Dean and Cas' four year old daughter, Jo, is having frequent nightmares and no one knows why. Later, the conclusion that it's more than insomnia and tension headaches brings a sudden realization that maybe it's something bigger than what they are prepared to handle.

“Daddy.” A tiny voice whispered. “Daddy…”

Dean’s eyes fluttered open as he pulled himself into the real world. He was met with a teary-eyed little girl clutching her stuffed bee, holding on to one of Dean’s arms.

Jo had just turned four a little over a month prior, and already it was obvious that she was going to be just like her dads. She had Cas’ heart, no doubt about it, and Dean’s loyalty and nerve. Not to mention that she had picked up on her Uncle Sammy’s intelligence.

Jo was talking earlier than what the boys had expected. Her first word had been ‘papa’ much to Cas’ delight. Dean had paraded around the bunker for hours afterwards saying, “Listen, Sammy. She’s gonna be a genius!”

Her first steps had been even more rewarding. She’d run into Cas’ arms shakily, holding onto his hand fiercely for balance afterwards. They had never been more proud.

“What is it, baby?” Dean asked quietly.
“I saw somethin’ scary.” Jo replied, wiping at her face. “It’s makin’ my head hurt.”

Dean instantly went into hunter mode, panicking that someone - rather something - had broken in in a futile attempt for revenge or harm. Cas was on a case dealing with some ex-angel business due back in the next day or so. Maybe he pissed off some powerful being. Dean was nearly ready to scour the bunker with nothing but his pistol when he considered the situation. He was talking to a four year old, after all.

“Was it a dream?” he asked.

Jo nodded.

“You wanna tell me about it?” Dean asked, voice softer and heart slowing down.

This time, she shook her head, looking scared from the question.

“It’s okay. The monsters aren’t going to get you. I’ll fight ’em off, huh?” Dean smiled, “You can go back to bed.”

“Can I stay with you?” she asked shyly.

“Yes, of course.”

Dean scooped up his little girl and settled her beside him.

Jo nuzzled into Dean’s chest, gripping the fabric of his shirt with one hand and holding his hand with the other.

“Love you, sweetheart.” Dean whispered, planting a gentle kiss on her forehead.

She was already asleep, too far gone to hear it.

The next time it happened was a few days later. Cas and Jo were asleep on the couch, waiting for Sam and Dean to get back from an easy salt and burn case. A colorful cartoon played silently on the TV, the rest of the lights out. Jo was curled on top of her dad, fingers wrapped around the soft fabric of his sweater. Cas had dozed off unplanned, lying down once Jo had fallen asleep and drifting into a much-needed impromptu nap.

They were asleep for nearly an hour when a sudden movement woke Cas. He startled awake, not moving anything but his eyes. Looking down, he saw Jo moving sporadically in his arms, mumbling incoherently every now and again.

Cas knew what to do. He had helped Dean through so many of these and vice versa that it was second nature. Slowly and gently, he rubbed his daughter’s back, shushing her quietly. Her eyes sprang open fearfully.

“It’s okay. I got you.” Cas said as she threw her arms around his neck. “What is it?”

“A nightmare, Papa.” Jo whimpered, nuzzling into him.

“What about?”

“Mm mm.” Jo declined, shaking her head.

“Baby, you know nothing’s going to get you, right? We’ll take care of it. You’re safe.” Cas explained softly, smoothing her hair.
“But what about Daddy and Un’ca Sammy and Aunt Ei?” she asked.

“Nothing’s going to get us, either. They’re too afraid.” Cas joked sadly.

“Promise?” Jo asked, holding out her pinky.

Cas took it with his own, grinning, “Yeah, baby, I promise.”

Jo nodded, going back to hold onto her father.

Cas watched her worriedly. Her nightmares were becoming more and more common. He and Dean would have to talk about it once he was home and make sure nothing was messing with her. Until then, all he could do was hold her, so he hugged her tight until his other half arrived.

The third time was late at night the next week. It was one in the morning. Dean and Cas were due out for a hunt early the next morning, leaving Jo with Sam and Eileen for the weekend. There was a nest of vampires just on the other side of the Nebraska border slaughtering more people every day. They planned to make it there and back within the two days and take care of business as quickly as possible. They’d gone to bed earlier, saying bye to Jo beforehand, in hopes of getting a little extra sleep before what they knew would be a restless two days.

Now, the two were holding each other, Cas asleep. Dean had been awake for a couple of minutes, deciding to grab a sip of water from the kitchen like he often did. He carefully pulled himself from Cas. As he passed Jo’s door, he peeked in to check on her. Instantly, he sensed that something was wrong and noticed how she was thrashing around in bed, clutching her favorite plushie as tight as she could. Worriedly, Dean made his way into the room and sat down as softly as he could on the bed. He placed a gentle hand on Jo’s forehead, smoothing back her hair.

