

the blind passenger

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Prologue

When he opens his eyes, the first thing that really gets to him is the strange odor. He characterizes it as hospital smell in less than ten seconds; and hands down, the fact there's an IV in his arm helped him realize this.

He has no idea why he's here. He has no memory of what happened, no idea why his head hurts so much or how long he's been here, in this white-walled room. For some reason, he's only capable of wrapping his mind around one fact: he's starting to panic. He's alone, there's no one sitting by his hospital bed, no one waiting for him to wake up. It's somewhat unsettling – it feels like there definitely *should* be someone. If not someone close to him – he's not sure who that is, though – then a nurse or a doctor at least. Hell, he'd go with a wild fox if it meant he wouldn't have to be alone here.

His pulse goes up. The machine tells him so, the beeping sound sharp and cutting into his brain. That doesn't help, either. His fingers curl into fists, and his eyes scan the room once more. *Why the hell is he here?*

Maybe it's a sign and maybe it's not, but as he asks himself this question for what feels like the thousandth time but is probably just the second time at all, the door opens.

A nurse, her uniform green – a very pleasant change after staring at the white sheets, the white walls, the white door –, walks in with a thermometer in her hand.

He wants to ask about everything at once, he's got too many questions, but his throat seems to be too tight to let out a sound. He just stares at her, wide eyed, and when she notices he's awake, her lips curl in a smile.

“You're awake!” she exclaims, excited, and he doesn't even want to think about what that means; how long he must have been out.

Before he can force out a syllable, she shushes him and hides the thermometer in her pocket.

“I'll go get Dr. Simpson. It'll be a minute,” she informs him in the same cheerful voice and flees out of the room, leaving him alone and just as confused as he'd been before.

He tries to collect his thoughts before ‘Dr. Simpson’ gets there, but it's more difficult than it sounds. As hard as he tries, he can't remember anything that could possibly lead to him being here, and the more he thinks, the more his head hurts. It gets to the point where he tears up; yet he refuses to give up, trying to come up with at least something.

A few minutes pass, maybe five or six, when the door opens again. He looks up, his head pounding by this moment, and he's scared. Yeah, that's what he's feeling – he's *afraid*, thrown into a situation he doesn't know what to do with.

And then there's another smile from the doctor as she checks him – his eyes, his pulse, his breathing.

"I'm Dr. Simpson," she introduces herself politely as she removes the sheets. He looks down at his legs, swallowing hard. They look perfectly fine. "It's very good to see you awake. Could you please move your legs for me? Right first, then the left."

He's reluctant to do so, scared he might not be able to. He looks up at the doctor, noticing her wavy blonde hair reaching her shoulders and her kind smile. Okay. He needs to face whatever happens next. He's so, so freaked out as he closes his eyes and tries to move his legs. The sigh of relief that slips out of his mouth when he succeeds is loud. *Thank God* there's nothing wrong with that.

"That's great, thank you very much. How's your head?" He wishes she would talk about the more important things, like how he got here and what happened, but he's glad when he's able to squeeze out a one-word answer.

"Hurts," he says and his voice sounds rough and harsh. It makes sense, he hasn't talked in days... weeks? God, please, do not let it be weeks. "What happened to me?"

"We'll get to that in a moment. Could you please tell me your name and your address?"

He frowns at her, not liking the fact she's avoiding his question. "I'm not stupid, of course I know my name and my address. What concerns me more is that I don't know why I'm here and what happened to me, so –"

"Please," Dr. Simpson cuts him off with the same patient smile, her hand placed on his arm in a comforting gesture. "It would be really helpful if you could tell us your name, and possibly your address, too."

His frown deepens and he pushes away the urge to shake off her hand. He glares up at her, standing above him like a statue, and opens his mouth to answer her question to get it over with.

"My name is..." But he can't continue. He can't continue, because even though it dances on the tip of his tongue, he simply cannot remember his own name. He licks his lips, frantic, and he stutters. He lets out a breath, tearing his gaze away from the doctor's face, looking around the room. This can't be happening. He's not three years old. He *knows* his name, of course he does, so why the hell isn't it coming to him? Why the hell – "Oh my God," he mumbles, on the verge of crying. The reason he can't remember his own name is sneaking up on him, but he is not ready to face it.

"I'm very sorry," Dr. Simpson says, her hand constant on his shoulder. She looks pained and genuinely sorry, which almost makes him cringe. "Your name is Dean Winchester. You were in a very serious car accident three weeks ago."

As if waiting for his reaction, she falls silent. He doesn't even dare to open his eyes, the words '*three weeks*' cutting whatever wounds he's had open. It's not possible. He would remember that.

She picks up the facts again when he stays silent. “Your car got hit by a truck, but the driver didn’t press any charges since he got out of it with barely a scratch. Anyway, your belt gave up and you got pushed forward. You got through the windshield and flew a fine few meters. It took us a while to find you, your body was off the road. You hit your head really bad, we were scared the damage would be fatal, perhaps you wouldn’t wake up at all, or wake up with the mind of a newborn. We were afraid it might have damaged your spinal cord, even though you never suffered a brain hemorrhage. It could happen anyway, but I’m glad it’s not that case for you. Apart from your head, you only broke a few ribs, which is quite a miracle I’d say. You could have broken both your legs. Arms, too, at that matter.”

“So you’re telling me I actually got lucky, huh,” he comments, sarcasm being his only defense at all, although his shaky voice gives him away. He finally looks up at the doctor. “Was I alone in the car? Or did I... Was there someone else?”

He’s too afraid to ask whether he killed anyone.

“Oh, you weren’t the one driving,” Dr. Simpson says, her hand finally leaving Dean’s shoulder. “Your husband was.”

His heart skips a beat. “My... my husband?”

She nods, biting down on her lip. “Yes. Castiel Winchester. Rings any bells?” He shakes his head no. “We informed him you woke up. He should be here in a minute. Actually, he’s probably waiting for us to let him in. He was just getting some lunch in our cafeteria when you woke up. Do you want me to call him?”

“Doctor...” he trails off, ignoring her question. Damn, how is he supposed to know whether he wants to see *his husband* when he doesn’t even remember having one? His chest tightens at the mere thought. “Will I... will I ever remember... everything?”

“We certainly hope so. Your memory loss should only be temporary,” the doctor answers and her tone sounds okay enough for him to believe it. “Now, do you want to see your husband? We could tell him you’re too tired, if that’s what you want.”

“Yeah, please,” he says quickly, “I *am* tired. Maybe I could see him... tomorrow?” It’s a lie. He’s not tired – and even if he was, he wouldn’t be able to fall asleep. He can basically hear his own disoriented thoughts running through his head. He is so not ready to face someone he doesn’t remember, and he’s not sure that’s going to change any time soon.

“I’ll take care of it,” Dr. Simpson says with a nod. “Anything else I could do for you? Are you sure nothing hurts, apart from your head?”

It sounds so normal he almost wonders whether his head will hurt forever from now on. “No, I’m fine. Nothing hurts.” He’s tempted to ask her to leave him alone, just like that, but she goes for the door anyway.

“I’ll come check on you later tonight. We’ll talk about everything later; you should rest now. I know it sounds impossible, but try not to think too much.”

Yeah, pretty fucking impossible.

Chapter One

Dean's glad they didn't shave his head. They could have, but they didn't, and he's seriously thankful for that. The only bare place is where the cut is. When they take off the bandage that first night and his fingers wander all the way to the back of his head, he's terrified at first.

The cut is way too long. It roots near the back of his neck and goes in a crooked line up to his ear. He hisses when his forefinger meets the wound and he pulls away his fingers quickly.

With a proof, he's forced to believe this. It could still be just a ridiculously vivid dream – and he would gladly fall for that any minute – but he knows it isn't.

Before he falls asleep, for the first time since he woke up, he's almost scared he might not see daylight for another three weeks. But that's not the only thing troubling his mind. As he closes his eyes, the beeping sound of the machine actually lulling him to a sweet, yet dull off-state, he repeats *My name is Dean Winchester*. He says that name a few times, wishing he would remember.

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When he wakes up the next day, his mind is just as blank as it was the day before. He opens his eyes, doing so rather reluctantly. Funny as it is, now, in the bright light of an early morning, he would go for another coma instead.

A pile of self-pity attacks him, and jealousy, too. All the people around him, starting with Dr. Simpson and ending with this so-called husband Dean doesn't remember, have no idea what this is like. What it's like to wake up one day with no memory whatsoever. He doesn't know who he is, he doesn't know his past, he doesn't remember anything or anyone. There's just this space, planet-sized, in his head, and there's nothing to fill it with. And knowing there should be something, knowing that there once *was* something; that just adds to the feeling of emptiness.

He wants to turn it all off. All the lights; hell, he wants to turn *himself* off. His eyes shut close once again.

“Dean Winchester,” he says for the hundredth time since he was given this name, and it sounds as alien to him as it did before. He wished for a miracle, wanting to remember everything overnight (or at least some little things, dammit), but this morning is a nice enough proof that miracles really do not exist.

There's throat-clearing and for a split second, Dean thinks he forgot to control his own body and it's him creating the sound, somewhat sub-consciously.

When he looks to his left, though, where the only window in the room is, he spots a giant sitting in the chair near his bed. Well, okay. It's not a giant, but it's definitely a tall person squeezed into a chair way too tiny for him.

Dean looks him up and down, raising his eyebrow at the red-and-white plaid shirt the man is wearing. As their eyes finally meet, the tall guy smiles, dimples decorating his face all of a sudden. White, pointy teeth catch Dean's attention, but it lingers only for a few seconds.

"God, I thought you'd never wake up," the man – his smile makes him look more like a boy, though – says and moves the chair closer to Dean's bed, its legs screeching against the floor.

Dean simply looks at him, too afraid to say anything. The only thing he thinks of saying is *Are you my husband?* but it sounds inappropriate even in his head. He can't really imagine marrying this guy, hands down; besides, maybe it's just another patient who ran away from the psychiatric wing. Who ever knows with hospitals, right?

"Oh," the guy breathes out, his face falling, carrying only slight remains of the bright smile. "Oh. You don't remember me, huh?"

Dean bites his lip, sitting up in his bed. It sends a signal to his head, the pain sudden and thankfully, short. At last, he makes himself look up at this someone he should have recognized but didn't, and shakes his head. "No."

