyway, make sure they’re okay while the critter is still out there and we’re still in the area.”

Sam nodded his agreement, even if it didn’t lead to a new avenue of investigation the break would help.

Dusk made the shadows distorted and deceptive, they were long used to the effect though. As they approached the house, they saw Adam also approaching it.

“Adam?” Sam queried.
The young man looked over at them, “Sam? Dean? Coming to visit are you?”

“Yeah.” Dean replied, “what were you doing?”

“Just walking home.” Adam responded.

“Are you sure it’s wise to be out this late with Joe still missing?” Sam asked.

“I’m an adult, remember. This isn’t late, and I’m usually out at this time. What could happen?”

“Oh…well…” Sam tried to figure out how to answer.

“We just want you to be safe.” Dean beat him to it, “with wha…whoever took Joe still out there, maybe just play it safe.”

“What…are you guys paranoid or something? Who would want to do anything to me?”

Something tingled on the edge of Sam’s senses, but before he could even turn to look in the appropriate direction, or come up with something to say that wouldn’t have their kid brother thinking they were insane, a scream split the night.

Adam lost all colour in his face, “mum?”

Dean reacted faster than Sam, turning and racing towards the house. Sam was on his heels an instant later, Adam belatedly joining the rush after a few stunned seconds. The door was locked, but that didn’t deter Dean more than a second. Sam made a mental note to repay Kate as he followed his brother through the splintered door.

As they closed on the bedroom the sense of ‘human’ that Sam could feel in front of them abruptly vanished, though the sense of whatever the other thing was didn’t. Almost without thinking about it he checked his motion, turned, and grabbed Adam, preventing him from continuing on into the bedroom.

“Let me go!” The young man demanded.

“Trust me…you don’t want to go in there.” Sam told him, “she…she’s gone. I…have psychic abilities, I felt her…die…”

“What? That…that’s crazy.” Adam retorted, still fighting to get out of Sam’s grip.

“Sam.” Dean reappeared in the doorway of the bedroom and Sam looked at him. The anguish on his face, accompanied by the small head shake, told Dean that their goal had abruptly changed, “I’m going to need your help figuring out where whatever it was dragged her.”

Adam glared at Sam and pulled himself out of his grip before stalking past Dean into the bedroom. Various pieces of furniture were upturned, but beyond that, there was no indication of Kate or her attacker. Not at first glance anyway.

“Give me a hand with the bed.” Dean stated after he spotted the scratch marks leading under it.

Sam didn’t need to move his hand to shift the bulky piece of furniture, but he did anyway. Adam visibly started as the bed moved gently away from it’s resting spot and looked wide-eyed at Sam.

“Yeah…he wasn’t lying about the psychic abilities.” Dean told him, effortlessly putting the clues together.
The scratches led to a heating vent, and Dean sighed even as Sam came to his side. He knew Sam was mildly claustrophobic, for good reason given how big his brother was. He also knew that the slightest hint of making allowances for that sort of stuff would have him stubbornly insisting on going into the situation anyway, one of the reasons he teased him about his severe fear of clowns. Sometimes his little brother was too stubborn for his own good. Fortunately, they had a long established habit that let him bypass that stubbornness. A simple glance was enough to initiate the game of rock paper scissors, which he lost. Even as he made a show of being frustrated at the outcome, he was glad and hoped Sam never figured out he lost deliberately to spare him.

The vent was a tight squeeze even for him, and he regretted effectively volunteering for it though he was happy Sam wasn’t trying to squeeze into the space at the same time. There was a slight blood trail, which told him he was on the right track. He made sure he had his gun free just in case he came face to face with whatever fugly had decided to take their kid brother’s mother from him. Sam hadn’t indicated the critter was still present, but without asking questions he didn’t want to detail in front of Adam he couldn’t know whether his little brother could actually sense whatever it was. The only thing he did know his brother had picked up was that Kate was no longer with them and Dean hated that he hadn’t been fast enough.

Rounding a bend, he came on the scene that confirmed what Sam had indicated. Blood, flesh, hair, other things that he didn’t want to look close enough at to identify coated the inside of the vent.

Dean sighed, squirmed around enough to fish out his phone, and snapped a picture of the carnage before wiggling back out the way he came. There was no way he was dragging himself through that mess, the vent went vertically down afterwards anyway, and there was no guarantee he’d have been able to get down it safely. Sam had to help fish him out of the vent when he got back, another thing that made him grateful it hadn’t been Sam in the vent.

Adam looked pleadingly at him, and Dean wished he could give him good news, “sorry, kid.”

He opened up the pictures and handed his phone to Sam even as Adam’s eyes welled with tears. Dean pulled the young man to him in a reassuring hug even as Sam swore softly at the mess shown in the photo.

“I’ll call the police.” Sam said gently, getting a nod from Dean, before moving a short distance away and punching the emergency number into his own phone.

It didn’t take long for the sirens to sound as various cars screeched to a stop out the front of the house, maybe someone else had heard the screams, or seen them go through the door. Definitely wouldn’t be the first time that sort of thing had happened to them.

They explained to the grumpy deputies about how they’d been talking to Adam when they heard Kate scream. They’d raced in to try to help, but she was gone by the time they got there, Dean had entered the vent when they’d spotted the scratches in the hope of being able to save her only to come across the mess.

The deputy swore when they showed him the photo Dean had taken, his resignation to having to have their techs crawl in so they could document the scene was evident on his face. The deputy wasn’t completely happy with the revelation that they were Adam’s half-brothers, but given the teenager was still clinging to Dean he had to accept that Adam accepted them as such. With a warning to not leave town, they were chased out of the house as it got declared a crime scene.

Sam managed to get permission to get some clothes and other personal items for Adam from his room while Dean gently shepherded the distraught young man out of the house.
It wasn’t until Adam was partway through the hot chocolate that Dean gave him, after getting a rollaway bed from the office and narrowly avoiding an extra charge for an additional occupant, that he found his voice again.

“You didn’t even hesitate.”

“With what?” Dean asked.

“Running in there…into danger you had no idea what was from…to save a woman you only met yesterday.”

Dean shrugged, “kinda what we do.”

“And what is that, exactly? Mum seemed to know…but no one’s told me.”

“Kid…you don’t want to know. Dad wanted to keep you out of it, least we can do is honour that wish.”

“Don’t give me that. Neither of you so much as blinked about running in there. And don’t get me started about Sam having psychic abilities…abilities you were very careful not to mention to the deputies even though he could have easily proved it to them just like he proved it to me.”

“It’s not safe to reveal them.” Dean explained.

Adam looked around at Sam, “are those senses of yours good enough to tell the difference between people?”

“If I know them well enough, yeah.” Sam replied reluctantly.

“So…the only way you could sense her die…is she was the only person there. So what killed her?”

“We don’t know, yet.” Sam replied.

“Sam.” Dean interrupted.

“No, Dean. His mother was just taken, it might be after him too for all we know.” Sam returned, “he at least needs to know how to protect himself.”

“We have this place fortified against everything it’s possible to fortify against.” Dean retorted, “and we’re here. If we need to have that discussion it doesn’t need to be tonight.”

“I’m not a child, you know.” Adam inserted a little petulantly.

“No…but you are our kid brother, and like it or not that means we’re going to protect you.” Dean told him.

Adam looked at Sam, “is he always like this?”

Sam chuckled, “you’re not even seeing his mother hen side.”

He barely managed not to laugh at the disconcerted expression on Adam’s face at that revelation.

“You need to rest.” Dean told him, and gestured to the bed he’d used the night before, “take the bed, I’ll camp on the rollout.”

Adam glanced between Dean, the bed, and the rollaway bed, “uh…you’re not going to fit on the
rollout. Sure…you’re not as big as Sam, but you’re bigger than me, and you’re not going to be comfortable on that.”

Dean shrugged, “don’t care. I want to keep watch for a bit anyway.”

“Dean…” Sam complained, and he didn’t even have to finish the sentence for his big brother to know what he meant.

“Don’t even think about it, Sam.”

Adam actually let out the ghost of a chuckle as Sam rolled his eyes at Dean.

“I’m guessing you grabbed some PJs for him when you grabbed his stuff from his room?” Dean asked Sam.

“Of course.”

“Go get comfortable.” Dean told Adam, gesturing towards the bathroom.

For a moment it looked like the young man would protest, then he grabbed the pyjamas and toiletries Sam had retrieved for him and disappeared into the bathroom.

“Ease up a bit, Dean. It’s not like he’s used to having brothers, much less an extremely protective one.”

“You going to try claiming you’re not just as bad?”

“Nah…comes with the territory I think. But I also know what it’s like to be the focus, and if I’m reading him right…he needs a little space. He did just lose his mum.”

“Space is not necessarily a good thing when combined with grief.”

“He’s not me, or you for that matter. Just ease up on him and let him convey what he needs, protecting him is one thing, smothering him is something different.”

Dean turned away to stare moodily out the window, it really bugged him that he didn’t know what had attacked Kate, what might be coming after Adam next. For all he knew it wouldn’t blink twice at the fortifications they had on the room.

Adam was yawning when he came out of the bathroom.

Dean opened his mouth, hesitated a moment considering what his brother had advised, before rephrasing what he had been about to say, “you look tired, why don’t you grab some sleep?”

Sam was independent enough that most of the time anything that came out of his mouth phrased as an order was taken as a suggestion, but as his little brother had pointed out Adam wasn’t either of them, and he wasn’t familiar enough with him to know just how he’d take those.

“It kinda just hit.” Adam mumbled, running a hand over his face to try to bring himself more alert.

Sam gave him a sympathetic smile, “yeah…it kinda does that. You won’t feel quite so drained once you’ve had a sleep.”

Adam tried to marshall a response then decided that it was probably a good idea since he was having trouble forming sentences. He headed towards the rollaway bed only to have Dean intercept him gently and wave him towards the proper bed.
"I wasn’t kidding about wanting to keep watch."

"But…"

"It’s okay. Nothing I haven’t done before." Dean reassured him, "I’ll nap tomorrow afternoon if we don’t take out the bastard in the morning."

Adam frowned but let himself be guided into the bed by Dean as Sam flipped off the light and shut down his laptop. Sleep did not come as quickly as he’d expected though, every time he closed his eyes and tried to sink into sleep the grief and memories of the events intruded and pulled him back out. Tears welled in his eyes despite his wish to avoid thinking of it all.

Sam and Dean shared a sympathetic glance in the gloom as they heard the stifled sobs before Dean headed over to the bed and their distraught kid brother.

"C’m’ere." Dean said gently, gathering the teen into his arms, settling him comfortably, and stroking his hair gently as he latched on, “it’s okay. I’m here, you’re safe.”

Sam smiled in bittersweet memory, remembering the number of times Dean had done that for him after Jess. Dean didn’t move even after it was apparent Adam had finally dropped off to sleep. Sam climbed into his own bed, with the laptop off there wasn’t much more he could do anyway, and unless he missed his guess, their kid brother wasn’t going to have an easy night.

Once asleep he slipped across to Adam’s dream, it was just starting to get tumultuous. He effortlessly calmed everything down and shifted to a soothing scene.

“Sam?” Adam looked at him with confusion.

“It’s okay.” Sam told him, “you’re safe.”

The young man nodded in the tranquil way that resulted from dream logic being in full force and turned away. Sam settled in to watch over him.

Chapter End Notes

The Bunny did not want to cooperate for this chapter, I wanted to get further along than this. That said…this doesn’t feel like a 3000-word chapter *chuckle* I’ll do my best to get the conclusion to all this up next week, sorry it’s spreading out over more chapters than I originally wanted it to.
Chapter 62: Hunting

Sam woke up shortly after Adam did to the smell of breakfast cooking. Dean was humming softly to himself as he busied himself in the kitchenette, and Sam had to smile to himself. His big brother always seemed most contented when he was cooking, though a lot of the time meals were left up to various diners. He cooked more frequently since their stay at the reservation though.

Dean glanced over at them and grinned, “ah, you’re awake. How did you sleep? Want some breakfast?”

“Better than I expected.” Adam replied with a yawn, “weird dream though…you were in it, Sam.”

Sam gave him a self-conscious smile, “uh…yeah…”

Dean’s hands stilled as he was portioning out the meal onto the readied plates and he shot a look at Sam, “did you go dreamwalking, Sammy?”

“Yes…” Sam replied uncomfortably, “I wanted him to actually get some decent rest. Not like it’s an exceptionally hard thing to do.”

Adam was glancing back and forth between the two of them like he was at a tennis match, evidently confused at what was going on between them.

Dean rolled his eyes at his little brother and shifted back to Sam’s plate, depositing a more substantial amount on it before finishing up the doling out of breakfast.

“So…” Adam said slowly, “I didn’t dream you…that was actually you inside my dream?”

Sam nodded hesitantly, he wasn’t sure how their new brother would take it.

“That’s…kinda creepy…and reassuring at the same time.”

“If you’d prefer I can stay out unless it’s an emergency…” Sam hurriedly offered, “I don’t want you to be uncomfortable…”

“No…it’s okay.” Adam reassured him promptly, “it just…surprised me. I mightn’t have ever met a
psychic before…but I get the impression you would be the last one to ever misuse it…”

“Got that right.” Dean commented as he deposited the plates on the small table, “breakfast is served.”

He directed Sam towards the plate intended for him, his little brother gave him a look as he saw the increased size. Dean just returned it levelly, Sam knew well that if he was going on nighttime adventures, his meals had to be increased even if he didn’t actually feel the increased requirement. But the fact that he didn’t have a raging appetite like Dean led to him resisting it at times. It was a good thing Dean was an excellent cook. The shaman had helped them figure out what exactly it was that drew Sam towards the food he liked so now the meals were stuff Sam enjoyed while also being what Dean adored. And Sam definitely wasn’t upset that it meant his brother was eating healthier without really thinking about it.

One breakfast was finished with Dean cleared away the dishes while Sam arranged himself in the lotus position on the end of his bed.

“We usually meditate for a little while before doing whatever we have planned for the day.” Dean explained to Adam without needing to see his confused expression.

“Would you like to join us?” Sam asked.

“It does help settle things.” Dean added.

“Thought you said it was Sam into all the meditation stuff, not you.” Adam replied with confusion.

“Oh, he is.” Dean returned with a grin, “I joined in out of necessity. That and…it’s pretty boring twiddling my thumbs while he contemplated his navel.”

Sam rolled his eyes at his big brother, it may have been under protest to begin with, but he knew Dean didn’t mind it anymore.

“I don’t know how to meditate…” Adam said hesitantly after absorbing that for a moment.

“No problem.” Dean told him, “I can talk you through it. So did you want to join in?”

Adam nodded after another silent moment, his eyes showing his unspoken trepidation.

“Okey-dokey.” Dean waved him towards the couch. The curtains were still firmly drawn.

“Am I going to need to sit like that?” Adam asked, with a gesture at Sam.

“Nope.” Dean replied, “Sam’s the only one who’s flexible enough to do that anyway, and he finds it comfortable for some reason. Just get comfortable on the couch.”

Adam sank onto the couch, Dean joined him and waited until the teen actually settled before speaking.

“Close your eyes, focus on your breathing.” Dean said, soft and measured like he was talking Sam out of the aftermath of a bad nightmare, not that he’d needed to do that anytime recently, “nice, slow, and even. When thoughts intrude just acknowledge them and set them aside.”

He continued in that vein for a bit until he could see that Adam had actually relaxed, then he talked him through tensing and relaxing each part of his body. There were some mental exercises that he routinely did and many more that Sam did that he didn’t even touch on. Adam wasn’t even close to ready to attempt them any more than he’d been when he first started. He’d actually struggled to begin
with because of their need to push hard at it to develop the urgently needed defences on his mind. That wasn’t necessary for Adam though, and if he had anything to do with it would never be necessary.

Once he brought him back to awareness of their surroundings, and Sam finished up with his own they started looking at what they hoped to get done that day.

“What do you know about the surrounds of the town?” Sam asked Adam as he pulled out the information they’d accumulated of the isolated places, steering carefully clear of the research into what creatures it might be in deference to Dean’s desire to keep their kid brother out of it.

“I know a bit…camping wasn’t real big on my agenda growing up…but you do hear stuff. Best places to go if you want to be alone, best places to take your girl, best places to ‘get back to nature’, stuff like that.” Adam replied, “you figured out what killed my mum yet?”

“Not yet, no.” Sam answered.

“Maybe I can help.” Adam suggested.

“Adam…” Dean interjected.

“Dean.” Adam returned, “I get that you’re trying to protect me, really I do. But whatever it is killed my mum. I want to help. I’m pre-med…research is no stranger to me.”

Dean blew out a frustrated breath.

“It would be better if he finds out from us, Dean.” Sam pointed out gently, “he’s only going to go looking himself anyway, as he said he’s no stranger to research. No biology student would be.”

“Damnit.” Dean grumbled.

Sam shifted the laptop to give Adam a view of the information he had up about the town, and it’s surroundings, “here. Take a look at this and tell me what you know. We’re pretty sure that the corpse stealing is the same creature responsible for taking Joe and your mum. What we’re trying to figure out is where it might hole up, we can count out the town itself given the stench associated with the corpses that went missing.”

Adam frowned as he looked over the information Sam had collated from the dozen different sources he’d tracked down, including satellite images.

“Maybe this area…?” Adam suggested hesitantly after a while, gesturing to an area with a disused cabin marked on the maps. The satellite image revealed to be particularly dilapidated and partially falling down, “it doesn’t have a ‘stay away, dangerous’ reputation, for want of a better description, but it does have a…’don’t go there, it’s not nice’ type reputation. If they’re taking the corpses somewhere away from the cemetery that’s where it’s most likely the smell won’t be noticed. Decomposition is not an easy smell to hide, nor is embalming fluid if they were treated that way.”

Sam saw Dean tilt his head in surprise even as he took what their kid brother had said in.

“You know…” Sam said slowly, “I think that’s what’s been bugging me…why would they move the corpses away from the cemetery in the first place? There’s plenty of crypts so they’d have shelter, and the smell wouldn’t draw attention.”

“The corpses were definitely taken out of the…tomb things.” Dean pointed out.
“Sarcophagi.” Sam corrected absently, “and I wasn’t saying they weren’t taken out, just asking why they’d go away from the cemetery rather than staying there somewhere.”

“So whatever it is is intelligent?” Adam asked.

“Well…yes.” Sam confirmed, consciously ignoring Dean’s annoyance.

“So…it didn’t just kill my mum…it murdered her…”

“Adam…” Dean soothed, squeezing his shoulder gently, “we’ll get what did it.”

“I want to help.”

“You are helping.” Sam told him, “you already have.”

“No. I mean when you go after it. I want to help take it out.”

“Adam.” Dean began repressively.

“Don’t tell me I can’t.” Adam snapped in reply, “it MURDERED my mother! I need to help take it out. Please.”

Sam could see that Dean was being torn in two by the plea and interrupted, “you ever used a gun?”

Adam’s face fell, “no…”

“Okay.” Dean stated, “so before we even consider you coming along with us we need to find out if you can hit the broad side of a barn.”

“Well…we need to eliminate that area anyway…” Sam suggested.

Dean nodded after a quick glance at Sam, from his experience reading his little brother he’d bet he wasn’t getting any sense of danger, “okay. But you’re staying in the car while we clear the area, with an open line, so we know if you get in trouble.”

Adam looked like he was going to argue for a bit before he nodded his agreement, he had a feeling that neither of his half-brothers would hesitate to somehow manage to stuff him in some sort of protective custody if they felt it was needed. With or without the cooperation of the sheriff and deputies.

It didn’t actually take long to conclude the area wasn’t occupied by what they were after thanks to Sam’s radar, and that even the flimsiest shelter in the area had no signs of occupancy.

Once back at the impala Sam set up a target as Adam got out of the car to join them. Carefully Sam explained and demonstrated to Adam how to fire his gun before handing it over to let him try.

Adam took careful aim with the gun, uncertainty clearly visible on his face, before pulling the trigger. He dropped the gun with a small yelp as it bucked in his hands. Sam blinked at the target in surprise, it was utterly untouched by Adam’s shot.

“Oh okay.” Dean stated, smoothly scooping up the gun and handing it back to Sam, “let’s table that for now.”

He headed over to the impala and pulled a shotgun out of the boot.

“What?” Dean asked to Sam’s baffled expression as he returned, “just ‘cause he has Winchester
blood doesn’t mean he can automatically handle a gun. Even I barely hit the target on my first try and dad was quick to label me a natural.”

He handed the shotgun to Adam, “here…if you have to defend yourself use this. Point in the general direction of the bad guy and squeeze the trigger. Just don’t point it in our direction.”

Adam accepted the weapon gingerly, the heat and recoil of the handgun still firmly in the front of his mind, “so…you’ll still let me help go after whatever murdered my mum?”

“Hell no.” Dean told him, “that’s for protection only. We’re probably going into close quarters when we find the bastard and a shotgun is the last weapon you want in a situation like that. I know you want to face down whatever did it, but that’s a recipe for disaster. It could get you killed, especially as the critter is probably after you. We’ll find a place where you should be safe while we go find it.”

Adam looked unhappy, but he didn’t argue, he was smart enough to know that what Dean said was true.

“Where is safe though?” Sam asked, “we still don’t know exactly what it is so it’s anyone’s guess as to whether our fortifications will stop it.”

“It’s stayed away from crowds, even though it obviously has strength and agility, only going after its targets when they’re alone.” Dean noted, “so…leaving him at Cousin Oliver’s is a possibility.”

“I can’t just waltz into Cousin Oliver’s with a shotgun!” Adam exclaimed.

“Then we’ll put it in a duffel.” Dean stated, “if nothing happens you won’t need to pull it out, and they don’t need to know. If something does, they won’t care.”

Adam wasn’t at all sure it would be that simple but didn’t argue. He felt incredibly self-conscious walking in knowing there was a shotgun in the duffel Dean was carrying, unloaded though it might be. That there was a deputy grabbing a coffee at the counter did nothing for his peace of mind.

“Howdy, Adam.” The deputy said as he turned from the counter with the takeaway cup in his hand, “how are you holding up?”

“Been better, sir.” Adam returned softly.

“Your…brothers…looking after you?”

Adam nodded, “kept the nightmares at bay, made sure I ate.”

“Good, good.” The deputy looked at Sam and Dean, “could I talk to the two of you? Outside?”

“Sure.” Dean returned, depositing the duffel bag at the most defensively positioned table in the place then handed over a few notes to the staff with instructions to get Adam anything he wanted. Then he and Sam joined the deputy outside.

“There a problem deputy?” Dean asked.

“Well, we were surprised to find out that there were some FBI agents looking into the disappearance of Joe and the corpse thefts. We were even more surprised that they’re apparently brothers.” The deputy declared, folding his arms and glaring at them, “since when do brothers work together, especially on a case involving family?”

“We actually volunteered after the techs turned up the connection back to the corpse stealing back in
“90.” Dean told him, “see…we’d recently found out our father had been in the area at about the same time, but he’d never mentioned it to us, and the journal he kept at the time had pages torn out for the period he was here. We’d been planning on taking some time off to find out what he’d been hiding, so when the case came up, we stuck our hands up. Normally they wouldn’t assign family together, but they didn’t think it was a hot case and given our connection to the area they made an exception. The last thing we were expecting was to discover we had a half-brother and to have him right in the middle of whatever is going on.”

“Didn’t think it was a hot case even with Joe missing?”

“You know as well as we do if a missing person isn’t found within 48 hours you’re most likely looking for a corpse.” Sam pointed out sadly. That was doubly so in their job, with the timeline usually shortened to hours or minutes.

The deputy’s face fell as he let out a sigh, “yeah…true that. Just…keep hoping you know…”

“Yeah…we know.” Dean replied, “and finding him alive would be the best possible result, we haven’t given up on him…but we’d be fooling ourselves if we thought it was a real possibility.”

“You got any leads?”

“We’ve got a possibility we’re planning on checking out, just didn’t want to leave Adam on his own, not after last night.” Dean told him.

“You think that was deliberate? It looked like a wild animal attack.”

“Actually it was we didn’t want to leave him alone with his grief.” Sam corrected, “but speaking of the attack…have you ever known a wild animal to climb through ducts and drag someone into them, do that level of damage, then drag the body off all within minutes? When there’s likely plenty of easier prey not far away?”

“What then?”

“An animal specifically trained to do so, maybe.” Dean suggested.

“Damn…that’ll be hard to prove.” The deputy groused and the brothers nodded their agreement, “want some help checking out your lead?”

Dean promptly shook his head, “mightn’t be anything, wouldn’t want to waste your time.”

“If you insist, don’t forget to call for backup if you find something though.”

Both of them nodded without any intention of actually following through on that, there were too many bodies with the case already.

The deputy headed towards the sheriff’s office with evident reluctance as the brothers got into the impala and headed towards the cemetery.

“So where do we start?” Sam asked as they looked over the area.

“Where we know they at least visited then work our way out from there.” Dean stated, “hopefully we’ll get an indication of where they went, or have your Spidey sense point the way.”

“Sounds like a plan.” Sam agreed, following his brother as he led the way to the crypt where the thefts had taken place.
Once inside they carefully scoured the cramped room. It was Dean who spotted the disrupted cobwebs and the slightly out of alignment stone block. Between the two of them they got the block shifted to reveal a crudely dug tunnel. Dean swore softly before moving forward to climb in, Sam grabbed his shoulder before he could go in.

“Be careful, I’m sensing danger in there.” Sam told his big brother softly.

“Awesome.” Dean grumbled before freeing his gun and climbing in, he knew better than to suggest that Sam stay behind. Even with his little brother’s dislike of confined spaces nothing would prevent him from backing him up, especially after sensing danger waiting for them.

He rolled out of the tunnel and into a combat stance with his gun already aimed, startling the pair that had set up home in the long-sealed crypt. His aim wavered as he saw he was facing Joe and Kate. It didn’t last long, fixing steadily on Kate a split second later. He definitely knew she was dead, but there was a possibility that Joe was a prisoner, a slim possibility of course but still a possibility.

Sam rolled out of the tunnel and came up ready beside him, his gun didn’t waver for even a second as he aimed at Joe. That was all Dean needed to know that it wasn’t the real Joe standing there.

“Ghouls.” Sam stated unequivocally, “you’re ghouls.”

Dean shifted his aim to ‘Kate’s’ head at that information.

“You know, I find that term racist.” ‘Kate’ retorted before snatching up a knife and the two of them leapt at them, perhaps counting on their speed to let them get the drop on the Hunters.

It didn’t work. The gunshots sounded almost simultaneously as the brothers blew the heads off the ghouls. The corpses fell to the floor, now completely unrecognisable and Dean glanced at Sam to get an idea of whether it was safe to relax. When his little brother relaxed and holstered his gun he knew it was over.

They took in the state of the crypt, bones littered the floor along with partially consumed corpses here and there. Opening up a couple of newish looking coffins they found the bodies of Kate and Joe.

They were contemplating crawling back through the tunnel and summoning the deputies when the formerly barred crypt door slammed open accompanied by various shouts of ‘freeze police!’ The brothers glared at the excited deputies crowded in the doorway as their eyes readjusted to the sunlight now streaming in.

One of the deputies put his gun up, and they recognised him as the one they’d spoken to at the diner, “I thought you were going to call for backup if your lead panned out. My thought was that would be well before any gunfights.”

“There wasn’t time.” Dean replied, “by the time we knew the perps were here playing dress up as their victims they were coming at us with drawn knives.”

The deputy glared at them as the others holstered their own weapons grumpily, “any sign of said victims?”

“Unfortunately.” Dean replied, gesturing at the coffins.

The deputy went over to look in them and gagged, “were they EATING them?”

“Looks like.”
“Damn. You want to call in your techs or shall we just get ours?”

“Would be faster to call in yours.” Dean told him, “not like there’s anyone to prosecute now.”

“Yeah…you saved us a bunch of money taking them out. Let’s clear out to let the techs in.” The deputy declared, waving them to the exit. They were more than happy to leave the disturbing crypt to the techs.

“Think there’s a chance we can get the bullets before they run them in the national database?” Dean asked after he parked the impala back outside the diner and gave a quick scan with the bug checker.

“No need.” Sam told him, “telekinesis is real useful for distorting striations.”

It took a second for Dean to parse the Sam speak into regular language then he gave a bark of laughter, “should have realised you’d be one step ahead.”

Sam flashed him a grin before hopping out of the impala and heading into Cousin Oliver’s, Dean following him shortly after. Joining Adam they ordered lunch for the three of them.

“Did you get it?” Adam asked in a whisper while they waited for the meals to be delivered.

“Got them.” Dean confirmed with a nod.

They saw Adam absorb silently that there was more than one before continuing, “what were they?”

“Ghouls.” Sam answered, ignoring Dean’s glare, “usually they’re scavengers, feeding off the dead. They take the form of the last corpse they eat. The lore has hints that they may also take the thoughts and memories of them too. They don’t usually actually kill, but they are dangerous. They’re more than capable of killing someone who comes on them even when they’re not killing their food.”

Adam looked a little sick at the description but rallied quickly, medical was not the career path of the squeamish, “do you know why they came after Joe and mum?”

“We didn’t get to play twenty questions with them.” Dean told him with a sigh, “but my guess would be they were connected to the one that brought dad here back in ’90. Joe helped him, and your mum had a relationship with him. They’d probably have come after you next as dad’s son.”

“Oh…”

The conversation fell into silence as their meals were delivered.

“Is there going to be something for me to…” Adam asked hesitantly as he poked at his meal, unable to actually finish the sentence.

“Bury?” Dean finished gently, “yeah, we found her and Joe.”

Adam found himself tearing up at the news, even though he’d known since the previous night that she was gone. Dean abandoned his meal to shift around the table next to Adam then pulled him to his side. The teen turned to bury his face in the oldest brother’s shoulder.

“Adam, you okay?” One of the waitresses asked as she came over, they recognised her as the one who had spoken so familiarly with their kid brother the first time they’d visited the diner.

“His mother’s body has been found.” Sam offered softly in explanation while Dean ignored her in favour of turning his entire attention on Adam.
“Oh…damn…I heard about the attack. I’m so sorry to hear that. You need anything let me know, okay?”

Adam gave her a teary nod, but it was apparent even to his new brothers that he didn’t want to stay in the conversation.

“Did you want to stay here or go back to the room?” Dean asked gently.

“Room.” Adam said brokenly after a silent moment.

“Could we get these put in to go boxes, please?” Sam asked the waitress promptly.

“Of course.” She reassured them instantly, quickly taking the meals away and returning with the uneaten portions packed away neatly in boxes, also bringing back the change from the notes that Dean had handed over when they left Adam there. There seemed to be more than Dean expected but he filed it away as something to ask about later after they’d got their kid brother sorted.

Once back in the privacy of their motel room Adam cried himself out, dropping into an exhausted sleep once the tears dried up. Dean coaxed what was left of his meal into him a few hours later.

Dean’s first thought now that the situation had been taken care of was to head for the hills, Hunters weren’t exactly big on formality. Most Hunters that had died weren’t even officially known to be dead, just getting a Hunter’s funeral at the hands of their fellow Hunters. However, Kate hadn’t been a Hunter, and Adam needed to deal with officialdom even if he hadn’t required the closure of a funeral. They hadn’t needed to talk him into getting her cremated, that had been Kate’s stated preference.

Lisa in the bar made good on her promise regarding free drinks after they went to let her know that Joe’s body had been found, only to find out that the deputies had already notified her and been gracious enough to give them credit for it. They didn’t take advantage of it though.

The morning after the funeral, after making sure Adam was ready, they headed to Bobby’s.

“Who’s this?” Bobby asked bluntly when he answered the door to their knock.

“This is Adam…our…half-brother.” Dean answered while Adam shifted uncomfortably.

“Since when?” Bobby demanded.

“Uh…29 September 1990 apparently.” Sam supplied.

Bobby grumbled about paranoid Winchesters who really should have mentioned getting another son before something decided to try munching on said son before sticking his hand out to the teen, “welcome to the family. I’m Bobby, surrogate father to these two fools for my sins.”

“Good to meet you, sir.” Adam returned hesitantly.

“Come on in.” Bobby stated, waving the three brothers into his home. He had a feeling life was going to become more complicated.
Finally. I thought having characters take on a life of their own was supposed to make writing EASIER...I swear it was like Dean and Adam were having a tug of war over the chapter...and Sam laughing at my frustration...yeesh...

My apologies for how long this chapter took, I hope it was worth the wait. Now to see if I can corralle the characters for the next chapter...wish me luck.
Chapter 63: Ghost in the Office Building

“Hey Sam, could you take a look at this?” Adam called as Sam came back in from outside. Dean was happily tinkering away in Bobby’s workshop. They’d had to make a couple of trips to collect Adam’s belongings as they got him sorted, and once the police had cleared the house for them to reenter. One of the first things they’d arranged was for Anna to stop by and carve the protective sigils into Adam’s ribs, followed by Sam giving him the anti-possession tattoo. The days that had followed had seen them expand his knowledge of the supernatural at his insistence and Sam installing his customised programs on Adam’s laptop and phone, his new phone since his old one hadn’t been even remotely up to the task. With his degree transferred to the local university in Sioux Falls, not without some convincing from Sam, and the academic authorities allowing him some time to adapt to his new circumstances Adam had been focusing on learning what it was his brothers, and Hunters in general, looked for when locating a likely case.

“What have you got?” Sam asked.

“This firm in Cleveland, Ohio called Sandover Bridge & Iron has an unusually high suicide rate over the last month or so.” Adam told him, gesturing at the array of articles he had up on his computer.

Sam ran his eyes over the nearly dozen names spread over an increasing number of articles covering the phenomenon. The company had arranged some group counselling sessions about combating suicidal impulses after the most recent one, several employees had been put on leave following actually witnessing some of the suicides. One in particular after being spooked out by seeing someone who hadn’t been there following the second suicide, by pencil to the neck of all things.

“Well…it is pretty tough economic times for companies like that, such drastic reactions aren’t unknown.” Sam pointed out, “and…the mind can often play tricks during times of high stress and trauma, so we can’t put too much stock in that guy thinking he saw someone in the mirror that wasn’t there when he turned around.”

“When I compared the numbers to similar companies in the same field and prominence, the number of suicides were significantly higher.” Adam told him. Sam knew well a biology student didn’t throw the word ‘significant’ around lightly, especially one planning on going into medicine.
“Okay. Let’s take a look.” Sam answered, pulling his own laptop over and firing up the various hacking programs he had on it.

Adam shifted over to watch as Sam expertly slipped into the network for the company.

“That’s odd.” Sam commented after poking through the emails and records of the dead employees.

“What is?” Adam asked.

“Every single one of the suicides were summoned to HR no more than three days before they took their lives…room 1444.” Sam replied, “the first one, Paul Durban, was only 2 weeks from retirement.”

“What makes someone commit suicide that close to retirement?” Adam asked.

“Nothing normal.” Sam answered with a frown.

“Anyone else been summoned to HR?”

“Let’s see…” Sam did some more digging, “yeah…but the room numbers are all 700 numbers.”

“So…the HR department is split in two?”

“Maybe.” Sam pulled up the organisational layout, “not according to this. HR is all on floor 7. Floor 14…doesn’t seem to have anything significant on it, mostly storage and a couple of offices. 1444 appears to be a storage room.”

“Oh…” Adam said, disappointment in his voice.

“Let’s see what was there historically.” Sam stated, pulling up the history of the company, “now that is interesting.”

“What?”

“The building used to be only 14 floors high. And the founder’s office, one P. T. Sandover, was in room 1444. Never married, used to say that he was the company. Definite workaholic.”

“You think it’s his ghost?”

“It’s a good possibility. Let’s see where he’s buried…” Sam did some more searching, “now that’s a pain.”

“What?”

“He wasn’t buried, he was cremated. So either it’s not him, or he’s tied to something else.”

“Like what?”

“Some treasured belonging perhaps, some keepsake that someone held onto that just happens to also be remains, hope it’s not the building itself, that’ll be a huge pain to deal with. Being arrested for arson isn’t exactly something we want to have happen.”

“Is burning the only way to deal with ghosts?”

“Usually. Sometimes there’s another weakness, or they’ll go away when they get their revenge. Back at the beginning of November 2005, we dealt with a Woman in White that got taken out by the
ghosts of her children before we could salt and burn her bones. A little while later we ran into a ghost drowning members of a couple of families, turned out to be the families of the kids who drowned the kid who was now the ghost drowning people. When it took out the two people, it went away. Not what we’d have preferred, but the body was let go in the lake so finding the bones was not possible. There’s…also something I can do to take out a ghost if we can’t get to the bones or there’s not enough time. It isn’t without consequences though, and Dean really doesn’t like me doing so. It knocks me out for several hours, and I think Dean keeps thinking I won’t wake up again.”

“Oh…” Adam absorbed that, Sam was a lot more relaxed with displaying his abilities at Bobby’s than he was before but he still didn’t know most of what his brother could do.

“Won’t truly know until we get there.” Sam stated, “thanks for pointing us at it, I’ll go get Dean.”

“I’m coming too.” Adam stated stubbornly.

Sam shook his head immediately, “no. Too dangerous.”

“But…”

“Adam.” Sam looked at him.

Adam might not be as familiar with his brother’s expressions as Dean was but he realised there was something more than just brotherly protectiveness in Sam’s face.

“You…what does Dean call it…Spidey sense?” Adam asked hesitantly.

Sam nodded, “just…stay here. You can help us, and many more Hunters besides, by assisting Bobby.”

“Okay.” Adam agreed reluctantly. He saw Sam relax in relief.

“Thanks.” Sam said before getting up and heading back outside.

Dean was half under a car when Sam reentered the workshop.

“Dean.”

Dean slid out from under the car and looked at him, a smudge of grease on his cheek.

“Thought you were grabbing lunch.”

“I was, but Adam grabbed me first. He found us a case.”

“Okay.” Dean sat up and wiped off his hands, “so what is it?”

“Possible haunting in Cleveland Ohio.”

“Okay.” Dean did a rough calculation of driving time in his head, “you go grab your lunch, I’ll grab our things and let Bobby know. And one of us is going to have to break it to Adam that he’s not coming.”

“That’s already taken care of.” Sam replied, “talked him into staying, I got a sense of danger when he tried to insist on coming.”

Dean shot him a concerned look but nodded in acceptance before getting to his feet. Less than an hour later they were on the road. They stopped for the night at a random motel on the side of the
highway before making it to the bustling city the next afternoon.

“How do you want to handle this?” Dean asked as he gazed up at the tall building. Sam had brought him up to date with what had been dug up about the situation between he and Adam during the drive.

“See if we can establish whether it’s a ghost or something else that’s just resembling a ghost.” Sam replied, “I sent some emails establishing us as reporters writing a historical piece about the company and how it may have led to the creation of a working culture where suicide is a risk during the ride.”