“Jo?” Dean asked quietly as he went to rub her back. “Jo, will you wake up for me?”

Upon the contact, Jo’s eyes startled open and she stared up at Dean frightenedly, tears in her eyes.

“What is it?”

The little girl launched herself into Dean’s arms, holding onto him as tightly as she could. He held her for a moment, filled with worry. It was too frequent to be coincidental. He and Cas would have to talk on the way or as soon as they got back. At the moment, he had more pressing matters to attend to.

“Talk to me, baby.” he said softly.

“Nightmare, Daddy.”

“I know, sweetheart, but you gotta tell me what it was about.” Dean coaxed.

“Bad stuff. You and Papa got hurt.” Jo said into Dean’s shirt, voice contorted from crying.

“Hey, look at me.” Dean said, tilting her chin up with his thumb. “Me and Papa are safe. You’re safe, ya hear me? It’s alright.”

“Will you stay with me?” she asked, afraid for a moment to be left alone.

“Always. C’mere.” Dean said, scooting into her small twin bed with her, holding her close. “Sleep tight, kid.”
The next morning, Dean woke early with a stiff back and aching leg. He pulled himself away from Jo without waking her, getting up and stretching as he made his way to the kitchen. Cas and Sam were already there, coffee in hand.

“What happened to you last night?” Cas asked through squinted eyes.

“I was gonna get some water, but Jo was having a nightmare and wanted me to stay with her.” Dean explained, getting his own mug and sitting by his husband.

“That’s the third in the past two weeks.” Cas said anxiously, rubbing at his face.

“I know. Sam, keep an extra eye on her while we’re gone? If anything happens, call.” Dean spoke to his brother.

“Of course.” Sam replied.

“When we get back, we oughta talk.” Dean suggested.

Cas nodded before checking his phone, “We gotta go, it’ll be daylight soon.”

The men got up, downing the last sips of their caffeine before getting ready. They left later with their minds everywhere but the hunt.

The boys returned on time and in one piece, but just barely so. The hunt had apparently derailed almost as soon as it started. Dean came back with a nasty gash in his knee causing a painful limp. Cas had a black eye. Both were bruised nearly everywhere. It had been a tough fight, but they came out winning.

The drive home was miserable. They were tired and dirty and homesick. It made getting to the bunker that much sweeter.

Once Baby was parked and the bags were unloaded, Dean and Cas stumbled through the heavy doors, Dean limping down the steps first. Sam greeted them, pulling his brother into a hug and then Cas.

“Woah, you look like crap.” Sam said, holding Dean by the shoulders at arm’s length.

“Tell us what you really think, Sammy.” Dean shot back, voice dry.

“Where’s Jo? Did everything go alright?” Cas asked immediately, skipping the formalities.

“She’s with Eileen having a tea party. Everything was perfect. I couldn’t ask for a better kid to take care of. She did have a nightmare, though. I ended up sleeping on the couch with her to make sure she was alright.” Sam explained.

Cas shot Dean an ‘oh shit’ look that also meant they needed to talk. Dean nodded knowingly.

“It was a great weekend, other than that. Her and Eileen get along so well. I think she’ll want to see you guys soon, though. But I probably wouldn’t let her see… that, right now.” Sam said, gesturing at the two bloody messes in front of him.

“Right, uh, we’ll go get patched up. Don’t tell her we’re back yet.” Dean told his brother. He threw his arm around Cas, leaning his weight off of his now bad leg. They made it through the library before they heard small footsteps bounding down the hallway. Both stopped dead, waiting.
Jo ran into the room, stopping dead as soon as she saw her fathers. Her eyes widened, looking them up and down in terror.

“Hey, sweetheart.” Dean said quietly, slipping his arm from around Cas’ neck and gaining balance. Watching as Cas squatted down to her height, he became scared that his daughter was afraid of them now because of the blood and wounds.

Jo hurried to them as soon as Dean spoke. She leapt into Cas’ arms, grabbing onto him with a grip tighter than what a four year old’s should be.

Cas winced in pain as she unintentionally touched several of the bruises peppering his sides with her arms.

“Papa.” she said concernedly, pulling back and holding his face with both hands as she examined his black eye.

“It’s good to see you too, baby.” Cas said, smiling gently. He pressed a kiss to her cheek.

Slowly, Jo pulled away from Cas and made her way to Dean. She crawled into his arms, avoiding his blood stained pant leg.

“Are you okay, Daddy?” she asked.

“I’ll be fine, kid. Just a little scratch. How was Uncle Sammy?” Dean asked, changing the subject.

Excitement quickly flooded her concern as she described in detail everything that they did over the weekend. The men waited patiently, happy to see that she was better now. Later, they shuffled her off and went to clean up, wasting nearly all of the hot water just standing under the showerhead.