For some reason, he expects the guy to throw a scene. Something like, "But how can you not remember me after everything we've been through together?!" But it doesn't happen. The person nods.

He points at his chest, as if Dean didn't know who they were talking about, and he blinks a few times. "I'm Sam. Sam, your brother?"

Oh, well, that's interesting. "You look *nothing* like me," Dean comments, suspicious. He's seen himself in a mirror, okay, and he knows what he looks like, and this guy – Sam, or whatever – doesn't look one last bit like him. And it's definitely not just the hair, although Dean could see how that guy could actually quite desperately need a haircut.

Sam rolls his eyes. "Well, sorry," he says with a snort. "Do you want me to show you my birth certificate? I am your younger brother, you'll have to deal with that."

Perhaps it's the way he talks, but there's a warm feeling spreading all across Dean's chest and for some reason, he doesn't really know why, but he feels like trusting the boy in front of him. He might not remember him, but he's *got to be right* about whatever he feels, right? And even though Sam's hazel-brown eyes, or his thin lips, or his giantness (totally a word, thanks), there's something in his speech that sounds familiar.

Dean lets out a deep breath, thanking all Gods for bringing him someone he feels good around. He didn't think that would be possible.

"I was scared you were my husband for a moment there," Dean admits, and although it's an actual confession that takes a lot to be squeezed out, Sam laughs at it.

"First of all, *ew*. Second of all, I'm much better looking. Castiel is *nothing* compared to my beauty."

It makes Dean's grin fall. It reminds him that at some point today, he will have to talk to this Castiel, will have to face him and deal with him, and he has no idea how to do that. "I don't even remember getting married. Fucked up, isn't it?" His voice is quiet, and his tone is pretty much indescribable. It's something between a mumble and a sigh, really.

The silence falls heavy on their shoulders, Dean's headache more and more persistent. He hates to put all this on Sam's shoulders, but he's the first person Dean somewhat feels attached to and so he chooses him to be his human lighthouse of sorts. Someone to run to when his thoughts get to be too bad and unbearable. It does bug him that not even a single memory got trapped in his head that involves his giant brother, but remembering Dr. Simpson's words, he hopes he will remember *something* eventually.

"N'aw," Sam says in the end, his huge fist bumping into Dean's shoulder gently, "You'll remember all the stuff. There's the therapy and then there's me and Castiel who will help you remember. It's almost one hundred percent certain that it will all come back to you, soon."

"Yeah," Dean sighs, and the small smirk flashes across his face in a nanosecond. "I..." he murmurs, frowning again, "So there's you and him and... what about our parents? Are they... Uh..."

"Yeah," Sam nods and bites down on his lip. "I'm not sure we should talk about that right now. But, yeah, they're dead. Happened years and years ago, don't worry about it too much right now, alright?"

Dean looks down, agreeing in silence. He looks up then, his fingers playing with the awfully white bed sheets. "So, *Sam*," he starts, that name alien as well, a stranger trying to escape his mouth, "could you, like, tell me something about Castiel? I don't remember *a thing* about him and I'm not sure he'll take it the way you just did."

"Sure," Sam nods, dimples present on his face again. He's so obviously happy to help it almost makes Dean sick, which he takes as a little bit of annoyance pointed at his *brother*. "What do you want to know?"

Dean lets out a deep breath. There are too many questions, and not just about his husband, but first things first. He needs to focus on one thing at a time or his head will eventually explode.

"First of all," he says with a grin, trying to ignore the way his stomach ties itself into knots just thinking about this, "What kind of a name *is* Castiel?"

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Dean would have probably felt guilty for making his first conversation with his brother about Castiel if it hadn't been for his constant headache and tiredness.

He feels tired literally all the time and when Sam leaves the room, Dean rubs his eyes, already having to fight the sleep off. He doesn't want to fall asleep – doesn't want to wake up to his husband sitting next to his hospital bed.

But in the end, despite the anxiety and fear squeezing his gut, he does fall asleep. It's just a quick nap, but it brings unexpected fruits; when Dean wakes up, barely half an hour later, he

realizes he's just had a dream. And when he realizes he remembers every second of it, and that it was vivid as hell, he knows it wasn't just a dream. He, sort of, blame it on a gut feeling or something else, knows it's actually a memory.

The dream – the *memory* lasted for only a few moments. Dean was sitting on a couch, old, brown color, comfortable, right next to Sam. Sam looked younger, much younger in that picture. They were drinking beer together and when Dean looked at the TV in front of them, he saw they were watching baseball. No talking, not even a word was uttered during the whole thing, but it was enough.

It was definitely enough for Dean to have something real to hold on to. Knowing he's an actual person with an actual past is the best news he's got since he woke up.

He knows he should probably tell Dr. Simpson – if anything, to share the excitement, but he also wants to tell Sam because he's part of this – but he decides to keep it to himself for now. In the end, it was just a small memory, nothing important, and definitely nothing to worry about.

For a moment, that little spark of *something* from Dean's past, makes Dean forget about Castiel. He really, truly does let himself forget about it.

That's why he internally flips out when the door opens and a man, one Dean hasn't seen before, enters the room. Dean swears at himself in his head for not asking Sam to show him a picture – he could have known right away -- like this, he just stares for a second.

The stranger is wearing black pants and a blue shirt. His hair is a mess of dark brown bordering black, and what Dean notices next are his eyes – blue, almost steel blue, piercing. His lips shape a smile when Dean's eyes travel to them, and Dean almost doesn't notice the soft stubble. It's a pretty face, Dean decides, but it definitely doesn't look familiar.

“Hey,” the man says quietly and closes the door behind him. He doesn't close the gap between them, though. “I'm... Castiel,” he breathes out, his eyes still glued to Dean's face.

Dean nods to himself. Okay, so this is Castiel. This is his *husband*. Dean looks him up and down once again, trying to spot anything that would draw him in. There's nothing.

“Hey,” Dean says back and he's aware of the blush creeping up onto his cheeks. He feels embarrassed and indescribably awkward, and he also says the stupidest thing he could possibly think of. “I'm sorry I don't remember you.”

Castiel giggles softly, as if it was the funniest thing he's heard all week, and finally walks across the room. “It's okay. I'm glad you're alive,” he says and then points towards the chair. “May I?”

Dean nods quickly. “Sure.”

Castiel sits down and his eyes linger on Dean's face for a few more seconds. Dean can't read his expression no matter how hard he tries.

He sees love in Castiel's eyes, that one is for sure, and in Castiel's movements, he can see that he would like to reach out and touch Dean. Perhaps just catch his hand in his own, but he's too afraid. And to be honest, Dean's glad.

Castiel is nothing but a stranger to him. He knows he should feel *something* towards him, he feels like there should be something tying them together, something that wouldn't let him stay distant. But there really is nothing, no sense of familiarity, not even the smallest hint of their possible past.

Suddenly, he can't stand looking at Castiel's face; he looks away, his eyes penetrating the blinding white of the hospital bed sheets. He doesn't know what to say and so he stays silent, wishing he could escape this, wishing he would never have woken up to this situation.

"So," Castiel says then and Dean's eyes jump up. He tries to tell himself that at least the voice sounds familiar, but he knows it's a lie. "I talked about this with your doctor, actually. And she told me I should wait for the conversation to just... happen. But nothing's happening, so I guess I need to help it a little. Is there anything you want to talk about? Because I don't know..." Castiel trails off and runs his hand through his messy hair, making it even messier.

Involuntarily, Dean smiles. "Do you always talk that much?" he asks and the smile is shared as it tugs at Castiel's lips.

"Not always," Castiel exclaims and leans back in his chair. "Only when I'm nervous."

"Don't be," Dean says quickly and then bites down on his lip, "I mean, I'm nervous, too. But there's really no point."

"I guess you're right," Castiel admits. "So, do you want to know anything... about us?"

Dean knows he wants to ask about the car accident. He knows he wants to ask about Castiel's injuries, wants to ask how it happened in the first place. But he figures that, as peculiar as it is, he doesn't want to actually *know* all that, not right away. Those questions sound intimate in his head, and there's nothing even close to intimacy between him and the person who is supposed to be his husband.

"Yeah," he says in the end, "How about how we met? I hope there's a cool story to it."

"Sorry to disappoint you," Castiel says with a smirk, "but we simply met at a club, got wasted, hooked up, and that's it."

"And it led to marriage?" Dean asks with his eyebrow raised.

Castiel laughs under his breath. "Obviously," he says then and as he looks up, he narrows his eyes for a second, as if trying to decipher whether Dean actually *is* disappointed with this.

"Sorry it's not cooler."

"That's actually very cool," Dean argues softly, "How many people randomly hook up and then end up throwing a wedding, right?"

They both laugh at that, the sound nervous as hell. Dean realizes they're both trying too hard and of course it will never work that way; he doesn't exactly know how to *not* try so hard, though. He tries to relax, because his whole body has been tense ever since Castiel walked in, but it's to not much avail.

"There's also a cool story to when we went to Disneyland," Castiel informs him and Dean's head snaps up, eyes wide open.

A memory flashes through his mind, abrupt and confusing. There's Sam with Minnie Mouse ears on his head taking a picture with Captain Jack Sparrow, the next second he's throwing candy at Tinkerbell; and then Dean goes to turn around, laughing, but before he can finish the movement, he snaps out of it. He's pretty sure that he tried to turn around and face Castiel there, and he has no idea why it never happened.

"Are you okay?" Castiel's voice is panicked and he's sitting on the edge of the chair, reaching out. He's actually imprisoning Dean's hand with a tight grip, although it takes Dean a second to realize that. "Should I call someone?"

"No," Dean says quickly and shakes his head. "I'm fine, I just – was Sam there with us? Did he... did he buy a stupid Minnie Mouse hat?"

Castiel's eyes widen and he tightens the grip even more, squeezing Dean's hand in his. "You remember?" he breathes out, puzzled.

"I – I remember bits of it. I don't remember you being there, though," he admits almost shyly and his eyes drop down to their connected hands. He stares at it for a while, and even though he doesn't intend to pull away, Castiel notices Dean's discomfort and his hand leaves Dean's alone.

When Dean looks up again, he's almost hurt by the expression on Castiel's face and he wishes he wouldn't have said anything.

"But I was there, I'm not making it up," Castiel insists and Dean nods.