“And they were okay with that?”

“All but begged that we portray their corporate culture in a positive light despite the recent rash of suicides. I replied that it was our belief that it was a culture of success that has backfired in these trying economic times.”

Dean had to chuckle, “Sammy…you ever retire from Hunting you’d have a career in politics.”

“Gee…thanks.” Sam retorted sarcastically, “that cover will get us to see the hot spots of this case, including P.T. Sandover’s old office. And access to any keepsakes of the man. If it’s his ghost something will ping.”

“Okay. Let’s do this.”

“Uh…corporate culture, Dean, we’re going to need to break out the FBI suits.”

Dean swore, he was never comfortable getting dressed up, “fine. Motel first then.”

It didn’t take long for them settle into character before they headed in and introduced themselves to the executives who had been nervously awaiting their arrival.

“I…uh…must admit we’re not exactly enthusiastic about you doing an article after everything that’s happened.” The man, who introduced himself as Les Seward, stated as he shook their hands.

“I assure you, we pride ourselves in both our impartiality and getting to the bottom of any phenomena.” Sam assured him smoothly.

“Where would you like to start?”

“We would like to get a sense of where the company has come from, where it started, the founder, that sort of thing, to start with.” Sam responded.

His assistant quickly darted forward with a small file that someone had evidently been tasked with assembling while they were waiting for the brothers arrival, it almost made them feel guilty. Along with some seeming printouts collected into display folders was a glossy promotional booklet that went over the history of the company.

Sam thanked her as she handed it to him.

“There’s some photos of P.T. Sandover’s office from when he was alive in the booklet.” Seward stated, “unfortunately his old office was converted into a storage room when the extra floors were added.”

“We’d still like to take a look at it, get a sense of where it was placed in the day to day life of the building.”
Seward waved them towards the elevators and took them up to the 14th floor, his face clearly showing that he’d never understand the mentality of reporters. That he had no idea how they’d get any form of a story from the way they were going about this, but he wasn’t going to argue.

“We’ve updated the elevators, obviously, but they were kept in the same location as the very first set of elevators that were ordered to be installed by P.T. Sandover himself.” Seward told them as he led them down the corridor, “the layout has obviously changed, back in Sandover’s time all his top executives had offices along this corridor, culminating in first the desk of his secretary then his office.”

Sam could almost see the bustling corridor with executives coming and going all under the stern gaze of the founder.

“This isn’t the first time you’ve had issues with suicides is it?” Dean asked.

“There were a number of suicides during the Great Depression.” Seward confirmed reluctantly, “but the company wasn’t alone in that, it was a very tough time for everyone. The number of executives that leapt from windows during that time played a role in the decision to move the executive floor when the extra floors were added.”

They stopped in front of room 1444, and Sam stiffened imperceptibly to anyone but his brother as he could feel the sense of a ghost hotspot, though the ghost wasn’t present currently, and unless he missed his guess the anchor wasn’t within the room.

“It’s a storeroom now.” Seward explained, “though much of his furniture got left there rather than cart it up to the new executive floor, the CEO at the time wasn’t comfortable with the old style furniture. He’s recorded as stating several times having the impression of Sandover himself sitting behind the desk and feeling like he was intruding. Subsequent CEOs have preferred more modern furnishings.”

“We’d…love to see those furnishings.” Dean stated, having picked up on his brother’s tenseness. Though he wasn’t sure whether they were about to come face to face with a ghost or not.

Seward nodded resignedly and opened the door, leading them in. Dean took the opportunity while the man’s back was to them to flip the Hunter sign for ‘ghost’ at his brother in question. Sam nodded slightly but sent back the sign indicating that the critter wasn’t currently present.

Inside, haphazardly stored amongst filing from the years since the move, was old style furniture. Desk, chair, filing cabinet, even old metal intrays. There was some old, defunct paperwork in a couple of drawers.

“Can you imagine him sitting behind that desk, controlling everything with a steely hand.” Sam suggested.

“Leather gloved hand.” Seward replied, cracking the first smile they’d seen since they’d arrived, “he was famous for them, they’re on display up on floor 22 along with a couple of other things.”

The temperature noticeably dropped, and both brothers came on alert.

Seward shivered and glanced around with a frown, “looks like we need to get maintenance to look at the air conditioning again.”

“We’d really like to have a look at that display.” Dean suggested, doing his best not to sound like he was urgently trying to get the man out of the room even as he noted the use of the word ‘again’.
“Sure.” Seward nodded and led the way out of the room again.

Sam brought up the rear, every sense on alert. As he reached the door, he felt the ghost manifest behind him, and he spun around to see the old man he’d only seen in pictures before standing there. The door slammed closed, and he had to stumble back awkwardly to avoid being hit, he just barely managed to retain his balance as it was. Dean spun around and was at his side in an instant.

“What happened?” Seward demanded, trying the door and finding, unsurprisingly to the brothers, that he couldn’t open it.

“Think…one of the shelves fell over and caught the door.” Sam fudged quickly.

“Okay. I’ll have to get maintenance up here to sort that out later. Are you alright?” Seward said with a sigh.

“Yeah, I heard the creak in time to jump out of the way.” Sam told him.

“Do you still want to see the display? It would be understandable if you wanted to take the night to recover and continue this tomorrow.” Seward asked.

“A small accident isn’t enough to unsettle me.” Sam returned.

Seward nodded and turned to lead the way back to the elevator. Dean flashed the Hunter sign of ‘ghost’ at Sam again once his back was turned and his brother nodded. Dean followed up with the Hunter sign for ‘anchor’ in question, Sam shook his head, and Dean swore silently.

The ride up to floor 22 was silent. Arriving they exited out into the entry to the current executive area, dominated by a massive display about the company and its founder. Sam’s eyes flew immediately to the gloves proudly displayed in a glass-covered alcove, his senses confirmed they’d found the anchor.

Seward gave them a quick speech about the company, pointing out the various historical items on display. Then he led the way into the new executive area.

Sam used his telekinesis to carefully slip the gloves out of their enclosure and into the inner pocket of his jacket. He started to follow after Seward only to barely have a second to react as the ghost manifested again, then he was flying as the violent spirit threw him across the room.

“What the hell!” He heard Dean exclaim as he slid dazedly down the wall.

He heard Seward calling for security as Dean braced him and checked his eyes. Sam slammed a shield down around the two of them once his thoughts cleared sufficiently, swearing at himself that he should have done that as soon as he grabbed the gloves. At least it appeared, or Seward’s mind had filled it in, that the ghost had fled down a corridor or something rather than just vanishing.

“He can’t have got far.” Seward stated, “we’ll find him and get him arrested. Are you okay?”

“He came out of nowhere.” Sam mumbled, rubbing at the sore spot on his head where he’d connected with the wall, the statement more for Seward’s benefit than detailing what had occurred.

“Do you need medical aid summoned?” Seward asked, more than a little alarmed. They could imagine how having an ambulance turn up wouldn’t do the company’s reputation any favours, the summoning of police would already be bad enough. In the man’s credit, he wasn’t hesitating about summoning emergency services despite it.
“I’m fine.” Sam replied. Dean helped him to his feet, and he thankfully didn’t waver on them.

“I’m sure he’ll be okay with a little rest, I’ll keep an eye on him.” Dean backed him up.

“Okay. I’ll contact you in the morning.” Seward decided as he ushered them nervously into the elevator. His relief was visible when they exited out the front door without Sam collapsing on them.

“Did that bastard ghost hurt you?” Dean demanded once they were in the impala again.

“Bit of a headache.” Sam conceded, “but let’s go somewhere we can burn these gloves before going back to the motel.”

“You managed to snag them?” The surprise was audible in Dean’s voice.

“Telekinesis is real useful sometimes, should have thought to shield once I had them though.” Sam returned, “my own damn fault being tossed into the wall. They’re definitely the anchor, could sense it.”

“Remember that for next time.” Dean’s eyes were still worried, though he wasted no time finding a deserted car park where they could salt and burn the gloves. The ghost did put in an appearance, glaring at them from beyond the shield that Sam had up before going up in flames.

“So how are you doing, really?” Dean asked as his brother relaxed, releasing the shield he’d maintained since the Sandover building.

“Stop fretting already. I’ve had worse.”

“If you’re sure.” Dean returned sceptically, eyeing his brother carefully before taking them to the motel room they’d got.

When they called to check in with Bobby Adam nearly freaked on hearing that Sam had been injured.

Dean saw Sam wince at Adam’s raised voice as he drowned out Bobby’s more reasonable response, “hey, Adam…quiet down a tad will you? Sam…go grab some painkillers already.”

“Dean…you need to…” Adam started worriedly, making an effort to speak softer, as Sam went to follow Dean’s order.

“I know what to do.” Dean interrupted, “not the first time either of us have been clocked on the head. This was actually quite a tame encounter with a ghost.”

“He okay?”

“Yeah. He’s alert, he could focus on me. Aside from a bit of a headache, he seems fine.”

“What if…?”

“I know where the closest hospital is. Don’t worry.”

“I’m fine, Adam.” Sam stated as he returned, a half-full glass of water in his hand.

“It’s just…”

“You’re not going to lose us to this.” Sam told him gently, “telling you I’ve had worse probably won’t reassure you, but I have had far worse.”
“I don’t think either Dean, or I, like thinking about those times.” Bobby put in.

“What happened?” Adam asked.

“Short version…he nearly died.” Bobby replied.

“And the long version?”

“Too long to cover tonight if any of us want to get some sleep.” Dean interrupted, “and I want to get Sam to rest. And Adam…the key word there is ‘almost’. He didn’t die then, he’s not going to die now. Bumps and bruises are normal for us, we’re pretty hardy.”

“Okay.” Adam replied in a tiny voice.

“I’ll deal with it.” Bobby stated, “take care of Sam, Dean, call me if anything changes.”

“Of course.” Dean replied, and Bobby hung up.

Sam rolled his eyes at his brother but climbed into his bed anyway.

The night passed uneventfully, even if he still had a headache the next morning. Seward emailed him letting him know that the intruder hadn’t been caught yet, asking if they wanted to return to finish the interrupted tour, and when they could expect them. Sam replied that he felt they had enough data to complete the story without returning. Seward would probably conclude that they’d been scared off by the incidents the previous day and resign himself to an unfavourable story, he had no way of knowing that there would never be a story nor that the unexplained rash of suicides would be over.

They left later that morning, Sam ignoring Dean when he suggested, in his mother hen way, that they could take a few more days so he could rest. Cleveland was several hours in the rearview mirror by the time Sam was regretting his stubbornness. He had his eyes tightly closed as he all but curled against the door.

“Dean…” He managed finally, conceding defeat. Instead of his brother asking what the matter was, he heard the crunch of gravel as Dean pulled the impala to the side of the road. A concussion, however mild, combining unfavourably with being in a car wasn’t unknown for either of them even if it was far more likely to affect Dean than Sam. There was every chance his brother had just been waiting for him to admit he was struggling.

He barely registered Dean’s door opening, but his door being opened seconds later couldn’t have been more apparent. Then Dean’s hands were on his shoulders.

“Okay, Sammy, I got you.” Dean gently got him sitting half out of the door then gathered his hair back, “just relax, it’s okay.”

For a few long moments it looked like everything was going to settle down again now that they were still, then abruptly Sam heaved up the breakfast that Dean had pushed on him earlier.

“Easy…easy. You’re okay.” Dean soothed as the episode ran its course.

Sam swore softly as he put his head down on the Impala’s seat again.

“Yeah.” Dean agreed with faint amusement, though concern was still the most apparent tone of his voice, “feeling better?”

“Yeah.” Sam replied faintly, not at all looking forward to getting back on the road.
“We’ll sit here for a bit, let you get your stability back. First though…could you look at me?”

Sam managed to peel his eyes open and glared at his brother.

“Good enough.” Dean stated after a moment, “just relax, okay?”

Sam closed his eyes again as Dean stepped away.

Dean hit one of his contacts and waited impatiently as it rang.

“What’s happened?” Bobby answered.

“We’re going to take another day or two to get back to you.” Dean told him, hoping that Adam wasn’t close enough to hear and assume the worst, “Sam’s a little carsick.”

“Carsick? That doesn’t sound like him…”

“Can happen after being clocked on the head, his eyes are clear though. Just needs some time.”

“Okay, I’ll explain it to Adam. You look after your brother, and call me if he gets worse.”

“Will do.”

Dean hung up and looked over at his brother again. There was colour back in his face at least, he’d give him a few more minutes then get him to the closest motel in the closest town so he could rest.

Chapter End Notes

Comments, constructive criticism, and questions always welcome.

Hope you enjoy this chapter :-)
“How are you feeling?”

Sam barely managed to contain his temper, this was definitely getting old, and glared at their kid brother.

“How many times do I have to tell you, I’m FINE.”

“You were throwing up.” Adam refuted.

“I got a touch of motion sickness, and it was only the once.”

Dean had refused to continue the journey until the headache had faded away. Of course, Sam was almost wishing they’d had a case come up before they got back with the way Adam had been over the top hovering since they’d returned. He could understand it, what with how the teen had lost his mother only recently and the two of them were all he had left of his family, but he was struggling not to lose his temper.

“Which is not normal for you.”

“Not unknown either.” Sam gritted out before getting up to head outside.

“Sam…”

Sam held up one hand to silence him before going out the door. Adam made to follow him.

“Adam.” Dean interrupted from the door.

“He could be…” Adam protested.

“He’s not.” Dean told him firmly, “I know, I have the reputation of being a massive mother hen when I’m worried. But you’re putting me to shame right now.”

“He’s really moody…”
“Of course he is. Sam’s the most independent person I’ve ever even met. He absolutely hates being fussed over, and yes…he will try to power through injuries and stuff if he can, but he’s not an idiot. If he was having problems from being conked on the head, he’d actually say something. Just like he expects me to say something if I’m in trouble.”

“But…”

“Adam…he knows where you’re coming from, he knows why you’re so worried…that’s why he’s restraining his temper. If I was the one doing the hovering you are he’d have blown at me long before now.” Dean told him calmly, “I have the reputation of being an overprotective arsehole, and for good reason. Sam has never been shy about calling me on it, he got me to back off on you and to stop giving you orders, which I’m not afraid to say wouldn’t have occurred to me on my own. I’m used to Sam…when he follows an order without question it’s either we’re in the middle of a case, or I need to worry.”

Adam glared at the floor, not wanting to concede that Dean was right.

“Why don’t you go see whether Bobby has anything for you to do?” Dean suggested, “let Sam cool down again.”

Adam reluctantly went to locate the older Hunter, and Dean headed outside with a suppressed sigh. Sam had a temper, even if he didn’t let it lose very often, and the oldest brother wasn’t looking forward to finding out how much like a volcano his little brother was being right now.

Dean rounded the corner and stopped in his tracks. He knew Sam was angry, could see it even though his little brother was doing his best to control it and keep it away from their kid brother. It just hadn’t clicked precisely what that meant until he laid eyes on him where he was trying to cool down out in the junkyard. There were crumpled pieces of metal suspended in the air, various tins by the look of them mostly, a slightly larger ball looked like it used to be an exhaust pipe. As he watched Sam crumpled another tin into a small ball without using his hands.

He didn’t fear Sam, never could, but his first instinct was to just leave him be. He shifted on his feet, unsure, and knocked a stray tool off the car next to him. Instantly the floating metal dropped to the ground, and Sam spun towards him, an expression part apology part trepidation on his face.

“Good thing I sent Adam to go talk to Bobby.” Dean commented mildly.

“Sorry.” Sam mumbled, looking at the ground in embarrassment.

“Nah…it’s okay. I knew you were out here cooling down…just wasn’t expecting…” Dean gestured to the crumpled metal fumbling for the correct phrasing for a second, “Jedi shit.”

Sam cracked a smile at that and Dean sauntered over to sit down next to him.

“You calmed down now?”

“Mostly. Just…damn, I feel like crawling out of my own skin the way he’s been watching me.”

“Figured that.”

“I need a case before I go nuts, Dean.”

“Okay. If you’re ready to go back in, we can see whether Bobby’s got any calls about cases.”

“Yeah.” Sam replied with a sigh and followed Dean as his big brother led the way back inside.
Back inside Dean detoured to where they had a stash of muesli bars, grabbed one, and tossed it to Sam. His brother caught it almost reflexively and gave him a put-upon look as he figured out the reason. Dean ignored him, and Sam began munching on it resignedly.

Locating Bobby and Adam, they walked in on an animated discussion.

“You mean in all these years no one has even looked at the taxonomy of the supernatural creatures?” Adam demanded of Bobby as they came through the door.

“Taxi-what?” Dean asked.

“Taxonomy.” Sam corrected, “it’s the system of classifying living things; species, genus, kingdom, all that.”

Adam shot a surprised and relieved look at him.

“Trust you to know that, Sammy.” Dean grumbled.

“There’s a reason he got a full ride to Stanford even though you never stayed in one place more than a few months growing up.” Bobby pointed out, and Adam did a double take between Bobby and Sam.

“A full ride?” Adam all but squeaked.

Sam shrugged, “demons had other ideas.”

“But…” Adam started.

“Leave it.” Dean interrupted gently.

“Even if I could go back I wouldn’t.” Sam stated softly, “too much has happened…I’ve changed too much.”

He could see the pain in both his brothers’ eyes, even though Dean was doing a better job at hiding it, and decided it was time to change the topic.

“Got anything that needs doing, Bobby?”

“Yeah…what got us onto the subject of taxonomy actually.” Bobby replied, “chupacabra over in Montana. Adam got a little put out that there’s no data on where it fits into the animal kingdom and stuff.”

“Why would there be?” Dean asked, “it’s a supernatural critter.”

“Doesn’t matter that they’re supernatural in origin, the principles of evolution still apply.” Adam refuted, “if a creature can’t compete they die out.”

Sam looked at Dean, “it does make sense. Supernatural resources are an evolutionary niche just like any other resource.”

“Knowing where to pin them in the giant tree of life doesn’t help us deal with them.” Dean grumbled.

“It might actually.” Sam replied, “like shapeshifters you can always deal with them using silver. Any type of ghost salt and burn can deal with. Anything connected to hell you can have a decent guess at what you can use to combat it.”
Adam nodded, “shapeshifters would all be linked in taxonomy by their similarity to each other, which would also lead to the conclusion of similar vulnerabilities. How do you figure out how to kill stuff?”

“Research in the lore.” Sam told him.

“And if we can’t find it in there we try different things until something sticks.” Dean added.

“If you knew taxonomy and could place roughly where it was in the scheme it would be easier to figure that stuff out.” Adam stated.

“Hunters just don’t get the time to do that sort of thing, too busy trying to stay alive or save the victims.” Dean protested.

“Well…” Adam started hesitantly, “since I got some downtime and this is stuff I’ve been studying… maybe I can make a start if you can get me some samples.”

“Alive or dead?” Sam asked.

“Alive preferably, as long as it’s not too dangerous.”

Sam and Dean traded a look.

“Well…a chupacabra IS one of the more…tame…critters. Just a big pain for farmers with the way they kill and drain livestock.” Dean commented.

“And if supernatural critters are actually going to fit into the known taxonomy it’s a good one to start with, with its mismatched appearance it should be fairly easy to figure out if it actually slots in or floats.” Sam added.

“Mismatched appearance?” Adam asked.

“You’ll see.” Bobby put in, “I’ll just go whip you boys up a cage to hold the damn thing.”

“We’ll go get the weapons ready.” Dean stated.

“You might want to make a list of equipment you might need.” Sam added to Adam as he went to follow his big brother, “either we can grab it while we’re out or Bobby can locate it.”

Adam nodded thoughtfully, pulled out a blank notebook from his studies equipment, and started making notes.

Chapter End Notes

Massive apologies for how late this is, I caught a mutant cold from hell (did I piss Crowley off? *lol*) that landed me on my butt. Still not fully recovered but able to write again. I kinda feel like my life has turned into a sick fic *chuckle* anyway, I hope you enjoy this chapter, even if it is a little shorter than normal.
Dealing with the chupacabra was actually rather easy once they’d touched base with the farmer who’d initiated the call that sent them there, even if figuring out how to capture rather than kill had been an awkward improvisation. Sam had spotted the signs that indicated the dog-like creature had a litter, so there wasn’t just one critter sitting in the over-engineered cage that Bobby had provided them.

Adam was certainly going to have fun figuring out the specifics of the creature, Sam mused to himself as they wrangled the bulky contraption into the back seat. Bobby would undoubtedly know where to lay his hands on some livestock blood if their kid brother was going to keep the critters alive for long. If the creature wasn’t such a plague to farmers, Hunters probably wouldn’t bother with it, even if it did require a specific killing method.

“I’d suggest not speeding.” Sam commented as they closed the door.

“What…you want to spend longer with those things in the back?” Dean grumbled.

“Nah…just they’d be rather interesting to explain to a traffic cop don’t you think?”

“Point.” Dean conceded with a sigh. Glancing into the cage, he rolled his eyes as he saw the chupacabra had decided the accommodations were comfortable and safe enough to start suckling the…whatever the correct term for the babies was, “let’s go let the farmer know his livestock problem is dealt with and head back. I’m blaming you if Adam adopts that as a pet though.”

Sam just chuckled and followed him to the farmhouse.

Several hours later they got to see Adam’s reaction for themselves once they arrived back at Bobby’s and hauled the cage up to the improvised lab that the older Hunter had got set up in one of the disused rooms upstairs.

“Oh wow, I see what you meant by ‘mismatched appearance’.” Adam commented as he got his first good look at the creature, “do you know whether it’s oviparous or viviparous?”

“Whether it’s what or what?” Dean demanded incredulously.
“Hunter procedure is to look for…pups.” Sam replied, with a gesture at the young chupacabra’s the adult was now standing over and growling at Adam, “not eggs. Though that doesn’t count out them carrying eggs to hatching. There’s only ever one adult when there is a litter.”

“What?” Dean asked again.

“Method of reproduction.” Sam explained without going into the kind of detail that would confuse his big brother. Dean wasn’t stupid by any stretch of the imagination, but he wasn’t keen on book learning, “whether it lays eggs or gives birth to live young.”

“Why didn’t he just say that then?” Dean grumbled.

“Scientific language was developed because of a need for accuracy in descriptions.” Sam returned calmly.

Dean looked at him for a bit with more than a little exasperation in his expression, “I’m going for a beer.”

He stalked out of the room.

“Um…” Adam said hesitantly, not sure what to make of that interaction.

“Dean is not stupid.” Sam told him firmly, “he’s just not one for book learning. He’s far more action orientated than I am, he can put clues together and act on them far faster than many other Hunters. He’s no slouch on research though, and the one constant during my childhood was him. If there’s a reason I was able to get that scholarship even with how much we moved around it was because of him. He probably could have easily gone to university also if he’d wanted.”

“There’s no way he’d have even considered that before you were headed there, the impact on you would have been unacceptable in his eyes.” Bobby pointed out.

Sam made a face but didn’t argue, there were definitely things that they could have done better back then on both sides. He’d been terrified of letting on what he’d achieved, what he’d been planning, and his big brother had got blindsided. That was his biggest regret about going to Stanford and had led to the years long silence between them. To find out that Dean had actually thought he’d wanted that had floored him nearly as much as the news that their dad had been missing. Of course neither had had been a patch on what had happened with Jess, and Dean had slipped straight back into his protective big brother role as if the silence had never happened without even the briefest of discussions.

Adam was happily scribbling away in his notebook muttering to himself, and Sam noted that he appeared to have missed the side discussion between him and Bobby. He caught comments about it evidently being a mammal, the chupacabra had settled back into suckling its young, and wanting to see whether the scales were actually reptilian in nature or formed some other way.

“I’ll leave you to it.” Sam commented and headed out of the room. Biology had not been one of his fields of study at Stanford, so there wasn’t much he could really contribute. Adam would come find him if he had other questions that could be answered from a Hunter’s experience.

He found Dean nursing a beer moodily in the kitchen.

“Come to keep your dumb brother company?” Dean asked as he noted Sam’s approach.

“One, you’re not dumb. Not even slightly.” Sam retorted as he slid into the chair next to him, “and two, not much I can do to help other than hand him tools. Biology wasn’t one of my fields of study.”
“You knew what the hell he was talking about, not me.”

“That’s mostly because I kept running out of reading material at all those various schools and ended up reading my way through the nonfiction section of the libraries to deal with the boredom, at least in that section I had a reasonable chance of the next school having the same book.”

That got a faint chuckle from Dean, which definitely heartened Sam. Maybe this overdue apology wouldn’t make his brother really angry with him after all.

“I was thinking…” Sam said slowly, “I never did apologise to you, or even talked it over with you…”

Dean threw him a puzzled look, “what are you talking about?”

“Going to Stanford…I was so terrified of dad finding out…of him preventing me from going…I never thought…never even tried to talk it over with you…and I should have.”

Dean’s grip tightened on the bottle, and he had to make a conscious effort to relax his hand even as he let out a carefully controlled breath. Even after all this time, that night was still like a punch to the gut for him.

“If I’d paid attention I’d have seen it coming a long way off.” Dean replied dismissively hoping Sam would drop the topic. The last thing he wanted to find out was that his little brother resented him for the intrusion that had cost him his studies.

“I should have found a way to talk to you…to let you know what was happening…I shouldn’t have blindsided you with it.” Sam pressed on, “it was the one thing that I really regretted about going to Stanford…that I caused the rift between us all because I was too terrified of dad finding out to find some sliver of time to let you know. I…I don’t know…I thought maybe I’d have time to talk to you before having to go to the bus…I thought…I thought I’d have to break out of wherever dad stuck me not that…that he’d boot me out of the family…I thought…I don’t know…that I’d be able to talk you into coming with me…a…I’m not sure…a vague idea that I’d be able to get you into college too…I don’t know…”

It was Sam’s turn to avoid looking at his brother, afraid of what he’d see.

“Sammy…” Dean’s hand found his shoulder and squeezed gently, “that’s really what you thought?”

Sam nodded, “damn near gutted me to have to get on that bus without you…then to find out you thought I WANTED silence between us…I wasn’t sure what was a bigger gut punch…dad’s disappearance or finding that out…then Jess…and…and we never talked about it…”

“Hell, Sammy…I’m sorry…spent half the night walking off the anger…then I get back to dad telling me you chose school over the family…over me…and he orders me not to contact you…I didn’t know what to think…then it was just easier to avoid calling…why’d you want my dumb arse in your life any way I couldn’t think of…I didn’t actually graduate high school, you know that, and there you were with the top scholarship type to one of the top universities.”

Sam rounded on him to fix him with a glare, “you. Are. Not. Dumb. Get that through your head already. The only reason you didn’t graduate was dad was hauling us all over the country on his quest, and we never stayed more than a few months anywhere. You were too busy keeping dad and I from each other’s throats, and keeping me on track with my schooling, to pay much attention to your own. And don’t even think of trying to make out the only reason you even kept going to school those last couple of years wasn’t so I wasn’t alone.”
“Yeah…well…not like we would have been able to get a last minute ticket on the bus anyway…”

“I had two tickets.” Sam told him softly, continuing when Dean gave him an incredulous look, “what? I wasn’t going to risk having to leave you behind if you decided to join me and have dad handcuff you to the car or something if he figured out that you were going to follow me.”

Dean had to admit that that was the least that their dad would have done if there’d been even the slightest hint that he’d had even the slightest inkling of following his little brother to Stanford. He sighed as he wondered how different their lives would have been if he had got on that bus with his little brother, whether it would have been better or worse once Azazel started up his machinations.

“Everything okay?” Bobby’s wary voice interrupted them, and Dean turned to see him looking at them with a concerned expression from the doorway.

Dean shook himself, trying to dislodge the mood that had settled on him, “yeah…just revisiting something that happened years ago. What’s up?”

He felt Sam take a breath to settle himself, revisiting the pain of what happened to Jess had unsettled him more than he wanted to admit, and turn to look at Bobby also.

“Adam wants some kind of tranq. He wants to look at a scale or two to figure out what it’s made of.” Bobby explained.

“So you need to find a vet who can help.” Sam noted, “I’m guessing you’ve also laid in some supplies to keep them alive for a bit?”

“Not enough.” Bobby groused, “I was only expecting you to bring one back, not an entire litter.”

“Yeah, well…here’s hoping Adam doesn’t decide to try taming one of the pups.” Dean complained.

“Actually…” Sam started.

“Don’t even THINK about suggesting it, Sam.” Dean interrupted.

Bobby just glared at both of them and shooed them out of the kitchen so he could start making the phone calls he needed to.

“I’m going to go meditate.” Sam stated.

“Want me to join you?” Dean asked.

Sam hesitated for a moment, “maybe in a bit.”

Dean turned concerned eyes on him, “Sammy…”

“I’m okay, Dean, just…need to centre myself.”

Though Dean couldn’t quite put the concern out of his mind, Sam was happy enough to have him join him an hour later. Bobby had managed to track down a Hunter aware vet who was willing to supply some tranquiliser to them when they emerged again.

“Will that even work?” Sam asked, “we have to chop the head off to kill them, is any sort of regular sedative going to be effective?”

“Hell if I know.” Bobby returned, “but given the mama is happy enough with the blood I got from the butcher I doubt dead something’s blood is going to work.”
“Blood from the butcher would have been removed straight after death.” Sam pointed out, “I wouldn’t be surprised if human blood in the same condition didn’t affect vampires.”

“Damnit, Sam, we haven’t even finished with that critter upstairs, don’t go making links to vampires before your kid brother has used his oversized brain to work it all out.”

Dean laughed at that while Sam rolled his eyes. The eldest brother wondered how he’d ended up with two genius younger brothers, and half wondered if he’d been adopted.

The vet turned up at the door a few hours later.

“Brought a selection from the stuff that’s usually used for wild dogs right up to the stuff used for the largest animals usually encountered. I’m no zoo vet though.” He explained as Bobby let him in, he was carrying a small case and a rifle designed for tranquiliser darts, “also grabbed some blood from a dog that had had to be put down this morning.”

“Hopefully something in that lot will work.” Bobby acknowledged before gesturing at Sam and Dean, “this is Sam and Dean, the Hunters who caught the damn thing. Their brother, Adam, is upstairs peering at it. Sam, Dean, this is Gerard.”

Gerard shook their hands and chuckled, “you know…when you called, I expected it to be an injured Hunter needing some under the counter help, not that you needed my actual expertise.”

“Not a call I expected to be making either.” Bobby replied, “Adam isn’t a Hunter though, these two didn’t know about him until recently, he’s a biology student.”

“Hence the interest in actually looking at the creatures his brothers fight from a scientific perspective.” Gerard noted.

“He thinks it might make it easier to pick what will work when dealing with various creatures.” Sam put in.

“Ah, I see.”

They could almost hear him concluding that was the only reason they’d gone along with the exercise. They didn’t need to even look at each other to decide simultaneously that they weren’t going to enlighten him, being underestimated had saved their lives too many times.

“It’s upstairs, shall we get started?” Bobby suggested. Gerard agreed, and the four of them headed up to the improvised lab.

The chupacabra leapt to its feet and growled at them from inside the cage when they came through the door.

“This is Adam.” Bobby introduced, “Adam, this is Gerard, the vet I contacted.”

“You brought something that will knock her out so I can take a closer look?” Adam asked eagerly.

“Don’t get attached, Adam.” Dean warned, “it’s not a tame creature, and it’s too dangerous to release once you’re done. They have a range, it’ll go straight back to that farmer’s fields, so relocating it to somewhere away from civilisation isn’t going to work.”

“Doesn’t mean I shouldn’t take care of her while I have her.” Adam replied.

“If it’s any consolation.” Gerard started as he slotted the tranquiliser dart in, “a regular wild dog that
had gone after a farmer’s livestock would already have been put down. When the time comes call me, I’ll help you do it humanely.”

“That might be a problem.” Sam stated, “it’s only able to be killed by beheading.”

“Then we knock it out first.” Gerard replied, “ready for the first attempt?”

“Let’s do this.” Dean agreed, gesturing at Adam to come to stand with them behind the vet.

Gerard took aim, and with a small puff of air, the dart flew true to lodge between two scales on the chupacabra’s neck. It let out a yelp and tried to snap at the dart but couldn’t reach it. Unfortunately, that was the only effect it had.

“What now?” Adam asked.

“Try another dose, go up a level of tranquilisers, or try the dead dog blood I brought along.” Gerard returned.

“Let’s try a second tranq first.” Sam suggested, “if it’s not at least groggy after that we can conclude its inherent supernatural nature is nullifying it and try the dog blood.”

“Sounds good.” Dean agreed.

Gerard pulled out another dart and slotted it in, “this is the strongest I have access to. If it was a regular wild dog, this strength would overdose it.”

“But…” Adam started worriedly.

“If it was a regular wild dog it would already be out.” Sam reassured him, “one of the biggest things that separate supernatural creatures from regular creatures is it generally requires a specific method to kill them. I’ll be amazed if it affects it at all let alone to a lethal level.”

“Don’t go writing the effort off before even trying Sam.” Bobby retorted. Sam nodded at him in acceptance of the rebuke.

Gerard took aim and shot the new dart expertly into the chupacabra’s neck. It had no more effect than the last one.

“Looks like that didn’t work.” Dean noted, “try the doggy blood?”

Gerard nodded and slotted the dart filled with the dark red material then took another shot. Much to their relief, the chupacabra slumped over, none of them were sure what they’d have to do if it didn’t work.

“Well, finally.” Dean stated, he went over to the cage door and wrestled it open. Between them, he and Sam hauled the sizeable dog-like creature out and tied it up with rope just in case. Only once it was secured to their satisfaction did they allow Adam to approach.

Adam quickly busied himself getting a sample of several of the scales, and extracted some blood along with giving it a thorough examination that he hadn’t been able to do while it was in the cage. He actually found the extra layer of teeth more disconcerting than anything else he saw.

The pups yipped angrily at them, but they didn’t attempt to leave the cage.

“While the mama is contained we should take a look at the pups.” Gerard suggested.
“Good idea.” Adam agreed.

Between them, Adam and Gerard gently extracted each protesting pup and examined them gently. Several of them tried ineffectually to bite their fingers as they did so.

“Three females, four males.” Gerard stated as they returned them to the cage.

Then Sam and Dean wrestled the adult chupacabra back in and untied it before resecuring the door. Adam took the samples he’d collected over to the microscope and various other machines that Bobby had managed to secure for him and busied himself contentedly.

Gerard packed up his rifle and tranq darts, “well…this has definitely been an unusual house call.”

“Thanks for helping.” Bobby told him gruffly.

“My pleasure. I’ve got a feeling you’re going to be doing stuff like this again, even after you have to put it down, so call me if you need help. And I was serious about helping with needing to put it down.”

“Here’s hoping Adam doesn’t get too attached.”

Gerard shook his head, “the adult he has no chance of taming. The pups may be another story, but even if that’s possible, it’s not like you could take it for walks or to the dog park or anything.”

“Don’t say that too loudly.” Dean grumbled. Gerard just chuckled and saw himself out.

Chapter End Notes

Sorry this is a little late, connection issues. I'm going to switch to doing a chapter every 2 weeks instead of trying to do one every week, hopefully this will make it easier for me to get back up to speed and also give me time to write some other things, like the Tales from Pivot Point chapter that's been sitting at about 75% done now for a while *chuckle*

As always comments, constructive criticism, and questions welcome. I hope you enjoy this chapter.
Chapter 66: Distress Call

Now that their kid brother wasn’t hovering over him like a bantam hen with chicks Sam was actually enjoying Adam’s forays into looking at the supernatural scientifically. Dean not so much. Adam had got them to modify the cage so that the pups could be let out while keeping the adult still contained. Most of the pups were disinclined to venture out of the cage without the adult, but there were a couple that were adventurous enough. Bobby had installed a ‘baby gate’ in the doorway as a precaution, an over-engineered ‘baby gate’.

Dean was more than a little wary of the tiny scaled dog-like creatures curling up with their kid brother, but so far they hadn’t seemed inclined to try to take a chunk out of him.

Adam had updated them about what he’d found out about the creatures over the days they’d had them. Like he’d established that it appeared to actually be a mammal and that the scales, despite their appearance, were not actual reptilian scales but a defensive adaptation of the fur that was the more usual appearance of canines.

Dean tuned both his brothers out as Adam explained something to Sam that went straight over his head. He was almost glad when his phone rang until he saw the caller id anyway.

“Gohol laiad.” He answered without preamble, he mightn’t be a psychic like his brother, but he had a bad feeling about this.

“Authority has been misused. False orders have been given. The hierarchy has betrayed their charge.” Castiel replied woodenly from the other end, Sam’s attention was immediately on Dean as he registered the command. Adam just glanced between them with confusion written on his face.

“What’s wrong, Cas?”

“I need to see you…I think…I think something is wrong.” The angel replied hesitantly.

Dean felt like swearing, they had to try to help, but there was every chance they were way outgunned if Castiel was sending a mayday, “okay, where?”

“Pontiac, Illinois. Warehouse district.”
“Okay.” Dean quickly mentally calculated the travel time, it was already afternoon so they wouldn’t
get there until the next day even if they drove straight through, “won’t be there until tomorrow
though.”

“I understand, but Dean…hurry.” Castiel hung up before Dean could demand more information, and
this time the eldest brother did swear.

“What’s wrong?” Sam asked.

“Cas said he needs to see us, that he thinks something is wrong.” Dean told him, “and he asked us to
hurry.”

“Damn, it’s bad if he’s sending a mayday.” Sam stated, echoing his big brother’s thoughts, “you grab
the weapons, I’ll make sure I’m not missing anything from the calligraphy supplies and my
notebooks.”

“I’m coming with you.” Adam stated.

“Hell no!” Both Sam and Dean said in unison.

“But…”

“If you want to help, assist Bobby in seeing if there’s anything more on angel combat in his
collection.” Sam put in quickly.

“Angels are a thing?” Adam asked.

“Yeah…but most are dicks with wings.” Dean told him as Sam disappeared upstairs, “Anna, the girl
who put the carvings on your ribs, is one of the good ones. So is Castiel. We don’t want you
anywhere near the bad ones, hell we don’t want to be anywhere near the bad ones, but if Cas is in
trouble, then we need to at least try to help him.”

Adam’s expression changed to one of worry, “how dangerous is this?”

Dean sighed, “I’m not going to lie to you. If it comes to facing off against angels, there’s a chance
we’re not walking back out. But we can’t run away from it, we at least have a chance at being able
to weather them, which is more than most Hunters would have.”

“What if…?” Adam started fearfully.

“Bobby will protect you, no need to worry about that. And we’re not going to go down without a
fight, if it’s possible to walk out, we will.”