Once they were both clean and somewhat clothed, Cas made Dean let him dress his wounds. The hunter sat on the countertop in the bathroom, legs dangling. One pant leg was rolled up, exposing the gash and he wore a t-shirt so that the cut on his arm could be addressed.

Cas pulled out a box of medical supplies they always kept nearby, taking out what he needed for sterilization and stitches along with several bandages and a half empty bottle of Jack. He kneeled in front of Dean, carefully cleaning out the half-inch deep wound in his leg with rubbing alcohol. Dean gripped the countertop with white knuckles as Cas applied pressure.

“What’s wrong?” Dean asked through gritted teeth, seeing Cas’ ruminate look.

“I don’t know. It’s just that Jo looked pretty shaken when she saw us, and she’s still having the nightmares. I feel bad that we weren’t there for her last time.” Cas replied fixedly as he threaded the needle in his steady hands.

Dean took a pull from the bottle, preparing himself for what was about to happen.

“I’m worried, too. Maybe we could talk to her? Take her to a doctor? I don’t know, Cas. I’ve never had to deal with this before.” he said, wincing at the sting of the needle.

“The doctor’s is a long shot. Aren’t they common everywhere but our field? We can talk to her, make sure everything is alright.” the ex-angel responded after a few moments of thought, tying off the thread and wrapping Dean’s arms with bandages.

They switched positions, Cas now sitting and Dean standing between his legs. Cas had removed his shirt, exposing the shallow but long cut running the length of his abs to just below his heart.
Dean made him hold a bag of ice to his face.

“Yeah, okay.” he said quietly as he tried his best to patch the wound. “You don’t think it’s something-”

“No. At least I hope not.” Cas said, cutting him off.

Neither wanted to say and it, and they certainly didn’t want to hear it. But what with the headaches and nightmares and panic? It looked like they were dealing with something from the supernatural world.

Once they were clean and bandaged, Dean and Cas brought Jo into their room, settling on the bed. She barely let go of them, wedged in between Cas’ side and Dean’s arm.

“Can we talk, kid?” Dean asked hesitantly.

“Okay.”

“Uncle Sammy said you had another nightmare while we were gone.” Dean eased in.

“Mhmm.” she nodded.

“What happened?” Cas asked softly.

“You and Daddy got hurt. Just like when you came home. Made my head hurt.” Jo explained, oblivious to her fathers sudden panic.

“What-what do you mean just like when we came home, baby?” Dean asked.

“It was the same. Papa got this,” Jo said, pointing to Cas’ black eye, “and you got this.” She motioned to Dean’s wrapped leg.

The boys’ eyes immediately went to each other’s in dread, knowing it sounded familiar.

“What about the one’s before that? Do you remember?” Cas coaxed.

“Yeah, Papa. Your arm got all blue and Daddy almost got shot by a bad man.” she said.

Dean’s eyes widened as he stuttered out his last question, “Does your… uh, does your head hurt when it happens?”

“Yeah, when I’m not sleepin’. Do we have to talk ’bout this anymore?” Jo asked.

“Of course not.” Cas replied, wrapping his arm around her.

They all three went to bed in the boys’ room that night. Jo was in between them still, comfortably wrapped in blankets and their protective arms. She was the only one to really sleep that night. Dean and Cas lay awake, terrified of the conversation they would have to have in the morning.

They followed one another to the kitchen the next morning earlier than either would like to be conscious. They left Jo in bed, sleeping soundly. Dark circles rimmed both of their eyes and their footsteps were dragging as they got coffee and a seat. They tangled their legs under the table, staring contemplatively at their mugs.

The silence wasn’t broken until Sam came in, closely followed by Eileen. They both looked
sweaty from running, Sam’s hair pulled back in a loose ponytail.

“Dude, what’s with the man bun?” Dean asked, eyeing over Sam’s hair.

“Eileen did it.” Sam said happily.

“You are so whipped.” Dean mumbled, shaking his head.

“You know you both look like crap?” Eileen asked, cocking an eyebrow.

“Didn’t sleep.” Cas said, signing with his words.

“Everything okay?” Sam asked concernedly.

Dean looked up, “Talked to Jo last night. She told us about the nightmares. It’s not pretty.”

“So what do you think it is?”

“She said she’s been watching us get beat up. It always happens while or the day before a case, and we come home bloodied up in the exact places she saw. And there’s the headaches. She said they come after she wakes up the same night.” Dean explained, eyes clouded with consternation.

“Sound familiar?” Cas asked dryly, staring at his and Dean’s intertwined hands.

“Um, that sounds a lot like-” Sam began.

“We know. How do we fix it?” Cas interjected.

“We can look at the lore, but I don’t know if it’ll fix it. Anything from your angel days, Cas?” Sam asked.

“The list is… foggy. All of the other angels that would even consider helping are dead or MIA.” he replied.

Dean shook his head, “Well, then, looks like we’re making a call to the big man upstairs.”

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