"I believe you. I just don't remember. It'll come to me later, everyone says so," Dean says softly, realizing he's trying to comfort this man that's now sitting so close to him. Or maybe he's just trying to comfort himself. And maybe he just doesn't know what he's doing and there are doubts eating at his brain once again.

"I really hope so," Castiel utters and shakes his head. He purses his lips and falls silent for a second, as if trying to decide on something.

Dean looks up at him with anticipation, seeking any word of comfort, but Castiel remains silent.

"So, what's the cool story?" he asks in the end, trying to hide the disappointment.

And Castiel tells him, just like he brings up many more 'cool stories', and while they all entertain Dean to a certain level, they're now only about them and not even one brings

another memory. It's worrying and unsettling but Dean lets himself forget about it for a second, believing every word Castiel utters blindly.

"Have you... remembered anything else while we talked?" Castiel asks after the thousandth story he came up with and Dean is sad to let him down once again.

He shakes his head. "No. But it's most likely because my head hurts." And there it is, he's trying to comfort him again, even though he has no idea why he would want to do that.

"I should probably leave, then?" Castiel asks, his voice going up in a question.

Dean wants to tell him it's okay, that he suffers from headaches half the time, but he can't bring himself to open his mouth and say something.

"When will I see you again?" Dean asks instead and it's almost difficult to squeeze those words out. He's doing it for Castiel's sake, really, not because he wants to see him.

Dean accepts that Castiel is a part of his life, and a pretty major one at that, but he's still a stranger. He literally feels like he just spent almost an hour talking to a random person he met at a bar. Castiel sure feels different, but for Dean, there's nothing connecting them. He likes Castiel; likes his humor, likes his voice always bordering on rough and low, likes the way he looks at Dean. But it's just liking, and it feels like something new and just born, not like something he's rediscovering, something that's been inside of him for a long time. Castiel doesn't feel like family, doesn't ring any bells like Sam did. Castiel just is. And Dean doesn't know how to deal with him most of the time.

But still, he's glad when he sees Castiel's eyes light up after his question.

"I could come see you tomorrow?" he suggests with a smile.

"Yeah, that sounds great," Dean responds with a partially forced smile. "I, you know, won't go anywhere. I'll be here all day," he says jokingly but the trying-too-hard thing has come back to him and he knows the joke is overdone.

"Anyone told you when you might go home?" Castiel asks in a small voice and Dean's heart drops.

"No," he mumbles and his eyes stay glued to somewhere near Castiel's shoulder, avoiding eye contact. "But I suppose I won't be here much longer. A few days, maybe. Then I'm out."

Castiel nods, the motion small in Dean's peripheral vision. "We'll talk about it later, then," he says as if he knows it causes Dean trouble. "I'll see you tomorrow."

Dean looks up, finally finding Castiel's eyes voluntarily. "Yeah. I'll be looking forward to it."

Castiel's lips spread in another smile and as he gets up from the chair, he, spontaneously, leans in to plant a kiss on Dean's cheek. It's slow and uncertain, and Dean has just the right amount of time to move his head, letting Castiel know he doesn't desire the kiss, while still looking apologetic.

The movement is too quick, though, and blood rushes right to his healing wound, stinging and burning. Dean makes a grimace as he winces in pain.

When his eyes find Castiel's again, Castiel is taken aback and Dean realizes what it must look like – like he's disgusted by Castiel's intentions, offended.

"I'm sorry, I didn't mean to –"

Castiel takes a reluctant step back as Dean's hand flies out and catches the soft denim of Castiel's shirt, tugging at it and pulling him closer. "No, it's not like that," Dean urges and even though his head really hurts by now, he sits up and doesn't let go. "It's just that my head hurts. A lot. You didn't do anything."

Castiel looks unconvinced for a second before he rubs his face with his free hand. "I'm so sorry. I just don't know how to deal with this. I didn't want to snap."

Dean sighs and lets go of Castiel's hand, leaning back against his pillow. "We just need time. *I* need time. To remember."

"I know," Castiel agrees, but Dean's pretty sure he knows shit – it's not like Dean himself is certain about what he'd just said.

Truth be told, he doesn't know how to deal with it either. And that's definitely not a comforting thought.

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"Do I have a job?" Dean asks when Sam picks up.

Dean's not even sure why he's calling in the first place; this question occurred to him while waiting for Sam to answer. Sam gave him his old phone and his number when they talked earlier that day, and Dean honestly didn't think he'd use it so soon.

"Hello to you, too," Sam sing-songs.

"Yeah, sorry. Hey. So, do I?"

"Sure you do. You're a professional cowboy at a western-themed strip club," Sam tells him jokingly and Dean makes a grimace, wishing Sam would be here so he could punch him in the shoulder.

"Well aren't you funny," he says, annoyed.

"Yeah, you always appreciated that about me," Sam remarks and Dean's not sure whether he's still joking or not. "Anyway, yes, you have a job. You're a journalist, but not a tabloid one."

"Seriously?" Dean asks, bewildered. He'd expected to be something cheaper – journalism seems pretty serious to him, and something he had to study for, which is, for one reason or another, surprising. "What do I usually write about?"

“Uh, crimes and stuff?” Sam suggests, “You wrote a few articles on cold cases and actually put some people in jail, if that makes you feel better about yourself.”

“Hell yeah, it does,” Dean agrees instantly. He makes a mental note that he needs to find those articles and read them. “That is seriously not what I expected when I asked you about my job.”

On the other side of the line, Sam snorts and makes a remark, one that doesn’t come through to Dean. “So how did it go with Castiel? You’ve talked to him already, right?” he asks and he actually sounds genuinely curious. Dean wonders whether he’ll ask Castiel the same question, too, and compare their answers.

He doesn’t base his answer on that, though. “It went okay, I think,” Dean says, uncertain. “But it was creepy, man, at least on my part. I don’t know him at all. He’s a stranger to me. After I talked to you, I actually remembered a – “

“That’s great, Dean,” Sam cuts him off excitedly, “What did you remember?”

“The baseball match we watched right after you graduated from Stanford,” Dean answers without hesitation and it leaves him puzzled for a second. He has no idea when the memory completed itself in his mind and where do all the facts come from, but suddenly, he knows Sam did graduate from there, knows who played the match and knows who won. He knows they got drunk afterwards and he remembers the awful morning after.

Sam laughs into his ear. “I remember that night, too. It was a great night.”

“Yeah.”

They’re silent for a moment before Sam picks up the conversation again. “So, Castiel. Creepy. Why creepy?”

“Because, well,” Dean shrugs his shoulders. “I don’t know. He’s not even in my memories. I remember the time we went to Disneyland and he tells me the three of us went together but in my memories, it’s only me and you. He’s not there. Did he lie to me?”

Sam hums. “No, he didn’t. He was there. It was his idea, you know, that we should go and have fun.”

“Why is he not in my memories, then?” Dean asks like a pouty child expecting to get a good enough answer right now.

“I don’t know, Dean,” Sam tells him, sounding almost sad. “Maybe you should talk to Dr. Simpson about that, not to me. I really have no idea.”

Dean realizes that’s true – he should have chosen Dr. Simpson for this conversation, not his younger brother. He doesn’t know why he called Sam in the first place – it was spontaneous, kind of like an idea that gets into your head and you just have to listen to it because it won’t leave you alone otherwise.

“You’re right,” Dean agrees and rubs his eyes with his free hand. He exhales, letting out a sigh. It was stupid, calling his brother – it’s just that he is *sure* it’s his brother and it felt normal to run to someone he knows he can trust. “I’m sorry. I know you don’t have all the answers.”

“Nah man, it’s okay. Call me whenever. It’s always good to hear from you, especially after the weeks where we weren’t sure you’d even wake up.”

“Gee, Sam, aren’t you a ball of sunshine all of a sudden,” Dean jokes, trying to lighten the mood because it went too gloomy out of nowhere. “I’ll call you soon, okay? Or are you coming to visit your poor brother?”

“Yes, I’m coming to visit my annoying brother first thing tomorrow,” Sam informs him.

“I’ll see you, then.”

“Yeah. Take care and don’t forget to rest. Dr. Simpson says it’s important – “

“And *I am* annoying, Sam? Please,” Dean cuts him off and even though he says it jokingly, not at all in a serious manner, he doesn’t like hearing advice from his brother. He feels protective of him, like he doesn’t deserve to deal with this. Dean’s almost not able to play it cool and make a joke out of it, *almost*.

They end the call after that. Dean, instead of calling Dr. Simpson and talking to her – she’ll come check up on him at some point anyway – leans his head against the pillow and goes to sleep. Maybe it will bring him more memories.

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It does bring more memories – every time Dean goes to sleep, he dreams what happened at some point of his life. In the next four days, he gets bits of his childhood, parts of his relationship with Sam, and once, he dreams about his college girlfriend – which is surprising as he thought he was gay and that was the end of it.

Not even once, though, does he dream about Castiel. And that’s surprising as well, because Castiel drops by every single day to talk to Dean, even if it’s only for a few minutes. Castiel works as a pediatrician and doesn’t always have much time to spend with his husband.

They do talk, and Castiel always mentions what they’ve been through. And while Dean feels a little bit closer to him, he knows it’s most likely thanks to these conversations.

Dean feels bad every time Castiel asks about Dean’s memories, really wanting to ask whether Dean remembers him now or not. Every time, of course, Dean has to tell him he doesn’t. It’s never pleasant, because Castiel gets this *look* on his face that makes everything even harder.

Anyway, Dean is still sort of happy with what he has. When people kept telling him he would remember soon, he really thought they meant weeks and months. But his memories are quick to return to him, even though it’s just some of them. That’s one thing to make him happy.

Another thing that makes him happy, well, at first at last, is when Dr. Simpson tells him he's to be discharged from the hospital the next day.

It's good news, God, of course it is – Dean is tired of his hospital bed, of hospital food, of hospital hallways, of hospital everything, really. He's sure the hospital smell is stuck in his nostrils forever and if he ever stops dreaming about the shiny white walls and bed sheets... that's going to be a miracle as well.

The one thing that bothers him not even two minutes after Dr. Simpson tells him, wearing her beamy expression on her face, is that he doesn't know where he's going to stay.

Sure, the first thing that comes to mind is that he should live with Castiel, just like they did before the car accident. But, for obvious reasons, he doesn't want that to happen. Honestly, he can't imagine living next to Castiel, not to mention sharing the bed with him. No.