“That’s not what I was worried about.” Adam retorted.

“Adam…our life isn’t safe. We’ve tangled with angels before, though, and always walked away.
Well…ran…but still, we survived. We’re not going to stop doing what we do…we can’t…if we
didn’t, there’d be a lot more people dead.”

“Like me.” Adam noted in a small voice.

Dean sighed and squeezed his kid brother’s shoulder, “yeah…probably. Maybe you’d have got
lucky and the ghouls wouldn’t have been interested in you, or the disappearances might have
attracted the attention of another Hunter…but…there’s not enough of us to be sure of that.”

Adam nodded and took a steadying breath. After being reasonably sure he was at least reasonably
steady Dean gathered up their weapons, finishing up just as Sam came back down the stairs with his notebooks and the small protective case he kept the calligraphy supplies in.

“Ready?” Dean asked.

“Ready as we’re going to get.” Sam replied.

Adam came over to him and hugged him tightly, Sam gathered the teen into his arms without hesitation.

He looked over at his big brother, “you told him?”

“I wasn’t going to lie to him.” Dean told him, “or make promises I can’t be sure we can keep.”

Sam nodded and looked down at their kid brother, “we’re going to do our best to survive, Adam, you won’t lose us easy.”

“You better come back.” Adam mumbled into his chest.

“Do our best.” Sam promised.

“We’d better get going.” Dean reluctantly interrupted. Adam grudgingly released Sam and stepped back.

“Bobby said to call him when we get there and afterwards.” Sam told Dean, and the eldest brother nodded in acknowledgement.

They nearly drove straight through, only stopping for food, fuel, and the necessary stops for coffee. The motel night manager wasn’t too pleased to see them turn up in the wee hours of the morning without even a reservation, but that didn’t stop him accepting Dean’s latest credit card. Once they were in the room they fortified it quickly, then Sam pulled out his calligraphy supplies and carefully painted the elaborate sigils on them both that would hopefully protect them if they did end up encountering angels. Then they headed towards the warehouses that Castiel had indicated.

It didn’t take long for them to find the warehouse the angel had intended for their meeting, it was half demolished. Recently too, there were faint sparks from exposed wires and the occasional crash as some rubble that hadn’t settled yet gave in to the pull of gravity.

“Shit.” Dean exclaimed softly, “spread out, see if we can find it. But not too far, anything that isn’t Cas call me the second you spot it.”

Sam nodded, though he wanted to roll his eyes at Dean’s protective nature, and moved into the rubble. He could sense a lone human and wanted to check on them first, this level of destruction made bad injuries all too likely for a stray human, before searching for the angel he’d never been able to sense. He definitely wasn’t expecting to see Castiel, or his form anyway, crumpled on some rubble right where he was sensing the human, and incomplete angel banishing sigil scrawled on the wall nearby.

“Dean!” He called even as he dashed to the side of the crumpled form. Urgently he checked for a pulse, he wasn’t sure if the reason he was sensing the vessel was if the angel was injured or whether he was gone altogether. There was also the possibility that the sigils were affecting how he was sensing things, tuning out the interference from the angel residing inside.

Dean reached his side just as the angel, or the angel's vessel, returned to consciousness with a start. Dean caught him before he could tumble onto the rubble-strewn floor and get injured, or more
injured as the case may be.

“Cas! You okay?” Dean asked worriedly, forgetting to use the truth command in his concern.

“What…what’s going on?” He asked, looking at the two of them a little blearily.

“Easy, easy.” Dean soothed, trying to see where he was hurt, “Cas, just relax. Where are you hurt?”

He scrambled away from them and looked around like he was confused at where he was, Sam quickly positioned himself to be able to catch him if he lost his footing.

“Cas?” Dean prompted again.

He looked at him for a few silent seconds as if trying to remember how his voice worked.

“Castiel…?” He finally managed, “I…I’m not Castiel…I…it’s me…”

“Okay…” Dean said slowly, “who’s ‘me’?”

“Jimmy.” He answered, appearing to calm down as he became more sure of himself, “my name’s Jimmy.”

“Do you know where Castiel is?” Sam prompted gently, “is he still with you or is he gone?”

“He’s gone.” Jimmy confirmed, shaking his head slightly, “I…I don’t think it was willing.”

Dean swore then glanced around warily, “we’d better get out of here before whoever did this to Cas comes back.”

Sam nodded, “good idea. The more distance we can put between us and here the better I’d say.”

“Right.” Dean turned to lead the way back to the impala.

“Can we go somewhere with food?” Jimmy interrupted plaintively, “I’m starving.”

Dean paused for a moment to consider, “okay, but it’s going to have to be to go until we’re a lot further from here.”

“Fine with me.” Jimmy agreed, and Dean led the way with Sam bringing up the rear.

Back in the impala, they made a quick stop at the motel to get their things, giving the manager the excuse of a family emergency for leaving so quickly, before tracking down a drive-through to grab some food before heading for the horizon.

Jimmy dove into the food with an enthusiasm that put Dean at his hungriest to shame.

“Hey, slow down.” Dean commented as they left the town behind after a glance in the mirror, “I’m not sure I remember CPR if you choke.”

“CPR’s for when the heart stops. Choking requires something different.” Sam corrected him, twisting around to look at their unexpected passenger in the back.

“I’m hungry.” Jimmy replied by way of explanation.

“When was the last time you ate?” Sam asked. Their exposure to angels had been limited, but he’d never seen them eating.
“I don’t know…months?” Jimmy returned sounding unsure of the answer.

Sam did his best not to let his concern show on his face, hopefully being an angel’s vessel would allow him to avoid the unpleasant side effects that situation could lead to, “yeah…slow down a tad. Don’t want to overwhelm your stomach with a massive influx.”

Dean swore as he registered what Sam was implying, “tell me if you need me to pull over. Don’t try to tough it out if you start feeling off, the seats are a bitch to clean.”

Jimmy stopped and looked at the burger in his hand warily as if it hadn’t even occurred to him before.

“I’m sure it’ll be fine.” Sam reassured him, “just pace yourself, it isn’t an eating contest after all.”

Jimmy resumed eating at a more sedate pace.

“What happened back there?” Sam asked, they needed to know plus it would help Jimmy space out his bites.

“All I remember of that is there was a flash of light.” Jimmy answered, “and…uh…then I was alone.”

“Of that?” Dean echoed, “is there other stuff you remember?”

“Castiel…he…uh…he started talking to me after he…uh…” Jimmy’s eyes flickered to Sam.

“After he tried to kill me and found out his orders were false.” Sam suggested, reading the reaction effortlessly.

“Yeah…that. He wasn’t sure who he could trust, so he talked to me.” Jimmy explained.

“Did he give any indication of what was going on?” Sam asked.

“They’d been giving him less leeway in where he could go recently, specifying places he had to search. He tried not to let on to me…but he was worried.”

“That’s obviously why he sent the mayday to us.” Dean noted, and Sam agreed. Unspoken was the conclusion that it wasn’t good for their angel ally.

“Wish I could tell you more…but having an angel inside you…it’s like being chained to a comet.” Jimmy apologised.

“Doesn’t sound much fun.” Dean commented.

“Understatement.” Jimmy returned, “Castiel…he did what he could to buffer me…but still…”

They drove all day, with the assistance of strong coffee, and several changes of highway before either brother felt comfortable enough with the distance they’d covered.

They booked into a rundown motel that barely glanced at the credit card Dean produced.

“Get some sleep.” Sam told Dean once they’d fortified the room, he’d managed to get some sleep in the car, “I’ll keep watch.”

Dean put up only a token struggle before all but falling on his bed and falling asleep before he’d registered the pillow.
“So what now?” Jimmy asked.

“Now?” Sam returned, “now we do our best to keep you safe. We don’t know for sure that whoever did that to Cas won’t return for you. And there’s plenty of other beings who might want to… question…you.”

“Why would anyone want to question me?” Jimmy asked in surprise, “I’m just Jimmy Novak from Pontiac, Illinois. I just want to go home…to my family.”

Sam wanted to swear, and his thoughts flicked back to the conversation he’d had with Castiel about vessels for angels and the reasons that might be behind it.

“Because they might think you know something of Castiel and what the angels are doing. Or maybe some more esoteric reason like you retaining a link to him, I don’t know.” Sam told him with a sigh, “I’m not going to lie to you…you mightn’t be able to go home, no matter how much you might want to. It might endanger your family. We’ll try to figure that out before we even think of getting you home to them.”

Jimmy looked like he wanted to argue and wasn’t very happy at having to acknowledge the logic of the Hunter’s argument.

“Get some sleep.” Sam suggested gently, “we’ll face what to do tomorrow.”

Jimmy reluctantly nodded and climbed into the bed left free for him.

Sam took a seat near the window to keep a check on anyone or anything approaching. His phone beeped an incoming message, and he mentally kicked himself as he saw it was from Bobby. They’d been so focused on putting distance behind them they’d forgotten to call him. Admittedly they’d been in and out of reception all day, but that was no excuse.

‘You better not be dead.’ The message read, and Sam hit the button to call him.

“Well about time.” Bobby grumpily answered, “did you forget how to use a phone, boy?”

“Sorry, Bobby, we kinda got too focused on putting distance behind us.” Sam apologised. He heard Adam in the background, likely demanding to know if they were okay, but he couldn’t actually make out the words.

“That bad, huh?” Bobby asked, “either of you hurt?”

“We’re fine.” Sam assured him, “Dean’s exhausted after driving all day, but that’s it. Didn’t encounter any angels, not even Cas. Did find evidence of a battle, and Cas’ vessel though.”

“His vessel? He bailed out for some reason?”

“Jimmy said he didn’t think it was voluntary.”

“Jimmy the vessel?”

“Yeah. Jimmy Novak from Pontiac, Illinois. Think you could take a look whether there’s any danger coming his direction?”

“I’ll keep an ear out. You better keep in contact this time.”

“Will do, Bobby.” Sam rang off and resumed his vigil.
Hope you enjoy.

Comments, constructive criticism, and questions always welcome.
Chapter 67: Let the Games Begin

Sam was sipping at his fifth coffee of the night shortly after the sun had come up when Dean’s primary phone started going off, it roused his big brother before he could summon it to himself with his telekinesis.

Dean blinked blearily at the caller id for a moment before answering, “Anna?”

Jimmy sat up from his doze with a worried frown, Sam wasn’t sure if Castiel had told him about the rogue angel or not.

Sam gestured at Dean to put it on speaker, and the eldest brother interrupted whatever the angel was saying, “wait one, just putting you on speaker.”

“You sound half asleep.” Anna complained once that had been done.

“You woke me up.” Dean complained right back, “what do you want?”

“One sec, Anna.” Sam interrupted, “gohol laiad.”

“The hierarchy has got it wrong. Emotions are amazing.” Anna replied woodenly.

“Sorry.” Sam apologised.

“No need to apologise, I’ve told you before. It’s a reasonable precaution, a very reasonable precaution at this time too.” Anna scolded him as Dean sat up and scrubbed his hand over his face to bring himself more alert.

“You heard about Cas, I take it.” Sam commented.

“Angel radio is going nuts. Castiel got recalled to heaven…and not in a good way. How did you hear about it?”

“Cas sent a mayday.” Dean told her, “I take it him being hauled back to heaven isn’t a good thing.”

“It’s a very, very bad thing.” Anna confirmed, “painfully, awfully, bad. He must have seriously
“Pissed someone off.”

“What’s going to happen to him?” Sam asked.

“Punished…reprogrammed maybe.” Anna replied, “killed or imprisoned maybe, if they figured out he was helping you two.”

“What about his vessel? Any danger coming his way?” Dean asked.

“Not from heaven. Most angels don’t care about vessels except as transport even though they’re commanded to love all humans.” Anna told him, “the hierarchy has been…encouraging…that attitude the last couple of millennia. Cas…he’s always been too compassionate for their liking, this won’t be the first time he’s been…re-educated.”

“Just heaven? What about other creatures?” Sam asked as Dean swore.

“That’s why I called.” Anna replied, “that kind of battle isn’t quiet spiritually speaking. Demons would jump on the chance to nab an empty vessel. Castiel probably told you to run, but you need to get your arses in gear and find his vessel. He’s in danger, serious danger. I wouldn’t put it past them to have a watch on his family so they can grab him when he returns.”

“My family?” Jimmy demanded, his voice rising in panic, “are they okay? Castiel PROMISED he’d look after them.”

“Who’s that?” Anna demanded.

“That’s Jimmy, Cas’ vessel.” Dean told her, “Cas didn’t tell us to run, he called for help. We just didn’t get there in time. Found Jimmy in the rubble and figured we should put as much distance as we could between us and there.”

“Smart.” Anna approved, “okay…if Cas is being punished like it appears he is…not even the angels in the garrison will risk keeping his promise lest they come under the same suspicion. I’ll go see what I can do, but I can’t make any promises…I do something overt, and I’ll get a squad on my tail.”

“But…my family…it’s been so long…I need to protect them…”

“You go there, and you’ll only bring more danger at them.” Dean told him bluntly.

“Before you go, Anna.” Sam suggested, “would putting the hiding sigils on him be a good idea?”

“More than a good idea, I’ll pop by before I go to Pontiac. Where are you lot?”

Dean dug out the motel’s stationery and read off the address to her. A moment later there was a knock at the door, and Sam checked it was her before crossing out the angel warding and letting her in.

Jimmy looked fearfully at her while Dean hung up the phone.

“I need coffee.” Dean mumbled as he scrubbed at his face again and went into the kitchenette, making one quickly.

“My family…?” Jimmy asked worriedly.

“I’ll do what I can to keep Castiel’s promise.” Anna assured him, “now…just hold still for a bit. This will hurt.”
Giving him no more warning than that she placed her hand on his chest and he let out a gasp of pain as it lit up. A moment later she stepped back, and he curled forward trying to catch his breath.

“Hopefully they’ll conclude he’s dead and give up searching after a few weeks.” Anna commented, “until then, I suggest you keep him moving.”

“Did you take your vessel from her family too?” Jimmy asked a little bitterly.

“No.” Anna answered, “I’m a little…unusual among angels. I fell and was born a human, when circumstances required that I reclaim my grace I got some assistance to keep the body I had as a human.”

“Oh…”

“I should go.” Anna stated, “and you should too. Keep him safe.”

She vanished in a flutter of wings before the brothers could do more than nod.

Dean sighed, “guess we’d better let Bobby…shit…we forgot to call him, he’s probably going spare.”

“I called him last night after you went to sleep.” Sam told him, “he was that worried annoyed he gets when he doesn’t know how someone is. Told me to remember to keep in contact with him.”

“Well…that’s the next thing on the to-do list then.” Dean stated after a quick swallow of coffee, and hit the contact for the older Hunter, switching it to speaker without needing to be asked.

“I see you’re taking my instruction to stay in contact seriously this time.” Bobby answered.

“Sorry, Bobby, really should have thought to drop you a line at some point yesterday.” Dean apologized.

“Remember that for next time. With you two I know there will be a next time.” Bobby groused.

“We’ll try.” Dean told him sharing an amused look with Sam.

“You better. Anyway, I did some digging like Sam asked. A crap tonne of demon sign popped up around Pontiac, Illinois last night.”

“My family?” Jimmy asked fearfully.

“You must be Jimmy.” Bobby noted, “without going there I can’t tell for sure. Alerted some Hunters to the situation and they’re gearing up to head in now. Hopefully, they’ll be able to save whoever’s possessed.”

“Anna’s gone there too.” Dean told him.

“Hopefully her firepower won’t be needed, that’s a good backup though. What are you planning on doing?”

“Anna confirmed there’s demons that are going to be coming hard after Jimmy here, said to keep him moving until they lose interest.”

“Well…guess you’d better get to that then. Much as I’d prefer you two tackling demons, I’ve seen some smoke out at the mere hint that you might be coming, if Anna thinks that there’s a problem we’d better pay attention.”
“You read my mind.” Dean quipped in reply.

“Yeah, yeah.” Bobby grumbled as Sam laughed softly, “just keep in contact. The pups dang near started chewing on my ankles Adam was so uptight yesterday.”

“Will do.” Sam promised, and Bobby hung up, “guess we’d better get going then.”

Dean grumpily agreed and finished his coffee a little quicker than he’d like while Sam cleaned up the salt and collected the weapons. A quick check out and they were on their way, this time with Jimmy in the front passenger seat and Sam curled up in the back so he could sleep a little more comfortably. They had a feeling this was going to last a while.

Chapter End Notes

Comments, constructive criticism, and questions always welcome.
Chapter 68: Return

Chapter Notes

Story Name: Pivot Point
Pen Name: ElenaRoan
Disclaimer: Don’t own any of them, written purely for enjoyment.
Warnings:
Summary: What if Anna decided to derail the apocalypse by intervening to help rather than trying to make the brothers never having existed.
Timeline: Season 4
Note: I’m Australian and I can’t bring myself to use USA spelling, sorry.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Chapter 68: Return

The latest attack came while they were filling up the impala. Or more correctly while Dean was filling up and Sam was keeping watch.

Jimmy hadn’t suggested going to his family again after the second attack had made it clear he was the target. It had been almost comical the way the demon had backpedalled when it realised it was face to face with a Winchester. Bobby had kept them up to date with the status of his family, which undoubtedly helped. The Hunter team had rescued a couple of neighbours who’d been possessed, and Anna had scared the pants off the team by appearing from nowhere to save one from bleeding out before vanishing again.

The civilians fled screaming as the demon tossed aside one of their cars to come at them, Dean glimpsed the attendant duck beneath his counter even as he dropped the nozzle to whip out the demon-killing blade and deal with it. He almost laughed at the ‘oh shit’ expression that crossed the demon’s face even as Sam pushed Jimmy down to the floorboards and pulled out the Colt.

“I wouldn’t.” The demon hissed, “unless you want the vessel’s wife and kid to buy it.”

Amelia and Claire had remained oblivious to the storm of supernatural conflict surrounding them, which was the only reason they weren’t being moved from place to place like, or with, Jimmy. The man himself hadn’t wanted to disrupt their lives any more than he already had, though he desperately wanted to see them again.

“You have 5 seconds to explain that comment.” Dean told the demon bluntly.

The demon laughed, “he wants to ever see them again, the vessel better come to the old packing factory. Alone.”

Before either brother could demand further information or act to capture or kill it the demon smoked out, leaving its meat suit to collapse bonelessly on the concrete.

“Damn.” Sam stowed the Colt and stepped forward to check their pulse, more for show than anything else as he could sense the original occupant wasn’t present. He shook his head at Dean, as much for the camera they were carefully keeping their faces obscured from as to let him know the
status.

Dean finished up the filling and headed into the shop to pay for the tank full of fuel. The poor attendant nearly leapt out of his skin, and probably alarmed the emergency operator on the other end of the phone he was on, when Dean leant over the counter to let him know he wanted to pay. His voice was barely intelligible in his response, Dean managed to interpret it as wanting to know what had happened outside.

“Whatever drugs that guy was on must have overloaded his system, he had a heart attack.” Dean told him calmly before pulling out the Marshall id he had, “now if you don’t mind, I’d like to pay. The guy out there’s in witness protection, and we’d like to get him out of here before they make another attempt on him.”

“Okay…okay…” the attendant squeaked, pulling the monitor down so he could see the amount and accepting the notes from Dean.

Dean could hear him explaining fearfully to the operator about the US Marshalls protecting someone and getting out of the area as he exited.

“Let’s go.” He stated as he got in the driver’s seat.

“What about my family?” Jimmy demanded.

“We get somewhere safe first, then we find out if they’re just blowing smoke or not.” Dean replied as he sped out of the service station. They were out of sight before the first police cars came flying into the street.

Dean was trying to locate a motel so they could figure out what to do when his phone rang. Sam quickly checked the caller id then answered and switched to speaker.

“Gohol laiad.”

“The hierarchy has got it wrong. Emotions are amazing.” Anna answered woodenly.

“Oh, hey Anna.” Dean said, “glad you called.”

“Zip it, Dean.” Anna retorted, “the bastards found out how to banish me. By the time I got back they were gone.”

“Damn.” Dean replied, “I was hoping the demon who claimed they had them was just blowing smoke.”

“Unfortunately not.” Anna confirmed with a sigh, “I’m sorry.”

“It’s okay, we know you did your best. We’re going to head that direction, they demanded Jimmy go to some factory there alone in exchange.”

“You can’t just hand him over to them!” Anna exclaimed.

“Not planning to.” Dean told her, “will probably arrange to have it appear that way though.”

“Be careful.”

“Will do.”

Anna hung up, and Dean allowed himself to indulge in some inventive swear words.
“What are we going to do?” Jimmy asked fearfully.

“First, we’re going to drive there.” Dean told him.

“And then?”

“We’ll think of something.”

“That’s reassuring.” The expression on Jimmy’s face said it was anything but.

Sam used the time it took to drive there to get what information they could on the former factory, using what internet connection they had going through towns and analysing what had been downloaded in between. They hashed out a rough plan.

Arriving they parked the impala in a nearby alley.

“Remember, they’re expecting you to come alone.” Dean reminded Jimmy as they exited, “and that’s exactly what they’re going to see you do. We’ll work our way through the catwalks. Just stall and stay calm. We got your back.”

“You want me to stay calm?” Jimmy demanded, “this is my family we’re talking about.”

“To be able to help them, you need to stay calm.” Sam interrupted before Dean could snap back at him.

“Whatever.” Jimmy grumbled and stalked off.

They heard him yelling to the sky, berating Castiel once he rounded the corner away from them. Sam and Dean shared a worried glance; that hadn’t been part of the plan. Too late to worry about that now, they just had to do what they could and deal with any curve balls as they arose.

They’d been expecting a trap, the demon that had delivered the ultimatum had escaped to reveal who was protecting the vessel after all, and also expecting them to choose numbers if they could get enough willing to attack. Without Lilith at the helm, there hadn’t been a lot of cooperation amongst demons. Either a new leader had taken charge, or the goal of securing the vacated vessel of an angel was important enough to get more to cooperate. Whatever the reason it resulted in them getting captured and hauled in where Jimmy was facing a demon possessing his wife. His daughter was tied up close by.

The Colt and the demon-killing knife got confiscated off them, not before they snuffed some of the demons out of existence, but at least they didn’t make any attempt to kill either of them. Yet at least.

“Got the knife and gun?” The demon in Amelia asked. A couple of the demons displayed the two items. She smiled in victory as she looked back at the brothers, “and you know what’s funny?”

“You wearing a soccer mum?” Dean quipped in reply. Sam almost wished his brother would learn how to control his tongue, it often got him in more trouble.

“I was actually bummed to get this detail.” She continued as if he hadn’t spoken, “picking up an empty vessel. Sort of like a milk run. Now look who landed in my lap. Explains the Hunters and angels protecting the bait.”

“Well…you got us, okay.” Sam replied, hoping that it might distract them from their original goal, “let these people go.”
“Oh, Sam.” She replied, “it’s easy to act chivalrous when your killing weapons are out of reach.”

Sam noted silently that the fact he still had his powers was still unknown.

“Now for the punch line.” The demon continued, bringing up a gun to aim at him, “everybody dies.”

Sam put up a telekinetic shield over his skin in the hopes of not just protecting him, but also keeping the abilities unknown. She held it aimed at him as if savouring the moment, then abruptly changed target and shot Jimmy. Sam didn’t manage to change where he had the shield fast enough and swore silently at himself as the man clutched at the wound in his stomach abruptly spilling blood.

“Waste little orphan Annie.” The demon instructed one of the other demons as Jimmy crumpled to the floor. Then she walked out, apparently confident in her underlings’ ability to deal with the brothers.

A single demon sauntered over to the girl tied to a chair, picked up a piece of scrap laying nearby and swung it at her head. Abruptly she looked up and deflected the bar, then reached out and placed her hand on the demon’s forehead. The demon lit up with killing angel power.

The brother’s reached the conclusion that it was probably Castiel almost simultaneously, now if only they knew whether that was a good thing or not. They wasted no time using the distraction to free themselves, recovering their weapons as quickly as they could.

The angel ignored them in favour of approaching Jimmy.

“Castiel.” Jimmy stated, there was no doubt in his voice.

The demon in Amelia came running back in as she heard the conflict, Sam used his telekinesis to jam an imprint of a devil’s trap into the roof, fortunately out of view of what was happening with Clair and Jimmy, and the disbelief on her face as she ran into its barrier was priceless. Sam took advantage of the momentary distraction to disarm her, then returned to taking out the other demons with the Colt. The only way they’d managed to capture them in the first place had been to pounce en mass to get the Colt out of his hands and to a lesser extent the blade out of Dean’s. Now it was like he was in a shooting gallery, the demons too spread out to even think of trying it again.

“Of course we keep our promises.” Castiel stated through the mouth of the young girl, “of course you have our gratitude.”

With the other demons taken care of Sam raced through the exorcism ritual to evict the demon from Jimmy’s wife. She’d been the only demon he’d sensed the underlying shimmer of human with, and made a mental note to remember to tell Dean that later.

Dean slipped over to watch the interaction between Jimmy and Castiel, using the demon-killing knife to slice open his hand so he could do the banishing sigil in hasty preparation for if it was needed.

“You served us well.” Castiel stated, “your work is done. It is time to go home now. Your real home. You will rest forever in the fields of the Lord.”

Dean winced; that didn’t sound much like the Castiel they’d come to know, and he really hoped it didn’t mean what he thought it meant.

“No.” Jimmy returned, looking at the angel pleadingly.

“Rest now, Jimmy.” Castiel replied.
“No.” Jimmy said, even more desperately, “Claire…”

“She is with me now.” Castiel told him, with no apparent awareness of what was upsetting her father, “she is chosen. It is in her blood, as it was in yours.”

“Please…Castiel.” Jimmy pleaded, “just…just take me. Take me, please.”

Dean motioned to Amelia to stay back as she came over and saw her daughter talking to her severely injured husband. The confusion on her face was plain to read.

“I want to make sure you understand.” Castiel stated, “you won’t die. Or age. If this last year was painful for you picture a hundred, a thousand more like it.”

Jimmy reached out to grasp the angel inhabiting his daughter desperately, “doesn’t matter. You take me. Just take me.”

“As you wish.” Castiel replied after a moment then reached out and took his face in her hands. They all saw the moment when the angel changed vessels, Jimmy sitting up straight and Claire slumping breathlessly.

Castiel stood and barely spared a glance at Amelia as she dashed to her daughter’s side.

“Cas.” Dean stated as the angel looked at the two of them, he really hoped what he said next was as unnecessary as the previous uses, “gohol laiad.”

“Orders must be obeyed.” Castiel replied woodenly.

Dean swore and brought his hand hard into the centre of the sigil. The angel vanished in a flash of light. Dean looked over at Sam and saw the same sadness he felt displayed on his little brother’s face.

“Okay, let’s get out of here.” Dean stated, turning back to Amelia and Claire.

“What did you do to him?” Amelia demanded.

“Sent him away.” Dean told her shortly, “Castiel had been changed and would have tried to kill us.”

“Jimmy wouldn’t…”

“Jimmy doesn’t get a say anymore, maybe won’t ever again.” Sam told her sadly, “the Castiel who would have given him a say is gone, maybe forever.”

“But you arrived with Jimmy, you were protecting him…why would Castiel want to kill either of you? I can’t believe I just asked that as if it’s a completely rational question…”

“Crazy world, I know.” Dean agreed, “Castiel risked everything for us, saved our lives several times. Now he’s been changed, reprogrammed is the word he used to describe it when he warned us about it, and will try to kill us if he sees us again.”

“We need to get you somewhere safe and us away from here before he can fly again.” Sam added, handing over a piece of paper with instruction and a few symbols on it, “this explains how to keep yourself safe from demons, and also our numbers if you need help.”

“What about Jimmy?”

“From what I heard Castiel say to him…there’s not much chance of him coming back, I’m sorry.” Dean replied, “and even if Cas leaves him again he would come under threat from demons again.”
“And you…agree with this?”

“No.” Sam answered, “and even Castiel agreed there’s something wrong with the system. But there’s no way to change it that he’s aware of. We do know Cas spoke with Jimmy, maybe he will again. It wasn’t all danger and difficulty. And Amelia…he wanted desperately to return to you, it was only it being clear his presence with you would put you in deadly danger that kept him away.”

The small family gave no more arguments after that, letting the brothers take them back to their home then watching them drive off into the night in silence.

Neither brother felt much like talking, or even playing music, as they turned the impala towards Bobby’s place.

Sam stared moodily out at the darkened scenery they were passing through, the guilt at having failed the angel who’d risked all for him coiling heavily in his gut and leaving him feeling somewhat nauseated.

“Dean…could we take a break for a bit?” He asked softly.

“Sure.” Dean replied promptly, shooting a worried look at him, “you okay?”

“Yeah…just…need to clear my head.” Sam replied.

“I hear you.” Dean agreed, “I’m definitely not putting this one in the win column.”

Sam didn’t reply, he didn’t want to talk about it. Not yet anyway. The next rest stop turned up in reasonably short order, and Dean pulled into it. Sam climbed out of the impala and plopped down at the closest table, Dean settled down next to him at a comfortably close distance. The proximity of his brother Sam found comforting.

“You want to talk?” Dean offered.

“Not particularly.” Sam returned, “not like there’s anything to talk about anyway.”

“Sure there is. But if you’re not ready, that’s okay too.” Dean replied, “just remember…it’s not your fault.”

“Then who’s fault is it?” Sam demanded, “not yours that’s for sure, not Jimmy’s or his family, not Anna’s. There wasn’t anything you or they could have done to stop it.”

“Neither could you.” Dean pointed out.

“I should have got a damn vision…” Sam cut off his rant with a gasp of pain and put his head down in his arms on the table. Dean’s hand instantly found his shoulder, he saw his little brother’s fingers try to dig into the wood of the table.

“Sammy? What’s wrong?”

Looked like that was a bit of an understatement to Dean, “okay. Where are you hurting?”

“I…” before Dean could ask what had happened Sam spun away from him and threw up violently onto the ground, catching part of the bench in the spray as he did so.

Dean was instantly on his feet and steadying his brother, pulling his hair back out of the way as he
heaved. The automatic reassuring words that he always said dying on his lips as he caught sight of what Sam was bringing up.

“Tell me…” Sam pleaded shakily once he stopped heaving, “that that isn’t what I think it is…”

Dean really wished he could, “you’re…going to be okay.”

“Dean…don’t lie to me…” Sam refuted waveringly, “where is the nearest hospital anyway…?”

“Couple of hours.” Dean answered reluctantly, pulling out his handkerchief and cleaning the blood off his little brother gently.

Sam nodded resignedly, he’d expected as much, “could you…get Bobby and Adam on the phone? And Dean…don’t do anything stupid…”

“You’re not going to die.” Dean told him firmly, pulling out his phone and hitting one of the contacts. Despite Sam’s request, it wasn’t Bobby’s number he called, it was picked up only a moment later, “Anna. Gohol Laiad.”

“The hierarchy has got it wrong. Emotions are amazing.” The angel replied woodenly.

“Sam’s real sick, we need you.” Dean told her, “he’s puking blood. We’re too far from a hospital… not sure they’d be able to help anyway.”

“Shit. Where are you?”

“Rest stop off highway 57.”

“Be right there.”

She evidently didn’t manage to find the right rest stop immediately as it was a couple of minutes before she appeared in a flutter of wings.

“Holy crap.” Anna exclaimed as she took in the younger brother’s appearance and how much blood he’d brought up. Then she was next to him and had her palm on his forehead, he relaxed as the pain and nausea vanished.

“Feeling better?” Dean asked, and Sam nodded. The older brother breathed a sigh of relief and turned back to Anna, “thank you. Any idea what that was? I didn’t see him take any hits earlier, not that could cause something like that anyway.”

“At a guess…an angel.” Anna told him a little reluctantly, “if that was natural you’d have gotten signs long before now, as in months ago. Rest for a bit, though, it’ll take a little while for your body to catch up to the swings in condition.”

Sam felt like he wanted to cry, and from the expression on Dean’s face, he was torn between being sad and angry.

Finally, Dean let out a sad swear word, “speaking of angels…stay clear of Cas. He’s been reprogrammed.”

“How bad?” She asked.

“His answer was ‘orders must be obeyed’.” Dean told her and saw the sadness wash over her face.

“That’s not good.” Anna agreed, “I’ll steer clear, you’d better too.”
“Planning to. Thank you again.”

“Of course.”

Anna disappeared in a flutter of feathers, and Dean looked back at Sam.

“Ready to continue on to Bobby’s?”

“More than ready to be nowhere near that.” Sam replied with a gesture at the congealing pool of blood and bile.

“You and me both.” Dean agreed, shadowing Sam back to the impala.

Chapter End Notes

Comments, constructive criticism, and questions always welcome.
Chapter 69: Aftermath

The growl of the Impala's engine was the first clue either Bobby or Adam got of Sam and Dean’s return. Adam looked up quizzically from where he was going over his notes, a chupacabra pup nestled in his lap. The mama chupacabra and the rest of the litter had been taken care of the previous week with the assistance of the vet, Adam had insisted on keeping the friendliest of the pups around.

“Guess they’re back.” Bobby noted, “wonder how bad it was, from what they said last call they didn’t think they’d be free for a while.”

“They injured?” Adam asked in alarm.

“How would I know that without seeing them? Sam’s the psychic, not me.” Bobby retorted. He opened the door just as the engine shut off.

Bobby watched the brothers clamber out of the car. Both of them were on their feet, which was reassuring, but Dean shooed Sam towards the house when he attempted to help with their bags, which wasn’t. Of the passenger they’d had for the last few weeks there was no sign.

“What happened?” Bobby asked when Sam reached the door, he looked a little tired but other than that fine.

“Cas is back. He’s been reprogrammed though.” Sam told him shortly, the flat tone telling Bobby that it bothered the middle brother more than he was admitting.

“He woke up once, there’s every chance he’ll wake up again.” Bobby tried to reassure him.

“Maybe.” Sam returned.

Dean joined them right then, “go grab a seat, Sammy. I’ll take these upstairs.”

“She said you needed to rest, so go rest.” Dean interrupted, “now stop arguing and let me go dump this crap.”
Sam went and plopped down on the couch with a sigh while Dean took their bags upstairs. The little chupacabra pup poked her nose out and sniffed in Sam’s direction curiously.

“Looks like you’ve got a little friend there.” Sam noted with a chuckle.

Adam brought the little scaley pup over, and she happily nuzzled close after giving him a cautious sniff. Dean rolled his eyes when he came back downstairs and saw the puppy with his brothers.

“Gerard came over last week and helped us take care of the rest of them.” Bobby stated, “Adam insisted on keeping the friendliest of the litter.”

“Awesome.” Dean sighed.

“So what happened?” Bobby asked.

Dean sighed again and ran his hand through his hair, it was apparent from his expression he didn’t much want to talk about whatever it was.

“I need a beer.” Dean stated instead of answering and disappeared into the kitchen after it. He returned with three bottles of beer, though he hesitated slightly before handing one to Sam.

Bobby took a gulp of his beer and waited until Dean had taken a drink also before prompting him again.

“Well?”

“Some demons managed to banish Anna and possessed Amelia. We went in to rescue them after a demon delivered an ultimatum to Jimmy. Cas returned, and Jimmy insisted he resume inhabiting him to spare Claire. Being a vessel is apparently a genetic thing, just so you know.” Dean told him flatly, “we used the truth command on him and had to banish him after his response was ‘orders must be obeyed’. We took Amelia and Claire back to their home and left them with instructions on how to protect against demons, and also left our numbers.”

“Okay. Doesn’t sound too bad. Could have been worse.” Bobby replied, “what happened with Sam?”

Dean stared at his beer for a long moment before answering, “he nearly died last night.”

Adam let out a gasp of horror, and when Bobby looked at Sam, the middle brother was staring fixedly at his own beer.

“What happened? He get hurt in the fight?”

Dean gave a humourless half laugh, “I guess that’s when it happened. We didn’t find out for several hours though, when we were already on the road to here.”

“And?” Bobby prompted when the oldest brother fell silent again, “do I need to drag every word out of you?”

“We stopped for a bit of a break at a rest stop, to clear our heads a tad. Losing Cas like that…it’s almost worse than if he’d been killed. Everything he held dear swept away without his consent.” Dean continued slowly, “we were talking, and suddenly Sammy doubled over in pain. He wasn’t even able to tell me where the pain was before he spun away from me and puked blood all over the ground.”
Adam turned wide, horrified eyes on Sam.

“I’m okay now.” Sam reassured him softly.

“I got Anna on the phone.” Dean stated, “closest hospital was a couple of hours away, and I was pretty sure it was more than they could deal with anyway. She fixed him right up, said he needed to rest though given the large swings in condition.”

“You got no warning?”

Dean shook his head.

“I was feeling a little sick in the car beforehand.” Sam admitted, “but I thought it was due to the guilt of having failed Cas.”

Dean sent an exasperated look in his direction.

“Even if I hadn’t thought that was the cause it wasn’t enough to get you to stop or anything.” Sam protested.

“It wasn’t your fault, Sammy. We got there as soon as we could.” Dean told him, more than a little frustration in his voice. What might have happened if they hadn’t stopped for a break flitting through his mind.

“Any idea what caused it?” Bobby interrupted.

“Anna said her best guess was an angel, it wouldn’t have jumped to that level if it was natural.” Dean answered.

“Were there others?”

“No that we saw.” Sam replied, looking at Bobby with pained eyes, “there might have been some there invisible…but if there were…they would have been making sure Cas did as he was told.”

“Balls.” Bobby replied.

“Yeah.” Dean agreed.

Adam looked like he was ready to cry and Sam pulled him into a firm hug, “it’s okay. We’re fine. Dean fixed it. We’ve got a few powerful allies in our corner.”

“Well, I hope you’re sticking around for a bit after that.” Bobby stated.

“Barring any emergencies or cases, yeah.” Dean confirmed. He headed over to the couch and sat down next to Sam, Adam returning to the chair he’d occupied before to make room for them, not that the couch was small. Without appearing to think about it, the eldest brother wrapped his arm around Sam’s shoulders and pulled him over to lean on him.

What told Bobby that the middle brother was more tired than he was letting on was he relaxed into the hold.

One of the phones in the kitchen jangled and Bobby rolled his eyes, “one sec, someone needs their butt wiped.”

The comment got a ghost of a smile from Dean as the older Hunter stomped into the kitchen. From the sound of the conversation floating in from the kitchen, it was one of the FBI calls.
When Bobby returned Sam had actually dropped off, and Dean gently settled him comfortably in a more horizontal position, Bobby gruffly pulling the tall Hunter’s boots off and folding his legs onto the couch. Sam stirred slightly, but Dean calmed him again running his hand through his hair.

Adam collected his notebooks, the little pup, and disappeared upstairs so he wouldn’t disturb the brothers.

“He okay?” Bobby asked quietly.

Dean nodded a little shakily, “physically, yeah…now.”

“What about you? It can’t have been easy.”

“It scared the hell out of me, Bobby.” Dean admitted, the fear he’d been burying while in front of his brothers visible on his face.

“I’ll bet. Sounded like a close call, but you made it through.”

“He gave up on me, Bobby. Wanted to get you and Adam on the phone to say goodbye.”

“He knew how bad it was?”

“He’d just puked blood everywhere, the place looked like a murder scene. And I’d just had to tell him the closest hospital was a couple of hours away. So I’d say he definitely knew.”

“Talk to him, I’d bet he has a different take on what it meant. When he wakes up, obviously.”

Dean nodded silently, and Bobby headed back into the kitchen to let them both rest.

Sam slept for several hours and when he woke Dean chivvied him into eating and then upstairs to get some more sleep in an actual bed.

Chapter End Notes

Sorry this is a little late. Did have a very cute distraction though. We found a cat that had had kittens in the laundry last night.

As always comments, constructive criticism, and questions very welcome.
Chapter 70: On the Road Again

It only took a couple of days for Sam to get back to normal, though Dean wasn’t able to relax about it for a lot longer. Which is how he came to be in Adam’s room listening to his two brainiac brothers babble about something that he wasn’t at all sure what it was.

“Stick to the nonsentient creatures.” Sam stated in a tone that brooked no argument, “not without them being able to consent to you taking a look anyway and figure out a cure or control or something. Which leaves out things like werewolves since they lose control when they shift.”

A small alarm on Adam’s phone interrupted their kid brother before he could find a reply. He moved over to the small bar fridge in the corner after silencing it.

“We made a note of how the mother chupacabra fed the pups once they were weaned.” Adam explained as he pulled a small jar out.

Adam kept talking about something to do with timings, what the adult chupacabra had done, and the training he was planning, but Dean didn’t register the actual words as his focus snagged on the gory red liquid sloshing viscously in the jar. Suddenly all he could see was the blood of his little brother splashed all over that rest stop in the middle of nowhere.

Sam and Adam’s conversation while feeding the pup screeched to a halt as Dean gagged then bolted from the room.

“Dean?” Sam asked to the air then waved at Adam to stay behind and followed after his big brother.

It didn’t take much for him to figure out where Dean had got to, the upstairs bathroom door was closed and the sound of someone being sick came from inside.

Curbing his impulse to dash in and check on him Sam knocked on the door, “Dean?”

“I’m okay, Sammy.” Dean called back.

He didn’t much sound like it, but Sam backed off. Turning back to the room he had to step in Adam’s way to stop him barging in on Dean.
“Adam, leave him be.”

“He’s sick.”

“He said he’s okay.”

“And you just accepted that?”

“He wouldn’t lie.” Sam told him, “go finish up with the pup or talk with Bobby or something. I’ll wait for Dean.”

Adam wanted to argue, but he had a good idea that Sam wouldn’t need to move a muscle to stop him from getting into the bathroom to check on his oldest brother. Why their middle brother was preventing him from making sure Dean was okay he didn’t know.

Sulkily he headed downstairs, where he found Bobby with his nose in some dusty book.

“Something bothering you?” The older Hunter asked after a glance at the youngest brother.

“Dean’s throwing up and Sam won’t let me check on him.” Even to himself, it sounded like he was whining and Adam clenched his teeth.

“Did Sam say anything?” Bobby asked. Adam wasn’t sure how he could be so calm.

“Only that Dean said he was okay.”

“Something probably set off his weak stomach then.” Bobby stated, continuing when Adam gave him a baffled look, “he’s had it all his life. Sam found out when they were teenagers, he’d managed to keep it from him until then. After a few arguments they settled on an agreement between them, Sam wouldn’t fuss when it made an appearance provided Dean tell him if it was more than that.”

“That had to have made things interesting when Sam got sick.”

“One of the things that doesn’t set him off.” Bobby told him, “Dean looked after Sam for a good portion of their childhood and into their teens. I’m not sure whether it was exposure, necessity, or sheer willpower. Knowing Dean, it was probably a combination of all three. Only know of one time where that wasn’t the case.”

“What happened?”

“Was Dean’s last year in high school. Someone messed up and half the school came down with food poisoning, including both Sam and Dean. John had no idea how to deal with it. Mary had mostly been the one to take care of Dean in the first four years when he got the typical childhood illnesses, and he’d not had to bother even with Dean getting sick once Sam got old enough to do things like wet a cloth and get a drink of water. So he was way out of his depth when Dean had to summon him back from a case. Dean wasn’t able to keep it together more than a minute or two when Sam started puking. So John bundled them both into the car with a bucket each and brought them here. Once they stopped throwing up every few minutes, he pretty much fled, and I got them back to health. Dean never went back to school after that, he never said so, but I got the impression he felt he’d let Sam down not being able to take care of him.”

“Oh.” Adam mulled over the new information.

Sam was leaning back on the wall opposite the bathroom door when Dean emerged, he ran his eyes carefully over his big brother. He was maybe a bit pale, and a little shaky, but other than that didn’t
look like he was coming down with anything.

“I’m fine, Sammy.” Dean stated, both tired and annoyed.

“What was that about? You don’t get set off by blood last I checked.” Sam returned.

“Last you checked you hadn’t had your blood splashed all over some rest stop in the middle of nowhere and nearly died on me.” Dean retorted.

Sam tilted his head and regarded him thoughtfully, “want to talk?”

Dean shrugged, “what’s there to talk about?”

“What’s got your knickers in a knot for one.” Sam gestured towards their room, and Dean followed the suggestion with a sigh.

Sam pulled a couple of beers out of the cooler that had been brought in from the impala, handed one to Dean where he’d plopped down on his bed then took a seat on his own.

“So?” He prompted once Dean took a gulp.

“What’s to say?” Dean returned with a shrug, “when he pulled out that jar of blood all I could see was your blood splashed all over that rest stop in the middle of nowhere.”

“Why is that bothering you? You fixed it.”

“You nearly died!”

“Nature of the job, you know that. You’ve explained as much to Adam several times.”

Dean was silent for a moment, “you gave up on me, Sammy.”

“What?”

“Do I really have to say it again? Surely you remember wanting me to get Bobby and Adam on the phone. I wasn’t dumb enough to miss what you wanted with that.”

“Dean…that wasn’t me giving up on you.” Sam stated, sitting forward, “I’d thrown up…what…a quart or so of blood. It wasn’t going to be long before I’d have been throwing up again, so I knew I didn’t have long without some intervention. I didn’t want to waste what time I had bemoaning reality, especially after you’d confirmed we were hours from a hospital, even if they were able to help. I was already lightheaded and having trouble thinking straight, but I knew if there was a way to fix it you’d find it. I just…didn’t want to wait too long. I’d have been surprised if I was still capable of stringing two words together an hour later if I was even still conscious. It was preparing for the worst case scenario…a scenario I really didn’t want to have eventuate and hoped wouldn’t.”

Dean’s hand shook as he took another pull from the beer bottle, “you really reasoned all that out in those few moments?”

“Roughly, yeah. I always did spend too much time in my head.”

“And I thought I reacted fast.” Dean half complained though a smile made its appearance.

“You do react fast.” Sam told him, “I’m barely halfway through reasoning out what to do, you’ve already acted. And most of the time you’re completely correct.”
Dean gave a snort of laughter and finished off his beer, “how badly did I spook Adam?”

“I had to stop him from barging in on you. Not sure if he went back to the pup or to talk to Bobby.”

“Guess I’d better go show him I haven’t keeled over or anything.” Dean stated with a sigh.

Sam nodded and finished off his own beer. He followed his big brother downstairs, where they found Adam talking with Bobby. The teen bounced to his feet when he saw them.

“You okay, Dean?” Adam asked nervously.

“I’m fine. You can have feeding the pup all to yourself from now on though.” Dean returned.

“The blood set you off?” Bobby asked, “since when has that been an issue?”

“Since I can’t get the image of his blood splashed all over that rest stop out of my head.” Dean returned, jerking his head at Sam as he spoke.

Bobby harrumphed, “should have figured that. You need to relax more, Sam’s fine. He’s not even tired anymore.”

“Yeah…yeah.” Dean groused softly.

“Workshop is always there if you want to busy your hands while your heart catches up to your head.”

Dean chuckled, “I may just do that.”

The next few days he did just that, contentedly getting his hands greasy working on the various wrecks that Bobby nudged towards being roadworthy between Hunting crises, leaving Adam and Sam to talk over esoteric sciency things. Their kid brother was also due to start at the university in Sioux Falls to continue his degree, and Sam was somewhat wistfully helping him prepare also.

Adam was happily speculating about what could be done to convincingly disguise the pup once it was adult so it could be taken places when Sam felt the pressure of an oncoming vision and belatedly realised they hadn’t explained that aspect of his abilities to the teen. Not that there was enough time to remedy that before the vision would take over his senses.

“Adam.” Sam interrupted, putting his drink down on the table next to him to avoid dropping it, “go get Dean.”

“What?” Adam asked in confusion, looking over at him. He got no response and shivered when he noticed that it didn’t seem his brother was aware of anything in the room anymore. He knew what that indicated, being the child of a nurse educated people to a lot of unusual things, though he couldn’t believe neither of them had mentioned it to him. Springing to his feet, he dashed from the house in search of their eldest brother.

“Dean!” Adam called as he almost skidded into the workshop.

Dean slid out from under the car he was working on and looked at his kid brother, “what’s up?”

“Sam’s having an absence seizure.”

“Seizure?!” Dean was on his feet in an instant.

“An absence seizure.” Adam corrected hastily, a little puzzled that Dean didn’t recognise the
Dean sighed as he placed the description and realised they’d never explained to Adam about that aspect of Sam’s abilities, “it’s not a seizure, absence or otherwise.”

Ignoring the questions Adam was asking Dean headed into the house. Sam was just recovering from the vision.

“You good?” Dean asked.

Sam nodded.

“Your sketchbook is upstairs isn’t it?”

Sam nodded again, and Dean turned to Adam, who’d followed him in and had a lot of unspoken questions in his eyes, “Adam, could you go tell Bobby that Sam’s had a vision?”

“A vision?” Adam asked; that definitely wasn’t a possibility he’d ever even heard of.

“One of his psychic abilities. Remind me to give you the list of all of his abilities at some point, so we don’t get caught out again.” Dean returned, “I’m just going to grab Sam’s sketchbook.”

He disappeared upstairs as Adam reluctantly went to hunt down the older Hunter. He returned with Bobby as Sam was finishing off the pictures from the vision.

“You’re a good artist.” Adam commented as he saw the almost photorealistic drawings.

“Another psychic ability; makes stuff I see just appear on the page.” Sam told him, “otherwise, I don’t even manage stick figures very convincingly.”

“Where are you headed this time?” Bobby asked.

Sam flipped to a picture of a city skyline and showed him, “no town signs or anything convenient like that this time.”

“That’s going to be easy to track down.” Bobby grumbled, “any clue what the problem is.”

Sam flipped to another picture, this one of a man about the same general age as the older brothers with long hair that brushed his shoulders, “this guy is in danger. From what I didn’t see, just that it’s been in motion for a while and it reaching critical. And before you ask, didn’t get a name either.”

“That’s going to be even harder to track down than whatever city that is, there’s a lot of people in a city. And a larger portion aren’t able to be found online than in a town.” Dean noted. Sam gave him a ‘tell me something I don’t know’ look.

“Well…you track that down while I get our stuff ready.” Dean decided.

When he returned with their bags, Adam was sulking on the couch while Sam was working on his computer.

“Figured out where we’re headed yet?” Dean asked.

“Denver, Colorado.” Sam answered, “still haven’t located who the guy in danger is though.”

“Okay, well let’s head there and hope your abilities point us at them then.”
Sam nodded and shut down his computer.

“I want to…” Adam started.

“I already said no.” Sam interrupted, “it’s too dangerous for you, plus you’ve got to be at lectures in a few days.”

“Don’t look at me.” Dean said when Adam turned a pleading look on him, “I’m not going to override Sam, especially when I agree with him. I’d have preferred you didn’t know anything about the supernatural, dad wanted to keep you out of it for a reason.”

Adam scowled, and Dean decided he was taking lessons from Sam in expressive looks. Fortunately, he was able to escape the expression by heading out to the impala with Sam, then started them in the direction of Denver.

[Continued in chapter 6 of Tales from Pivot Point]

Chapter End Notes

Hope it was worth the wait.

As always comments, constructive criticism, and questions welcome.
Chapter 71: Another Thing

[Continued from chapter 7 of Tales from Pivot Point]

They were on the road much later than they would have typically been, but Dean hadn’t had the heart to wake his brother. Instead letting him sleep in far later than either of them usually slept. Not that he was entirely sure that was a good thing, Sam was obviously still reeling from the revelations. The silence in the car that he hadn’t been able to banish even with his tapes was broken by Sam’s phone ringing.

After a quick check of the id, Sam answered, “Bobby?”

Dean shot a concerned look at him from the driver’s seat, Bobby didn’t usually call them when he knew they were already on their way to his place. Unless it was urgent.

“Adam’s gone.” The older Hunter stated without preamble.

Sam sat up straight like he’d been electrocuted and Dean stopped looking for a rest stop and got the impala stopped on the shoulder so fast he wasn’t completely aware of the transition.

“What do you mean gone?!” Sam demanded.

Dean reached over and plucked the phone out of his brother’s hand and switched it to speaker. He didn’t know what the older Hunter had said but if Sam’s reaction was anything to go by it was bad.

“Gone gone.” Bobby snapped from the tinny speaker, “went for a nap after a tiring day, I turned around, and he was gone.”

Dean went cold as he registered that Adam was missing.

“Any chance of… I don’t know… sleepwalking or something?” Dean asked even as he saw Sam go white. He nearly sighed as he realised he could almost narrate along with what was going through his brother’s head now.

“I was in between him and the door. Plus the pup yelped.”
“Okay…” Dean thought quickly, “you see if you can turn up any evidence there, we’ll get to a diner or something so that we’re not sitting on the side of the road and see what we can turn up also. We’ve gotta find him.”

“And we will. I just don’t like how this happened.”

“Me either.” Dean agreed, “talk to you soon.”

Bobby rang off, and Dean went to pull back onto the road.

“Dean…”

“Not your fault.” Dean cut his brother off before he could say what they both knew he was about to.

“But…”

“No buts about it. Just because they’ve targeted our family doesn’t make it your fault. It’s their choice, not yours.”

Sam didn’t argue as Dean pointed the impala in the direction of the closest town with a motel and diner.

Dean dropped Sam off at the entrance to the diner at his request so he could get started while Dean parked the impala. The eldest brother took advantage of the brief isolation, even if he wasn’t entirely comfortable with it, to give Anna a call. While the rogue angel agreed with him that it sounded much like an angel taking Adam, specifically getting out of him his location after entering his dreams given he was taken while sleeping, she was disappointed to report that there was no chatter on angel radio about the situation.

It was disappointing not to have an immediate lead, but at least Ana had promised to keep eye and ear out. Entering the diner Dean stopped at the counter before heading to the corner where Sam had set up, there were a spattering of apparent locals throughout the sitting area.

“What’ll it be, sugar?” The waitress asked.

“Two coffees.” Dean replied, then glanced over at where his brother already had his nose buried in the computer, “uh…could you add…chocolate or something…to the second one?”

“So…a coffee and a mocha?”

“Uh…sure.” Dean wasn’t sure exactly what that was, though undoubtedly Sam could have given him chapter and verse of its definition, but if that was what the lady thought it was from his fuzzy description that’s probably what it was.

“Sure thing, sugar, anything else?”

“Not just yet, will want some food later though.” Dean told her. He figured he might have to badger Sam into eating, but his little brother wasn’t going to get an option. Sam never felt like eating when he was stressed, Dean knew, but they were going to need to keep his abilities fuelled.

“No problem, sugar, take a seat and I’ll bring it over. The mocha for the walking mountain?”

Dean chuckled and nodded, the setting off of his sense of humour almost a relief with how tense things had been.

The waitress brought the drinks over a short while after he joined his brother. Dean could tell that
Sam had to force himself to pay enough attention to her to be polite about thanking her for the drinks. His focus was straight back on the laptop once she was gone and he distractedly sipped at his coffee, mocha Dean reminded himself, without taking his eyes off the screen again.

Dean hid his disappointment when his little brother didn’t react to the addition, sternly telling himself that Sam noticing wasn’t the point of the exercise.

One his second sip Sam paused and looked at the cup quizzically then looked at Dean.

“Did you seriously get me a mocha?” He asked after a bemused moment.

“Yeah…well…figured you could use a bit of a pick me up.” Dean told him a little embarrassed.

“Dean…”

He could have nearly read his little brother’s thoughts in that one word, “don’t, Sammy, it’s not your fault. Never was. You never asked for it. It’s all on them, no matter how hard they try to put it on you. Why Bobby doesn’t have the entirety of his place fortified, instead of just the bedrooms, and the panic room I’ll never know.”

“Probably because his place also operates as the office for the junkyard.” Sam suggested, “that kinda thing attracts raised eyebrows from the general public. And usually, someone being awake and alert in the rest of the house removes most of the risk there. Even if someone is napping on the couch if something starts happening the person awake can usually wake them and relocate to the panic room.”

“We’re gonna have to work on that. Once we get Adam back, we’re going to need to make sure nothing can get to him again, or Bobby for that matter.”

“Chris managed it pretty imperceptively, maybe he can give us some pointers.”

“That’s an idea.”

Sam nodded and turned back to the laptop, “much as I’ve been dreading it…you’d better give Anna a call. Bobby would have mentioned if there was sulphur, so that leaves angels as the most likely culprit.”

Dean fought the impulse to sigh in relief, “already did. She agreed with that assessment, but there’s nothing on angel radio about it. She’s going to keep her eyes and ears open though.”

Sam nodded in acknowledgement, his attention back on his laptop.

Dean sipped his own coffee and decided he should do his side of the investigation. Starting with the call he couldn’t pretend to be an investigating agent, the police and hospital of Windom, Minnesota. After getting an unofficial promise, the police were apologetic over the needing to wait 24 hours thing, to keep their eyes out for the teen he started calling other locations where if Adam was being used to send them a message he might have been left. Dean wasn’t sure he was happy or disappointed that he found no trace of their kid brother, sure he was really glad the enquiries at the various morgues came up empty, but getting a positive response at a hospital would at least tell them where he was and let him beg a favour of Anna to fetch him.

They continued like that for an hour, getting more coffee as needed, before Sam abruptly shoved the laptop away from him with a scowl.

“This is useless!” He growled, “I can’t find any trace of him!”
Dean grabbed his hands before he could do anything more, let alone anything more spectacular. Usually, he wouldn’t need to worry about that since his brother was one of the most level tempered people he knew. This was not a normal situation though.

“Everything okay, sugar?” The waitress interrupted warily, the friendliness in her voice from earlier completely absent.

Dean glanced at her and could easily see she was a hair’s breadth from kicking them out. Behind her he could see one of their fellow diners paying careful attention to them and recognised it as the type employed by law enforcement. She wouldn’t need to call the police if she decided it was necessary.

He plasted his most charming smile on his face, “sorry, darling, my brother’s just having a tough time. Our kid brother didn’t come home after classes, and we haven’t been able to find out where he might have gone. We’re too far away to search for him physically.”

Her expression softened instantly, “oh, you poor dears. And the police won’t even start looking for 24 hours. Stupidest policy I’ve ever heard of if you ask me. This must be so stressful for you. You just sit there, and I’ll go get you some more coffees. Just…try not to break anything will you?”

Dean nodded, and she bustled off as Sam ducked his head, his face colouring in embarrassment. Dean saw her stop by the table the law enforcement customer was at out of the corner of his eye, and from the sympathetic look the man gave them could figure she’d updated him about the situation.

“It’s okay.” Dean soothed, closing the laptop, “just calm down. No news just means he ain’t dead.”

“You can’t know that.” Sam replied, a tinge of the despair he was feeling echoing in his words.

“Yes, I do.” Dean refuted, “neither of the candidates for taking him are particularly subtle after all. If he were dead, he’d have been left somewhere where we could find him easily to make a point, if they didn’t just leave him gutted in front of Bobby’s or his place.”

Sam took a carefully controlled breath as he acknowledged his big brother’s reasoning, comforting as it wasn’t.

The waitress came over again just then with the two drinks, “need anything else, sugar?”

“We’ll grab some food before we find somewhere we can bed down for the night if you don’t mind darling.” Dean interrupted before Sam could answer in the negative.

“Dean.” Sam complained.

“I know…I know…you lose your appetite when you’re stressed,” Dean retorted, “but you’re not going to help Adam by skipping meals.”

“My daughter is the same way.” The waitress commented sympathetically, “nearly have to force her to eat in finals week. I’d suggest the chicken tenders, easy to eat when you’re stressed.”

“He’ll have that.” Dean stated when his little brother looked indecisive, “and I’ll have a cheeseburger.”

“No problem, sugar.” The waitress jotted down the order, “if you’re looking to stop here for the night the motel across the road is pretty good. Beds are clean, and prices are decent.”

“Sounds perfect.” Dean told her with a charming smile.
“Great, I’ll let Shelley know you’re going to be coming.” She declared, “just try to relax some, sugar, I’m sure he’ll turn up. Young ‘uns forget they are loved all the time, probably show up after spending the night with his friends and wonder what all the fuss is about.”

“Thank you.” Dean told her as she bustled off.

“Wish I could be as hopeful as her.” Sam commented softly.

Dean nodded with a sigh, “wish he only had normal issues to worry about, instead of the possibility of being taken from his bed by angels and demons.”

“If…” Sam began, only to have Dean interrupt.

“No, Sam, he was targeted long before we even knew he existed. You know as well as I do that he probably wouldn’t even be alive now if we hadn’t intervened.”

The waitress brought their meals over, “here you go, sugar. Now, don’t you worry none. Get a good night’s sleep, and you can start looking for your kid brother fresh in the morning. It’s a wonder what a decent rest can do. Shelley will take good care of you.”

They thanked her, somewhat embarrassed, and tucked into their meals. When they went over to the motel after paying, the aforementioned Shelley had a room all waiting for them along with sympathy and reassurances that their brother would undoubtedly turn up fine the next day. They wished they could believe her as they settled down for the night.

Chapter End Notes

My apologies for how long this chapter has taken. A combination of life went a little nuts, the plot bunnies weren't cooperating, and some things happened to shake my confidence in my writing. I hope you enjoy it, and hopefully, I'll be back on schedule with the next chapter in 2 weeks. Comments, questions, and constructive criticism welcome.
Chapter 72: Ghostly Hijinks

Chapter Notes

Story Name: Pivot Point  
Pen Name: ElenaRoan  
Disclaimer: Don’t own any of them, written purely for enjoyment.  
Warnings:  
Summary: What if Anna decided to derail the apocalypse by intervening to help rather than trying to make the brothers never having existed.  
Timeline: Season 4  
Note: I’m Australian and I can’t bring myself to use USA spelling, sorry.

Chapter 72: Ghostly Hijinks

Another night another motel. It had been weeks, and they were still no closer to finding Adam. Dean went into the office of the random motel they’d found along this stretch of deserted highway that only trucks appeared to use, leaving Sam to sulk in the impala. His little brother would have protested the description, which was why he’d been teasing him with it at every opportunity. At least until Sam’s mood got so bad, it was near taking his life into his hands to do so. Not that he truly feared that, more that it wasn’t helping anymore. Most telling as far as the eldest brother was concerned was that morning meditation was taking twice as long as usual, Sam was having a lot of trouble focusing. At least he wasn’t giving up on the effort to get through the exercises.

The caustic looking manager looked at him wearily, “fee is non-refundable, no matter what you think you see in the middle of the night. Don’t like it, find another motel. Next is 2 hours north.”

Dean’s eyebrows rose, “has something happened?”

“Only thing that’s happened is people letting their imaginations run away with them.” The manager snapped, “do you want the room or not?”

“A twin, please.” He handed over their latest credit card. The manager rang it up without further comment before handing over the keys to a room. Dean took them and left without further comment to collect Sam and locate the room.

“You getting anything with your Spidey sense?” Dean asked as he let them in.

“I’d have mentioned if I did. My abilities haven’t shorted out on me yet. Why?”

“The manager said something weird as I was checking us in about the fee not being refundable no matter what we think we see in the middle of the night.”

“Odd. I’ll do some digging once I’ve seen if we can get any leads.” Sam replied, looking into stories about the motel that may or may not actually be something supernatural wasn’t a high priority. With a lack of concrete leads, they’d been reduced to searching for angel and demon signs, not that there was a lot of things that pointed towards angel presence. The few they knew of could easily be mixed up with demon sign. Bobby had been keeping in touch with the places Adam might be dumped to
make a point while they roamed the country searching, he’d had to officially report the teen as missing because of his university classes. There wasn’t an active search from law enforcement currently though; that having been wound back once they figured they were most likely searching for a corpse. The only departments that hadn’t shelved it being the Windom police department and, surprisingly enough, the Sioux Falls police department. Bobby had appeared to actually know the sheriff from the phone conversations, though why that would have led to her keeping a team on it given it seemed to be a somewhat abrasive familiarity they didn’t know and didn’t bother asking.

Sam set up the laptop and got straight into searching for any new leads, no matter how slim, once they had the defences set up. Dean knew better than to try to get him to focus long enough on food to detail what he’d like so he just headed over to the diner not far away. More of a truck stop actually in this tiny town that seemed to consist of it, the motel, a couple of houses, and a small post office complete with town clock. He’d decided to just be thankful his brother wasn’t near papering the walls of all the motel rooms they stayed in days ago, though he had a feeling that Sam’s reasoning behind that was a reluctance to spend the time taking down and putting up each time they moved. Dean hadn’t been game to take a look at how his brother was laying out the leads on the laptop. Once they had Adam back, he could focus on getting his brother’s head back on straight.

Once he returned they settled for their now usual nightly routine, Sam scouring the internet for clues while absenting eating the food that Dean had all but shoved under his hand, and Dean going through newspapers and making calls until it got too late. The oldest brother usually had to badger him into sleeping sometime after midnight. Left to his own devices, Sam would probably have worked straight through the night. Such behaviour from his usually level-headed little brother would have seriously concerned Dean if he hadn’t seen it before, not that he wasn’t still worried though.

It was right as some clock outside tolled midnight that Sam felt it activate. He froze for a moment, searching his senses to be sure he wasn’t imagining anything. It had been a while since they’d last encountered one.

“Dean.”

Dean immediately came on alert, an unspoken question flashing across his face.

“A ghost just became active.”

“Awesome.” Dean grumbled, “so much for it being overactive imaginations. But…since it has been mistaken for that…any chance of it not being dangerous?”

A crash and a scream answered that question before Sam could reply.

Dean grabbed their duffle bag, hauled two shotguns and salt filled shells out, tossing one to Sam where he was already at the door.

“That sounded like the manager.” Dean commented as he joined his brother, “wonder why it’s turned violent.”

“Who knows…could be anything from finally snapping to it being an anniversary. Unlikely to be the manager herself since she’s obviously been here a while.”

“You didn’t get a chance to do some digging?”

“No.”

Dean swore silently, he hated going into a situation blind, though he didn’t actually say so. Time enough for recriminations after they’d dealt with the ghost, and if he knew his brother he’d be
kicking himself far more than anything Dean could or would direct his way.

“Okay. Save first, research later. Ready?” Dean asked, and received a nod in reply.

They dashed out of their room, shotguns at the ready, and eyes scouring for the location of the trouble. It didn’t take long, the broken vase and the manager pinned halfway up the wall of the office a dead giveaway for them. She was trying to grapple with invisible hands at her neck, paired with the colour of her face told them her air was cut off.

They didn’t bother taking the time to open the door normally, Dean booting it open with rough efficiency. Sam slipped passed him, aimed and shot where he could sense the ghost actually being, being careful to keep the manager out of the cone of fire.

With a gasp, she came down off the wall and crashed to her knees as she desperately dragging air in. Dean jumped forward and hooked his hand under her arm, pulling her as gently as possible in the circumstance to her feet.

“Come on, let’s get you to safety.” He stated.

“What’s going on?” She coughed shakily as they shepherded her towards their room.

“Ghost tried to kill you.” Dean told her bluntly as he guided her into the room.

“Anything like this happened before?” Sam asked, following them in and closing the door. He then checked that the salt lines were unbroken.

“What?” She asked with confusion, “uh…no…I mean…some people have claimed to see stuff in the middle of the night…”

“Like what?” Sam prompted, coming over and taking a careful look at her throat while Dean ducked into the kitchenette, “you hurting anywhere else?”

“Just…movement…the sense of someone being in their rooms. Nothing like a description of someone or anything.” She replied, “and…um…don’t think so. I hope you’re going to clean up that…whatever that is at the door and windows…”

“Salt.” Dean told her as he returned with a cup of coffee that he handed her, “keeps ghosts, demons, and some other stuff out. And yes, we always clean up. Can’t be sure we’ll be able to collect more before it’s needed next otherwise.”

She took a sip of the coffee almost absently, “wait…you’re what…some kind of…ghostbusters?”

“Something like that.” Dean replied.

“Do you know any stories about this place?” Sam prompted before she could continue along those lines.

“Like what?”

“Deaths, disappearances, that sort of thing.”

“Oh…uh…no deaths, can’t stand the idea of staying somewhere where someone died. But…”

“Yes?” Sam prompted.

“The lady who was here before me…her little girl disappeared…what…15 years ago now. She sold
“This place cheap after the cops gave up looking because she couldn’t stand being around so many memories of her daughter.”

“They never found her?” Dean asked, and she shook her head.

Dean turned away with a slightly sick look on his face, and Sam quickly went over to him.

“She’s still here, isn’t she?” Dean asked quietly.

“Definitely within the realms of possibility.” Sam agreed, “these places have a lot of nooks and crannies an adventurous kid can get into. If she got stuck in one that her mum and the cops couldn’t find…”

“Starved to death within spitting distance of her mum desperately trying to find her.” Dean concluded.

“Explains why she hasn’t been violent until now. We probably set her off by blocking her access to this room, from the sounds of it she had the run of the place when she was alive.” Sam looked a little guilty as he finished his conclusion.

“Maybe…maybe not. She’d have snapped sooner or later, they all do. Better when we’re here to deal with it.” Dean refuted, “big question is; how are we going to find her body when her mum, who would have known the place fairly well, couldn’t?”

Sam thought for a moment before turning back to the manager, “ma’am, do you have a floorplan of this place?”

“Um…yeah…but it’s in the office safe.”

“Damn…okay…we’re just going to have to retrieve it.” Dean stated.

The manager picked up one of the pieces of motel stationery and wrote down the combination before handing it to them.

Sam gave her a confused look even as he took it.

“Not like there’s any money in there.” She told him with a shrug, “you’re the first guests we’ve had in a week.”

“Okay. You stay here and don’t come out until we say it’s safe. Or dawn comes. If you need to call the police, tell them it was an intruder with their face covered. They’ll just cart you off to the nearest psych hospital if you say a ghost attacked you.” Dean told her before leading his brother out the door cautiously after retrieving more salt and some fuel from their duffle bag.

“Don’t burn down my motel!” Floated after them.

“This is going to be fun.” Dean complained as they carefully went into the office.

“Well…let’s just hope there’s something on the floorplan that points to where she got stuck. And hope that we’re able to get in there to torch the body without having to knock a hole in the wall.” Sam returned as he located the safe and went to open it. The sense of the ghost was only nebulious until he went to enter the last digit. He didn’t even get a chance to react before he was flying into the wall. It was easily a minute before he knew which way was up again, and the lack of his brother’s hands supporting him told him that the situation was not sorted.
When he finally managed to focus his eyes, his shotgun was nowhere in sight, and his attention snagged on Dean pinned on the wall like the manager had been earlier. His shotgun was also not visible, but more disturbingly was that Dean was about to pass out. His hands going limp even as he fought to keep his eyes open.

He knew he had a good minute or so after Dean passed out before the lack of air took his life, but that was cutting it way too fine for his comfort, especially as he wasn’t sure he could get to his feet and find a shotgun without passing out himself.

Sam forced himself to concentrate, the impressions becoming clear painfully slowly, then reached out with his mind and snapped the tether of the ghost of the young girl. He was vaguely aware of the thump of his brother hitting the ground before everything went dark.

Dean’s throat felt raw as it seemed like he was about to cough up his lungs. He’d barely registered Sam going flying before the ghost had slammed him into the wall, the shotgun falling from his grip at the impact. He wasn’t sure why the ghost had let go, but he wasn’t about to look a gift horse in the mouth.

First things first, his shotgun. It had fallen in an awkward place to retrieve, but he managed to grab it. Next up, his brother. It took a little bit to locate him where he was crumpled on the floor. He wasn’t able to rouse Sam, and the blood on the back of his head told him there was a good chance his little brother had been knocked out on impact. And they didn’t have the floorplan yet, which they needed if they were going to have a hope of taking care of the ghost. Taking advantage of the ghost being quiet he snatched up the piece of paper and quickly opened the safe, he snagged the floorplan and stuffed it in his pocket, slammed the safe closed, grabbed Sam’s shotgun, and then hauled his brother up into a fireman’s carry.

“Oh my! What happened?” The manager exclaimed as he hurriedly reentered the room.

“Ghost got the drop on us.” Dean replied shortly as he lowered Sam onto the bed furthest from the door. He handed her the floorplan, “here, take a look and see if there’s anything where people don’t go very much, but there’s at least a crawlspace into while I take a look at his head.”

She hesitantly took the document and sat down to go over it while Dean retrieved the first aid kit and tended to the bump on Sam’s head. The bleeding had stopped, but it was a fair lump and combined with still not being able to rouse his brother it worried him.

“Should I summon an ambulance?” The manager asked hesitantly as she came over with the map, “it’ll be an hour or so for them to get here…”

Dean shook his head, “can’t risk bringing emergency personnel into a situation like this, too dangerous for them. Ghost should go dormant with the dawn then I can call for some backup and get Sam to aid if necessary. You got something there?”

“Maybe.” She pointed out a little section around the back of the motel, “the entrance is overgrown, if it wasn’t marked on here I wouldn’t even know it was there.”

“Ohay. Come daylight I’ll check it out. Meanwhile, we’re staying here where the ghost can’t get to us.”

She gave a shaky laugh, “if you’d told me yesterday that I’d be hiding in a guests room from a ghost I’d have said you were crazy.”

“And we’d have preferred you hadn’t found out that it wasn’t a delusion.” Dean told her, “you can
take my bed if you’d like to get some sleep. I’ll keep watch and make sure Sam is okay.”

“You sure?”

Dean nodded and gestured to the bed as he settled on the couch to keep watch.

Dawn was just tinting the sky when Sam finally stirred.

“Sam.” Dean was instantly at his side, the remainder of the night had been almost disturbingly quiet, “don’t move just yet. How are you feeling?”

Sam squinted at him, “how am I feeling? You’re the one who nearly got strangled.”

“Oh, so you didn’t get knocked out from your initial contact with the wall then? That’s good. Did the ghost clock you again?”

“No.” Sam pushed his brother’s hands away from him and sat up, “I…”

He spotted the manager sitting up in the other bed looking at them wide-eyed and cut off what he’d been about to say.

“I’m fine.” He finished lamely.

“Sure you are, you only got body slammed into a wall by a ghost.” Dean retorted, “look at me will you?”

Sam let his brother check his eyes with a sigh.

“Well, your eyes are clear at least.” Dean conceded, “with the dawn, the ghost should have gone dormant, so if you’re up to it, we can check out the place she found that she thinks is likely.”

With a glance at the manager he nodded.

“You sure that’s safe?” The manager asked.

“The ghost has gone dormant now that the sun is up.” Sam told her, “so there’s not much chance of it manifesting.”

“At least until we find it’s nexus anyway.” Dean added, “but even then it won’t manifest beyond that nexus, so you’ll be safe enough in the office if you want to stay until after we’ve sorted it.”

“I…think I’ll go over to the diner until you’re done.” She said hesitantly.

“Okay.” Dean agreed, “I’ll walk you over there just to be sure.”

She looked relieved, and Dean grabbed the appropriate weapons to safely escort her over there in case the ghost made an appearance despite the sun being up.

He paused at the door before he left and fixed Sam with a stern look, “and you are to rest until I get back.”

Sam rolled his eyes but nodded. Dean always did tend to be a mother hen, especially when Sam was, or he thought Sam was, injured. He decided to meditate while he waited, given how he’d been struggling to concentrate he needed all the extra practice he could squeeze in. At least that was his plan. As soon as he closed his eyes, it felt like he was in a spinning top and the headache he hadn’t even acknowledged burst across his forehead. With a groan, he dropped his head into his hands
feeling almost like if he didn’t hold it that it would explode. He stared at the quilt cover trying to will everything back under control before Dean returned, his brother was worried enough as it was.

“Sammy?”

Sam nearly swore as he realised he hadn’t registered the door opening, nor was he sure how much time had passed since the attempt to meditate had backfired on him.

Dean gently pulled his brother’s hands away from his head. The walk across to the diner and back had been thankfully uneventful, he hadn’t been expecting to get back to his brother holding his head.

“Sammy, what’s wrong?”

Sam gave him a wry smile, “stupidly decided to meditate while waiting for you. Soon as I closed my eyes, it felt like I was in a spinning top.”

Dean felt like swearing, wasn’t the worst he could be after the wallop he took, but there was still the ghost to deal with, and the last thing he wanted to do was take his brother into a situation when he wasn’t real steady on his feet.

“Okay. How’s your head now? Do you feel sick?”

“I’m fine, Dean, had a lot worse before.” Sam returned with a sigh, he did actually feel a little queasy, not that he really wanted to admit that even to himself.

Dean glared at him, “riiight. Okay…you rest. I’ll give Bobby a call and see whether he can get someone here to give me some backup.”

Sam frowned in confusion, “why?”

“Did you forget about the ghost that clocked you?” Dean asked worriedly, mentally ratcheting his assessment of the seriousness of his brother’s condition up another notch. It might be getting to the point of needing to take him to a hospital.

“Oh, that.” Sam berated himself for forgetting to tell his brother with everything that had happened since he’d woken up, “the ghost is gone. I snapped its tether last night.”

“What the hell? Why’d you do that?” Dean growled, “thought we agreed emergencies only?”

“It was about to kill you, Dean!” Sam snapped back.

Dean made an effort to reign in his temper, much as he hated his brother taking such a risk, especially on top of a likely concussion, he had to admit that Sam didn’t make such decisions lightly.