The worry must reflect on his face because Simpson's expression falls and she frowns slightly. "Are you okay, Dean?" she asks, concerned, already digging around her pockets to fish out a thermometer. "Are the headaches back again? That could cause us some trouble."

He shakes his head and tries to crack a smile, not very successfully. "I'm okay, doc," he says and nods his head for confirmation. "I'm just thinking I need to call Sam."

"Oh," Dr. Simpson mumbles and checks her chart again before looking up at him. "Is nine in the morning a good time?"

"Yeah, sure, whatever works for you. I'll be glad to get out of here."

"That's what everyone always says," she complains with a slight pout to her face. "No one ever wants to stay a little longer. Except for the hypochondriacs, of course."

Dean laughs at that, happy not to feel any pain stabbing him in the head where he'd been injured. "And that surprises you?"

She scrunches up her nose and obviously not happy to do so, she shakes her head in the end. "Not really. The white walls are disgusting."

"Yeah," Dean nods in agreement. "Nine in the morning, then? I'll have someone pick me up."

"M-hm. Great," Dr. Simpson then gives Dean another one of her professional smiles, the atmosphere that had appeared between the two of them now fading. "I've got to rush now, but I'll come check up on you later today and before you leave tomorrow."

"Sure," Dean nods and after she stuffs her hands in her pockets, she leaves Dean alone with his thoughts – which are currently pretty aggressive, each and every one of them demanding attention.

Dean picks up his new phone and dials Sam's number only reluctantly. He knows he's going to ask for something that might easily be too much, but living with Sam seems like the best option. By all means, he would be happy to live on his own, but he doubts he would find a suitable apartment overnight, especially when he can't actually go and look at it.

Dean is surprised he hasn't thought of this before – of the fact that he will have to live with *someone* after he gets discharged. Maybe it was just hiding in his mind, or he kept pushing it away for days. Now that he has to face the issue he feels itchy all over and, despite everything, guilty. He knows Castiel loves him and leaving him alone like that, choosing Sam over him, that probably just makes him a giant asshole. For this one time, though, Dean puts himself first and if it works out, he would rather live with Sam for the time being.

Still, calling Sam and talking to him is quite nerve-wrecking, which makes Dean realize it will be pure Hell to tell Castiel what's going on.

"Hey, Sam." Dean's voice is too low as he's trying to sound firm and sure, definitely not shaky. "Could you come see me in, like, an hour?"

"Sure. Something wrong?" Sam's voice sounds distant and there are other voices in the background, indicating he's not alone at the moment, but somewhere with someone. Great. Another wave of guilt for Dean that he's making Sam leave whoever he is with.

"Yes," is Dean's first answer, but he changes it quickly. "I mean, no. It's complicated. I want to ask you something and it's kind of a big deal. But nothing's wrong."

Sam falls silent for a second, as if considering whether he should keep asking or leave the questions for when they're talking face to face. The decision takes him longer than it should, because Dean's just about to open his mouth and ask if Sam's still there when Sam finally talks.

"I can be there in half an hour. That okay?"

"Yeah," Dean says and then checks the clock on the wall above the door. "That's dinner time but I'll be happy to skip it, obviously."

"Obviously," Sam giggles and without saying anything else, he hangs up. Dean doesn't really mind.

When Sam enters Dean's hospital room in exactly twenty-seven minutes, Dean's sitting cross-legged on his bed, reading a Stephen King book. He realized he already read this one a few chapters back, but his mind is wandering who knows where anyway and so he doesn't bother with putting the book away.

He looks up when he hears the door creak open, and placing his bookmark in the book – it's really just a train ticket he found in the things that survived the car accident –, he closes it. He wishes his memory would have survived instead of the stupid ticket, but what can he do, right?

He smiles at Sam when he sees him approach the bed. They're pretty much back to normal by now since most of Dean's memories concern his little brother, and so Sam sits on the bed as well and takes the book Dean's been reading in his hands.

"Carrie, huh?" he asks rhetorically and examines the book cover for a second before putting it back on the bed. "You read that one at least twenty times already."

“Yep, and still loving it,” Dean exclaims and waves his hand in a ‘it’s not my fault, bro’ kind of gesture.

“I see,” Sam nods to himself and when he looks up at Dean again, the smile Dean could hear in his voice just seconds ago is now gone. “So, what happened that you called an emergency?”

Dean frowns, “It wasn’t an emergency. Well, not exactly.”

“What was it, then?”

Dean clears his throat and shifts on the bed slightly. “I’m out of here tomorrow,” he says, not sure just how much emotion he should put into the statement. He sees Sam’s face light up, but before he can get excited, Dean cuts in again, “And I know this might be too much to ask of you, but could I stay at your place until I find somewhere to live?”

Sam looks confused at first, and then he frowns. “What? Did something happen between you and Castiel? I talked to him last night and he said you two were doing fine so far.”

“We *are* doing fine, I guess you could say that,” Dean says, trying not to dwell on the fact that Sam discusses his so-called kind-of-non-existent love life with Castiel so freaking much. He bites down on his lip, then. “It’s just – he’s like a guy I met a few days back and it doesn’t seem right to move in with him. I still don’t have any memory of Castiel. *None*,” he emphasizes.

“I don’t get it,” Sam acclaims and Dean can only guess whether he’s talking about the moving in thing or Dean’s memories. “I mean, how come you don’t remember your husband but you remember your college girlfriend? That you spent barely three months with?”

Dean’s gesture is wild as he waves his hands. “I have no damn clue, Sam. And when I asked my doctor about it, she just said it was peculiar but it should fix itself *miraculously*, I guess with time. But I *can’t* move in with him, he’s practically a stranger to me. I have my moments where I seriously doubt he’s really got anything to do with me. Like, what the hell do I know, maybe you two are playing a prank on me or something.”

Sam raises his eyebrow, taken aback. “You seriously think that?”

“I don’t know what else to think,” Dean acclaims, a bit exasperated. “He’s not made up, though, right?”

“Didn’t you ask him to show you your wedding pictures?”

“Uh, no?”

“Well, ask him, then. I’m sure he’ll be glad to show you. Your wedding was a huge thing, maybe the photos would bring a memory, I don’t know.”

Dean narrows his eyes as he considers it, tilting his head to the side. “Maybe you’re right,” he admits then, and he drops his gaze down to his hands resting in his lap. “But still, Sammy. I

don't feel like moving in with him, not *tomorrow*. Maybe in a few weeks, but not right now. I know it's hard to understand, but..." he trails off, running his fingers through his short hair. His forefinger brushes against the almost completely healed wound as he does so, and he's pleased to not feel any pain.

Sam purses his lip after that and as he nods, his bangs fall into his face. "I'm not saying you can't stay at my place, Dean. You're more than welcome. I was just asking because I know how happy you used to be together and..."

Dean doesn't say anything to that; not really sure what the right answer would be, anyway. "So I can stay at yours? You got to tell me if you have a problem with it, I can just –"

"Jesus, Dean," Sam cuts him off and rolls his eyes at him. "You're my brother. You're a pain in the ass, but this could be fun. Aside from all the drama, you know."

Dean feels an actual rock fall off his chest and he almost hears it bang against the floor. "Man, thank you so much. I was afraid I'd have to sleep on the bench in some park for a moment there."

"That's because you're stupid," Sam informs him with a serious expression on his face. "By the way, don't call me Sammy. That makes me cringe, literally."

"Sorry, Sammy," Dean winks at him and sits up in the bed, straightening his legs.

It's pretty obvious Sam wants to punch him, but Dean in a hospital bed still looks a bit fragile, so no punching happens. Sam does snort, though. "Anyway, how exactly do you want to tell Castiel? The second he finds out you're a free man as of tomorrow, he's going to get all excited, you know that, right?"

Dean sighs, wishing Sam wouldn't have ruined the atmosphere. He shakes his head, then, his eyes wandering all across the room trying to avoid looking at Sam's face. "I have no idea. He really told you we're doing fine?"

"Yeah. He talks to me a lot about this since I'm the second closest person to you." Dean huffs out a breath because that's plain naivety right there – Sam is the *closest* to Dean, at least at this very moment. "I'm not saying he's going to freak out when you mention moving in with me instead of moving in with him, but it is possible he will."

"I don't think so," Dean argues back right away. "I don't know him that well – I mean, shit, I don't remember him that well, but I don't think he's that kind of person. I think he'll just be really, really disappointed and I'm not sure if that's not even worse than freaking out."

"He'll understand, Dean," Sam tries to comfort him in a soothing voice, but they both know it's closer to a lie than to a fact. Sam can't know for sure.

"Well, but what if he doesn't? What if he leaves?" Dean offers, not even sure why he is so concerned about that.

"You don't remember him anyway," Sam states, and even though it's true, it's bitter and it stings. "So what would be the matter?"

“It wouldn’t be fair to him,” Dean tries in an uncertain voice. He buries his face in his hands, then, desperate. “I don’t know, Sam. I don’t want to talk about Castiel. I’m so fucking confused, I just can’t.”

“I’m sorry,” Sam mumbles apologetically and when Dean looks up, Sam seems distant as if he withdrew into himself and closed up. “I didn’t mean to hurt you or anything.”

Dean takes the book in his hands and toys with it, flipping it from one side to the other, idly reading the summary on the back cover. “You didn’t hurt me. I just don’t want to talk about it, that’s all.”

It takes Sam a few seconds to respond, but Dean doesn’t look up this time. Once again, he feels like his head might explode from all the thinking and from worrying so much about everything – about himself, about his brother, about what’s going to happen next, about his marriage he doesn’t even remember. And he worries about Castiel; he worries about him more than he worries about anything else. Because even though he does not remember him and there are doubts eating at his brain most of the time, he developed certain uncategorized feelings towards the man and to his devotion – he doesn’t want to hurt him on purpose. And yet he’s about to do exactly that.

“When should I pick you up tomorrow?” Sam asks in the end and Dean is relieved to hear some sort of excitement in his voice, as if he really didn’t mind. And maybe he doesn’t. Considering the memories Dean has gotten back, he probably doesn’t. They’re not the kind of brothers who don’t talk for weeks.

Dean smiles, and he feels like it just might be the first unforced, genuine smile since he can remember (which is not really that far back). “Nine in the morning, if you can manage that?”

“I might be a few minutes late, but I’ll be here.”