“Okay…okay…point taken…just…hell, Sammy…I wasn’t sure you were going to wake up. Even if I’d known you’d knocked yourself out doing that instead of the ghost I’d have still feared that. Who knows what damage that could do on top of a concussion.” Dean took a carefully slow breath, “okay…you just stay there, and I’ll grab you a drink.”

“Wouldn’t be any great loss.” Sam mumbled, running a hand over his face as Dean moved away.

Dean stiffened, he knew his brother hadn’t meant for him to hear that. It took all his control to get a glass and fill it with water before returning to Sam.

“Here, sip that. If it stays down, we can tell the manager it’s sorted.” He stated as he handed the glass to his brother. He waited a moment as Sam cautiously sipped it, “Sammy, it’s not your fault. Not
what both heaven and hell intended, not what happened to our mum, not what happened to Adam. None of it. Only beings to blame are the demons and angels who were trying to bring what they wanted about. And as far as I’m concerned the world is much better with you in it.”

Sam coloured and looked away as he realised his brother had actually heard what he’d said, “sorry.”

“Don’t. I want to know when you’re feeling like that, I can’t help if I don’t know.” Dean told him carefully. He honestly wanted to grab hold of him and beg him not to feel that way, but knowing his brother, that would just make him clam up about his feelings.

Sam shrugged, “can’t change the reality of who I am.”

“Bull shit. We’re changing it every second by refusing to be what they want us to be. Who we are never mattered to them, just our genetics. And that’s what doomed their plan from the start. Who you are isn’t defined by what they intended for you, or they wouldn’t have had to try manipulating us so extensively.”

Sam took a shaky breath and looked down at the glass in his hand.

“That sitting okay?” Dean asked, and he nodded, “Sammy…”

“Don’t, Dean, whether I wanted it or not doesn’t change the fact that my presence is a poison to all those I care about. Mum…Jess…now Adam is paying the price, maybe already paid the price and we just haven’t found out yet. Next time it might be you, or Bobby…you both should just get as far away from me as you can before that happens.”

“Not happening.” Dean told him firmly, “your presence isn’t poison. You’ve saved my life many times. You’ve saved many people’s lives. Hell, there’s an entire reservation that owes their lives to you. And maybe Adam has been taken by angels, for whatever reason, but he wouldn’t even be alive if it wasn’t for you. What demons and angels want of you doesn’t change who you want to be, who I know you to be.”

Sam looked like he was going to argue more, but they were interrupted by Dean’s phone ringing. The eldest brother gave it an annoyed look but held up a finger to pause the discussion and answered.

“Hello?”

“Dean?”

Nearly every other concern blew out of his thoughts at the sound of that voice.

“Where are you?” Dean demanded.

“I…I don’t know. Used that sigil you taught me then managed to get out and find a phone…but…”

“Okay.” Dean looked at Sam, “Sam, get a trace on this will you?”

The middle brother immediately pulled the laptop around and fired up the program that allowed him to locate where a call had come from.

“Okay, he’s finding your location. Now…are you okay?”

“Yeah…I think so…they didn’t hurt me, not beyond imprisonment and babbling at me anyway.”

“Okay…good.” Dean let out a sigh of relief. Sam turned the laptop around to show him the location
of the payphone being used, “okay, looks like you’re about 2 hours from here. Is there a diner nearby?”

There was a pause as the teen obviously looked around, “yeah, next block.”

“Okay. Go there, tell the waiter or waitress that you didn’t get back to your bus in time, your brothers are coming to get you, and they’ll cover any food or drink while you wait. Give them my number if they need it. We’ll be there soon as possible.”

“Okay. Thanks.”

“Adam?” Sam asked, barely daring to hope, once Dean hung up.

“Yeah. Okay, let’s get packed. Then I’ll duck over to the diner and tell the manager it’s sorted.”

Without thinking Sam reached out with his telekinesis and gathered the salt into its designated bag. He nearly instantly regretted it as his headache flared anew.

Dean grabbed him as he swayed from the pain, “for such an intelligent guy, Sammy, you can be daft sometimes.”

“Not gonna argue with that…” Sam mumbled as he managed to find his stability again.

Dean rolled his eyes, “okay, you sit tight and get your balance back. I’ll get the rest of our stuff into the car.”

Sam knew better than to argue when his brother used that tone, besides arguing would just slow them down from getting to Adam.

It didn’t take long to get their bags into the impala, then Dean ducked across to the diner to talk to the manager.

“It was a body, wasn’t it?” She asked in a hushed voice when Dean came over to her.

“Um…we managed to take care of it without finding the anchor. But yes…it’s probably a body. I know you didn’t want to be somewhere where someone had died…but if you’d like to give someone some answers finally get some workers to take a look at that area.”

She nodded nervously, evidently not at all reassured.

“We’ve received a distress call, so we gotta go. But if you have any issues give us a call.” He handed her a slip of paper with his primary phone number on it.

“Thank you.” She replied as she took it, “and don’t worry about the fee, I won’t be charging you for the night. I figure you saving my life covers that and then some.”

“Thank you.” Dean told her. The credit card wasn’t exactly legit, but at least it was the banks and not the business owners that wore the fact that no payments were ever made. Sam didn’t much like that reality of their life, and truthfully neither did he, but there wasn’t much they could actually do about it.

Returning to the impala, Sam was already waiting for him in the passenger seat. He grabbed the bowl they still had in the boot and gave it to him just in case, ignoring the look his little brother gave him, before hopping in and turning the impala towards the location of their kid brother. They made it there in an hour and a half.
Dean hopped out and headed into the diner after checking that Sam was okay, his little brother looked pale and a little queasy but hadn’t thrown up during the ride. After they got Adam and got somewhere safe, he could find somewhere for Sam to rest.

He didn’t race to Adam and snatch him up in a hug, but that was only because Adam did so first.

“Are you okay?” He asked gently, noting the relieved look on the waitresses face out of the corner of his eye.

Adam nodded, “yeah. Glad to be out of there though.”

“I’ll bet. Let me settle up and then we’ll get going.”

The waitress gratefully accepted the notes he gave her then he ushered Adam out to the impala. He frowned as he noted the passenger door was standing open, and Sam wasn’t in the seat. A moment later he managed to locate bent over near the boot supporting himself with a hand.

Dean swore and turned to Adam, “hop in the back. I’m going to check on Sam.”

He rounded the impala and was half relieved to note that while there was a puddle at his feet, his little brother didn’t appear to be actively throwing up.

“You done?”

Sam nodded, “sorry. Hoped it would settle down while we were still.”

“You should have said something. Look at me will you.”

“We couldn’t waste time.” Sam replied as he straightened up and let his big brother check his eyes.

“What’s wrong?” Adam asked, earning a glare from Dean for not hopping in the car like he’d instructed.

“Got clocked by a ghost last night.” Dean stated shortly, “it body slammed him into a wall. Didn’t even know there was a ghost there before we arrived.

“What?! If he’s throwing up he needs to get checked by a doctor!” Adam exclaimed.

“I’m fine.” Sam looked at him, “just a little wonky. We need to get going before the angels come looking, we’re still far too close, and the sigil’s effects will be wearing off soon.”

“But…”

“He’s right.” Dean said, “much as I hate it, we can’t stop. His eyes are clear even if the puking is worrying, he made it worse by using his abilities.”

“It was necessary.” Sam protested.

“Taking out the ghost maybe…but cleaning up the salt wasn’t.” Dean retorted with a glare, “did you want to lie down in the back?”

Sam shook his head, “be worse if I can’t see the road.”

Dean nodded in acceptance and gently ushered him back to the front passenger seat, then he waved at Adam to hop in and ducked around to the driver’s seat. Less than a minute later they were on their way out of the small town.
Chapter End Notes

Once again, my apologies for being late. I'll try to be back completely on schedule in 2 weeks.

Comments, constructive criticism, and questions always welcome.
Chapter 73: Brother Bonds

Dean drove them for two hours before being comfortable that they were far enough away, at least for now, and finding a motel they could rest up at. Sam hadn’t got sick again during the ride, but Dean was wary of being too hopeful from just that sign. He’d picked their direction of travel based on the hospital that was in this town, just in case.

The manager disinterestedly booked them in, not even raising an eyebrow at their relatively early entry at this non-tourist town.

The two older brothers put up the fortifications once they’d shepherded Adam into the room. Dean insisted that he take over once Sam finished up the psi wards and waved him to take a seat at the table. That his little brother didn’t argue worried him but chalked it up to both of them being somewhat tired after the ghost then immediately racing to Adam’s location.

He finished up the fortifications then looked over at his brothers. Adam met his gaze worriedly, but Sam was staring at the table surface with weariness all but radiating from him.

“Feel like something to drink?” Dean asked, not that he was precisely planning on letting Sam say no.

“Mmm.” Sam mumbled in reply.

Dean hesitated for a bare moment before going over and crouching next to his chair, “look at me.”

Sam sighed before doing as he requested, “just tired, Dean.”

“Okay.” Dean conceded once he’d checked his eyes and being satisfied that he hadn’t taken a turn for the worse, “but you need to drink something first before you rest. One of your fancy teas?”

Sam shrugged, “whatever.”

With a glance at Adam silently telling him to keep an eye on Sam, Dean went into the small kitchenette to prepare the ginger tea that would be wisest. He’d barely put the bag in to steep when Adam came up beside him, his eyes automatically flew to where Sam had been sitting only to find an empty chair.
“Sam?” He asked of Adam.

“Went into the bathroom.” Adam told him, concern evident in his voice and eyes.

“Did he say anything?”

“No, just got up, walked in and closed the door.” Adam reported uncertainly, “I wasn’t sure whether to check on him or let you know first…”

Dean swore, maybe it was nothing, but maybe it was a sign that things were worse than he’d thought, “okay. You take over the drinks, I’ll check on him. You did good, Sam can be real prickly when he’s not feeling the best. Absolutely hates being fussed over even, or maybe especially, when he knows it’s necessary.”

He got a nod from Adam before leaving him to finish up in the kitchenette and going to the now closed door to the bathroom. He hesitated for a moment, as he’d told their kid brother Sam could be really prickly, then forewent barging in to knock on the door since there weren’t any sounds of distress coming from within.

“Sammy?” Dean called.

“I’m okay, Dean.” Sam called back, his voice sounded a little strained, but all that indicated with the absence of other sounds was that he wasn’t feeling the greatest. Something that went without saying right now, “just…give me a bit will you?”

“Okay.” Dean agreed reluctantly, “but if you puke, I’m coming in. Yell if you need me.”

He retreated after getting Sam’s soft agreement to the table where Adam was just bringing the drinks. A hot chocolate for the teen, a beer for Dean, and the now slowly cooling tea for Sam. He sipped at it slowly with his attention focused on the room where Sam had retreated. There’d been no sounds to indicate problems, but neither did his little brother emerge.

“Enough is enough.” He muttered, putting his beer down, once he was about halfway through and went over to the bathroom. This time he didn’t bother knocking. Instead, he went straight in.

Sam was nearly dozing where he leant against the wall near the toilet and frowned at him sleepily as he came over.

“Don’t give me that look.” Dean told him as he crouched and felt his forehead, “if you ain’t puked yet you’re not likely to. You need to drink something then rest, in that order.”

Sam made a noise of protest that Dean easily interpreted as not being sure his stomach would welcome a drink.

“You’re in the right place if it does come back on you.” Dean told him.

Adam retrieved the cup of tea from the table and handed it to Dean. He’d been hovering at the doorway. Dean gave him a thankful look before holding it out to Sam. Sam gave it a wary look but took it and sipped cautiously.

When it became evident the tea wasn’t coming back up, at least not immediately anyway, Dean coaxed Sam to his feet and shepherded him gently to the bed nearest the bathroom. He instructed him to rest after making sure there was a bin next to him just in case.

“Maybe you should take him to go get checked.” Adam suggested quietly after Dean moved away
from the bed but kept his eyes carefully on the middle brother, “I looked, there’s a hospital in this
town.”

“I know. That’s why I came here.” Dean replied just as softly, weariness in his voice, “but it’s only
for if he gets worse. Bumps and bruises are normal for us, we know how to deal with most of it on
our own.”

“A concussion is a bit more than a bump or bruise, Dean.” Adam protested, “head injuries are
nothing to mess with.”

“We don’t go to hospitals unless we can’t deal with it ourselves.” Dean replied, “too much chance
that we’ll be dragging trouble along with us. Plus having to dodge official questions if there’s a gun
or knife wound involved.”

“Neither of those this time,” Adam pointed out, “and you wouldn’t have stopped us if you thought
there was trouble still following. You can just say that he slipped and fell and that he didn’t tell you
for a while.”

“We don’t have insurance.” Dean told him, “not legitimate anyway.”

“What?” Adam looked shocked.

“Not like Hunting pays the bills.” Dean replied with a shrug, “saves people, but no income from it.
Bobby’s one of the few Hunters we know of who actually has something that provides them money
legitimately.”

“How are you able to cover expenses?”

“Pool. And credit cards.”

“Got to be able to cover the payments somehow, not like they accept cash.”

“Who said we make payments? The banks can afford it, they post billion dollar profits every year.
Not like we’re buying mansions or anything.”

“Holy crap, Dean…”

Dean looked at their kid brother with a sigh, “it’s necessary. Won’t say either of us like it, but there’d
be a lot of people dead if we didn’t. And sticking around somewhere long enough to land a
legitimate job and earn enough money would just increase the risk of trouble finding us. Not like
either of us have a choice in being Hunters, Sam even tried to have a normal life, but demons weren’t
about to let that happen. He’d have been the best damn lawyer in the country if they’d just left him
alone.”

Adam looked stricken, and Dean sighed.

“One reason why we want you to have a normal life if you can. Someone should even if we can’t.”
Dean yawned and shook his head, “just relax, I’ll grab a coffee and keep an eye on Sam.”

Adam looked at him thoughtfully, “it’s not just the concussion, is it? How long have the two of you
been awake?”

“The ghost prevented us from sleeping last night.” Dean explained a little self consciously, “we
weren’t expecting to encounter one so hadn’t prepared beforehand.”
Adam frowned, “so…you’ve been up and on the go for over 24 hours?”

“Wasn’t counting, but probably.”

“Get some sleep.” Dean started to protest, and Adam interrupted, “I’m the son of a nurse and in training to be a doctor, I’m more than able to keep an eye on Sam.”

“But…”

“I’ll wake you if he gets sick or anything. You need to sleep, especially as I’m guessing we’ll be travelling again tomorrow.”

“Yeah…much as I’d like to just stay put until Sam’s back up to speed we’re still too close to be truly comfortable. Angels can cover a lot of ground.”

“If you’re driving you need sleep, there’s only so far you can push your body.”

Dean had to concede to the argument, in part because he couldn’t think of a reply, and in part because he refused to take chances with his brothers’ safety.

Adam pointed at the other bed, the rollaway they’d got from the office not having been set up yet, and Dean went over and all but fell on it after a moment where he’d tried to come up with an excuse or retort. The complete lack of being able to come up with something told him their kid brother had more than a little bit of a point.

Adam shook his head and retreated to the table to watch them both sleep.

It was dark outside when Sam woke, Adam abandoned the reading of a book he’d managed to find to come to his side. He figured it was Sam’s, but with them both sleeping he hadn’t had someone to ask, the middle brother had always struck him as someone who enjoyed reading for pleasure while the eldest seemed to prefer movies or TV shows.

“Easy, Sam, how are you feeling?” Adam asked softly as he reached him.

Sam blinked at him for a moment before swallowing hard and pressing his fist to his mouth.

Adam picked up the bin and pushed it at him, “easy, bin’s right here.”

Sam’s eyes darted to the other bed, where Dean still slept. Adam wouldn’t have made anything of that, but to Sam, it told him how tired his big brother was. He shook his head firmly then pointed at the bathroom.

Adam opened his mouth to argue then decided that that would just waste time they mightn’t have. Instead, he just steadied his much larger brother and guided him into the bathroom. Once there Sam leant against the wall after sitting down in front of the toilet.

“Don’t fight it, Sam.” Adam said as he crouched next to him, a newly wet face washer in his hand.

Sam gave him a wry smile, “the downside of having a strong stomach. Mightn’t throw up, but you spend a lot of time feeling sick to your stomach when you’re under the weather.”

“Oh.” Adam handed over the face washer, “anything I can get you? How’s your head?”

“Hurts a bit, about par for the course. Could have been worse.” Sam told him, “my own fault really.”

“What do you mean?”
“I can shield against ghosts, but I forgot to do so. Therefore this headache and stuff is my own damn fault for not thinking clearly.”

Adam shook his head but opted not to argue with him, “want some Tylenol and a drink?”

Sam pulled a face, “not particularly, but I probably should though. Some of the ginger tea?”

“Sure. I’ll just go get it.”

“Try not to wake Dean, will you? He’s obviously exhausted and needs his sleep.”

“How do you know that?”

“He’s an overprotective mother hen who’s usually hyperaware of the condition of everyone under his protection, and he didn’t wake. Therefore he’s exhausted.”

“Okay.” Adam agreed. Since Sam wasn’t throwing up, he didn’t see a reason to wake their older brother just yet.

He was on his way back from the kitchenette with the tea and tablets when Dean woke, sitting up and coming instantly alert as he scanned for both his brothers.

“Sam?” He asked when Adam came over, noting what the teen was carrying.

“He woke up a little while ago, felt sick and didn’t want to disturb you if he threw up. He’s in the bathroom.” Adam told him.

Dean ran a tired hand over his face, “he been sick?”

“No. I’d have woken you despite his request if he had.”

“Okay.” Dean slipped out of bed and held his hands out for what Adam held, “I’ll take those to him. Did you want to catch some sleep?”

Adam shook his head though he let him take the items, “the same arguments as earlier still apply, you need to sleep if you’re driving. I can sleep in the car. I’ll wake you if Sam takes a turn for the worse.”

Dean gave him a half smile, “you have a point. Let me check on Sam then I’ll be a good boy and go back to sleep.”

Sam frowned when Dean brought the items in to him, “damnit, I told him not to wake you.”

“He didn’t.” Dean crouched and handed over the tea and tablets, “I woke on my own as he was on his way back. How are you feeling?”

“About par for the course.” Sam replied, taking the tablets and swallowing them with a sip of the tea.

“Feeling sick, though, I’m guessing.” Dean gestured to their surroundings.

Sam shrugged, “as I said, par for the course.”

“You been sick?”

“I’m sure Adam would have rushed to wake you if I had.” Sam grumbled.

“As well he should.” Dean scolded gently, “you know as well as I do that someone needs to keep an
eye on you while you’re recovering from a concussion.”

Sam sighed.

“Come on, let’s get you back to bed.” Dean stated, interrupting Sam’s protest before he could voice it, “I know you’re feeling crook, but you’ll be more comfortable in bed, and if you do get sick… well… that’s what the bin is for.”

“Don’t want to disturb you, you need your sleep.”

“You puke, and I’ll be waking anyway, no point you being uncomfortable.”

Sam sighed, and Dean coaxed him to his feet then guided him back to the bed.

“You should get some more sleep too.” Adam told Dean softly once Sam was settled.

Dean checked the time, “yeah…I will. Once I check in with Bobby.”

He slipped into the kitchenette, the furthest he could go from Sam without leaving the room, in an effort to keep from disturbing his little brother.

“About time you called.” Bobby answered grumpily.

“Yeah… well… had to deal with a ghost we weren’t expecting last night.” Dean told him softly.

“Balls. You two okay?”

“Aside from it managing to give Sam a solid concussion we’re good. He’s currently sleeping it off. Got some good news also.”

“You got a lead?”

“Even better. He managed to escape and called us, we picked him up this morning.”

“Now that is good news. He okay?”

“Yeah. Said they didn’t hurt him, just babbled at him.”

“When can I expect you to get back here?”

“With Sam’s concussion, we’ll need to take travelling a little easy so probably a week. I’d prefer to stay put, but we’re still too close to where the angels had Adam to comfortably do that.”

“Yeah, better to keep moving. Keep in touch, ya hear.”

“Will do.”

The older Hunter rang off, and Dean headed back to his bed after one more check of Sam. Adam returned to reading the book by the dim light of a lamp at the table.

It was sometime after midnight when Sam stirred again, Adam hastening to his side the moment he saw him lean over the bin.

“Easy, Sam.” Adam soothed softly as he pushed the middle brother’s hair out of his face.

“I should…” Sam mumbled, looking towards the bathroom.
“No…just stay there. That’s what the bin is for.” Adam replied, “think you’re going to be sick?”

“Maybe.” Sam replied with a light gag.

Adam glanced over at the other bed wondering if he should wake the eldest brother, only to see Dean already in the process of coming over.

“Easy, Sammy.” Dean soothed, sitting on the bed behind him and rubbing his shoulder.

“Damnit.” Sam complained, a little breathily, “I didn’t want to wake you.”

“I’d have woken if you got up to go to the bathroom also so don’t fret.” Dean reassured him, “just relax.”

They spent some minutes just sitting until finally Sam relaxed and rolled back from the edge of the bed.

“Settled again?” Dean asked quietly.

“Yeah.” Sam replied, “sometimes I wish I would just puke and get it over with.”

“Yeah, well, given it wouldn’t be getting rid of what’s messing with your stomach I’m just going to be grateful.” Dean soothed, “Adam, would you mind getting him some more of the ginger tea?”

“Sure.” The teen agreed immediately and headed into the kitchenette to do so. When he returned Sam was sitting up in the bed.

“Have you actually slept?” Sam asked with a frown as he accepted the drink, his attention hadn’t missed that the rollaway hadn’t been set up.

“Someone needed to keep an eye on you, and Dean needed to sleep also since he’ll be driving later today.” Adam replied, continuing when Sam frowned even more, “hey…just be thankful I didn’t go old school and wake you every hour.”

If Adam had worried about overstepping that fear was assaged by Dean’s chuckle.

“How are you doing?” Sam asked as he sipped at the tea.

“I’m okay. They didn’t hurt me, just babbled at me.” Adam told them, “tried to convince me that I couldn’t trust you.”

“I hope you know that that’s not true.” Dean commented.

“If I’d had any doubt the fact that you raced immediately to my location, even with Sam being injured, would have banished that immediately.”

“We’re going to have to figure out how to keep them from getting to you again.” Sam commented, “wish I knew how they’d found you, the engravings on your ribs should have blinded them.”

“I think that’s my fault…” Adam said looking embarrassed, “a guy kept appearing in my dreams and bugging me to tell him where I was.”

“Damn, the angel’s version of dream walking.” Sam grumbled, “took advantage of the more suggestable dream state.”

“How long was that happening?” Dean asked.
“A week or two.”

“Wish you’d told us…we might have been able to figure out how to keep them from getting to you even if we couldn’t keep them out of your dreams.” Sam said.

“You had bigger things to worry about.” Adam mumbled.

“Hey…no…we always want to know if you’re having something weird happen.” Dean retorted, “you’re our brother.”

Sam nodded his agreement, “even if it was just a bad dream I could have checked to be sure.”

“Thanks.” Adam mumbled, “I just hope I haven’t been kicked out.”

“You haven’t.” Dean told him, “we had to report you officially missing, and you’ll have a bit to catch up on, but your spot is still there.”

“That’s a relief.” Adam said.

Dean nodded, “well…I’m awake now so go grab some sleep.”

Adam went to argue but a stern look from Dean had him setting up the rollaway bed and settling down.

“You too, Sam.” Dean said softly as he took the now empty cup from his little brother.

Sam gave him a look but settled back down. Dean retreated to the table, smiling as he spotted that Adam had been reading one of Sam’s battered science fiction books, and waited out the last few hours of the night.

Chapter End Notes

Merry Christmas everyone. I was originally planning on progressing to something more angsty then realised it was due to go up on Christmas so fleshed out the brothers time together *grin* I hope you enjoy.

I’ve realised, when there was a question about it, that I forgot to give my good friend Angelic Spirit (from the Amino Supernatural community) credit for the story behind the ghost last chapter. We talked it over quite extensively fleshing out that event and she definitely deserves the credit for her part.

As always comments, constructive criticism, and questions welcome.
Chapter 74: Demonic Consequences

Dean’s prediction was almost bang on the money as they pulled into the scrap yard with relief. Sam’s concussion symptoms had faded during that time, however, great as his brothers found that, it allowed him more time to stew on everything that had happened in the last month. Dean had had to explain to Adam about the archangel lines after their scary smart kid brother had picked up that there was something more than the concussion going on with Sam.

Dean parked and glanced at Sam as he reached to turn off the ignition. He paused at the expression on his little brother’s face.

“Okay…what’s wrong?”

Sam shrugged, “not sure, just got a bad feeling.”

He wasn’t at all sure why he was uneasy, there were few places that were fortified more than Bobby’s place. For years now turning into the older Hunter’s driveway had been a signal he could relax on his vigilance.

“Oh, Obi-Wan, while you figure that out let’s go inside.” Dean told him, and Sam nearly rolled his eyes at him in response to the jab.

Bobby exited the house to come greet them once they were all out of the car and Sam’s bad feeling crystalised the moment his eyes landed on him. For a split second, he swore at himself for not checking what Dean referred to as his radar.

“Adam, get back in the car.” He ordered. Dean gave him a worried look while Adam just looked confused.

“What?” The teen asked.

“Christo.” Sam stated rather than answering their kid brother, or the unspoken question in Dean’s eyes. Bobby stopped in his tracks and snarled, his eyes flickering black.

Dean immediately stepped in front of Adam, “Adam, go!”
The teen wasted no more time, instead scrambling back to the impala and locking himself inside.

The first thing Sam did, against all logical reasoning, was search desperately for the sense of Bobby still being alive under the demon squatting in his head. He shouldn’t have, he knew that an instant later. Another demon emerged from the house, and before he could react, it had them pinned.

“Now…how did you figure that out?” The second demon asked.

“We’re good observers.” Dean quipped back. He could almost see Sam trying to figure out how to take the demons out, he didn’t need to be able to read his mind to know that his brother would consider any consequence acceptable if it saved the three of them.

“For such dumb pawns, you sure have a knack for derailing plans. First, you killed Azazel, which was inconvenient but Lilith was free and could take over.” She came over and pulled the demon-killing blade from Dean’s belt, “but then you managed to dump her back in the depths of hell, she can’t even get messages out in any sort of timeliness. So now I’m pissed, and you’re going to pay.”

The familiarness the demon had with them was kinda familiar, but Dean thought the few that had that were dead.

“Ruby?” He guessed, though he was almost positive that particular demon was dead.

“Try again. Go back further.” She retorted.

“Meg.” Sam stated.

“Hi.” Meg smirked at Dean after Sam had correctly named her then looked critically at the middle brother.

“I’m pretty sure you didn’t let Ruby train you…but let’s not take that chance shall we?”

Sam felt pressure on the sides of his neck and just had time to realise that she was putting pressure directly on the arteries before darkness was crowding his vision. He didn’t have time to even think about using his abilities against her before he was out.

“Sam!” Dean yelled as she smirked at him again. He couldn’t see whether his little brother was still breathing or not. But given the efforts of both heaven and hell, he knew what the most likely outcome was, and his heart clenched. Fortunately, his kid brother had been smart enough not to get out of the impala, though from the way Adam had his hands pressed against the window and the expression on his face he was more than a little worried.

“Now for you.” Meg turned back to Dean, “now…Lilith gave strict instructions to leave you alive. But that was before you dumped her arse so far in hell that she has to look up to see the Cage. There are so many demons that are just dying for a piece of both of you.”

“Get in line.” Dean retorted.

“Oh, I’m in the front of the line, baby.” She told him, and the way she approached him set off every warning bell in his head. If he hadn’t been pinned he’d have tried to get free, but demon telekinesis was nearly impossible to get free from, for him anyway. “let’s ride.”

She reached out and forced him to kiss her. He’d never understood why some people liked things that weren’t offered freely, and this didn’t clear it up either. The demon apparently enjoyed it though.

“What is that? Peanut butter?” He quipped to her smug expression. The jibe apparently hit home as
her eyes narrowed.

“You know…your surrogate daddy’s still awake, screaming in there.” She stated, and Dean fought to keep his face expressionless. She handed Bobby the demon-killing blade, “and I want him to know how it feels, slicing the life out of you.”

She stepped back with a triumphant smile, dropping her pinning force and letting the demon controlling Bobby take over. It brought the knife up to Dean’s neck.

Dean could almost feel the older Hunter’s anguish and wasn’t able to remain expressionless in the face of it.

“Bobby.” He pleaded, trying to keep the demon augmented strength from carrying through Meg’s instructions. He knew from dealing with people who’d been saved from possession, including Sam, that it was tough for them to put aside the guilt of what demons had done with their bodies, “Bobby, no. No.”

He wanted to be better spoken, tell him not to blame himself, that he didn’t blame him. He’d only heard of one person retaking control, and even Bobby had agreed that was a once in a lifetime event. Getting that sort of sentiment out while fighting for survival was beyond him though, if Meg would even have let him get past the first few words.

The demon looked over at Meg for more instructions.

“Now!” She ordered, Dean could have sworn she was annoyed at the delay.

Bobby turned back to Dean and pulled his arm back. The eldest brother saw his eyes clear the moment Bobby wrested back control over his body.

With a grunt, the older Hunter redirected the knife thrust and jammed it into his own gut. Dean barely had time to gasp in horror as light pulsed through the body of the Hunter who had been their surrogate dad from long before their biological father had died.

He barely managed to catch Bobby as his knees buckled, and pulled the blade out. There was one last member of his family he had to protect, even though he couldn’t imagine continuing on without either Sam or Bobby. The least he could do was avenge them and protect Adam as best he could.

The glare he directed at Meg must have telegraphed his intentions because she smoked out immediately after catching sight of it, Sam crashed bonelessly to the ground as she released her hold. Dean swallowed his anger at not being able to take her out, stuck the knife back into his waistband, and gently lowered Bobby to the ground. He almost leapt out of his skin when the older Hunter groaned, and his eyes flickered open.

“Bobby?” Dean asked with a gasp, his hands going to the wound to put pressure on it automatically, “you’re alive?”

“Surprised me too.” Bobby replied in a pained voice.

Adam skidded to a halt next to them, his eyes wide with alarm. He knelt quickly and checked Sam’s vitals then rolled him into recovery position.

“Adam?” Dean asked, his voice strained as he couldn’t allow himself to hope.

“He’s alive. Won’t know if there’s damage until he wakes, how likely that is depends on how he was knocked out.” Adam told him, severely controlling his emotions. After looking at the blood
covered hands of Dean still putting pressure on Bobby’s stomach, he dashed back to the impala and returned with the first aid kit. Forming a thick pad, he handed it to Dean so he could use it for applying pressure rather than just his hands.

Bobby’s groan at the extra pressure was echoed from behind him, and after meeting Dean’s eyes reassuringly, Adam scrambled back to Sam’s side.

“Sam.” He said soothingly, squeezing his shoulder.

Sam rolled onto his back and blinked at Adam.

“Adam? Is Dean…?”

“Dean’s fine. Stopping Bobby from bleeding out at the moment.”

Sam blinked for a moment as he absorbed that, then shoved himself up and scrambled over to Bobby and Dean.

“What happened?” He asked as he added his hands to Dean’s providing pressure, running his extra senses over Bobby and using his telekinesis to cushion him.

“Stabbed himself to stop the demon possessing him from killing me with the demon blade.” Dean told him shakily, “you okay? I thought she’d killed you…”

“Me too.” Sam replied, trying to reassure Dean with his eyes, “she must have allowed the blood flow to resume once I was out. Maybe she didn’t know it takes a little longer to actually cause death over unconsciousness.”

Dean took a shaky breath.

“We need to get him to hospital.” Sam stated, “this is beyond what we can deal with.”

Dean nodded, “Adam…could you go start the impala.

Adam started to argue for calling an ambulance then decided not to waste time, fished the keys out of the eldest brother’s pocket and scrambled to the car to start it.

Between Sam and Dean, they carefully hoisted Bobby into their arms while keeping pressure on the knife wound, then carried him to the car and gently put him in the back. Sam got in with him to keep pressure on the injury while Dean ducked around to the driver’s seat and Adam shuffled over to the passenger side to make room.

They made it to the hospital in record time. Dean hauled Bobby out of the back seat once he’d brought the impala to a stop, pulling his arm over his shoulder as he did so. He barely managed to support the stocky Hunter’s weight when Bobby’s legs refused to hold him even slightly. Sam quickly scrambled out to lend his support and resume putting pressure on the wound.

“Adam…” Dean started.

“I’ll lock up the car, don’t fret.” Adam stated reassuringly, already slipping into the driver’s seat where Dean hadn’t even turned it off.

Normally entering an emergency department and yelling for help wouldn’t get a massive amount of attention without going through a lot of administrative rigmarole. Normally did not include blood dropping on the floor despite the pad being pressed against the wound that was the origin of said
blood.

Nurses and orderlies urgently deposited Bobby on a gurney, then a nurse ripped open a sterile pad package, pushed Sam aside and shoved the new pad on top of the blood-soaked one.

“What happened?” Another nurse demanded.

“Found him like this.” Dean improvised quickly, he knew they needed to provide an explanation for the injury or the police would be summoned, “think he fell on something in his scrap yard. Dragged himself a good distance before he collapsed. That’s where we found him, can’t have been there long, he was bleeding like a stuck pig.”

Dean did not like how Sam didn’t contribute to the explanation, and he especially didn’t like the look in his little brother’s eyes now that the rush of getting Bobby to help was over.

“Is he up to date on his tetanus shots?” The nurse asked as Bobby was wheeled through a staff only door.

Dean blanked, “no idea. Given his job I’d imagine he would be though.”

“Can’t go by guesses, we’ll just have to give him a booster just in case.” The nurse made a note.

Adam joined them just then, “how is he?”

“This is our half-brother, he was with us when we found him.” Dean supplied to the nurse’s look, “he parked the car while we brought Bobby in.”

“He’ll be going straight into surgery, then into imaging to see if we can see what sort of damage he’ll have going forward. Did you notice whether he was able to move his legs when you first found him?”

“He can’t move his legs?” Sam asked with a noticeable waver in his voice, going white as he spoke.

“He wasn’t supporting himself as you brought him in despite being conscious. Now…it mightn’t mean anything, pain can do some crazy things to motor control after all. It’s a question we need to ask in a situation like this. We won’t know for sure until he’s out of surgery and he’s been through imaging.”

Sam swore.

“It’s only a worst case scenario, it’s too early to worry about that.”

She bustled off after directing them to the waiting area where they could wait for news. Dean pushed Sam into a seat when they got there, and worryingly his little brother didn’t resist.

“Don’t even think of blaming yourself for this.” Dean stated as he sat down next to him.

Sam snorted, “I did warn you that you should get as far from me as you could.”

“Wait…” Adam said as he sank into another chair, “you can’t seriously think it’s your fault?”

“The evidence is right there, Adam, everyone who gets close to me, who I come to care about, end up paying the price.” Sam replied, sounding almost too calm, “we barely got you back, you could easily have ended up paying that price also. Now Bobby’s paying the price, he’ll probably never walk again because I was dumb enough to let him get close to me.”
“Sam...unless it’s missed your attention, the only reason I’m even alive is you and Dean.” Adam pointed out.

“More than you know, actually.” Dean added, “only reason we were there in time was Sam had a vision that you were in danger.”

“Then my point is twice as relevant.”

Sam just looked at the floor.

“And I’m an adult, Sam, who I choose to be close to is my own choice. You’re not going to chase me away that easy.”

Sam shook his head, “I appreciate it, guys. But it won’t change reality.”

Dean opened his mouth to argue, and Sam interrupted, “it’s going to be several hours before we hear anything, I’m going to go tidy up and secure Bobby’s place before someone finds it. And check on the pup, I think Bobby rigged up an automatic feeder for it, but it would be best to check.”

Dean looked torn.

“I’ll go with you.” Adam stated, “I know the most about the pup after all.”

“Okay.” Sam agreed, a little too easily for his big brother’s comfort, “I’ll grab you a change of clothes before I go, Dean.”

Dean glanced down at himself and pulled a face, there was drying blood on most of his clothes, same for Sam. Probably only the fact that they’d literally carried someone who was trying to bleed out in had saved them from getting pointed looks and questions.

It didn’t take long for Sam to grab a complete change of clothes for Dean, one of the advantages to living the majority of their lives on the go meant that they were rarely far from their belongings. The expression of relief on various nurses faces after he’d changed told the eldest brother that it wasn’t before time either, though he did have to explain that his two brothers had gone to secure Bobby’s place before thieves discovered it.

Back at the scrap yard Sam took care of the body left by Meg vacating her meat suit and cleaned up while Adam checked on the pup. She was thrilled to see the teen after his weeks-long absence. The crazy contraption that Bobby had put together to ensure that the young chupacabra would get fed on the schedule that was required still had a nearly full refrigerated hopper.

Once everything was taken care of, and Sam had showered and changed, they headed back to the hospital to rejoin Dean.

As Sam had predicted it was several hours before a doctor came out to see them with news.

“Sam and Dean Winchester?” He asked.

Sam and Dean shared a look before Dean answered, “that’s us.”

The doctor handed over the small bag he was carrying, “there were documents in his wallet that named you his official next of kin.”

“Didn’t know he’d done that.” Sam said softly.

“Well, it means we can speak to you about his condition.”
“How is he?” Dean asked.

“They’re taking him into imaging as soon as he’s out of recovery, but I should warn you, as the surgeon who operated it would take a miracle for whatever he fell on to have missed his spine.”

Dean didn’t miss his little brother’s face going expressionless, “what does that mean, doc?”

“I’m sorry, but it means he’ll most likely never walk again.” The doctor explained apologetically, “the scans will tell us the extent of the damage, there’s a slim possibility that it’ll only be partial paralysis.”

“When can we see him?” Dean asked.

“A nurse will come fetch you when he’s settled in his room. Do what you can to keep his spirits up, please, even with the best case scenario this will be a major transition for him. He’s lucky you came along when you did, without you stemming the blood loss he wouldn’t have made it to the hospital.”

Dean thanked the doctor, and he left.

Even though he was now out of surgery, it was easily an hour before a nurse came to tell them that Bobby had been settled in a room and showed them the way there. He was sleeping when they got there, and they settled in to wait however long it took for him to wake up.

Chapter End Notes

Comments, questions, and constructive criticism always welcome. I hope you enjoy this chapter, as you may have noticed we've gone into the equivalent of season 5 *grin*
Chapter 75: Discussions in the Ward

The hours it took for Bobby to wake dragged on. Adam had managed to drag Sam out to grab some food at the canteen in an effort to banish the dark cloud that seemed to have settled over the middle brother. Dean knew it wasn’t going to help that he was absent as Bobby finally stirred.