“Great. Thank you so much for doing this, seriously. I’ll cook you lunch and dinner every day for it, no kidding.”

“Yeah, that’s a lie and you know it,” Sam laughs.

“Trying counts?” Dean offers with an innocent look on his face.

“Sure it does,” Sam confirms. “Good luck with Cas, by the way.”

“Thanks,” Dean breathes out, letting out the thousandth sigh of the day. Luck; yeah, he’s definitely going to need that. He’s going to need lots of it.

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If calling Sam was hard, calling Castiel is even harder, but Dean makes it happen. He can’t hold back his own anxiety and the tension hovering over them is almost tangible when Castiel comes over.

They're actually sitting at the hospital buffet, Castiel drinking ginger lemonade and Dean just trying not to go crazy. He's glad they're not in his room, though, as this feels less intimate and somehow, it helps a lot.

"So..." Dean trails off and Castiel glances at him, sucking the lemonade through a yellow straw. Dean sees how much Castiel hangs on to every word Dean might say and he fidgets. "I think I'll have pie," he says instead of informing Castiel he's getting discharged tomorrow, and without waiting for an answer, he gets up and crosses the room to get the food. He knows he could wait for the waitress to come – the young, presumably teenage girl with her hair dyed weird brown who's probably working a part time job here and couldn't hate it more – but in trying to escape Castiel and their conversation, he's more than happy to take those few steps.

The lady – Myrtle, or so her name tag says – who owns the buffet hands him a plate with the homemade apple pie and winks at him, as if sensing Dean's discomfort. He utters a thank you and drags his feet back to Castiel.

His heart is running a dangerous pace, but in the end, he's in hospital so it shouldn't be all that bad if he has a heart attack.

"Okay..." Castiel starts, pushing away his glass as if to indicate he's done drinking and it's time for talking. "There's obviously something wrong. What is it?"

Dean, despite spending the past two hours – because Castiel couldn't get here sooner – fretting over this, he doesn't know what to say and how to say it. He looks reluctant, gripping the dessert fork in his shaky fingers. Why can't he just eat the damn pie in silence? They could just talk later, or never.

Dean drops his look and stares at the pie in front of him. "They're letting me go first thing tomorrow," he squeezes out through his gritted teeth.

"Really?" Dean doesn't even need to look up and watch Castiel's face to know he's getting excited, just like Sam predicted he would.

Dean sighs – more like exhales deeply, actually – and puts the fork down on the plate. It takes a lot of willpower, but he manages to look up in the end, the meeting with Castiel's bright shiny smile painful. "Yeah, really. But listen, I need to –"

"I'm so glad you're not going to be stuck in here anymore," Castiel cuts him off and the excitement taking control over him, his palm covers Dean's, now both resting on the dirty table. "When can I pick you up?"

"Cas," he says without realizing it's the first time he's using the shortened version of his name. He tells himself he's just trying to be gentle about this – he doesn't want to make it hurt or anything. "I'm not – I asked Sam to pick me up."

Castiel furrows his brow and tilts his head to the side, his hand still heavy on Dean's. "Why would you do that? Dean?"

And, okay. Dean is pretty sure Castiel knows exactly what it means, and the way he said ‘Dean?’ is one way to make it even more difficult. Why does he even have to ask? Dean knows Castiel’s not stupid, he must have put one and one together and seen what this is all about.

Dean carefully, gently removes his hand from underneath Castiel’s and even though it’s hard to do, he looks up and holds the eye contact for as long as his conscience lets him.

“Look, I don’t want to hurt you,” he says, ignoring how his voice trembles in the middle of the sentence. Saying this, it’s obvious that’s exactly what he’s about to do. “But I... I still don’t have any memory of you. I still don’t remember you. I’ve got *nothing* here. And I know you want me to move in with you, but I can’t do that right now.”

“What?” Castiel asks, confused, and okay, maybe he really didn’t guess this was coming. “You’re going to stay at Sam’s?”

Dean purses his lips. “I just need space. I need time to remember you. And would you give me that if we lived together?”

“Of course I would. I love you.”

Dean cringes quite visibly at that, because that’s really what he didn’t want to hear today at this very moment. “No, you wouldn’t,” he argues back. “You’d be disappointed every morning after I woke up and told you I still didn’t remember. And you’d hate me for sleeping in the guest room and not next to you. It would be hard on both of us, not just on me.” Although he must admit it was selfishness that drove him to this.

Castiel withdraws his hand, hiding it in his lap, and he looks down at the table. He looks like a lost puppy and Dean hates himself for this.

“We don’t even have a proper guest room,” Dean informs him, “When someone stays over they simply crash on the couch.”

Dean licks his lip. “That’s exactly my point,” he explains, “I don’t remember anything that’s got something to do with you. I know it will come back to me eventually, but right now – I really need you to understand.”

When Castiel looks up again, Dean can only guess what’s going through his mind. Maybe Castiel is blaming himself for this – in the end, it was him driving that night. But Dean doesn’t blame him, what would be the point? It wouldn’t change the situation anyway.

“I do understand. I get it, Dean,” Castiel says in the end, and it occurs to him how peculiar it is they’re going through so much drama in a stupid hospital buffet full of ignorant people. “But you can’t expect me to be happy about it.”

“I don’t expect you to be happy about it,” Dean throws back, “But it’s temporary. Everything will go back to normal, sooner or later.”

“Yeah,” Castiel utters, obviously not convinced. “Have you ever thought that hey, maybe if you saw the house and spent some time with me, maybe you would remember?” he offers then, hurt.

Dean doesn’t have anything to say to that, because, well, Castiel’s got a point. He shifts in his chair again, uncomfortable. It makes him itch to the bone that he doesn’t have an answer for that. There’s a possibility Castiel is right, but Dean doubts it at the same time. He can’t admit that out loud, though, because wouldn’t that make him rude? Wouldn’t that make him look like he’s generally over this relationship because he can’t feel any of it anymore?

“Cas...” Dean trails off, still speechless, unable to defend himself in this matter. He depends on his eyes to do it, because while it’s more intense than he’d like, he stares at his *husband* - still feels surreal, to be honest – and purses his lips. He’s not sure whether he’s trying to show regret, pity, or if he’s begging for patience or something else.

Castiel gives it to him, though, whatever it is Dean’s asking for. Strangely, it’s like Castiel understands him better than Dean himself. “Okay. Can I at least come by tomorrow to say hi? See how you’re doing?”

Dean beams at him, thinking that this actually went better than he thought it would. “Jesus, of course. I never said I want to stop seeing you.”

“So now we’re seeing each other?” Castiel jokes, desperately trying to lighten the mood.

Dean winks at him, still overwhelmed with excitement and slight spark of happiness. This worked out, he’s actually staying with Sam and Castiel is not mad about it. Dean practically feels like a teenager who’s spending the night at a friend’s for the very first time and is more than happy his parents let him do it.

It puts Dean at ease and he’s not even fully aware that he’s flirting with Castiel until he can see the blush travelling up from Castiel’s neck to his cheeks.

And Dean, as stupid as it is, finds himself thinking it’s really adorable. For the first time, he feels something pull at him and he almost reaches out to touch Castiel, whenever possible. For a second there, he feels like running his fingers through the mess of Castiel’s dark brown hair, and he thinks it would actually be nice and normal. He stares at the blush covering Castiel’s face and for a moment, he wants to kiss it away.

Dean snaps out of it just seconds later. He swallows, not sure what that was about and he’s surprised to think that maybe moving in with Sam isn’t the best option in the end.

Then, though, he remembers how uncomfortable he feels when he’s around Castiel, well, for most of the time, and it forces the previous thought to hide at the very back of his mind. Few seconds of strange tenderness towards the man doesn’t change it, and it certainly doesn’t bring any memories. Which is, by this point, not even that surprising.

“I’ll see you tomorrow, then?” Castiel offers when his blush finally goes away and he fights his embarrassment off.

Dean nods. “I suppose you know where Sam lives?”

Castiel giggles. “You don’t even know how often I annoy him.”

“Aw, I’m sure you never annoy him,” Dean argues, but once again, it’s only for Castiel’s sake. Now that the conversation is over, Dean clears his throat and picks up the fork again, putting a small slice of the pie in his mouth. Castiel watches him intently, as if curious, and Dean’s trying to ignore that as he chews and then swallows the food. “Best pie I’ve ever had,” Dean announces, “You should get some, too.”

Castiel obeys and giggling again, he waves at the waitress, ordering pie for himself. Dean’s suspicious it’s only because Castiel wants them to spend more time together, possibly bond over stupid shit, but for the time being, he’s quite okay with it.

Tomorrow, he’s out of this place and that’s one less thing to worry about.

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Sam arrives precisely on time, but that’s just about the only thing that goes that smoothly. Overnight, Dr. Simpson turns into a bitch that Dean really, really doesn’t like.

He’s sitting on his bed, fully dressed. It feels incredibly good to be wearing jeans and a real t-shirt again – he’d be ready to celebrate if it wasn’t for his doctor. The bag with his stuff is sitting right next to him, but there’s not much he’s taking with him – just the few books Sam and Castiel got him, pretty much everything else died in the car accident.

“No,” Dean says firmly for the thousandth time. He hears Dr. Simpson’s exasperated sigh as she sits down next to him, burning him with her look.

“Dean,” she insists, “It’s for your own good. A few therapy sessions would do you good.”

“I thought I was in a car accident,” Dean snarls and shoots her a dead glare. “Not on a killing spree caused by my untreated schizophrenia.”

Dr. Simpson frowns and crosses her arms across her chest like an displeased mother. “Therapy is not just for the mentally ill,” she explains, for the thousandth time as well. “I’m not even talking about a psychiatrist. I’m talking about a *psychologist*.”

“And there’s a difference?” Dean raises his eyebrow, but his question is rhetorical. His phone vibrates in his back pocket and when he pulls it out idly, it’s a text from Sam saying he’s waiting for Dean in the parking lot.

“Of course there’s a difference,” she acclaims, obviously trying not to raise her voice at this stubborn child. “Could you at least consider it?”

“No.”

“It could help you with your memory. You’ve been through shock, you spent a lot of time in hospital and your mind’s obviously blocking any memories of your husband – “

“Look,” Dean cuts her off, pointing his forefinger at her. When he realizes the gesture, he blinks and lets his hand fall onto his lap. “I’m perfectly fine and my mind’s not doing anything. Thank you for your help, doc, but I’m out of here and I’m not seeing a *psychologist*,” he spits the last few words out as if insulted he has been offered help in this way.