“Easy, you’re okay.” Dean soothed, squeezing his shoulder as he struggled to wake fully.

The older Hunter blinked at him a little blearily for a moment, “any news?”

Dean sighed, “want the good news or bad news first?”

“Hit me with the bad news.” Bobby stated, though his expression said he wasn’t too keen to actually know.

“The surgeon spoke with us after you go out of surgery, kinda surprised us that you’d named us your next of kin by the way,” Dean started, wishing Sam was there since he had a much better way with words, “he said…that there’s not much chance the injury missed your spine.”

“Balls.”

“There’s a chance it’ll only be partial though, they sent you for imaging to find out for sure. Think they’re waiting until you are awake to share those results though.”

“I’d be a fool to let myself hope.” Bobby grumbled, “and the good news?”

“You’re going to live.”

“Not sure I’d call that good news.”

Dean’s face fell, “hell Bobby…don’t say that. Can’t do this without you…even if you were just a brain in a jar, you’d still be indispensable.”

“Enough of the soft-spoken crap now, Dean. Where’s Sam? He’s usually the one pulling the gently gently stuff.”
“Adam managed to drag him off to get some food into him, gotta give him credit…managed to get Sam to go to let Adam eat.” Dean told him as he sat back down.

“He’s no dummy, that’s for sure.” Bobby stated, “if it’s not from him being the child of a nurse it’s from him paying close attention to the two of you since he landed with you.”

Dean just shook his head, how he’d ended up with two genius brothers he wasn’t sure. He sent a quick text message to Sam letting them know Bobby was awake and less than ten minutes later his two younger brothers were back.

“Good to see you.” Bobby told them, gripping their arms in an approximation of the hug he couldn’t give them, “when you head back to my place you’re going to need to give the sheriff’s department and the university a call to let them know Adam is back.”

“That’s going to be fun.” Adam said with resignation.

“What’s also going to be fun is going through all the recordings and notes your teachers have been dropping off.” Bobby added.

“Don’t take this the wrong way.” Adam said, “but it’ll be a relief to deal with some normal stuff for a bit.”

Dean chuckled and even Sam cracked a bit of a smile.

“I hear you there.” Dean stated, “I definitely hear you. Think we’ll take a bit of a break also, if we’re not needed.”

Bobby shot Dean a look at that, but the eldest brother’s face wasn’t giving anything away. Any questions the older Hunter might have asked was interrupted by Dean’s phone ringing. He sighed and glanced at it. Not recognising the number he stepped outside before answering.

“Hello?”

“Is this Dean Winchester?” A woman’s voice replied.

The voice didn’t sound familiar, “Uh…yeah…”

“I’m calling from the Sioux Falls police department, you’re down as Bobby Singer’s emergency contact.”

Dean’s eyes flicked towards the room where Bobby currently was, “what’s this about?”

“We’ve been continuing the investigation into Adam Milligan’s disappearance and keeping in contact with Bobby while we are doing so. One of Adam’s lecturers stopped by to drop off some notes for his classes, found Bobby wasn’t present and called us. His car is still located at his place.”

“Ah.” Dean replied as the pieces fell into place, “a couple of things. We stopped by to see Bobby earlier today, he’d had a bit of an accident in his yard, so we took him to hospital.”

“Which room?” The police officer interrupted. Dean glanced at the number on the wall and told her, “what was the other thing?”

“Our half brother, Adam, managed to get away and contacted us. We’d just brought him back when we found Bobby.”

“That’s great news. There’ll be an officer there to take your statements soon.”
Dean sighed as the lady hung up, he did not like dealing with law enforcement. Even Hunter ones like Chris and his team got him antsy.

“Who was that?” Sam asked when he slipped back in.

“The local police department.” Dean answered, “apparently one of Adam’s lecturers panicked and called them when they turned up to drop off some notes and Bobby wasn’t there. They’re sending over an officer.”

“Wonderful.” Sam mumbled.

“Won’t be too bad.” Bobby stated, “most of them know me. Won’t say they LIKE me all that much, but they know me.”

“Why is that not reassuring?” Dean replied with another sigh.

The officer turned up a short while later.

“Don’t you know better than to work in that yard after drinking?” She asked as she laid her eyes on Bobby in the bed.

“Yeah…well…since they think I’ll never walk again, that won’t be an issue in the future.” Bobby groused. The officer’s face fell.

“That bad, huh?”

Bobby just shrugged, and she turned towards the brothers, “Adam? If you don’t mind, I need to get your statement.”

Adam looked a little like he was a deer in the headlights, “uh…sure…”

“Would you be more comfortable with your brothers present?”

The relief on his face couldn’t have been more evident, “yeah…if that’s okay.”

She took a seat in a spare chair and pulled out her notebook, “just tell me in your own words what happened.”

Sam and Dean met each other’s eyes worriedly, they hadn’t gone over with him what to tell the police yet, though they carefully kept the concern confined to their eyes.

“Not sure what to tell you.” Adam replied, “wasn’t expecting to be grabbed, so I wasn’t really paying attention to who was nearby.”

“You never saw their faces?”

Adam shook his head, “just babbled at me. Never saw them even when I got food shoved at me.”

“What did they talk to you about?”

“Kept saying that I couldn’t trust my brothers.”

She frowned and look at Sam and Dean, “that sounds like he was taken to get at you. Did you receive any threats or ransom demands?”

“Not that we’re aware of.” Dean answered, “we hit the road hoping to find him.”
“Nothing arrived at my place for them.” Bobby put in.

“How did you get away?” She asked, turning back to Adam.

“They forgot to lock the door again after feeding me one day, I managed to slip out and ran. Found a pay phone, begged some coins off a passerby and called Dean. They were 2 hours away and just jumped in the car and came to me.”

“You didn’t call the police?”

“Didn’t know who I could trust and I just wanted my brothers.”

“I see they didn’t manage to get you to distrust them. That should be all I need, I’ll just close off the case file when I get back to the station. It’s a pity you didn’t see who had you, would have liked to lock those guys away.”

“What’s important is he’s safe.” Dean stated.

“With the kidnappers still at large, they might make another attempt.” The officer pointed out, “I suggest you take extra precautions from now on. I know it’s an expense, but you might want to consider hiring a bodyguard.”

Dean glanced at Bobby then looked back at her, “we’ll figure something out.”

“Well…until you do, if you feel at all unsafe give the station a call and we’ll get an officer out to make sure.”

“Thank you.” Dean stated, actually sincere.

The officer nodded and headed for the door, instead of leaving thought she paused in the doorway and looked at Bobby, “are you sure your injury isn’t related to Adam’s kidnapping?”

“Hell…I just lost my footing.” Bobby groused.

“If you’re sure.” She turned to leave and almost ran into the doctor who was on his way in.

“Is there something I should know?” He asked worriedly.

“Just finishing up a matter unrelated to his injury.” The officer reassured him before seeing herself out.

He watched her go a little disconcerted before shaking his head and looking at his patient, “glad to see you’re awake, Mr Singer. I have the results of your scans, if your friends would like to wait outside for a moment.”

“They may as well stay, I’ll only need to tell them anyway.”

“As you wish.” He handed over the printout of the analysis, “you must have a guardian angel watching over you.”

“Why do you say that?” Bobby asked, glancing at the printout then handing it to Adam, the one most likely to understand the medical babble all through it.

“Whatever you landed on should have severed your spinal column completely. Instead, while there are cuts right up to it, the spinal column itself is untouched.”
Bobby and the brothers shared surprised glances.

“So why can’t I feel my legs?” Bobby asked.

“Swelling. We’ll keep you here for a few days to make sure there are no complications arising from that. But it’s looking good that once the swelling goes down, you’ll be able to make a complete recovery.”

“Thank you, doctor.” Dean said when it became evident that Bobby was too stunned to reply.

“I wish it was something I did.” He replied, “all I can say is just be grateful, that kind of fluke doesn’t happen every day. Visiting hours end in an hour, and he’s going to need his rest.”

He saw himself out.

“That doesn’t match anything we’ve seen from angels.” Bobby commented once they were sure he was out of earshot.

“No, it doesn’t.” Dean agreed, “maybe it was truly a fluke?”

“Since when does a fluke actually happen to us?” Sam asked.

“Something happened.” Adam stated, gesturing to the printout, “the shape doesn’t match what we know went in there. The point seemed to have vanished where it should have sliced into the cord.”

“How is that even possible?” Dean asked.

“Beats me.” Adam shrugged, “I’m just premed.”

“We’ll hit the books.” Dean assured Bobby, “make sure there isn’t anything going to bite us in the arse from that.”

“I’m not going to complain, even if I have to fight angels off.” Bobby returned with a yawn.

“Looks like you’re ready to go for a nap.” Dean noted with a chuckle.

“If you manage to be bright eyed and bushy tailed after surgery then you can poke fun at me.” Bobby groused good-naturedly.

“We’ll let you sleep.” Dean replied, waving his brothers towards the door.

“Stay safe. All of you.” Bobby replied.

Dean gave him a serious nod before all three of them headed out of the hospital room and back to Bobby’s place.

Chapter End Notes

Apologies again about not getting this finished for last week. Though we almost had to wait another week as I got a migraine yesterday, but it was only the one so that's a little bit of a victory.

Questions, constructive criticism, and comments always welcome.
“First things first.” Dean stated as he parked the impala at Bobby’s scrap yard, “let’s get the angel proofing up everywhere we can, that at least we can do invisibly so no worries about looking kookie to regular people.”

“I’ll get the black light pen.” Sam stated in agreement, hopping out, going around to the back, and digging through his duffle for the instrument.

Dean watched his little brother disappear into the house for a moment, “guardian angel my arse. It was Sam, I’d bet my life on it.”

Adam paused and looked at him as he was getting out of the car, “didn’t know he could do that. Why wouldn’t he have said so though?”

“He mightn’t realise he did so. He can do some amazing things on pure reflex, won’t even know how he’s done it afterwards either.” Dean replied, pulling the rest of their bags out and waving Adam ahead of him into the house, “and I know he cushioned Bobby while we were putting pressure on that wound.”

“So how do we go about proving it?” Adam asked. Dean raised an eyebrow at him, and he continued, “do you honestly think you’ll be able to tell him your theory and he’ll just accept it?”

“Point.” Dean conceded, “leave that to me though, he’s being stupid enough about thinking he’s the reason the two of you got hurt, no need to give him an excuse to refuse to contemplate the explanation.”

Adam nodded, suggesting to Dean that he’d already banged his head against that particular brick wall of Sam’s stubbornness.

Sam was just putting the finishing touches on the angel wards as they entered, they had both got pretty quick at putting them up after all the practice they’d got since they had started using them. Dean collected a beer for the two of them and something for Adam, handing it off to the teen before going over to his other brother.
He sat down next to Sam where he’d settled almost despondently on the couch, and handed him one of the beers. “so…what did you do?”

Sam gave him a puzzled look, “what are you talking about?”

“Bobby’s spine, what did you do?”

“I didn’t do anything.” Sam answered with a snort, “and I’m the reason he’s so hurt.”

“One, it’s not your fault.” Dean stated calmly, not giving in to the impulse to sigh, “and two, the doctors are baffled how the spine avoided being severed. And you know as well as I do that no supernatural entity we know of acts in that manner.”

“And your first thought is me??” Sam asked incredulously, “there’s plenty of other explanations, an angel for example, maybe even Cas, trying to hide their involvement.”

“If they weren’t under observation then they wouldn’t stop at just the spine, if they were they wouldn’t be able to do even a slight sliver of healing. No, it’s not an angel.” Dean refuted, “and before you suggest it…it’s not a demon either, they wouldn’t be able to resist holding it over us. Plus that sort of thing requires a deal, and none of us did something that stupid. Unless you want to confess to something.”

Sam gave him a look, and he was actually glad to see the flicker of anger in it, “do you honestly think I’d be that idiotic?”

“Nope.” Dean replied, taking a pull of his beer with a small smile, “but I did want you to acknowledge to yourself that you’re not the origin of all that is crap in the world.”

Sam rolled his eyes at him.

“You cushioned him with your telekinesis, I felt it.” Dean continued, “I’ve seen you do some crazy things and barely even register you’ve done them. I have no problem thinking you could have…whatevered…his spinal cord so he wouldn’t be paralysed.”

“You can’t know that.” Sam protested, “hell…I don’t even know whether that’s even possible. I certainly didn’t do anything consciously.”

For anyone other than Sam that would have been the end of the discussion, but it wasn’t anyone else.

“So you did it unconsciously.” Dean replied with a shrug, “not the first time you’ve done something without realising it after all. Protecting yourself from Lilith and that coin for example.”

Sam shook his head, “speculation doesn’t prove anything, and I’m certainly not going to slice myself open just to find out if I can or not.”

“Of course not.” Dean agreed almost cheerfully, before putting his beer down, slipping one of his knives out of his boot, and putting a cut across his forearm before Sam could react, “that’s my job.”

Adam had been half expecting his eldest brother to pull something like that, he’d paid attention to his brothers after all, but he still jumped when Dean did so.

“Dean!” Sam exclaimed and grabbed his arm, putting pressure on the shallow slice, “what the hell do you think you’re doing?!”

“You need something to practice on.” Dean told him, “so go ahead.”
“We don’t even know if your theory is true!”

“Only one way to figure it out.” Dean replied calmly with a smirk, though inside he was questioning forcing it right now since his little brother seemed a hair's breadth from panicking.

For a second Dean thought Sam was going to go for the first aid kit and hoped that Adam was ready to intervene. Then his little brother took a deep breath to settle himself and focused on the almost not bleeding anymore cut on his arm. There was a slight tingle, and the slice appeared to zip up in front of his eyes.

“Cool.” Dean stated and after Sam moved his hand away rubbed at the area where the cut had been. He was almost disappointed when the slice opened up again.

Sam gave him a look, slapped at his hand, then repeated whatever it was he’d done to zip it up before.

“Leave it alone this time.” Sam grumbled, “treat it like stitching or something.”

Dean reclaimed his beer and sat back with a smug smile at his little brother.

“That still doesn’t prove anything, Dean, just because I can do that doesn’t mean I actually did.” Sam grumped. He drained his beer and got up, dumped the bottle in the bin, and started towards the bedrooms.

Adam shoved a muesli bar at him, halting his movement.

“Don’t you start.” Sam grumbled, turning the look on their kid brother.

“Nah…I’ll leave the getting you to take care of yourself to someone who has far more practice at it.” Adam replied, “I’m just giving you what you need to have after using your abilities.”

Sam rolled his eyes, but took the bar and disappeared upstairs.

Dean let his lighthearted expression slip from his face once he left view.

“Didn’t go well?” Adam asked softly as he came over.

Dean shrugged, “not sure actually. Could have been worse, that’s for sure. At least we established he can actually do…whatever we’re going to end up calling that.”

“So what now?”

“Get this place more fortified, make sure Bobby keeps improving, make sure Sam doesn’t head for the hills out of some misguided desire to protect us. Once Bobby gets home it’ll be a little easier.” Dean finished off his own beer and tossed it in the bin, “you go get resettled into your room, I’ll go make sure Sam rests.”

Adam nodded, letting Dean head up the stairs first.

Sam was standing near the bed gazing at his duffle where it sat on his bed when Dean entered the room they shared whenever they stayed, though he quickly turned as the eldest brother came in. He didn’t need any form of psychic abilities to follow the middle brother’s line of thought.

“Tell me you’re not planning on heading for the hills before Bobby is even home.”

“Uh…” Sam stumbled, “um…wait…does that mean you agree?”
“No.” Dean replied with a snort, “I very definitely do NOT agree. I just know you. It wouldn’t protect anyone, just so you know, even if it actually was you putting people in danger.”

Sam looked away, and Dean sighed, “which it isn’t. And I’m going to keep telling you that until you actually accept that for the truth.”

Sam just shrugged and climbed into the bed. Dean wasn’t sure how to take that; it was evident from his actions that he didn’t want to keep talking right now, he knew his little brother well enough to know that when he clammed up, it didn’t indicate anything good. He shelved it for now though, convincing him it wasn’t his fault was a long term thing after all.

The next morning they took a careful look around at the things that needed to be modified to bring the fortifications out to at least the walls of the house. Adam got in contact with the university and promptly got set up with extra sessions to help him catch up and go through the assessments he’d missed. They joined Bobby for lunch and got his permission for more extensive fortification, including pointing Sam at some more books he had on wards. The two of them escorted Adam to the first catch up session at the university, though Dean had a lot of difficulty sitting still during it, before heading back to Bobby’s to continue fortifying. Adam retreated to his room to dive into his study while Sam dug out the books that Bobby had mentioned.

Since it was after the end of a usual workday, and a Friday at that, Dean sent a message to Chris to see if he was able to talk. The Hunter ATF agent called a few moments later.

“What’s up?” He asked after they exchanged the usual pleasantries.

Dean gave an amused snort, “you sitting down?”

“That good huh? Do I need to put down this beer and jump in a car?”

“No…the action part is done with. Just trying to make sure it doesn’t happen again and thought you might have some advice to help with that.”

“Okay. How about you start with what happened.”

Dean heard him settle, so he was more comfortable.

“Well…it started a few hours after we left you guys.” Dean started after taking a settling breath, “we got a call that our half brother had been taken.”

“Holy crap, Dean, and you didn’t think of giving us a call? I know you only met us recently, but we have connections for helping find someone who’s missing, even if it is a supernatural cause.”

“We figured out pretty quick he was taken by angels, and the last thing we’d want to do is expose others to that sort of danger. For the most part, they seem to leave people uninvolved alone, and we’re hoping they’ll stick to that. And even if they don’t the risk is low if they don’t know we’re connected.”

“Okay, fair enough. Since you say the action part is done with, I’m guessing you got him back?”

“He managed to escape actually, about a week ago, then called us.” Dean swallowed before continuing softly, “we brought him back to Bobby’s yesterday.”

“What happened?” Chris had evidently picked up on his emotions.

“There were demons waiting for us. One of them had possessed Bobby.”
“Blast. That can’t have been easy, Bobby started with demons and is easily the foremost expert in dealing with them.”

“No idea how they managed it, given Bobby was the one to give us anti-possession medallions after our first brush with possession I’d have been shocked if he didn’t have one.”

“Sam wasn’t able to do anything?”

“He was the one who alerted us to the situation and let us get Adam safely back into the car before the other demon pinned us. Meg, the demon in charge rather than the one that was in Bobby…we’ve tangled with her before, knocked Sam out then took the demon-killing knife off me…”

“Wait…demon-killing knife? That’s a thing?”

“Yeah. Got it off a demon, not sure of its origin but it works.”

“Okay.”

“Meg wanted to make Bobby experience slicing the life out of me using that knife. Bobby managed to retake control and sunk the blade into his own belly, killing the demon possessing him.”

“Crap. He okay?”

“Yeah…first person I’ve ever seen who survived a stab from it where the demon died. He’s currently in hospital. They thought for a bit that he would be paralysed, but now they’re expecting him to make a full recovery.”

“Which hospital?”

“Sioux Falls General.”

“Okay. So what did you want my advice with? Can’t be about the angel thing since you know more than we do about that and aren’t scared about putting it up invisibly anywhere going by the artistic endeavour on the walls of the guest room.”

“Well…good thing I didn’t get a wet dream that night then.”

Chris let out a huff of laughter before replying, “it’s fine, we didn’t touch it.”

“We’ve noticed that many Hunters, Bobby included, don’t seem to fortify entire houses, just certain rooms. We figured it’s because that stuff isn’t easy to hide, then we remembered your place and how you managed to do so pretty much invisibly.”

“Ah. Yeah, that I can give advice on. Though my place I actually built, so I was able to prepare the wall cavities then fill them with salt. Doing that with an existing building isn’t something that is practical. What we’ve done with the places the rest of the team live is hollow out decorative cornices and fill them with salt before replacing existing cornices.”

Dean grabbed a notebook and jotted down the information.

“Also,” Chris continued, “we have a friend who made some custom door handles for us. Made out of iron with silver inlay and quenched in holy water, would you like me to ask if he could make you some?”

“That…would be amazing.” Dean answered.
“How many do you need?”

“Well…there’s two external doors, and also the workshop. If it’s not too much trouble could I also get another two sets for Adam’s place for when he returns there after his studies? We’re not about to let him go back there without fixing it up. Currently, it doesn’t have anything since before we met him, he didn’t know anything about supernatural critters.”

“Of course. So that’s 5 sets. Just let me know if you need more, and I’ll get some.”

“Thank you.”

“No problem. I’m sure you know the trick of hiding devil’s traps under rugs and stuff.”

“Yeah. Need to fix pretty much all of the ones Bobby has since the demons broke them though.”

“Sounds like you have some work ahead of you.”

“Yeah. But at least it’s not putting anyone we know on a pyre, so I’m fine with that.”

“Sounds like it came close.”

Dean glanced towards where he could just see Sam with his nose in a book and lowered his voice, “hell…when she knocked Sam out…it looked like she’d killed him…then Bobby…never seen anyone survive a killing strike from that blade where the demon didn’t also survive. Didn’t manage to catch my breath again until after Bobby woke up from surgery.”

“Can’t have been easy. But they’re both okay, and you got…what was his name…Adam back.”

Dean gave a soft chuckle that had just as much pain as relief in it, “keep waiting for the other shoe to drop. We never have things go our way, not without a struggle anyway.”

“Well from the sounds of it it hasn’t been particularly easy anyway, so just stop worrying on that and just take stuff as it comes.”

“Trying.”

“Call if you need to talk, and I’m pretty sure that goes for any of my team also.”

“Thanks. Well…I’d better get measuring if we’re going to make this place as impenetrable as possible. Hell…if we can figure it out we’ll extend the fortifications out to the fenceline.”

“Fill a big long length of pipe with salt and bury it next to the fence and gate.”

Dean chuckled, “you’re full of bright ideas.”

“Well…when you want to protect people you care about without freaking them out you can get very inventive.”

The dark tone in his voice told Dean that whatever the ATF leader was referring to it hadn’t been enough.

“I hear you there.” Dean agreed softly.

There was a pause, and when Chris spoke again it was evident that he was trying to throw the dark mood off, “keep us posted, okay?”
“Will do.” Dean agreed before ringing off.

He took a moment to gather himself before digging out Bobby’s measuring tape and noting down the lengths of the various walls.

“Chris have some advice?” Sam asked when he went by him.

“Yeah. Decorative cornices hollowed out and filled with salt for inside, pipes filled with salt buried near the fence for outside. And he’s getting some special door knobs sent to us.”

“Great. I haven’t found anything extra so far, but I’ll keep looking.”

Once Dean had the measurements it didn’t take much for him to track down a local hardware store that carried cornices that would fit right in in Bobby’s place. Some creative use of tools and plastic wrapping along with a crap ton of salt had that particular defense in place. The pipe filled with salt was a little more awkward to get into place since it needed to be one big long loop rather than several segments, but they managed it.

Bobby came home in the middle of the renovations and ended up just watching them bemusedly since they refused to allow him to help out. Sam tried to keep Dean from telling him the theory about how the spine had escaped damage, but the older Hunter had overidden the objections in his usual gruff manner.

“I’m with Dean.” Bobby stated once the theory had been explained along with Sam’s reservations, “the doctors couldn’t explain it and told me to count my blessings because I could have landed in a wheelchair for the rest of my life.”

“Just because I can…stitch, for want of a better description, up cuts apparently at the cellular level doesn’t mean I did so with your spine.” Sam protested, again.

“Makes far more sense than any other option.” Bobby retorted, “the healing of angels is far different, as is that employed by demons and reapers. So unless you want to suggest that a completely unknown critter happened along and just healed one specific part of me and did nothing else to make its presence known we’re left with you. And before you suggest it, random healings don’t happen anywhere in the lore that I’m aware of, and that sort of thing would have got a lot of attention as you well know.”

Sam just sighed, none of his family was foolish enough to think that he’d actually accepted their arguments though.

Chapter End Notes

Sorry about the delay. At least it’s a good reason this time, I just started studying. Plus I wanted these two chapters to come out simultaneously, I hope you enjoy.

As always comments, questions, and constructive criticism welcome.
Chapter 77: Message

Dean slid the coffee next to Sam where he was tapping away on his laptop before taking a seat with his own.

“What are you working on?” He asked mildly.

“Nothing much.” Sam replied, closing the laptop with a faint aura of embarrassment.

“Uh huh.” Dean replied sceptically, “let me guess… trying to figure out where we wouldn’t be able to find you if you made for the hills?”

Sam looked guiltily into his coffee.

“Thought so.” Dean took a sip of his coffee, “so… how were you planning on getting there? Help yourself to one of Bobby’s junkers? Because Bobby and I immobilised them all the other day.”

Sam glared at him. Dean wished he could relax about that, but he and his brother had got hitchhiking down to a fine art in their teens.

“Like it or not, Sammy, caring about someone means making sure they don’t do stupid stuff that will hurt them.”

“You think it’s stupid?” Sam flared, “when Adam got kidnapped by angels because of me? When Bobby got hurt because of me? It’s nearly a miracle he didn’t land in a ‘chair for the rest of his life!”

Much as he disliked actual fights with his brother, they’d always had a rough and tumble relationship, Dean was actually thankful for the anger. Anything was better than the self-castigation Sam was getting into the habit of.

“In case you’ve forgotten, you’re the only reason Bobby didn’t land in a ‘chair.” Dean shot back.

“We still don’t know that for sure.”

“When you’ve eliminated the impossible, what remains, however improbable, must be the truth.”
Sam looked at him in silence for a moment, “did you just quote Sherlock Holmes?”

“Hey… I read.” Dean replied with a grin.

Sam rolled his eyes at him, then paused and looked towards where the gate was outside. With a sigh, he turned towards where Bobby currently was and called the older Hunter.

“What?” Bobby asked gruffly when he poked his head in. The knock on the door answered his question without Sam needing to reply. With a glare at the middle brother, he stomped over to the door to answer it.

“Oh… uh… I was told Sam and Dean were here…” the woman outside said hesitantly.

The two elder brothers shared a worried look then joined Bobby at the door. The slight brunette that was easily a foot shorter than Dean’s eyes widened at the sight of them. A glance shared by the two brothers confirmed that neither recognised her.

“Sam… is it really you?” She asked in an awestruck voice.

Both Dean and Bobby gave him perplexed looks. He returned an equally perplexed look, which shifted to disconcernion when she stepped forward and started running her hand on his chest.

“And you’re so firm.” She gushed.

“Uh…” Sam stuttered slightly.

“Do we know you?” Dean interrupted protectively, a hair’s breadth from stepping between his brother and this obviously crazy girl. That she was human he didn’t need to ask; Sam would have alerted them to the need for weapons rather than to a visitor to the scrap yard.

“No… but I know you. You’re Sam Winchester, you’re a real life superhero…” She replied, not looking away from the middle brother. She did at least take her hand away from Sam’s chest, then looked over at Dean. Taking him in for the first time, “and you’re… not what I pictured…”

If her attitude towards his brother was anything to go by Dean wasn’t exactly unhappy she hadn’t expected what he looked like. Though that raised the question of where exactly she’d heard of them.

“I’m Becky.” She continued enthusiastically, looking back at Sam. She pushed past them into the house, oblivious to their uncomfortableness at the intrusion.

Dean quickly shot off an SMS to Adam telling him to stay upstairs.

“I’ve read all about you guys, and I’ve even written a few…” for the first time she looked actually rather embarrassed at whatever it was she’d written. Though that gave a clue as to where she knew them from, “anyway, Mr Edlund told me where you were.”

And that was the final clue they needed.

“Chuck?” Dean asked, worried. The prophet had their number, so for him to resort to using one of his fans as a messenger meant there was a problem.

Bobby stayed by the door, once she spat out the reason she’d showed up he was asking her in no uncertain terms to get going.

“He’s got a message, but he’s being watched. Angels.” Becky continued, sounding like she was completely amazed at the existence of the winged beings, “nice change up to the mythology. The
demon stuff was getting old.”

Dean glared at her for talking about their lives like it was a fiction story, and for tossing in his brother’s face the reason things were so difficult for them currently. She had no idea that she’d likely just set off another round of self-blame from Sam.

“What’s the message?” Sam asked, clearly having to calm himself.

“He had a vision.” Becky declared dramatically, closing her eyes as if she had to visualise the words, “The Michael Sword is on Earth. The angels lost it.”

“The Michael Sword?” Dean asked; that wasn’t something he’d heard of.

“Did he say where?” Sam asked, if Chuck had gone to the lengths he had to get the message to them then he needed it in their hands for some reason.

“In a castle on a hill made of 42 dogs.” She replied in a tone she clearly saw as mystical.

“42 dogs?” Dean asked incredulously.

“Are you sure you got that right?” Bobby put in.

“It doesn’t make sense.” Becky conceded, looking at Sam adoringly, “but that’s what he said. I memorised every word. For you.”

She started running her hand over Sam’s chest again, and he shifted uncomfortably.

“Uh…” Sam shot a look at his brother and saw he was just short of killing the clingy woman, “Becky, can you quit touching me?”

“No.” She replied, apparently enthralled with the experience and still not quite getting that they were real people.

“Okay. Enough. You’ve delivered your message, now get out and let us get to work on deciphering it.” Bobby interrupted, “if Chuck had to send you it’s probably related to keeping the world from ending.”

Becky looked at him excitedly, “you mean it’s that important?”

“Out.”

She got the message that time, scuttling outside, “let me know if I can help at all!”

Bobby just closed the door.

“You okay?” Dean asked Sam once the woman had disappeared out the gate.

“I do NOT want to know what she wrote about us.” Sam replied, “I’m not sure it even really registered with her that we’re not fictional characters she can do with as she wishes. And a fucking superhero? If I was that my damn presence wouldn’t endanger and hurt those I care about!”

Dean pushed Sam’s partially empty coffee cup at him, and he actually sat down and started sipping it again. A small victory, but a victory nonetheless. Coming at that statement head on wasn’t going to do anything but make his little brother stubborn.

Adam appeared on the stairs once Dean sent him another message that it was all clear.
“What happened?” The youngest brother asked as he joined them.

“Remember us telling you about the prophet who wrote a series of novels about our lives not realising he was seeing real people?” Dean asked.

“Yeah… he in trouble?”

“Hopefully not. The message said he was being watched by angels, so they know he had contact with us. With luck how they regard prophets will protect him from reprisals.”

“So it was a warning not to contact him?”

“No, that was the explanation for him recruiting one of his fans to get the message to us.”

Sam made a face at the mention of the overboard woman, “wish he’d picked a more… normal… fan.”

“What?” Adam asked.

“She had a… thing… for Sam, Bobby near had to boot her out the door to get her to stop running her hands over him even after he asked her to stop.” Dean explained caustically.

“You can all laugh about it later.” Sam stated, “what’s this about the Michael Sword?”

“My guess is… the actual sword of Michael, the archangel.” Bobby stated, wandering over to one of the bookshelves and pulling out a book after a bit of looking. Dropping it onto the table, he flipped it open to a picture of an old religious painting depicting angels, one of which was in the foreground wielding a sword. He tapped on that angel, “that’s Michael. Toughest son of a bitch they got.”

“Joy.” Dean grumbled, “and that’s the bastard who wants me for a meat suit?”

Both Bobby and Adam looked at him.

“Something you forgot to tell us?” Bobby asked.

Dean blinked for a moment, “ah… yeah… forgot to mention it with everything. Found out in Denver with those agents who were also Hunters. Apparently, we’re descended from two Archangel vessel lines, and the two of us are the ‘true vessels’ of those two lines. Not the nicest thing to find out from Anna out of the blue.”

“You skipped the best part.” Sam put in sarcastically, “my abilities are because I’m the ‘true vessel’ of Lucifer’s line.”

Dean almost winced as he nearly heard the self-loathing dripping off that phrase.

“She said that the line didn’t cause the abilities, only magnified it.” Dean corrected, “and I get the impression that both sides would have preferred not to have it in the mix. The addition of the Michael line also supercharged them, so make of that what you will.”

Bobby nodded his agreement, “if it was because of what they wanted of you then they wouldn’t have had to try so hard to control them, or you.”

Adam nodded, “yeah, there’s something else at work with you having those abilities since neither heaven nor hell wanted it.”

Sam snorted, “like what?”
Adam shrugged, “I’d say God except He kinda falls under the ‘heaven’ category.”

“Cas, before they reprogrammed him, thought that the orders he was getting from the hierarchy were not originating with God.” Dean noted thoughtfully.

“This isn’t answering any questions.” Sam put in, more than a little annoyed.

“Okay, you’re right.” Dean acknowledged, “we’re not going to find the answer to that little puzzle by talking it over. It is an interesting idea though, and deserves some thought being put into it.”

The last was directed at Sam in the hope that he’d start seeing sense about it all.

Sam gave him a look then turned his attention back to the book, “so we’re looking for an actual sword?”

Bobby nodded, “he commands the heavenly host, during the last big dust-up he booted Lucifer’s arse to the basement using that sword.”

“And heaven lost it? How does anyone lose a weapon that important and powerful?” Dean asked.

“Beats me.” Bobby replied, “I’m more worried that a prophet got a vision to tell you about it.”

“So where do we start?” Sam asked.

Bobby retrieved a few more books from his bookshelves, “divvy up and start reading. Try and make sense of Chuck’s nonsense.”

“Awesome.” Dean grumbled.

“You were the one who quite proudly told me you read, Dean.” Sam told him with a grin.

Dean rolled his eyes and grabbed one of the books, but inside he was happy that Sam had felt relaxed enough to have a dig at him.

Several hours and several books later they were no closer to figuring out what the cryptic message meant. Even the diving into Biblical numerology hadn’t helped since 42 wasn’t a significant number. 40 was, but close wasn’t good enough.

“I keep getting the feeling I’m missing something.” Dean commented as he closed and pushed away the latest book.

“That’s usually me saying that.” Sam commented, looking up.

“At least with me, it’s most likely because of something I’ve seen or read that I’m not quite remembering…” Dean’s voice trailed off.

“What?” Sam prompted.

Instead of answering Dean got up and went over to their collection of items they hung onto in case they proved useful. Some of which had been culled from their dad’s journal because they needed them more at hand than stuck randomly somewhere in the book.

“It’s gotta be in here…” Dean said as he dug through the items.

“What the hell are you talking about?” Bobby asked, getting a bit annoyed at being left out of the conversation. The brothers seemed to not need all the words to talk to each other at times, and it
could be confusing to others caught in the middle.

Dean pulled out a business card, “here.”

“I don’t believe it…” Dean continued as both Sam and Bobby got up and came over to see what he’d found.

“What the hell is it?” Bobby asked as Sam plucked the card out of Dean’s hand to look at it.

“It’s a card for our dad’s lock-up in upstate New York.” Dean explained, “read it.”

Sam handed it on with a grin, having already spotted what Dean was referencing.

“Castle Storage, 42 Rover Hill.” Bobby read aloud, his voice trailing off as he made the connection.

“Castle on a hill of 42 dogs.” Dean explained, unnecessarily.

“You think your dad had the Michael Sword all this time?” Bobby asked.

“I don’t know. But it fits.” Dean replied.

“I didn’t see anything like that when we were last there, did you?” Sam pointed out.

“There was a lot of junk there, I’m sure we didn’t lay eyes on more than a quarter of what he stored there.” Dean returned, “not like he ever bothered with an inventory of the place.”

“When I was there last all I was concentrating on was repairing the security and taking out the stuff in curse boxes.” Bobby put in, “only reason I had an inventory of those was he needed me to make the boxes, and it’s hard to make those without knowing what’s going in them.”

“Okay, let’s get going.” Dean declared, “sooner we get there, sooner we figure out whether we’re barking up the wrong tree… or hill…”

Sam rolled his eyes, and collected his weapons and equipment ready to go.

Bobby nodded, “okay. You stay safe, you can’t be sure that the angels aren’t aware of the message for all Chuck did his best to avoid those angels that were watching him.”

“Will do.” Dean replied, collecting his own weapons.

“I’ll take Adam to his class.” Bobby continued.

“Thanks.” Dean returned, they needed to find a more permanent solution since they, and even Bobby, could disappear to a case with little to no notice. But hiring a bodyguard, if they even had the funds for it, like the police officer had suggested wasn’t exactly a good idea given the threats weren’t human. That was a problem for later, though. Now, they had a dangerous weapon to secure and then figure out why Chuck wanted it in their hands, or at least out of someone else’s.

It took a couple of days to get to the storage place, even driving straight through with each brother taking shifts. They didn’t often do so since Sam’s visions could hit very quickly at times and neither brother really wanted to chance that with him behind the wheel.

The storage place didn’t look much different to when they were last there, except for a more elaborate lock and extra security features courtesy of Bobby.

First thing they did when they got inside was put the angel warding sigils up, they hadn’t started
using them when they were here last and if there was one thing they’d learnt it was that it wasn’t worth taking chances.

It wasn’t before time either, as no sooner had they finished then a whoosh outside the entrance alerted them to unwelcome visitors.

“Can’t you, for once, do what you’re supposed to?” The angel flanked by Castiel and another angel complained.

“Sorry, kinda prefer this world without the apocalypse happening.” Dean shot back.

“Come now, it’s been the plan for longer than humans have been able to string two words together.” The angel retorted, “so you and your brother need to get with the program!”

“So since you knew we were here… what… did you manage to eavesdrop on Chuck?” Dean asked.

The angel laughed, “no. Raphael was quite put out you’d managed to meet with him under his nose. The prophesy might have been planted, but it was true nonetheless. We did lose the Michael Sword. We truly couldn’t find it until now… you just hand delivered it to us.”

Sam and Dean shared a puzzled look.

“We don’t have anything…” Dean replied.

The angel sighed, “it’s you, chucklehead.”

It took only a few seconds for the penny to drop.

“Did you seriously name Michael’s vessel the Michael Sword?” Dean asked incredulously.

“You found out about that, did you? No matter. The naming is appropriate.”

“Do the vessels of the other archangels also get fancy names?”

“That’s much too complicated to get into right now. We’re already behind schedule so just drop the wards and let us get things back on track.”

“Not happening, chuckles.” Dean retorted, “and the wards mean you can’t get in here.”

“We mightn’t, but that doesn’t mean other things can’t.” The third angel spoke up, before slipping a silver blade out of his sleeve and throwing it at Sam.

Sam barely managed to deflect it with his telekinesis, he managed to keep it from embedding in his chest, but not from hitting him altogether.

“Sammy!” Dean spun towards Sam as he doubled over with a hand clamped to where the blade was embedded in his arm.

“You sons of bitches!” Dean all but yelled, he pulled out his own knife and quickly slit his palm, hastily sketching the banishing sigil and activating it. Once they were gone, he turned to his brother.

Sam barely registered the exit of the angels.

“Okay, okay.” Dean crouched down and carefully looked at the knife that was buried up to the hilt in his brother’s arm. He felt like swearing as he took in the three cutting edges that could be seen poking out the other side, “I know it’s probably pretty hard to concentrate right now… but has it hit
anything dangerous?”

Sam’s teeth were clenched, but he managed to shake his head.

“Okay.” Dean rubbed the shoulder of the uninjured arm gently, “if I pull it out do you think you’ll be able to do that stitching thing to it?”

“Maybe…” Sam managed to get out.

“Okay.” Dean pulled a couple of handkerchiefs out of his pocket just in case. If his brother wasn’t up to fixing it, he was probably going to need to take him to hospital. Their stitching skills weren’t really for stuff this deep, “try to relax, okay.”

It wasn’t really a question, and when he felt the deliberate relaxing of his brother’s muscles, he pulled the silver blade out. Sam stiffened and went white, and for a second Dean thought he was going to pass out. Then his brother grit his teeth again and the deep triangular wound sealed up in front of his eyes.

Sam released his breath, Dean only just noticing that he’d started holding it at some point, and slumped into him.

“Easy, easy.” Dean soothed as he held him protectively, tucking the knife into his belt almost out of habit, “get your breath back. Then we’ll get you out of here.”

Sam nodded shakily and cupped his hand protectively over where the wound had been.

“Still hurts, huh?” Dean asked, smoothing his brother’s hair out of his face, “want me to tie something around it to keep it still?”

Sam shook his head then pulled himself upright, “we’d better get going.”

“Okay, if you’re sure.” Dean replied before helping him up and shadowing him back to the impala. The vibration of the engine obviously hurt Sam’s arm, but he refused to let Dean find them a motel until they were 4 hours away from the storage lock-up.

Dean updated Bobby while Sam dropped off to sleep once they did. That done he sent a message to Chuck about the result of the message, the expletives he got back told him the prophet wasn’t impressed about the manipulation.

Chapter End Notes

Apologies for the delay, some assessments took my writing time for a bit. Hope you enjoy, even if this is a bit late. As always, comments, constructive criticism, and questions welcome.
Adam was working on some basic training with the Chupacabra pup when the rumble of the impala engine announced the return of the older two brothers. Adam looked worriedly at the door, the last couple of days since Sam got injured Dean hadn’t really updated them beyond saying they were on their way back and the youngest brother wasn’t really sure what to expect.

Bobby stomped over to the door and opened it, watching the two brothers clamber out of the car. Dean waved Sam towards the house while he grabbed the bags out, and the older Hunter noted with concern that Sam’s arm that Dean had reported injured was actually tucked inside his shirt. The middle brother did give him a look when he gestured him towards the couch though.

“Oh, how bad?” Bobby asked once he got to close the door behind Dean.

“I’m fine.” Sam replied before Dean could say anything, with a slightly too easy smile, “Dean has me dosed up on painkillers.”

“I can tell.” Bobby commented, with a look at the oldest brother.

“Broke out the good stuff.” Dean said, “he didn’t fight me too much on it either.”

He sat down next to his little brother and gently pulled him down to rest his head in his lap. Sam wiggled a bit to get comfortable then dropped off within minutes.

Both Adam and Bobby could see the troubled expression on his face now that Sam was asleep.

“Anything you haven’t mentioned?” Bobby asked softly.

Dean sighed and shook his head, “I just didn’t realise soon enough that he was hurting. Damn knife went straight through his muscle, and I stupidly thought him ‘stitching’ it up would make the pain go away pretty quickly. Didn’t think much of him still hurting right after, the shock of it all you know?”

“I know Sam.” Bobby noted, “there’s no way he actually told you he was hurting unless he damn near fainted from the pain, idjit that he is. So how’d you figure it out?”

Adam just looked back and forth between them.
“He was whimpering in his sleep. Tried to brush me off when I woke him, but couldn’t stop a flinch when I took a look at his arm.” Dean replied, “I was expecting it to have torn open, but no… it’s just because a giant damn knife with three cutting edges sliced all the way through his bicep, poked out the other side, and was only stopped because it reached the hilt. And I stupidly didn’t realise it would hurt until it healed, like normal stitching.”

The oldest brother’s caustic opinion of himself was more than apparent in his tone.

“Three edges? That sounds nasty.” Bobby noted, deciding not to address the tone. Dean pointed at the duffel bag he’d dumped just inside the door and Bobby dug the shiny silver blade out.

Dean hadn’t bothered to clean it, but when Bobby carefully wiped the dried blood off there was no tarnishing to be seen. It appeared to be one solid piece, with a triangular blade, the cutting edges honed incredibly sharp. He tramped downstairs with it for a bit.

“Huh.” He commented as he returned with it, “it’s not silver. No idea what it is though.”

“Nasty, whatever it is.” Dean replied. Adam nodded his agreement.

“You want me to run some more tests, see whether it’s good for anything in particular, or just keep it in your arsenal?” Bobby asked.

“I’d really rather never see that damn thing again.” Dean replied.

“Understandable.” Bobby replied, “I'll keep looking at it in the meantime, see if I can dig anything out of the lore and run some more tests.”

Dean nodded in acknowledgement. Bobby took the knife back downstairs, and Adam coaxed the Chupacabra pup back upstairs to allow Sam to rest in quiet. Bobby did return, but just dug a book out and settled in to read it.

A few hours later Dean woke Sam in order to give him his next dose of painkillers, predictably the middle brother protested.

“We’re not travelling anymore, there’s no need to continue.”

Bobby looked over as Dean gave his little brother an exasperated look.

“You’re still hurting.”

Sam gave him a stubborn look and Dean sighed.

“Okay… tell you what…” Dean suggested, holding up his hand in a stop signal, “you manage to push my hand away, with your injured arm, without pain, and I’ll discontinue the meds.”

An uncertain look flicked over Sam’s face before he unbuttoned his shirt and pulled his arm out. He appeared to be having no problem with the challenge initially, much to Dean’s surprise, then the eldest brother noticed that the muscles of the arm weren’t moving and gave his little brother a put upon look.

“NOT using your telekinesis.”

Dean shot a glare at Bobby as the older Hunter huffed a laugh.

“You didn’t specify.” Sam pointed out.
“Telekinesis isn’t your arm.” Dean shot back, and Sam sighed.

The slightest twitch of the muscles had him going white, Dean reacted instantly to steady him.

“You know… if I didn’t know better, I’d think you had a masochistic streak.” Dean berated him.

“Our enemies aren’t going to make allowances just because I managed to let a stiletto skewer me.” Sam replied as he tucked his arm back away using telekinesis.

“One, it’s usually me quoting dad.” Dean pointed out, “two, we’re safe right now, you don’t have to keep up the appearance of being fine.”

Sam just looked away, and Dean dug the painkillers out of their bag, not needing to fetch a drink as Bobby had grabbed one while he was dealing with a reeling little brother. Sam took them with a sigh then Dean helped him up to their room to sleep in an actual bed, despite his protests that he was perfectly capable of walking himself upstairs.

It was a couple more days before Sam could perform Dean’s test with an acceptable enough level of pain that the eldest brother allowed him to switch to regular pain killers. Not that that got him to let up being a mother hen towards his little brother.

Dean was happily putting about in the kitchen after having insisted that Sam take a seat and just watch, though he allowed Adam to assist him. Sam’s sense of guilt at the fussing was only mitigated slightly by the knowledge that Dean actually enjoyed cooking, but that didn’t shake his feeling that the continued fussing was because he’d stupidly allowed the angel to hurt him, he wasn’t even decently sick to warrant the kid gloves.

Almost as if hearing his thoughts he suddenly gagged, and he slapped his hand over his mouth in surprise.

“Whoa…” Dean exclaimed, Sam heard the cup that had been in his brother’s hand clatter onto the counter, “hang on, Sammy, just a sec.”

Sam concentrated on calming his body. He noted almost absently that his telekinesis was active and shut it down. He figured the unexpected rebellion had put his instincts on alert for some reason. Then Dean was by him and shoved a bowl under his chin.

“I got you, Sammy.” Dean soothed, “let it out.”

Sam dropped his hand and spat what had made it into his mouth into the bowl. He could see Adam staring at them frozen and coloured in embarrassment.

“Sorry.” He mumbled.

Dean checked his temperature with his hand, then brushed his hair back from his face, “some warning would have been nice, Sammy. You still feeling sick?”

“Came out of nowhere.” Sam mumbled.

Dean frowned worriedly, “okay. Let’s get you to bed if you think you’re done.”

Sam sighed as Dean took the bowl away. He went to rinse it out only to have Adam intercept him and take it away. Sam couldn’t hear the low conversation that happened between the two, but he could guess the content was along the lines of taking care of him.
When Dean returned and pulled him gently to his feet, it was apparent from his expression that his big brother wasn’t going to take no for an answer. Once in their room, Dean settled Sam on his usual bed, then retired to his own. It didn’t take a genius level intellect to see that he intended to watch over his little brother.

Sam coloured in embarrassment again and rolled to face away from his big brother. As far as he was concerned the only saving grace of the still healing hole in his arm was that he was tired enough whenever he lay down, he dropped off quickly.

When he woke again the first thing that he was aware of was his belly quivering like it was ready to eject its contents. He frowned as he took a steadying breath, the lack of actual nausea to accompany it was confusing. Dean’s hand on the side of his face would have startled him if he hadn’t always been aware of his brother’s location.

“Okay, Sammy.” Dean soothed, “bin’s right here. You’re okay.”

Gentle, but inexorable, pressure from his big brother got him to roll over and lean over said bin. Sam took a steadying breath and tried to figure out what was going on, abruptly he noted his telekinesis was active again. The sensation of being on the cusp of throwing up immediately faded when he shut it down, and he frowned, using the ability, even unconsciously, had never made him sick before.

“I’m okay.” Sam reassured his brother tiredly as he rolled onto his back again.

“You sure?” Dean asked, taking the opportunity to check his temperature with his hand again.

Sam nodded and sat up, drawing immediate protest from Dean.

“Hey, how about just going back to sleep? Give your body a chance to fight whatever this is, you were just about to puke after all.”

Sam shook his head, “had enough of being in bed.”

Dean pursed his lips for a moment, “fine, but only if you let me get you something to eat. And I expect you to eat it.”

“Sure.”

“And let me look at your arm before we go down.”

Sam rolled his eyes, but let the mother hen that was his brother check it anyway. Dean was quickly satisfied that the still healing injury hadn’t developed an infection, though he was still concerned as to the origin of his little brother’s abrupt illness. Having known his brother most of their lives, he knew how unusual it was for vomiting to beset Sam out of the blue, and without nausea to boot unless he missed his guess.

Adam was going through some basic obedience training with the Chupacabra pup when they came downstairs.

“Hey, Sam, how are you doing?” Adam asked when he spotted them.

“I’m fine.” Sam replied, getting a roll of the eyes from Dean. He saw Adam’s eyes flick to Dean to get a sense of how reassuring to find that.

“Go take a seat, I’ll grab you something to eat.”
Sam sighed but went over to the small stack of books that represented the only work his brothers had been willing to allow him to do until his arm was fully healed. Maybe he’d be able to find out what was going on with the telekinesis, he pulled the book he figured was most likely to have answers in it to him while Dean busied himself putting together something for Sam to eat.

Chapter End Notes

Apologies for the delay (again), had a bit of a stomach bug that still doesn't seem to have entirely gone away. I hope you enjoy this chapter.

As always comments, questions, and constructive criticism welcome.
Chapter 79: Dark Answers and Consequences

Sam grumpily put the finishing touches on a coffee in Bobby’s kitchen, what books the older Hunter had wasn’t giving him the answers he was after. He really didn’t feel like going further afield, especially as he didn’t particularly want to explain what was going on to one of his mentors. But it was starting to look like it would be necessary. Hopefully, he could keep from worrying his family before he got it sorted.

“You sure you should be having that?” Deam’s voice interrupted his thoughts.

“I’m fine, Dean.” Sam replied with a sigh.

“Just pointing out you nearly puked just a couple of hours ago, you sure your stomach is up to coffee?” Dean leant on the counter near him, his own cup in his hand. Behind him Sam could see Adam with his nose deep in some textbooks, the Chupacabra pup curled up to him.

Sam gave him a look, “I’m fine.”

“Tell me if you feel even slightly off?” Dean pressed.

Sam nodded, even as self-anger at worrying his brothers swept through him.

As he returned to his books all he could think of was he needed to do better, if his abilities were malfunctioning he needed to fix it before he endangered his brothers or Bobby.

Suddenly he couldn’t breathe, his cup tumbled unnoticed from his hands as he clawed at where the pressure on his neck was, he didn’t encounter anything there though.

Vaguely he heard his brothers react as he crashed to his knees. He reached for his telekinesis to combat whatever this was. He was surprised to find that it was already active. Disengaging it, he abruptly could breathe again. A flash grabbed his attention, just in time to see Dean removing his hand from a banishing sigil.

His big brother promptly crouched in front of where he was kneeling and brushed his hair back from his face, “you okay? Can you breathe?”
“Dean…” Sam started hoarsely.

“Shh. Don’t talk, just nod if you can breathe.” Dean shushed him gently. Sam nodded, and his big brother turned to their kid brother, “Adam, take him downstairs to the panic room, will you? I’ll let you know when it’s safe to come back up.”

Adam nodded and pulled Sam up before the middle brother could try finding his voice again to protest.

Dean nodded, then dug through a duffel bag to get the black light and pen. Sam sighed to himself as Adam tugged him downstairs, the Chupacabra pup sticking close to them.

Adam waved him towards the bed once they got inside, the pup joining him to snuggle into his side, then grabbed a glass of water and brought it over to him.

“Don’t try to talk just yet.” Adam scolded when he opened his mouth, then handed the glass to him, “drink first, see if that helps your throat.”

“Sorry.” Sam whispered after he’d taken several sips, Adam didn’t shoosh him again since his voice didn’t sound anywhere near as painful as it had.

“For what?”

“Worrying you.”

Adam shook his head, “part and parcel of being family, you know that Sam.”

Sam just stared down at his drink and concentrated on shutting his abilities down. He wondered how badly his brothers would hate him if they knew it was most likely because his talents were malfunctioning, or maybe it was more accurate to say his mind was malfunctioning.

Adam settled into the chair and watched the younger of his older brothers as he appeared to try to curl into himself. That reaction was out of character for what he knew of Sam’s response to an attack, and that worried him. He wondered if it was just because of the recent injuries and illnesses, and his mind drifted back to some of the things that his mother had taught him. Some things fell into place, connected with what he understood of his brother’s abilities.

Adam cleared his throat nervously, “Sam…?”

Sam looked up at his kid brother and made an effort to plaster a normal as possible smile on his face.

“What’s up?”

“Sam.” Adam repeated, leaning forward, “my mum was a nurse. I’m aware of many things others aren’t.”

“What are you referring to?”

“What happened… it was you, wasn’t it? Your telekinesis.”

Sam dropped his eyes back to the glass and coloured in shame, “I… I think so…”

“You need to tell Dean.” Adam told him gently, he had no problem seeing how much it upset his brother, “so we can figure out how to help you.”

Sam snorted, and when he spoke the self-loathing was easy to hear, “what kinda help? A psych ward
isn’t going to be able to do a damn thing. It wasn’t like I went ‘let’s see if I can stop the air to my lungs’ or anything. Wasn’t until I went to use the telekinesis that I even realised it was active. And that would be a great thing to saddle Dean with… ‘hey… apparently, I hate myself so much I’m unconsciously trying to kill myself with my abilities, just thought I’d let you know… no idea if even knocking me out would stop it if it happens again.’ I can’t do that to him… or Bobby…”

A footstep sounding outside the door while Adam was still trying to come up with a response brought their attention in that direction. Sam realised abruptly, with shame, that he’d been focusing so hard on suppressing his abilities that he’d missed noting where his big brother was.

Dean’s face was white when he stepped into the doorway, “Sammy…”

Adam looked stricken, he obviously hadn’t planned on that happening.

“Shit… sorry, Dean, you weren’t supposed to hear that. You’ve got enough to worry about.” Sam mumbled, ducking his head in shame.

Dean came to his side, sat down next to him, and wrapped an arm around him, “and that tells me you’re really not doing good. You haven’t missed where I was since about a week after they came online.

“Sorry, Dean.” Sam tried to pull away and hide the tears that were threatening to spill.

Dean just pulled him closer, “it’s okay. We’ll figure it out.”

Sam snorted, “like that’ll be even possible. Psych ward wouldn’t know what to do with me, even if they didn’t lock both of us up as delusional for believing in monsters. Not like there’s going to be a tablet that’s safe to take anyway.”

“We’ll figure it out.” Dean reiterated, sounding more confident that he felt. He wasn’t real sure where to start. Then his thoughts drifted to Bobby, still upstairs checking the sigils. The older Hunter had come inside, after the scrap yard customer had left, while Dean was scouring the wards for errors. He’d suggested that fresh eyes might spot what the problem was, freeing Dean to come check on his brothers while Bobby continued, pointlessly as he now knew. There was no way he was leaving Sam to inform him though.

“Adam, could you go upstairs and ask Bobby to come down?” Dean asked softly.

Sam squirmed as their kid brother promptly disappeared out the door, “no… no… please… he has enough stress…”

“Shhh, it’s okay.” Dean soothed, “he’ll want to know, he’ll want to help.”

A short while later the heavy footsteps of the older Hunter sounded on the stairs, and a moment later the man entered the room. He silently took in the scene in front of him, then plopped down on the other side of Dean.

“I take it it’s more complicated than we thought?”

“New wrinkle in Sam’s abilities.” Dean replied, “they nearly killed him. Apparently fuelled by his feelings about himself.”

“Balls. What are we going to do?”

“Figure it out.” Dean stated, unequivocally. He thought for a moment, “Bobby… do you have any
books on psychics?”

“A few, not a huge amount though. If you want more in-depth answers, you might want to try Pam or the Shaman.”

It was like a light bulb had gone on in Dean’s head, “the Shaman! Why didn’t I think of that?”

Dean went to fish out his phone but remembered on encountering an empty pocket that it was still sitting on the bench upstairs.

“I’ll sit with Sam.” Bobby told him gruffly.

Dean still hesitated for a moment before handing his little brother over to their surrogate father with a promise that he’d be back in a little while.

Locating his phone, he punched in the number and tried not to get impatient as the line rang.

It was a few rings before the Shaman’s apprentice answered the phone. On hearing Dean’s voice, she immediately fetched the Shaman.

“What’s happened?” He asked after they exchanged pleasantries.

“It’s Sam… he… uh…” Dean started hesitantly, “not real sure how to explain it… he’s not self-destructive… not really… it’s just…”

“Did he turn his abilities on himself?” The Shaman asked urgently.

“Uh… yeah…” Dean confirmed a little reluctantly, “not consciously… but… yeah…”

“Okay, that’s not good. The worst form actually. How much damage?”

“Some bruising before he caught what was going on and stopped it.” Dean replied, almost relieved that, bad as it was, someone had an idea what was happening.

“That’s something at least. I want you to bring him here as soon as you can.”

“You can fix it?” Dean asked hopefully.

“I can’t guarantee it, Dean, but I’ll try.” The Shaman replied with blunt honesty, “what triggered off his self-hatred?”

“Long story.” Dean told him with a sigh, “in part the reason behind why heaven and hell are trying to manipulate us, in part friends and family being in danger because of that, which has undercut arguments about it not being his fault what they wanted. Adam got kidnapped by angels, and Bobby got possessed and injured. We, and in particular he, saved them both, but he apparently still feels responsible. I thought I’d been making some headway…”

“That’s a hard thing to come to terms with, and this issue is in part because he’s a good man. And I’m sure it wasn’t because you weren’t getting through to him.”

The simple sentences, spoken with such conviction, lifted a weight Dean hadn’t known he’d had on his shoulders. The fear that he’d failed his brother when he most needed it.

Dean took a steadying breath, “thanks.”

“You’re both good men. If you can, get him to meditate while he’s awake, and watch over him while
he sleeps."

“So it can happen while he’s not conscious.”

“Unfortunately, especially because he’s a dreamwalker. We’ll do our best, it’ll mostly be up to him to fight his way back though.”

“Okay…” Dean took another breath as he settled the plan in his mind, “okay… we’ll be there as soon as we can. Thank you.”

“Drive safe, Dean.” The Shaman rang off.

Dean took a moment to steady himself before going back downstairs. Sam had curled even further in on himself by the time he got back, if you didn’t know you wouldn’t have picked he was the biggest of all of them.

Dean crouched in front of him and got him to look at him, “Shaman wants us to go there.”

“Would even he be able to help?” Sam asked, despair in his voice. He had no idea how to turn this problem off, the last thing he wanted was where this was going, especially with the cost to his loved ones and the world in general.

“He said he couldn’t guarantee it, but he’d try. He recognised what it was though, so it’s not unknown.” Dean told him.

From Sam’s expression, his little brother was having trouble believing that even the Shaman might have an idea of a solution.

Dean pulled him gently to his feet, “come on. Let’s get our stuff together then we’ll get on the road.”

Sam nodded shakily and let Dean lead him out of the panic room. It didn’t take long for them to gather their belongings, in part because even at Bobby’s they never really unpacked, then they were on the road.

Once they were on the way in the impala Dean explained how the Shaman had suggested the meditation and shift sleeping, Sam quickly saw the logic, and that it would make the hours pass quicker.

The journey passed without further issues, to both of their reliefs, and the Shaman actually met them when they pulled into the parking lot. He embraced them both once they were out of the car.

“Well… I would have preferred a more cheerful reason for our second meeting. However, it is good to see you again, regardless of the reason.” The shaman stated.

“Thanks for offering to help.” Dean replied, “I’ll just go book us into the motel.”

The Shaman chuckled and shook his head, “no need. The tribe built you a house. In part because you not just risked your lives for us, but saved everyone you could even though it cost you. Also in part, because Hunters rarely have a home, and in unanimous vote, you’ve been declared members of the tribe.”

“What?” Sam managed faintly, “I can see Dean deserving that… but I sure don’t…”

“Nonsense.” The Shaman retorted, not unkindly, “even if the two of you hadn’t saved the lives of everyone here… you’re a good man, Sam, one any community should be proud to claim as their
own.”

Dean nodded his agreement, and Sam looked at the ground not sure how to take it.

“Come.” The Shaman coaxed gently, “let’s get you settled in, then we can get to work.”

Sam let himself be guided into the reservation proper, he mightn’t be sure how to feel about what they’d done for him, but they had come seeking help, and he wasn’t going to shy away from it, no matter the form.

Chapter End Notes

Actually on time *chuckle* hope you enjoy.

As always questions, comments, and constructive criticism welcome.
Chapter 80: Lessons

Dean knew it was helping his brother, but he still found himself not being completely happy about what that entailed. It had only been a few days, but he could already see how hard it was on Sam. And he couldn’t help, which was his main reason for not being completely happy. And there was only so many times he could clean their weapons to keep busy while Sam was off with the Shaman.

Sam came through the door and all but flopped down at the table, putting his head on his crossed arms.

Dean pulled a sympathetic face as he took in how tired his brother was.

“Want food or some coffee?” He asked, not touching on how exhausted he could see Sam was.

“Not particularly.” Sam replied, rolling his head to look at his big brother without lifting his head, “but I should.”

Between the shaman potions he was being dosed with and the exercises that were pushing even the limits of his abilities he was wiped, and the last thing he really wanted to do right now was anything other than sleep. The exhaustion was only in part because they were pushing hard with the need to get the issue under control, as the Shaman had explained most children in the tribes that hadn’t left the traditional path that were found to have psychic abilities would go through this training while they were still young. At a more sedate pace, of course.

Dean gave him a sympathetic look then grabbed an easy to eat cold meal he’d put together earlier when he’d run out of weapons to clean. Sam gave him an exhausted but grateful look as he realised he wouldn’t need to wait.

Once he’d eaten the meal, Dean shepherded him into the bedroom and got him settled in his bed.

Tough as it had been on his little brother, and how trying it had been so far with him not being able to do much more than make sure he was fed and rested, he didn’t expect any real issues. Not until Sam having a nightmare woke him sometime in the early morning.

Admittedly his brother had never truly stopped having nightmares, but since he’d got a handle on his
dreamwalking, he hadn’t had to ride them out. So Sam not interrupting one immediately after it had
started told Dean there was a problem, and he was out of bed and by his side before he had fully
processed it consciously.

“Hey… Sammy… Wake up.” Dean tapped his cheek gently, his worry ratcheting up another notch
when Sam didn’t even slightly respond. Instead just thrashing his head and almost whimpering in
response to whatever he was seeing. He rested the back of a hand on his brother’s forehead and
nearly swore at the heat that was coming off of it.

“Okay, Sammy… we got this… just a sec.”

Dean quickly dug out the thermometer out of their first aid kit, then wet a face washer before dashing
back to Sam’s side. It was almost scary how much the tribe had learnt about their preferences in the
short time they’d been there previously, like how it was just natural for them to have their beds in one
bedroom and their penchant for relatively compact and defensive layouts if they had a choice. He
pulled everything except a sheet off his brother then started wiping his face.

He was just contemplating a cold bath when Sam finally opened his eyes, they weren’t precisely
focused, but they were open.

“Hey… nice to see those pretty eyes of yours again.” Dean jibed gently, he wasn’t about to admit
how scared he was, “let’s see how bad that temperature is shall we…”

Sam wasn’t as with it as he’d hoped, as he found out when he tried to get the device into his
brother’s mouth.

Sam all but thrashed on the bed, lacking the strength to actually get up, “no… no… don’t want… in
me, Ruby… didn’t want… to start with…”

Dean’s heart plummeted to his toes as he figured out what Sam was talking about and that he wasn’t
even aware who was with him.

“Hey… Sammy… you’re okay. Ruby isn’t here, she’s dead, Sammy. It’s just me, your brother.”
Dean tried to soothe him, but it didn’t seem to be getting through the fever currently besetting his
mind. And without being able to get Sam to take the thermometer, he had no idea whether it was
cold bath time or even hospital time.

Before Dean could figure out what the next steps should be Sam suddenly choked then threw up.
Swearing, Dean bunched the sheet up to stop it from running off onto the floor, then hauled Sam up
into sitting position. He winced as his brother heaved up more into the sheet. It wasn’t ideal, but he
didn’t have a bin within reach, and with the way Sam was wavering there was no way he could
leave him to go find one. He settled for keeping his brother steady and making sure the mess didn’t
go further than it already had.

When Sam finally stopped throwing up, he bundled the sheet as best he could before turning to his
brother.

“Okay, Sammy… let’s get you cleaned up, shall we…”

His brother didn’t appear to respond, but Dean managed to get him into a somewhat upright position
and shuffling towards the bathroom, Sam’s head lolling on Dean’s shoulder, though he did have to
take much of his weight. They’d just got into the bathroom when Sam abruptly burped up another
mouthful of vomit onto Dean’s shirt.

Dean sighed and just concentrated on getting his brother to the toilet so he could sit him down, “if
you weren’t so out of it, Sammy, I’d rib you about that forever.”

He hesitated about putting Sam on the floor near the toilet or sitting him on the toilet to make cleaning him up a little easier. Dean decided on sitting him on the toilet, with how much he’d thrown up his little brother had to be empty or nearly so. Even half out of it, Sam didn’t appear to be in danger of falling off the bathroom fitting.

Once he was satisfied his brother was as stable as he was going to get Dean carefully peeled the messy t-shirt off Sam. It wasn’t as bad as it could have been, but it was definitely going to require a very thorough washing. He was about to dump it on the floor to deal with later when Sam let out a very wet burp. Dean quickly bunched the t-shirt up and held it under his mouth to catch what little his brother might bring up, though he honestly didn’t think Sam could actually bring anything up.

He was quickly proved wrong as his brother heaved and the amount that made its appearance quickly overran the improvised receptacle.

Dean jumped back, though avoiding getting messy himself was a ship that had already sailed, “shit, Sammy, how the hell do you have anything left to puke?”

His brother’s response was to heave up another burst, and Dean dumped the shirt into the mess and grabbed Sam’s shoulders to keep him from pitching forward off the toilet.

Once he stopped, Dean got him to lean back again, and Sam let out a sound that sounded very much like a whimper.

“Shower time, Sasquatch.” Dean told him as he managed to wrestle the pants off his brother. He shucked his own shirt before hoisting Sam to his feet and guiding him into the shower. He briefly considered using the bath, it would be easier than trying to keep Sam on his feet after all, but after his brother had shown he could still puke up a flood even though he should be well and truly empty that was just asking for more mess.

It was barely a minute before Sam was throwing up again. Even reducing the temperature of the spray didn’t help bringing his brother back to himself, and after the third time Sam puked in the shower Dean reluctantly concluded he was out of his depth.

He shut off the water, “okay, Sammy, time to get some help.”

He hauled Sam out of the shower and wrapped him in a towel before sitting him down, on the floor this time, then getting him to lie down on his side. He ducked out of the bathroom briefly to grab some boxers for Sam and his phone, he already had the call initiated when he returned to his brother and wrestled him into the boxers, the phone pinned between his shoulder and head as he waited for someone to wake up and answer.

The sleepy voice of the Shaman finally answered.

“Sorry to wake you, Shaman.” Dean apologised.

“What’s wrong?” The Shaman demanded, sounding a lot more alert. The other sounds Dean could hear told him the other man had immediately sat up.

“Sam’s really sick…” before Dean could elaborate his brother threw up again, fortunately, he had taken the time to position his head over the drain so it wasn’t as bad as it could have been.

“I’m on my way.” The Shaman hung up before Dean could even acknowledge the statement.
Less than five minutes later the Shaman let himself and his apprentice into the house.

“Damn… worse than I thought.” The Shaman stated once he found them in the bathroom.

“He’s running a fever.” Dean told him, “no idea exactly how high though, he wouldn’t take the thermometer…”

Sam interrupted them by throwing up again, Dean quickly steadying him.

“How the hell he even has anything left to puke I have no idea…” Dean commented even as the Shaman leant forward to hover his hand over the back of Sam’s neck.

The heaves died down, and the Shaman looked at Dean, “let’s get him over to my place, we’re best set up to help him over there.”

Dean nodded as he remembered the room the victims of the rogue dreamwalker had been kept in. Between them they hoisted Sam into a chair hold, Enola going ahead of them to hold the doors.

Carefully they got Sam settled and hooked up to a drip, the Shaman handing Dean a vial of the same antiemetic Dr McGarn had prescribed for the migraines. Wordlessly he injected it, it didn’t surprise him in the slightest that the Shaman was happy to use both modern and traditional methods.

“We can get the doctor to come over in the morning if we need more medications.” The Shaman commented as he handed over a wet cloth.

Dean nodded in acceptance, that definitely made sense. The Shaman had apparently made a note of the medications he’d seen in their kit when they’d been there last and passed that information on to the doctor.

A few hours passed relatively peacefully, then Sam got distressed from some more fever dreams.

“I’ll go get some tea, go in, and calm things down.” The Shaman decided when Dean wasn’t able to calm his brother.

“No.” Dean replied immediately, “I’m not sure he’d even recognise me as a non-threat right now; if he kicks you out, you’re dead. And there’s no way Sammy would recover from that.”

The Shaman swore as he realised the accuracy of the oldest brother’s statement, not that he particularly liked that that was the case.

It took a while, but finally, the soft words seemed to reach the middle brother, and he calmed, falling into a somewhat restful sleep for the rest of the night.

Chapter End Notes

Apologies for being late again. A migraine kicked my arse last week right as I was about to finish the chapter up and post. I hope you enjoy.

As always comments, constructive criticism, and questions more than welcomes.
Chapter 81: Recovery

Enola brought Dean a coffee midmorning while Sam was still sleeping. The Shaman had got the doctor to pop in just in case first thing.

He would have been put out about the doctor knowing about Sam being a psychic except that that wasn’t a secret anywhere on the reservation, and that he carefully checked what he wanted to provide against an obviously well-worn sheet of paper. He’d explained that though there hadn’t been any actual studies on how various medications affected psychics. That wasn’t possible since the companies and organisations that performed such studies were unaware of the existence of the rare variant of humans, the doctors that knew kept a list passed between them of every medication they knew of that had reacted badly in a psychic. Of course, some of them undoubtedly had been because of individual allergies, but they had no way of testing for that short of risking another psychic. Some things were no brainers, they’d been warned early on that any medication that affected the brain were likely to have extreme, even deadly, reactions in a psychic, especially one of Sam’s power. Others, though, were unexpected. Like the blood pressure medication that had put several psychics from the same family into comas a few decades before.

“The fever seems to have broken.” She noted.

Dean nodded, “now he just needs to wake up. No idea how high it got, just gotta hope it didn’t fry his mind.”

“Dr Tosahwi left extra prescriptions of the injectable antipyretic in case it was needed.”

“Kinda hoping that isn’t needed.” Dean replied, taking a sip of the coffee. He paused, “does that mean there’s a pharmacy nearby?”

“Yes, I can give you directions if you want.”

Dean looked at Sam, much as he wanted to visit a pharmacy, there was no way he was going to leave his brother before he woke up.

“Or I could go get whatever it is you want.” Enola offered, and he gave her a grateful look.
Dean fished out his wallet, Enola had fetched it for him at the same time she’d brought him a change of clothes. What had become of the messy pair of pants he had been wearing he wasn’t game to ask.

Pulling several notes out, he handed them to her, “I’m not sure how much it will cost, so let me know if it’s not enough. I want to get something like an ear thermometer so that I’m never stuck not being able to get a read on a fever again because he won’t take it in his mouth.”

“No problem.” She replied, immediately scurrying out the door on the errand.

Dean was surprised to find out that what he’d given had apparently been just enough to cover the cost of the fancy ear thermometer she returned with.

The Shaman returned a little while later from his duties with lunch for the three of them.

“I arranged for someone to clean up the mess.” He commented as he handed out the meals, “don’t fret, they’re tribe members. They know what to not mess with.”

Dean made a face as he remembered the unholy mess they’d left behind them, he’d actually been mentally bracing himself for dealing with it once Sam was awake, “that I wouldn’t wish on anyone.”

“They’re professionals, they’ve undoubtedly seen worse. They were more worried about Sam.”

“Still doesn’t make it right.” Dean sighed, “any idea on when he’ll wake up?”

“Soon, hopefully. I can feel the strength of his mind again, so he’s coming back to himself.”

Dean released the breath he hadn’t been aware he was holding, “so he’s going to be okay?”

“Looks like it, from this reaction anyway.”

It was mid-afternoon when Sam finally stirred and blearily opened his eyes.

“Hey, nice to see you back with us.” Dean commented from beside the bed before handing him a glass of water, “here. SIP it though.”

Sam frowned as he looked at the glass and slowly took in his surroundings; the last thing he remembered was going to bed, but this definitely wasn’t their room. Even starker was the drip that fed into a vein in his arm. He took the glass carefully and sipped it, the taste in his mouth was horrid, and the water cleared it somewhat.

“You were pretty sick.” The Shaman commented, Sam only just registering his presence, “how are you feeling?”

“I was sick?” Sam asked a little weakly. He felt wiped, but the very fact he couldn’t remember anything beyond going to bed let alone moving to what he now recognised as the infirmary type room at the Shaman’s place told him he probably felt better than he had a right to.

“Oh yeah.” Dean piped up, “you puked everywhere. Like full blown Exorcist.”

Sam rolled his eyes, but the fact that his brother was managing to joke about it said that things were mostly okay now. Carefully he sat up, Dean instantly supporting him.

“Easy, Sammy. Just relax a bit, will you.” Dean scolded.

Sam conceded to his brother lying him back down since he didn’t have enough strength to keep himself sitting up.
“How much time have I lost?” He directed the question at the Shaman. His mentor gave him a frustrated look.

“Sam, you can allow yourself some time to recover first. We’ll have to be more careful anyway since you reacted.”

Dean frowned, “whoa… wait a sec… he was so damn sick… and you’re just talking about starting it back up without even a break?”

“The original problem hasn’t gone away, Dean. We don’t get that sorted recovering from this will be pointless.” Sam pointed out.

The Shaman reluctantly nodded his agreement, and anger at him flashed into Dean’s eyes for the first time since they’d met the man.

“He could have DIED… and you want to just start up again?”

“There’s a reason we try to avoid this training with adult activation or discoveries.” The Shaman replied calmly, apparently unshaken by the eldest brother’s anger, “but with what’s going on with your brother, we don’t have that choice anymore. If there’s one good thing, it’s that the reaction has ensured that we don’t have to try so hard to exhaust him anymore.”

“You call that a GOOD thing?”

“Enough, Dean.” Sam interrupted, “I was warned about the dangers. If what’s going on with me keeps going, it’s nearly guaranteed death. What Shaman is getting me to do has a much higher success rate than that.”

The look Dean turned on his little brother was hurt, “you didn’t tell me…”

“I didn’t want you to worry about something that might not even happen.”

With a sigh, Dean turned back to the Shaman, “how bad is this likely to get?”

“I won’t lie to you, Dean. It has the potential to get really bad.” He replied, then held up a hand to stall the eldest brother’s response, “that said… it has actually been going surprisingly well given how powerful Sam is.”

“I want to be involved…” Dean said softly, “I know… I know I can’t help with the training… or anything like that… just… I want to be there… in case…”

The Shaman wasn’t able to say no to the anguish in Dean’s voice and face, “okay.”

Sam opened his mouth to protest, and the Shaman interrupted, “you’ll need to stay outside the wards, though.”

Dean would have agreed to nearly anything to be able to keep watch over his brother rather than spending the days wondering whether Sam was actually going to come back, “okay.”

They waited two days before starting up the exercises again. None of them had been pleased about restarting again quite this early, but if they waited any longer, it risked Sam’s abilities getting enough energy to pose a threat again.

Dean was surprised to find that the wards the Shaman had mentioned were the intricately carved wooden ones that had been showing up in their house and around the reservation in general since
their arrival arranged in a small circle around the seat that Sam settled in. The perimeter was small enough that it was possible to touch his little brother without actually entering the area covered by the wards.

The Shaman handed Sam a block of wood and stepped back as he started to carefully carve it with his telekinesis.

“The wood is from a particular tree species that has an affinity for spiritual and psychic power.” The Shaman explained as he settled next to Dean.

“And getting Sam to carve them makes them stronger.” Dean noted.

“True, especially since they’re created using his abilities. That’s not the entire reason, though, or even the primary reason. And it was Sam who suggested giving them to tribe members and spreading them around the reservation. If he’s actively using his telekinesis, it can’t turn on him, and if we exhaust him with it, it can’t turn on him while he’s sleeping. Only the first step, though.”

“What are the other steps?”