There’s another sigh following the statement. “Well, I can’t force you into it. But you really should consider it.”

“Could you just stop?” Dean snaps and with a frown on his face, he stands up abruptly. “It’s just not happening.”

Dr. Simpson looks like she’s still got many things to say, but she just shakes her head and gets up as well, still shorter than him.

Dean probably shouldn’t feel superior, but he does, and he kind of feels guilty for it. “Can I go now? Or do you need me to sign anything?”

“You already signed the discharge papers so you’re free to go,” she tells him and manages to put on a professional smile, and Dean can only imagine how much energy it takes out of her. No one likes stubborn kids and he did just let her down.

“Okay,” he nods and reaches out his hand for her to shake. “Thanks, doc. I certainly wouldn’t have made it without you.”

She shakes his hand with a grin on her face. “Oh, don’t you say goodbye to me like that. You know you need to come see me for a check-up in a few days.”

“Yeah, I know. But still. Being so rude about the therapy thing, I do need to say thank you for the rest.” Oh, she doesn’t need to know she completely ruined his mood with it.

Said mood lightens up the moment he leaves his former room and closes the door behind him. He walks with Dr. Simpson for a while, as she sees him off all the way to the elevators, but once Dean’s inside that thing it occurs to him that he’s *free*. Completely, one hundred percent free from all the hospital bullshit. And maybe he’s depending on it too much, but he seriously thinks his headaches – that have gotten better but still bother him almost every evening – will fade away and that he won’t be forced to think too much. Not about Castiel, about his memories... about anything, really. He’s genuinely convinced that out of the hospital, he’ll be able to zone out for hours if he wants to.

When he walks out of the building, fresh air fills his lungs and Dean really does feel good for a change.

He finds Sam fairly easily. First of all, he’s leaning against the car and since he’s basically a giant, it’s easy to spot him. And besides, Dean would recognize his car anywhere.

“Oh, Baby,” he mumbles with a satisfied grin on his face as he runs his hand across the black metal.

“I’m happy to see you, too,” Sam comments and helps Dean with the bag – completely unnecessary. “You want to drive?”

Dean really wants to, oh, he really does. He vaguely remembers their road trips, remembers driving and blasting AC/DC like there was no tomorrow. But still, the key word here is *vaguely* and so despite his want, he decides against it.

“Will be safer if you’re the one driving,” he exclaims sadly and slides into the passenger seat.

Sam mumbles some kind of agreement as he folds himself enough to fit his body into Dean’s precious Impala. Dean watches his every move with cautious eyes, ready to interfere if anything happens. If anything he doesn’t like happens, to be precise.

“I’m so, so freaking happy my Baby is okay,” Dean says with a genuine smile on his face as he shifts in the seat, finding himself a more comfortable position. “No offense towards Castiel, but I’m glad it was his Opel that got smashed into pieces.”

“Somehow I’m really not surprised you’d say that,” Sam comments but when he looks at his brother, he’s wearing a smile on his face as well.

Sam doesn’t live all that far away and so their ride isn’t really that long – now that Dean thinks about it, he could have driven himself and nothing would have happened, but it’s better to be sure and sad than anxious and dead.

Strangely enough, the moment he tosses his bag on the bed in Sam’s guest room, Dean feels like he’s home. He’s had enough of lying in the past few weeks, but still, he lies down on the bed and lets out a deep breath, as if he’d been holding it all through his time in hospital.

Without really meaning to, he falls asleep.

Sam’s hand shakes him awake two hours later and Dean has a hard time opening his eyes. It’s two completely different things – sleeping at a hospital and sleeping in an actual bed, with nice dark-blue sheets that don’t smell like meds.

“Wha’?” Dean mumbles, rubbing his face tiredly.

“Cas is here to see you,” Sam informs him in a quiet voice, as if respecting that Dean might still not be completely awake.

Those words do a nice job of waking him up, though. He sits up in the bed and bites down on his lip before looking up at Sam with the best puppy eyes he can manage. “Uh, tell him I’m asleep?”

“You’re pretty refreshed as far as I can tell, not asleep by far,” Sam argues.

“Sam. Seriously. I don’t want to see him right now, I’d rather see him tomorrow,” Dean tries to find a way out of this, hoping Sam would understand. But no, his little brother doesn’t understand at all.

“I’m not going to play your partner in crime with this. Because I don’t like it, and it’s not fair to your husband. At all.”

“Dude,” Dean gasps, trying to act offended, “We’re brothers. We were *meant* to be partners in crime.”

“No. You see, *Castiel* is your partner in crime and that’s why you should stop avoiding him.”

“Who says I’m avoiding him?” Dean squeaks, really trying to keep his voice low. In the end, he doesn’t want Castiel to know he’s awake.

“Oh, right. You’re not avoiding him. That’s why you refused to move in with him and that’s why you’re asking me to lie to him so you don’t have to see him.”

Dean purses his lips, trying his best to fight off the urge to break Sam’s bitch-face with his fist. He sighs, then, and Sam probably understands it as a give-up sigh because he moves towards the door. Dean stops him, though, working the puppy eyes again.

“Please, Sam?” he tries, sounding almost desperate. “I swear to God I’ll call him tomorrow, okay? Just tell him I’m asleep right now and that you don’t want to wake me up because I had a headache earlier.”

“You’re horrible and I hate you for making me lie to my friend,” Sam informs him in a stern voice and without much more clarification or confirmation that he is going to tell that lie, he moves for the door for real this time.

“Thank you,” Dean says to Sam’s back, more than relieved.

As Sam closes the door behind him and Dean is left alone in the room once again, he lies back. He only now realizes the knot his stomach tied itself into and he wonders why that is. Was he that scared to face Castiel out of hospital or was it something else? What is even going on in his head, how the hell is he supposed to understand that mess? One day he feels close to his husband, but then, after not having to confront him for about twenty hours, he doesn’t want to see him at all.

And then it occurs to him. Out of hospital, it’s easier to run away. He’s not sure he’s running away from Castiel himself – he’s more likely just running away from the possibility that he might not remember his husband, ever.

Back in the hospital, he couldn’t say no to visitors. Or, well, he could – but as we all know, he doesn’t want to hurt anyone in the process. And *that’s* impossible in hospitals. But here, in Sam’s small, cramped but lovely apartment, it is possible.

Castiel might be disappointed after Sam makes him believe the lie, but definitely not hurt.

Dean wonders. He wonders for how long he will be able to keep this up and how it will end. It’s more comfortable not to try at all, and that probably won’t end in a very pretty way.

It's funny, how aware he is of the fact he's running into a disaster here; and yet he decides to not acknowledge it. Instead, he rolls over onto his stomach and tries to fall back asleep, possibly to make Sam's lie into the truth.

Chapter Two

"So I called my boss this morning," Dean informs Sam the next day when they meet for lunch at a diner that's in walking distance from Sam's apartment. "Told me I can come back whenever, I just need to write something first. So I don't come back with empty hands. It would make more sense.] hands or something."

Sam nods and takes a bite of his cheeseburger. "So are you gonna writing something?"

Dean shrugs. "I dunno, man. I don't really feel like digging in cold cases. Don't really feel like writing about other people's accidents at the moment, if you know what I mean."

"I can imagine," Sam huffs out a laugh. "So did you call Castiel, too?"

"Could you stop being a professional matchmaker for a second?" Dean's annoyed tone is more than audible. He tears his eyes away from Sam's face and clearing his throat, he sips on his coke. He wanted to get beer – he *misses* beer – but he decided against it since he's still on some meds that should stop the headaches for good.

Sam purses his lips and Dean thinks he's just got a lot of parental figures around him – first the persistent doctor and now his own brother. "So did you call him or not?"

"No, I didn't. Okay?" Dean spits out and angrily, he picks up his sandwich and takes a bite, chewing like it's the head of his greatest enemy. "I forgot about it."

Sam, of course, knows that it's not the truth. Because, well, Dean didn't forget. He simply didn't call. He toyed with the idea for a long time after he woke up, but... yeah. Totally still running away from it and hiding. And, maybe, just maybe, avoiding Castiel.

"Should I give you a speech on why you should call him or are you familiar with those reasons?"

Dean frowns. "Keep that speech to yourself, thanks. I really just forgot about it."

"Whatever you say, Dean," Sam sighs, but his face gives him away – he's not convinced at all, and it's no wonder. Dean showed just how much he doesn't want to talk to Castiel only the day before.

It takes Dean a while to think of something that would successfully change the subject. "So how's work? It's, like, noon and you already look tired as hell."

It's really the perfect question to ask because Sam takes his chance and starts rambling about his work and the case he's currently working on. Dean hates lawyer talk, but he manages not to zone out, because anything is better than talking about the whole Castiel issue.

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It's funny, but Dean figures out it's actually possible to make a hobby of avoiding someone. Sam does force him into calling Castiel, but that's the first and also the last time they talk. They never agree on meeting; they mention it, but it's very unspecific and doesn't lead to anything.

Dean can't ignore the way Castiel sounds – sad and exhausted, yeah, his voice sounds mostly exhausted and Dean knows very well what's so tiring – but the moment he ends the call, he learns how to master pushing away any unwanted thoughts. He *masters* it, no exaggerating.

He also makes it his job to always come up with an excuse when Sam asks him about his marriage. Dean only truthfully answers the questions about his memory – no, he still doesn't remember Castiel at all. Everything else is made up. One time, he even dares to tell Sam he called Castiel earlier that day and they talked for a little while – Dean adds he enjoyed the conversation. He has obviously mastered lying, too, because Sam buys it so hard Dean's pretty sure he's not going to call Castiel for proof.

Dean spends a lot of his free time at Sam's place at first, as if afraid that if he walked out of the apartment, he would meet Castiel the next minute somewhere.

Of course, he realizes how ridiculous that fear is and eventually, he starts going out.

He's usually on his own, but then he tries to contact Jo – he remembers her accidentally, but it's not just one memory when it happens, it's just a batch of memories and he knows they're good friends.

He wonders why she never called or showed up at the hospital, but when he calls her she tells him she's been out of town for two months and that they are not on the best friendship terms ever.

"I'm sorry," he apologizes, frowning to himself, "I don't remember that. What happened?"