“You’ll see.” The Shaman looked at him seriously, “doing my best to keep the risk down, Dean. And you can’t imagine how much I hate that this is necessary.”

“I think I can if you feel anything similar to how I feel about the necessity.”

Sam was visibly wilting when the Shaman handed him a cup of some hot herbal concoction. After it was gone he gave Sam a string of instructions, Dean listened but couldn’t make heads or tails of what they actually meant. His brother didn’t appear to have the same problem, though.

After a few days with no further issues, Sam returned to sleeping at their place, though Dean was given instructions that at the first sign of problems he was to call. He found it very hard to relax, but as the weeks went by not only did the scary side effects not make another appearance but the exercises became a lot easier for Sam, and not because the Shaman had let up on the intensity. The satisfied smile of the Shaman confirmed that they were winning the fight, something he confirmed verbally a couple of days later.

They’d just decided that they’d update Bobby and Adam, and stay until a new case came up when Sam’s phone rang.

After giving it a puzzled look, the middle brother answered. Dean was about to turn back to the conversation with the Shaman when he saw Sam’s face lose all colour.

“Sam?” Dean was immediately on his feet and by his brother’s side.

Sam turned stricken eyes on him as the line disconnected.

Chapter End Notes

Fasten your seatbelts, wild ride ahead *grin* I hope you like it. Though I'm starting to think Dean has a voodoo doll of me *chuckle*

As always questions, comments, and constructive criticism welcome.
Chapter 82: Hostages

“I’ll pick you up at 5.” Bobby stated as he dropped Olivia and Adam off. Usually, they’d have driven themselves, but he’d had business in town also. Olivia was a new addition, an old friend of his who’d settled nearby that he’d contacted when it became evident that neither he nor Sam and Dean were able to cover Adam at all times. Aging Hunters were not known for settling gracefully into retirement.

He was poking through the unofficial stock in a Hunter friendly herb shop when what sounded like an outdoor PA that the city didn’t have boomed overhead, clearly audible even inside.

“Attention everyone within the city limits. Do not attempt to leave the city. I have your sheriff, and if you comply with my orders, she will be released unharmed. I require that Sam turn himself over to me. Then the sheriff, and the rest of the citizens in the city, will be released. Your cooperation is appreciated.”

“Balls.” Bobby grumbled. He had no doubt which Sam was being referred to, and he was thankful that the middle brother wasn’t anywhere near the city. Otherwise, hero that he was, he might just turn himself over to save the city and hope he could avoid setting off the apocalypse later.

“I take it you recognise who that’s talking about?” The Hunter aware shopkeeper stated nervously.

“Yeah. And I’m glad he ain’t anywhere close.”

“Why? I could have sworn you didn’t have a death wish, Bobby.”

“Because if he turns himself over, we’re probably looking at the apocalypse on the horizon, and that’s a lot more deaths than one city. Undoubtedly including everyone here, so it wouldn’t help anyone.”

“Stark way to look at it. So… what… we just gotta pray we survive somehow?”

“Praying would be useless. The angels are one of the groups that want the apocalypse to happen.”

Bobby handed over enough notes to cover what he’d already found and left the shop with the shopkeeper swearing at the air behind him.
There was an explosion in the distance as he dumped his purchases in the mismatched car he was using.

“I did instruct that none were to attempt to leave the city. Pity that someone had to test that order.” Boomed from overhead.

“Balls.” Bobby exclaimed again; it didn’t take a genius to do the math to conclude that the explosion was the car of someone who’d made a break for the city limits going up.

It didn’t take long to get back to the university, Adam and Olivia were waiting for him when he got there.

“Classes got cancelled after the nut got on the citywide PA I didn’t know the city had.” Adam told him.

“It doesn’t, as far as I know.” Bobby replied.

“So who’s the nut on the non-existent PA?” Olivia asked. Her role as Adam’s bodyguard let her carry a gun openly.

“Two candidates. Demons or angels.”

Adam held up his phone, customised extensively by Sam, displaying the same live news coverage that was breaking into TVs all over the city. Ignoring the barely controlled panicked commentary of the reporter they studied the other pictures and videos. A woman in police uniform was pinned partway up the wall of the police station with no visible support or restraints, movement inside revealed the figure of the one managing the technology less PA.

“Not familiar with that bastard.” Bobby noted.

“Think it was the same voice that was continually babbling at me when I was taken.” Adam noted, a little nervously.

“Balls.” Bobby grumbled.

“So… angel? Some way to use that sigil you taught me on it?” Olivia asked.

“With the way he’s inside with the doors closed we’d need to get in there with him…” Bobby started to reply thoughtfully.

On the tiny screen, a police officer tried to get to the visible door, the feed hastily cut away as the hapless officer went up in flames.

Bobby winced, “yeah… not happening.”

“Back door?” Olivia asked.

“Angels don’t need to have line of sight to know you’re there. Unless you have the sigils carved on your ribs that Adam and I have, which don’t protect from sight. And given they’re expecting Sam and Dean, they’d have something in place to deal with that.”

“To quote you… balls.” Olivia grumbled.

“Come on, let’s get eyes on the bastard. Mightn’t be able to do anything, but if something pops up, we won’t be able to act on it if we’re not there.”
They had to sneak around the police who were doing their best to keep civilians away from the being that had killed several of their number. Being able to actually see the police building that was the centre of the event made the enormity of the problem clear. There were several scorch marks, though it appeared that officers had risked ending up like their colleagues to drag the bodies away.

The lady pinned to the wall looked distinctly annoyed, though the lack of visible restraints or support clearly indicated they couldn’t rescue her unless they managed to deal with the nut demanding Sam turn himself over.

“Who’s the poor woman?” Olivia asked softly.

“Sheriff Mills. She’s arrested me more times than I can count.”

“For you… that probably makes her your best friend.” Olivia replied.

Bobby just shrugged in reply.

They carefully scouted around the building, but all the doors offering access had open fields of view for their approaches. Sensible layout for a police station, not like law enforcement would consider needing to assault their own buildings when they designed them. Angels definitely didn’t figure on their plans, even for those who did know about the supernatural.

“Sirs and ma’am, we need you to come away from the building.” A strained voice interrupted them after they’d finished and pulled back to consider their options.

“Just trying to help.” Bobby replied, looking at the officer who’d approached.

“We don’t need help from the town drunk, and we don’t need more bodies. So please come away.”

“That what Jody would say?”

“What she would or wouldn’t say I don’t know. She’d just been leaving for work when that bastard bashed his way into her home, killed her husband, then brought her here and did that.” The officer gestured towards where she was pinned.

“Damn… why would he kill her husband?” Adam all but gasped.

“To prove he was serious.” Olivia answered grimly, “same as torching the officers and blowing up the cars trying to leave.”

The officer nodded as he waved them away from the building, the three complied since, at least for now, there was nothing they could actually do.

“I’m guessing you’re a Samantha.” The officer continued, relaxing a little as they moved away from the death-trap of a building.

“Olivia, actually, why?”

“Huh… okay. I know these two are Bobby and Adam, so I was figuring it would be you. We’ve had about a dozen Sam’s and Samantha’s attempt to turn themselves over to the crazy bastard so far. One actually slipped passed us. Wasn’t the right ‘Sam’ though, since the bastard sent him up in smoke before we could try to drag him back.”

The three of them swore.

“Adam, isn’t one of your half brother’s called Sam? And you were taken to try to coerce them,
right?"

Adam glanced back at the occupied police station, “yeah… and the voice of that bastard sounds like
that of the guy who babbled at me while I was captive.”

It was the officer’s turn to swear, “where are your brothers?”

“Several states away last we heard.” Bobby replied warily, “why?”

“Well, at least that means we don’t have to try to keep them from turning themselves over.”

They visibly relaxed, and the officer snorted, “you never turn the target over to a psycho, no matter
what incentive they offer.”

“Another Samantha?” A higher ranked officer asked as they were lead into the improvised police
station.

“No, sir. They were scouting around the station though, said they wanted to help.” The officer
who’d found them reported.

“Very well.” He was waved away, leaving them with the higher ranked officer they could easily
guess was either the shift commander or the sheriff’s second in command.

“Should have figured you’d turn up sooner or later, Bobby. This situation is bringing out all the
cranks. Even got a few so-called psychics offering their assistance, funny they didn’t know to stay
away from the situation though.”

“Officer…” Bobby started to protest, only to have him hold up a hand.

“Jody always said you were a few sandwiches short of a picnic, but no one knows more about crazy
stuff than you. So, who the hell is that? And how do we stop him?”

Bobby glanced at Adam and Olivia before answering hesitantly, “who, I have no idea. Best guess
is… an angel or a demon. Know how to drive them away, but gotta get in there to do so.”

“Trying to get in there is all but suicide.” The officer immediately negated, “the building wasn’t
designed with trying to oust a hostile force in mind. We were the ones supposed to be holding off
hostile forces from inside in the worst case scenario.”

“Yeah… well… the normal rules don’t apply in this situation.”

“You can say that again. And not only do I have to try to deal with that nut, I have to keep pretty
much every Sam in the city limits from trying to turn themselves over to him to save the city. Even if
we knew which Sam he meant there’s no way we could allow that, no guarantee he wouldn’t kill
everyone anyway.”

“Undoubtedly he would, one way or another.” Bobby agreed.

“Well… won’t be our problem much longer, the brass have decided to stick some task force on it.
Despite my pointing out that would be bringing more people into danger. Wouldn’t believe me we’d
shot him several times only to have it have no effect either, not that we’d have kept shooting even if
it had done a little after he torched some when he got tired of it.” The officer sighed, “at least it’ll be
easy to get them here, all planes are being directed away. And at least all the nut did to the planes
taking off was cut out their engines, rather than exploding them like he did the cars. Glad all that
won’t be my problem to try to explain once this is over though.”
Bobby noted silently that the officer hadn’t resigned himself to dying, even though there weren’t many options for survival visible just yet. Not that he had either. He mightn’t be going to call the one the apparent angel was demanding, but that didn’t mean he wasn’t going to do everything he could to get out of this alive. But he definitely didn’t want more Hunters being caught up in this, bad enough the amount of those and support people that were already trapped in the city, he had a bad feeling about the ‘task force’ the officer had mentioned.

His phone rang, and he answered carefully after a quick glance to see whether there were any police in hearing range.

“I take it I don’t have to be careful about what I ask.” Josiah’s voice came over the small device.

“Well, hello to you too, Josiah. I take it you’re coming to deal with the idjit that’s grabbed Sheriff Mills?” Bobby returned grumpily, Olivia and Adam looked at him curiously.

“Yup.”

“Can’t convince you to turn around and go back before you enter the city limits, can I?” Bobby knew it was a slim hope, but the last thing he wanted was 8 more Hunters or near Hunters here in the worst case scenario.

“We’ve been assigned officially. I take it this isn’t a case of just an idiot with a hostage?” Josiah replied, not that he was particularly surprised. Hunters, in general, weren’t known for playing it safe.

“Considering he’s managing to talk at loudspeaker levels without any technology, and the few who decided to chance his wrath and made a break out of the city went up in flames… not likely. Not completely sure WHAT he is, but he ain’t human.” Bobby informed him.

“We were told no one has managed to get a shot off.”

Bobby snorted, not surprising that hadn’t been passed on since the officers hadn’t been believed, “more like he got shot half a dozen times by various police officers and didn’t even bleed. Incinerated a few once he got annoyed at it.”

Josiah swore, “any chance that…”

“Sam and Dean aren’t here right now, and they’ve got the Colt. Won’t be calling them either, bastard is demanding that Sam turn himself over. Chance that it might be another Sam… but I wouldn’t bet on it.” Bobby told him bluntly, at least the ATF agent Hunters would be right with him in wanting to keep the brothers as far away from the situation as possible.

“That does narrow the possibilities down.”

“Yeah, and neither can be killed easily. Hell… don’t even know if it’s possible to kill angels.”

“You tried…” Josiah started to ask.

“Can’t get close enough for either exorcism or banishing sigil.” Bobby interrupted before he could finish the question, it didn’t take a genius, after all, to figure out what he wanted to know.

“Damn. Well… we’ll be there soon.”

“Be better if you don’t.”

“You’ve never struck me as a fatalist, Bobby.”
“Yeah… well… when the alternative is the apocalypse, one city is a small price to pay even if I’m one of those lives.”

“Would Sam agree?”

“No. Which is why he needs to not be told about it.”

Josiah sighed, then glanced up as the shuttle slowed to a stop, “I need to go, we’re at the airport. We’ll be there soon.”

He hung up before Bobby could try talking him out of coming again, not that he truly had much chance at that, it wasn’t like the team could refuse the assignment after all.

“Who?” Olivia asked.

“Josiah and the rest of his team. They’re ATF and FBI agents that are also Hunters.” Bobby explained, “they also know Sam and Dean.”

“Wonderful… so how many extra Hunters are we looking at losing if we can’t banish that angel?”

“Eight.”

Olivia made a face, no matter how many Hunters there were, there was never enough and losing even one could leave a lot of cases not dealt with.

Bobby didn’t manage to get a floorplan of the building out of the helpful officer in charge, but he did get an unofficial promise to be taken along if someone figured out how to get in.

The entrance of the task force was definitely not subdued, Bobby knew Josiah wasn’t someone to disappear into the crowd, being nearly as tall as Dean, but apparently, the rest of his team were no more inclined to do so either.

The eclectic grouping of agents disappeared into the makeshift office being used by the officer in charge. A while later, they emerged and came over to the three of them.

“Well… guess you decided to be idjits with us too.” Bobby stated as Josiah, and the rest of the agents joined them, “this is Adam and Olivia.”

Josiah ran through the agent’s names quickly, revealing the last agent to already be up on a rooftop as their sniper. The radio crackled before they could discuss anything more.

“Chris.” From the responses that was the missing agent.

“Go ahead.” Chris returned promptly.

“The hostage taker is the man we encountered at the weird bomb site, Zachariah.”

The team shared a worried look.

“We can understand.” Chris replied.

“That’s significant, how?” Bobby asked, getting a bad feeling.

“The angel Sam and Dean got on the phone said he was one of the hierarchy.” Josiah explained.

“Wonderful.” Bobby grumbled, wanting to swear, “at least Sam doesn’t know though so he can’t do
anything stupid.”
“Too late.” Dean’s voice interrupted from behind Bobby, and the older Hunter all but spun on the spot to look at him.
“Damnit, boy, who the hell called you.” Bobby demanded, really not liking that he couldn’t see the other brother.
“The son of a bitch angel. Same one that ambushed us at the storage place.” Dean replied grumpily. Another sign that Bobby really didn’t like.
“Balls. Vin said…”
“I heard.” Dean replied shortly.
“Where’s Sam, anyway?” Bobby asked, almost dreading the answer.
Dean glanced towards where the hostage situation was, “where do you think?”
Several of the agents swore, and the youngest one who’d been introduced as JD quickly brought up the various feeds the police were using to try to keep an eye on the building. Inside and out, much more than the live feeds that Adam had pulled up earlier. It gave them a good view of the middle brother appearing before the building apparently completely unarmed.
“Tell me he at least has the Colt on him.” Bobby asked, resignedly.
Dean shifted his shirts slightly to give them a concealed glimpse of the antique weapon.
“Balls.” Bobby grumbled as a burst of activity swept through the police officers as Sam’s appearance was noted and triggered alarm. Not that they had a chance of getting him out of there.
“You wanted me, here I am. Now let them go.” Sam’s voice could be heard through one of the cameras that had a microphone, or maybe one of the monitors that had been co-opted to give them extra coverage.

Chapter End Notes

I really didn't mean to leave you hanging so long. The chapter just didn't want to cooperate. The next one is coming along nicely though so there shouldn't be any delay. I hope you enjoy it.
Chapter 83: Confrontation

Sam kept his eyes on the angel as he came into view, ignoring the shouted instructions from various police officers behind him to come away.

“No… I don’t think so. Not until you’re actually in here and dealt with.” The angel he’d never found out the name of declared thoughtfully, “I need insurance against your cooperation after all. You have my word they will be released afterwards though.”

Sam kept his feelings carefully off his face. Would have been easier if the city was released before he went in, but it was what it was. This was a gamble regardless, he had no idea if he’d manage to pull it off. The only thing he was sure of was he’d got a promise from Dean to not make a deal if he failed.

Before he could do more than start to make a step towards the entry something struck him in the side, sending him to the ground in a tangle of limbs with the angel that had tackled him.

“Anna?” Sam asked, even as he glared at her.

“You are too important to give yourself up!” The red-haired angel exclaimed.

“Do you think I’m an idiot?” Sam demanded, pulling his t-shirt neck down after a quick glance to check that the other angel was out of view to reveal the sigils painted on his skin.

“Oh…”

“If you want to help then get the sheriff out of here.” Sam told her, reigning in his anger.

Anna glanced at the woman still pinned on the wall and nodded, before pressing her blade into Sam’s hand.

“I want that back.” She stated before jumping at the sheriff and disappearing with her.

Sam quickly concealed the knife and got back to his feet. He could guess why the rebel angel had given it to him, though he hadn’t thought the blades had that kind of power. They weren’t even sure the Colt would work, though there were few angels they actually wanted it to work on.
“You won’t be able to get all of them rescued like that.” The angel stated as he came back into view, “the next person you try to have spirited away will have their heart explode. And I will get your little angel ally eventually, and she will rue the day she first contemplated rebellion.”

“Didn’t expect anything else.” Sam replied, stiffly.

“Let’s get this over with. Come in here.” The angel ordered.

Sam calmly walked over to the door, the shouts from behind him becoming a little more stringent, and entered.

“Well… finally. I believe it is one of your human sayings ‘if you want something done right, do it yourself.’” The angel stated with satisfaction evident on his face once Sam was in front of him.

“That is one of our sayings yes.” Sam agreed blandly, “and we put a lot of stock in it also.”

With reflexes that had been honed by their dad since he was a kid, he had the knife out and buried between the angel’s ribs.

Whatever Sam had expected it wasn’t what he got. A blaze of light burst from the angel’s eyes, mouth, the hole he’d put in him. When it died down, there was soot in the shape of wings behind his sprawled body.

He took a staggering step backwards blinking watering eyes. Vaguely he registered the door being slammed open behind him and had just enough presence of mind to realise he had to start coming up with a story that would be believable.

Chris and Nathan were the first two to get into the building. Only their Federal authority keeping the local police department from storming the area and demanding the location of their sheriff.


“You okay?” Chris asked. Holding out his hand when the young Hunter nodded, “I’m going to need to ask for the knife.”

“It’s…” Sam started to protest.

“I know.” Chris interrupted, “and we’ll figure something out, but for now, it needs to appear to be in our custody.”

It didn’t take much for him to follow the ATF leader’s reasoning, and Sam wordlessly handed over the blood-drenched blade. Only the fact that it was Anna’s had kept him from dropping it in the first place. The reality of having directly killed an angel was starting to set in and was making him feel somewhat shaky.

Chris squeezed his shoulder, “sit down and let Nathan have a look at you.”

Sam frowned and looked around, more than a little surprised Dean wasn’t right there.

“Dean’s with the rest of my team.” Chris told him, “wasn’t easy to get him to take a back seat. We should be able to keep official attention off you playing it this way though.”

Sam nodded in acknowledgement and Nathan managed to coax him into a seat and began checking him.

“I killed an angel…” Sam mumbled almost absently as the medic worked.
“He was holding an entire city hostage, so by whatever definition you use the killing is justified.” Nathan pointed out, “what did he want you for anyway?”

“To kill me, get Dean to make a deal, and kick start the apocalypse.” Sam replied almost automatically, if Nathan hadn’t been a Hunter, he wouldn’t have got any information.

“Then it’s also self-defence.”

“This will be hell to explain…”

“That’s Ezra’s specialty. Probably some illusionist and hidden technology explanation.”

“Rely more on others wanting to believe it.”

Nathan nodded, “can’t do much about that, unfortunately. But most people don’t want to believe the weird exists.”

“Might be a few who’ll decide to be Hunter aware allies… way too high a price though.” Sam sighed.

“You saved a lot of people, Sam.”

“My existence is what put them in danger in the first place.”

“Your existence is what is keeping the apocalypse from happening.” Nathan pointed out.

“Not completely true.” Sam replied, then shook his head and took a careful breath, “but I get your point.”

The sheriff walked in the front door just then, shadowed by Anna. Sam gave the woman he’d only seen pinned to the wall by the angel who wanted him dead a careful look over. She looked like she was handling it a lot better than many who’d been through what she had.

Many of the officers all but swarmed her to check that she was okay.

Chris discretely pulled Anna aside, slipping into one of the private rooms. Sam wasn’t sure what the Hunter agent was talking to her about but guessed it would be about her knife that was currently in custody.

Once the sheriff had calmed her officers down and sent them back on their tasks, she came over to Nathan and Sam.

“Sheriff Jody Mills.” She introduced herself, holding out her hand to Sam, “how are you doing?”

Sam chuckled softly after shaking the proffered hand, “I should be asking you that.”

“I wasn’t the one he actually wanted. And the bastard killed my husband just to make a point.” Sam’s face fell, “sorry… I… I came straight here when he called.”

“Not your fault.” She replied firmly, “and that was incredibly brave of you. I never would have asked you to do so, and I agreed with my officers trying to get you to come away. That could have gone very wrong.”

“I know… but how could I have just abandoned everyone here?”
“You wouldn’t have been. Someone prepared to threaten an entire city just because he could can’t be trusted to actually keep their word to release it when he gets what he wants.”

Sam took a breath and nodded, forcing himself to accept the reasoning.

“You got somewhere to stay? Taking a break after everything that happened would be a good idea.” Jody asked, “even combat veterans would need to wind down after today. Only reason I’m not chasing my officers out is there’s no one to replace them with right now.”

“His brothers are actually back with the rest of our team.” Nathan put in, “Sam, you might be interested to know that Adam recognised Zachariah’s voice as the one who had him.”

“Zachariah?”

“Vin recognised him from an encounter at a past case.”

The one identified as being a member of the hierarchy by Anna, Sam noted to himself.

“Sam and Adam? Let me guess… the other brother is Dean?” Jody asked.

Sam nodded.

“So you’ll be staying at Bobby’s then.”

Sam nodded again.

“I can take him to reunite with his family.” Ezra suggested, and Sam nearly did a double-take as he hadn’t been aware the other agent had approached. From the mildly exasperated look Nathan gave the southerner it wasn’t the first time the man had done that.

“Would probably be a good idea.” Nathan agreed, “unless you need him for anything, sheriff?”

“Nah, Bobby’s place is well known. We can find him if we need anything.” Jody replied with a small smile.

Sam followed Ezra out of the chaotic police station with relief. Even with friends and allies around him being in the middle of law enforcement like that as himself made him more than a little on edge. Especially given their brushes with the law over the years. He’d managed to hide their connection once attention died off with their declared deaths, but that didn’t make him feel more at ease.

Entering the place that had been used as the police command post during the situation, the nervous energy radiating off Dean was almost palpable to Sam.

Dean crossed the room in a couple of long strides almost the instant he noticed his brother’s entry and pulled him into a firm hug.

“Don’t you ever scare me like that again.” Dean told him once Sam relaxed into the hold, apparently not ready to release him just yet.

Sam patted his shoulder, “I’m okay.”

“And you better stay that way.” Dean returned, pulling back to look at him sternly.

“Do my best.”

Sam turned to Adam, who was hovering a short distance away uncertainly and gave him a hug also,
followed by Bobby.

“Damn boy, I nearly demanded Dean’s gun off him.” Bobby told him softly.

“He’s got more than just me now. He has you and Adam.” Sam reassured him.

Apparently deciding not to continue the conversation Bobby then introduced Olivia.

“Before you perambulate elsewhere.” Ezra commented as he returned from talking to JD about something, “I liberated this from the angel corpse, I’m sure we all would prefer it being in your arsenal given the power displayed by the one you utilised and you actually end up in conflict with them at times.”

Sam nearly did a double-take when Ezra handed over a pristine example of the knives they’d seen several angels using, he hesitated for a moment before taking it.

He pocketed it just as Chris and Nathan came in with Anna.

“Anna… um…” Sam started.

“Chris explained.” The red-headed angel replied reassuringly, “swapped it out for a stainless steel copy so the police won’t end up in a tizzy.”

Sam relaxed as he realised the agents were already putting things in play to at least give a hint to other causes for various supernatural actions during the whole incident.

“Before I go, does anyone want the hiding sigils installed on their ribs?”

Olivia immediately put her hand up.

“It hurts like a bitch.” Dean stated in warning, Olivia didn’t waver, “and it shows up on x-rays.”

A few glances between the seven and Henriksen then they all indicated they wanted them also. They quickly found out that Dean had understated the pain, but that didn’t stop any of them.

That done Anna flitted off to wherever she hid usually.

Chapter End Notes

I hope you enjoyed this :-)  

As always comments, questions, and constructive criticism welcome.
Chapter 84: Gathering

The last thing Sam had wanted to do to finish off the day was go over everything that had not just happened during the incident that day but also what had led up to it. So of course, that’s precisely what he ended up doing. No one could ever claim his life was fair.

Bobby’s place might have been a house, but with the brothers plus Bobby and Olivia, the 8 members of the task force weren’t going to fit at all comfortably. So only Chris, Josiah, and Ezra had joined them, the rest disappearing off to the hotel the department had coughed up funds for. Not without complaints, though those were silenced rather effectively by Chris.

Ezra was the one drilling Sam over every tiny detail, understandable even if he found it annoying, since the southerner was the one putting together the mundane explanation that would explain the supernatural elements of the events of the day. The truth that Zachariah was trying to start the apocalypse was actually going to go in the report if Sam understood correctly. With the spin of ‘religious nutter in an end-times cult’ obviously.

“There’s going to be enquiries as to why you didn’t communicate with the police after his first attempt to on your existence.” Ezra noted.

“I’m guessing a former marine dad who taught us to stay clear of the police wouldn’t be a good answer.” Sam replied with a sigh, looking at his beer bottle and almost wishing it was something stronger, “so… how about didn’t actually know his name and he’d indicated he was more than prepared to kill anyone who got in his way so didn’t want to endanger the police by getting them involved?”

“That would certainly be consistent with the attitude you exhibited today.”

If Ezra had any more questions, it was interrupted by someone banging on the door. Bobby put down his beer and went to answer it, grumbling. When they’d got back to the house, the phones had been all but ringing off the hook as various people, Hunters and otherwise, had checked in with Bobby to see whether he was okay and if any assistance was needed. Apparently, someone had been close enough that they’d foregone the phone call and just come to see for themselves.

“Well… you look to be in one piece.” Ellen commented as he opened the door, her daughter and
trainee hovering behind her shoulders, “now let us in so we can see the boys.”

“Kinda got a full house right now… and… uh… one sec…” Bobby started to reply, then remembered Ashley’s situation. He turned back to the group, “Chris, one of these three was a meat suit for a demon for a while…”

“That Ashley Cooper? We already figured what happened there out, we were the team that got called to the aftereffect of that exorcism.”

Bobby rolled his eyes and turned back to Ellen, Jo, and Ashley.

“ATF who are also Hunters.” He explained to the question in their eyes.

“If they know it wasn’t me then I got no problem.” Ashley replied when both of the other women deferred to her.

“Okay, come on in then. It’s getting a bit crowded though.” Bobby waved the three women in then grabbing some beer for them.

The first thing Ellen did was give both brothers a firm hug. Then she was introduced to the rest. Olivia and Josiah, she’d at least heard about, and they had updated her about Adam when they’d first brought him back there.

“Didn’t realise it was you who’d had to deal with the clean up from that.” Sam commented, “had no idea the exorcism would be so… volatile.”

“Got reported as a weird bomb, so we were the first option to call in with it.” Chris replied with a chuckle, “good thinking with dropping the card, even if the locals weren’t too pleased to have the only lead on the person or persons that were in that room dry up like a drought-stricken stream.”

Dean raised his beer in acknowledgement, “hopefully we won’t need to use that particular exorcism again, it put Sam on his butt along with the noise and… whatever it was that caused that scorch mark.”

“The techs hated that they couldn’t find any trace of accelerant or explosive.” Josiah rumbled.

“If we knew it was going to do that we’d have tried to relocate it to somewhere out of town.” Sam commented.

“No sense crying over spilt milk. What matters is Lilith is back in hell where she belongs.” Chris replied, “and that’s definitely a demon you don’t want being able to find their way back out any time soon.”

Dean nodded, “her death is one of the end capper seals for the apocalypse so her being safely in hell is definitely necessary.”

“That is definitely one convoluted plan they had going.” Josiah noted.

“I just wish they’d stop trying to kick start it.” Sam complained.

“Gotta wonder how they intend to do that when we know what they intended and what to avoid.” Dean commented.

“Zachariah wasn’t at all bothered by us knowing, so gotta assume that they have a way to mess with memory.” Sam pointed out.
Dean paused in the middle of taking a drink, “that’s a point. So… if any of you hear about Sam dying and me not, come tell me that if I make a deal, it’ll set the apocalypse in motion, and make sure I don’t do something stupid.”

Chris raised an eyebrow at him as he took his interrupted drink.

“Yeah, well… hopefully, we’ll manage to keep avoiding that.” Sam commented.

If anyone had more to say on the subject, it was derailed by another knock on the door.

“What… did everyone happen to be in the state or something?” Bobby grumbled as he got up to answer it. He was surprised to see who was on the other side, “Jody? Everything okay?”

Her eyes were red, telling him she’d been crying, but she had a determined look on her face. She was also not in uniform, and thus off duty. Probably on leave after the events of the day.

“Bobby. I know you know some crazy stuff, so what the hell was that bastard today, and how do you fight them?”

Bobby hesitated for a moment before answering carefully, “are you sure you want to know?”

Jody nodded, “the bastard killed my husband. Killed people I should have been able to protect. I don’t want that to happen again.”

“It’s not something you can unknow afterwards.” Bobby warned her again, “you might want to take some time to think over it.”

“I’ve thought enough.”

“Okay. First thing you need to know is there’s a lot of people here right now, and except for Adam they’re all Hunters. One was possessed by a demon a while back, Sam and Dean rescued her. The demon left her with a record of crimes, though. If you can’t accept it wasn’t her you’re definitely going to need to come back.”

“I’ll take your word for it. After today I’m pretty sure you’re the expert.”

“Okay.” Bobby waved her in.

Jody’s surprise at seeing the ATF agents was definitely subdued. Sam immediately put down his beer and came over to give her a hug.

“How are you doing?” He asked gently, he knew well how tough having a loved one torn from your life was. Being sheriff meant that Jody had been able to put it aside while she’d been dealing with the mess, but now she wasn’t on duty it had to be hurting.

Tears tried to well in her eyes as she gave him a shaky smile, “been better. Been put up in a hotel for the time being since my home is a crime scene, been put on leave also. Wish they hadn’t, hard to keep my mind occupied without something to do.”

Sam gave her a sympathetic look before guiding her to a spare chair. The chair collection was an eclectic variety, some not even proper chairs, just something sturdy enough with a pillow on top. Even Bobby wasn’t prepared for this number of visitors. Dean handed her a beer once she was settled.

“So what did you want to know?” The eldest brother asked.
“What was that today?”

“What an angel.” Sam told her, she gave him an incredulous look, “yeah… I know. They’re not like we expected. Not all of them are dicks like Zachariah, though, the girl who rescued you is also an angel. They also don’t usually involve others along with their target, and also most aren’t aware of what the true goal behind their orders are.”

“How do you fight them?”

“Honestly… we don’t. We run.” Dean replied, “they should leave you alone, but we can put up some wards if you’d like that will keep them out. And show you a sigil that will let you banish them so you can run.”

“Today was a rarity, I was actually just planning on banishing him before he could kill me. Until I stuck that knife in, I didn’t even know there was a weapon capable of killing them.” Sam added.

Jody took a breath and nodded, “I’ll definitely get you to do that at my place when they allow me to return. I’ll also see if I can manage to get you to do so at the station when I’m back on duty.”

“Might want to include some other defences also.” Chris noted, “like salt to deal with ghosts and demons. Workplaces are harder, but we’ve figured out some tricks as long as there isn’t an overzealous cleaner. I’ll get you some door handles like I did for Dean, how many external doors do you have?”

“Just the two.” Jody replied, looking a little wide-eyed.

“I’ll call in the morning and get them sent to you. Sam and Dean have blacklight pens so they can do any ward invisibly, it’s only going to be difficult with things that require actual substances for the barrier. Fortunately, you only need to put them at the windows and doors for it to form an effective barrier, though I know I feel happier when there’s an unbroken ring. At a workplace hiding it on top of door and window frames works pretty well, we used sticky tape to secure it. Though you do need to check at times to make sure a conscientious cleaner hasn’t cleaned it up.” Chris told her.

“We’ll also help do the renovations at your place to get it secured.” Dean offered.

“Thank you.” Jody replied with another deep breath. She took a sip of her beer before doing a double-take out the window, “uh… someone just literally appeared out of thin air in your yard…”

Dean was by the window before anyone else had started to react.

“Away from the windows. Everyone.” He ordered grimly.

“Who is it?” Bobby asked, even as there was a general shuffling of feet as the various people in the room started to comply.

“Cas.” Dean answered, pulling out his knife and slicing open his hand.

Sam peeked carefully out the window while his big brother quickly drew the banishing sigil. The angel pulled out his blade, then almost ceremoniously put it down on one of the cars.

“I am not here to create trouble. I just want to talk.” He called out, a waver they’d never heard in his voice.

Sam and Dean shared a glance, then Dean called out, “gohol laiad.”
“Nothing makes sense anymore.” Was the wooden, heartbreaking, reply.

Dean looked worriedly at Sam for a moment.

“Sam, Adam, Jody. Go down to the panic room.” He ordered. Sam opened his mouth to protest, and Dean interrupted, “don’t. It’s just a precaution. But they won’t kill me if he’s not alone, I’ve lost track of how many times they’ve tried to kill you.”

“You’ve got a panic room?” Jody asked incredulously.

“Sometimes it helps to have a room that’s pretty much impervious, even more so than the rest of this place.” Dean replied, his attention back on the angel outside.

Sam sighed and waved the two civilians downstairs, he could easily see that he wasn’t going to win this argument.

He followed the two civilians into the panic room with a sigh. On the one hand, Sam hated that the other Hunters felt he needed to be protected, on the other after the day they’d just been through he just wanted to sleep for a week.

“Wow, this looks like something out of a cold war movie.” Jody commented, going over and sitting at the table, taking in the various equipment set up there.

“I’m sure most cold war movies don’t have all the wards on the walls.” Adam replied with a chuckle. He took another seat, leaving the bed next to the wall for Sam to sit on.

“You’d be surprised.” Jody replied.

Sam decided to just let them talk, taking the time to meditate since they’d barely had enough time to turn around twice since the phone call.

It wasn’t a particularly strenuous meditation, but by the time he got through it, he could barely keep his eyes open. He propped himself up against the wall to keep himself awake, though the voices of Adam and Jody seemed to drop in volume. He didn’t even really register when Adam eased him down to lie on the bed.

Adam and Jody shared a sympathetic smile as the big Hunter drifted into a deeper sleep.

Upstairs, Bobby came over and squeezed Dean’s shoulder, “I’ll stay by the sigil, yell if you need me to slap it.”

Dean nodded then carefully slipped out the door.

“Cas.” He acknowledged him gravely as he approached the angel.

“How… no… that doesn’t matter…” Castiel started to reply and then finished with a sigh. If anything looking even more downhearted than before.

“They didn’t leave you any of the memories of us, did they?” Dean asked sympathetically, perching on a car.

“It appears I have more holes in my memory than I thought…”

“You tried asking Jimmy?”

“I… I didn’t think of that…”
“They probably conditioned that out of you. Jimmy knew the you who found out the orders were false.”

“I… I see…” Castiel’s gaze turned inwards for a moment, and when he looked back at Dean, his eyes were brimming with tears, “I… I’m sorry…”

“It wasn’t you.” Dean told him reassuringly, “we knew that. And we were pretty sure they were trying to get you to avoid what had tipped you off last time.”

He nodded, “and… did some things I can now see were tests.”

“Like bringing you along to the storage lock up.”

Castiel nodded.

“They keeping an eye on you?”

“They have been… it’s… rather chaotic with what happened with Zachariah right now… no one is quite sure who’s in charge. Even Michael is unsure of the right course. And… there are questions being raised… no general of the demon army would risk themselves for humans, even an entire city.”

“You stay quiet about it, okay? Can’t guarantee the hierarchy will allow the questions to continue.” Dean thought for a moment, “and let’s not risk them noticing your location. Just one moment, I’ll get you a phone.”

He went back to the house, and Bobby let him in, “everything okay?”

“He’s not being watched at the moment.” Dean replied with a nod, “apparently the angels are in a bit of chaos, even questions being raised. Can’t guarantee it’s going to stay that way, or that the questions won’t be squashed. Going to give him a phone so he can contact us.”

He dug out one of the burner phones and set it up quickly, making a note of the number to give to Sam later, then returned outside to give it to the angel.

“You be careful, okay?” He stated as he handed it over.

“I will… and… thanks.” Castiel picked up his blade and vanished.

“That was risky.” Bobby commented as Dean returned inside, “but I’m glad he’s figured out the truth again.”

Dean nodded, “me too. Anna did say he always had too much compassion for the hierarchy’s comfort, pretty sure that’s not the first time he’s been reprogrammed.”

He headed downstairs to let the three in the panic room know there wasn’t another crisis.

Adam heard his eldest brother’s footsteps on the stairs and came to the door, indicating to be quiet as soon as Dean caught sight of him.

“What’s wrong?” Dean asked softly once he reached the door.

Adam waved at the bed in explanation, “Sam’s fallen asleep.”

Dean looked past his kid brother with a mixture of relief and concern before slipping nearly soundlessly into the room. Feeling Sam’s forehead with his hand, he relaxed as he noted the absence
of a temperature. Carefully he pulled off his little brother’s shoes and situated him more comfortably on the bed, covered him with a blanket, then shooed the other two out and switched off the light as he followed them.

“Where’s Sam?” Bobby asked as they got back upstairs.

“Fell asleep.” Dean replied.

“He okay?”

“Not running a temperature at least. He’s barely rested at all since he got that phone call, so it’s a good thing.”

“Means you haven’t either.” Bobby pointed out.

“Yeah… but I’m not the one who had to confront Zachariah.”

Bobby rolled his eyes, “why don’t you take yourself off to bed also, I can finish up here.”

“Nah, I’m good.” Dean returned, retrieving his beer and positioning himself near the stairs down into the basement. Bobby rolled his eyes at him again.

Chapter End Notes

This is a lot later than I intended. Sorry.

As always comments, questions, and constructive criticism welcome.

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!