"I don't want to talk about it," she replies almost instantly and her voice is so firm Dean doesn't dare to doubt it or ask again. "Maybe it's good that you don't remember. I'll call you when I get back, okay?"

"Yeah, okay," Dean mumbles and makes a mental note to ask Sam about this.

(He does, later that evening. The whole story is simple and less dramatic than he'd thought it would be. Dean, according to Sam, just didn't want Jo to leave. She was supposed to go on a wild road trip with her at-the-time boyfriend and Dean obviously didn't like him enough to let her go without bitching about it. They had a huge fight and Jo left without a word. Also, turns out, Dean was right about the boyfriend as they broke up not even two weeks into the road trip. Jo stayed where she was to clear her head.

"Are all my friends your friends, too?" Dean asks with a grimace on his face. It's ridiculous how updated Sam is on everything and everyone.

"Yes," he says simply and goes back to his work.)

Anyway, with Jo somewhere far away, Dean really ends up being on his own all the time when Sam's at work. And he spends an awful amount of time at work, to be honest.

Dean is surprised to spend most of his time at the movies. It costs him a lot of money, but his credit card tells him he's saved enough to live this life for at least a year and still not worry about anything. And if he's not at the movies, he rents a movie and watches it on Sam's nice TV. It's his life at the moment, and he's not really complaining. The movies and the memories that keep coming back to him are a good enough company.

When Sam gets home a little past seven every day, they chit-chat about stupid things and although Sam mentions Castiel from time to time, it's so rare it doesn't even bug Dean.

They haven't talked in a little over two weeks and even though it surprises Dean, Sam doesn't know about it. Or at least, he doesn't mention it.

But maybe Dean should have known it's just the calm before a storm.

"I invited Cas over for dinner," Sam informs him one evening. Dean had tried and cooked them dinner, even though it's only roasted chicken.

It tastes good until Sam mentions this. The food in Dean's mouth turns venomous and he frowns, his fingers tightening around the knife and fork. "What? Tonight?"

"No, not tonight. He's coming over on Friday."

"I – " Dean's mind is racing as he's trying to come up with something. "I already have plans for Friday. Already bought a ticket to see – "

"You're being childish," Sam cuts him off and now he really acts like a parent. If anything, it should be Dean acting like this, *he's* the older brother, for fuck's sake.

"You're not my mother."

"And you haven't talked to Cas in *weeks*," Sam throws back and it sounds like an insult. Dean must have fallen really low in Sam's eyes. "What is that about?"

"It's none of your business," Dean tries, hoping he could pull this and win. He knows it's the last bit of self-defense he's got up his sleeve and he surely hopes it works. Every clever excuse he'd gathered in the past few weeks is now magically gone, lost in the mess that Dean's mind is at the moment.

"Come on, Dean," Sam sighs. "He's your husband. You need to find your way back to him."

"Well, what if I don't want to?" Dean exclaims, the fork and the knife ringing against the plate as he lets them fall onto it. "I remember almost everything now. Everything except *him*, so don't blame me if I'm not too eager to come running back to him."

Sam looks exasperated. “Do you understand how he must feel? How unfair it is towards him? You’re blocking him out. It’s enough that you don’t remember him even though you remember everything else, avoiding him doesn’t help it at all.”

Dean inhales and opens his mouth to deliver his answer in a yell, when he decides to put it calmly instead; maybe it will have more meaning that way. The anger in him is almost blinding him, though, and he’s sick of this.

“Could you, for at least a second, consider *my* point of view here?” he asks sarcastically. “I know it’s unfair, okay? But cut the crap. I know he’s my husband, but to me, he’s my husband only on paper. I don’t feel anything towards him.”

“But he told me that – “

“I had a moment where I liked him. Back in the hospital. But I liked him as a *stranger*, not as someone I know. Him and you – you both put so much pressure on me over this, and what the fuck am I supposed to do with it? I *don’t remember him*, I can’t fix that. And hell, I tried.”

“Maybe if you agreed to those therapy sessions, it would be different now.”

“Oh, shut your mouth,” Dean snaps, a disgusted grimace forming on his face. “I don’t care about therapy. I just don’t feel like Castiel belongs in my life, okay? And I don’t think it will change if I force him into it.”

“I just don’t get it,” Sam murmurs then, running his fingers through his longish hair. “You were inseparable. Why don’t you remember him?”

“Stop asking me that,” Dean utters. “I have no idea.”

“But you like him, then?”

“I do,” Dean admits unwillingly. “But, as I said, it’s like liking a stranger. And that’s...” he trails off, considering if he should say it, if it’s even the truth or if it’s just something he made up to make it all easier. “And that’s scary. It’s scary that I could, hypothetically, like him like this, but never remember him. I’d rather have him out of my life than hurt us both by getting into even more mess here.”

Sam falls silent and the atmosphere in general swims into a calm one. Dean’s anger flies out of him and once again, he’s only left with more questions and a slight hint of desperation, always bugging him, always hiding in his head.

“I don’t want to call off the dinner,” Sam says in the end, and it’s not surprising. Dean just simply nods to himself. “Because you should tell him the exact same thing. That okay?”

Dean sighs, but he picks up the fork again. “Yeah, okay. I guess it wasn’t the best decision ever to just block him out,” he admits.

“Thank God, you’re talking like a grown up person again,” Sam jokes, partially meaning it and partially just lighting the mood.

“Shut up or I’ll never cook again,” Dean threatens him, jokingly as well. In his mind, he’s trying to calm himself down, but it’s to no avail so far. The idea of talking to Castiel – and talking to him for real now, not just having him around and suffering through it or just making his way through it somehow – is not a pleasant one.

“Which wouldn’t be all that bad, you know,” Sam comments, but only a second later, he stuffs his mouth with way too much chicken with too much rice. “No, seriously, it’s delicious. Never stop cooking,” he says, his mouth full and words incoherent.

Dean laughs. “I know it’s delicious, you ass.”

They finish their dinner in silence, not mentioning Castiel again. But it’s like he’s there anyway – if anything, he’s lurking in Dean’s mind, making it even more difficult.

*

Strangely enough, Dean wakes up in a cheerful mood on Friday. Perhaps it is because the morning is so bright, or perhaps it’s because of his wishful way of thinking: he’ll survive this one night and then, hopefully, he’s free. The whole drama will be over.

There’s also another little thing he can celebrate – he takes his last pill in the morning, and although he’s scheduled for a check-up next Monday, his headaches are gone. He hasn’t had any in days, which leaves him more than happy.

It makes him almost thrilled for the evening – he’ll just open a bottle of wine and sip on it while trying to be a part of the conversation. And then, when everyone’s gone and Sam’s in his room, Dean’s going to invite over his old friend, Jack Daniels, and they’re going to have a lovely rest of the night. It’s not that he’s a drinker, but holy shit, he misses alcohol. He misses having a beer whenever he feels like it. Let’s just consider this evening as a dot after an unpleasant alcohol-less era.

“So what are we having for dinner tonight?” Sam asks during breakfast, sipping on his frighteningly healthy cereals.

“Dunno,” Dean shrugs, “If you’re trying to ask what *I’m* cooking for dinner, the answer is nothing.”

“Oh, come on. Are you still upset because your lasagna made me throw up?” Sam asks, and it sounds genuinely apologetic.

Dean glances at him and narrows his eyes. “That was not my fault. I told you not to mix it with milk afterwards. Did you listen? No.”

“Funny,” Sam comments, “because you didn’t drink any milk and yet you spent half the night bent over the toilet. Yes, I’ve heard. You sound disgusting when throwing up.”

Dean snorts. “Completely accidental. There was absolutely nothing wrong with the lasagna, and you should admit that to yourself.”

“I won’t even mention all the things you should admit to *yourself*,” Sam argues right back.

“I’ve had enough. I’m not working my ass off tonight. It’s pizza or I’m out.”

“Jesus Christ,” Sam rolls his eyes and emptying the bowl with the last spoonful of cereal, he gets up and makes his way towards the sink. “Pizza, then. I swear you’re like a five year old sometimes.”

Dean laughs. “That’s very funny coming from you. You know you’re wearing Buzz Lightyear shorts, right?”

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The evening isn’t as awkward as it could have been, if Dean says so. He’s pretty sure it is just because Sam simply knows how to talk to other people, and also because there’s the wine.

“Yep, I’m done with meds now,” Dean says when Castiel asks if it’s okay for him to drink alcohol now. “Putting that whole thing behind me, and I’m more than happy about it.”

He surely doesn’t know why, but Castiel manages to look like they never stopped talking; like Dean never hurt him. This, too, makes the evening a little more bearable.

“So,” Castiel says as he picks up another slice of pizza – it’s his last one, actually. “Sam’s been telling me you’re really into movies now.”

His attention is completely aimed at Dean, who is a little taken aback. Sure, it shouldn’t surprise him, but it still does – of course the little asshole, also known as Sam Winchester, has been updating Castiel on everything. How could he ever think Sam didn’t have a clue about the fact they’re not talking? Or that, okay, Dean’s not talking to Cas? That was very, very naïve.

“I, uh,” Dean stutters, and toying with his glass of wine (which really doesn’t go with pizza, but Dean insisted), he looks down. “Yeah. I think I might try to search for some movie magazine I could write reviews for.” It’s unnecessary information, but he’d rather talk than deal with awkward silence.

“That’s great!” Castiel exclaims and when Dean looks up at him, Castiel is fucking *beaming* at him and Dean has to stop himself from thinking how cute that is.

“Thank you,” Dean mutters and Castiel nods in encouragement.

The last piece of pizza disappears in his stomach and Dean’s still staring when Castiel brings up his hand and licks the remains off of each finger. Dean swallows hard and Castiel catches him staring – he smiles, small and soft, and before Dean can look away, there’s a blush fighting its way onto Dean’s face.

Sam clears his throat, then, and Dean tears his eyes away from Castiel. “So how’s work, Sammy?” Dean asks, his eyes glued to Sam’s face.

Sam frowns, possibly because of the nickname. “Dude, you must be tired of me talking about my job,” he says then. “And it would bore Cas, too.”

“It wouldn’t,” Castiel says quickly.

“Nah, still,” Sam waves his hand and leaning back in his chair, he rubs his belly. “I’m too full to talk. How about your work, Cas? Anything interesting?”

Castiel looks from Sam’s face to Dean’s and Dean, although tensed, manages to give him a lop-sided grin. Castiel takes it for what it is – some weird sort of encouragement.

“Nothing interesting, I guess?” he says in the end. “I had a very distressed mother come with her daughter today, yelling something about dog food, which left me all, *huh, I’m not a vet, ma’am*, but turns out, the daughter decided to try to see whether dog food is better than Cheerios when it comes to breakfast.”

“Jesus,” Sam laughs, but his eyes are widened. “Was the kid okay?”

“Yeah, sure,” Cas shrugs his shoulder. “I once met a man who ate *only* dog food and he was perfectly okay.” He takes a pause, and then he adds, “Physically, at least.”

It’s the frown that goes with the statement that makes Dean burst into laughter. It’s stupid, really, and it’s definitely not that funny, but the laughter is sincere. Castiel looks at him like he’s the eighth world wonder, and Dean’s neck reddens.

“I’m sorry,” he squeezes out when he’s done laughing. “I shall blame that on the wine, although I did not have that much.”

“Why are we drinking wine, anyway?” Castiel asks, grinning. “I’d say beer is much more appropriate when we’re stuffing ourselves with pizza.”

“Ask Mr. Alcoholic here,” Sam says jokingly and points his finger at Dean.

“Hey!” Dean defends himself. “Wine’s great, okay? Everybody loves wine.”

“Nah, I always thought drinking expensive wine is pretentious,” Castiel replies, scrunching up his nose. “It’s a well-known fact that I prefer beer to wine.”

“Really?” Dean turns his head to him, the smile still plastered on his face. “I didn’t know that.”

When he says that, he realizes he *did* know it at some point. He doesn’t remember knowing it – which is, once again, a surprise – but he knows he used to know. The look on both Sam’s and Castiel’s face is a good enough proof to him.

The smile disappears from his face and he tries to look as small as possible. They tried so hard not to mention Dean’s memory loss throughout the whole evening – and now he ruined it by saying four simple words. He didn’t even mean them in that way, it’s a vicious circle of associations, but the fact is, he did ruin it. He ruined the mood – his mood and the mood they’ve created. Dean had almost started to feel comfortable, and that’s why he let go and allowed the words to slip out just like that.

“I should probably go,” Castiel announces, his look dropped to the table. “I’ll just quickly use the bathroom.”

Sam follows him with his eyes as Castiel gets up and, knowing the apartment as well as the back of his hand, disappears from the room. His face turns to Dean, then, and Dean almost expects to be bitched at for the fiasco.

“So when are you going to tell him?” he asks instead and it leaves Dean confused for a second.

“Tell him what?” Dean’s trying to keep his voice quiet, as he really doesn’t need Castiel to listen to this conversation.

Sam rolls his eyes. “I thought we agreed that you should tell him how you feel.”

“Oh,” Dean breathes out and runs his fingers through his hair. His fingers run over the scar there, and still, it doesn’t feel like it belongs there. He knows it will always be there, though, a reminder of what happened in case he ever wanted to forget. “Well, what the hell am I supposed to tell him?”

“Try what you told me,” Sam suggests.

Before Dean can say anything else to that, Castiel appears in the doorway, a gentle, small smile tugging at his lips.

“Okay, I’m going, then. Thanks for inviting me over, Sam,” he says, eyes glued to the younger Winchester. It’s the first time he looks genuinely hurt by what happened, as if his mask finally fell off and Dean gets the chance to see what he’s done. “I’ll see myself to the door.”

“Wait,” Dean rushes to say, “I’ll go with you. I need to talk to you for a second.”

Castiel doesn’t say anything to that, just nods.

Dean looks over his shoulder as he follows, just to seek some sort of encouragement, and Sam, childishly, gives him a thumbs-up. Yeah, that’s really encouraging.

Once they’re in the hallway, Castiel stops and turns around. He’s only a few inches shorter, but he still somehow manages to look up at Dean, his eyes full of question. He probably wonders what this is going to be about – an apology? A confession? Hell, Dean himself has no clue.

“Dean – “

“I just – “

It’s pretty typical that they start talking at the same second, and Castiel grins. It’s when Dean sees that grin that he decides that even if this ends up being a confession, it should start with an apology anyway.

“You go first,” Castiel offers and Dean gives him a small smile as a thank you.

They’re standing way too close to each other, voices low, and it feels more intimate than Dean would like. The strange tenderness and want Dean felt all that long time ago in the hospital buffet is now back, and he feels tempted to reach out and fix the collar of Castiel’s white shirt. Sub-consciously, Dean’s eyes travel down from the collar to the small place where Castiel’s skin is visible, the shirt not buttoned up properly. Dean kind of wants to unbutton it even more, and he hates it. He wishes he could have his memories back – he’d rather have that than a stupid crush on his *husband*.

He snaps out of it, but only partially, the want never leaving him.

“First of all, I’m so sorry for how I treated you,” Dean breathes out in the end, and it takes a lot to say it calmly and without hurting his ego too much. He’s never been one to apologize – well, as far as he can remember. “I was an asshole to you.”

“It could have been worse,” Castiel says as if trying to comfort Dean. “Apology accepted, by the way. Will you answer my calls now?”

Dean, despite being embarrassed and despite his heart beating way too hard against his ribcage, manages not to break the eye contact. He loves to see the hope in Castiel’s eyes, but it also stings, because he knows he’s going to ruin it in the next second.

“I don’t know,” he says and it’s definitely not a good answer. Castiel frowns at him. “I don’t – uh. I don’t know how to put this.”

Castiel only gives him a look, obviously trying to read anything at all in Dean’s face. Dean wonders whether he finds something in there, other than his anxiety and uncertainty.

“I like you,” Dean says then, but it sounds probably even more confusing than his previous statement. Tired of it, Dean rubs his face. “I mean, I like you like a person I just met. And I kind of... feel pulled towards you, but I’m not sure what it means. It could easily mean I’m remembering the love that was, uh, that was there, or so I’m told and I – wait.” Dean closes his eyes for a second, trying to put his thoughts in order, because he knows he’s just rambling and it’s not making much sense. “I’m just trying to tell you that I don’t remember you. And I don’t know if what I’m feeling is what I used to feel, or if it’s just something I developed during our conversations. Does that... make sense?”

“And that’s why you stopped talking to me?” Castiel asks, bewildered. “Because...?”

“Because I didn’t want to lead you on,” Dean explains impatiently. “I didn’t want you to think I’m starting to remember you while it could be just a crush that really appeared out of nowhere.”

“You have a crush on me?” Castiel repeats the words, and although he’s obviously trying to hold it back, the smile tugging at the corners of his mouth is too persistent and it soon curls his lips.

Dean furrows his brow. “Well, yes. You’re nice and kind and you’re pretty and you never gave up on me even though I’m pulling – “

And then Castiel is kissing him, his lips chapped and warm and pressed against Dean's in such a demanding, yet sweet way Dean almost loses his balance and drops onto his ass.

He forgets to breathe, just standing there, his eyes wide open. He's staring at Castiel's fluttering eyelashes, long and casting shadows on his cheekbones in the dimly lit hallway. He's too surprised to respond, so he just stands there, unmoving, but the touch of Castiel's lips on his is precious and in that very moment, he wouldn't trade it for anything in the world, except for maybe his memories. He's never wished to have them back this much.

When Castiel pulls away, Dean is still unresponsive, like a statue. His eyes are still wide with surprise and his lips are slightly parted, and his hands that had flown up, spastic, are still up in the air and curled into fists.

"I'm sorry," Castiel apologizes, but Dean can tell by the look on his face that he doesn't really mean it. "I probably shouldn't have done that. I couldn't resist and I –"

"It's okay," Dean cuts him off, letting his hands fall by his side, trying to make the world regain its balance. "It's really – I didn't – It's okay, you don't have to apologize."

"Good," Castiel murmurs and then his lips are back again, devouring Dean as if they needed the taste of his mouth to survive.

And Dean, stupid, realizes that he wanted Castiel to go for it again. He's still surprised, still doesn't know what to do, but this time, his hands and lips decide it for him.

Although he's been unresponsive up until now, Dean's hands now find a way to Castiel's hips, gripping them tight and pulling him closer, pressing their chests together. Castiel gasps as they touch, Dean's fingers digging into his skin through the fabric of his shirt. He parts his lips and tilts his head, almost *begs* for Castiel to take his mouth if he can't take anything else at the moment.

Castiel's hands are desperate wandering down Dean's back, then sides, and then settling on his chest; not pushing him away, holding him in place by a soft, not demanding gesture.

His mouth is doing the demanding job. He does take Dean's mouth captive, first just biting down on his lip and then pushing his tongue in, brushing it against Dean's, moaning into his mouth and leaning in closer, closer, until Dean backs under his weight and hits the wall.

Dean's moan echoes Castiel's and the way Castiel is just holding on to him, kissing him; it feels good. It makes Dean's mind go completely blank, only leaving the emotion behind.

Dean feels fine. For the first time since waking up, he simply feels fine and nothing is bothering him. Every trouble has fled with Castiel's lips on his, and this, whatever it is, feels like the most natural thing to do.

When Castiel, panting, pulls away, Dean actually chases his lips for another kiss, and when he doesn't get it, he groans. His breathing is shallow as well, and even though they're not kissing, he's not letting go of Castiel's hips at all. That's not even part of the plan... whatever the plan might end up being.

Castiel rests his forehead against Dean's and breathes out, the hot air hitting Dean's face. "I missed you so much," he mumbles and Dean closes his eyes.

He wishes, with everything he has, that he could say the same. He can't, though. The only thing he knows for sure right now is that it felt good to kiss Cas, and intimate – and although still frightened, he's not that scared anymore. With certainty, Dean can tell that Castiel *does* belong in his life – he simply doesn't know if it's a brand new privilege or whether it's been that way for a long time now. He's inclined to believe the latter now, though.

When Castiel's hand goes up and rests against Dean's neck, Dean leans into the touch, his eyes closed. He doesn't know what to say and so he stays silent, enjoying the warmth of Castiel's skin against his.

"I'm so sorry," Castiel mumbles all of a sudden and pulls his forehead away, looking at Dean with his big eyes.

Dean grins, one corner of his mouth going up. "Don't be. I certainly enjoyed it."

Castiel giggles, the sound high-pitched and heart-warming (or Dean's just busy becoming a pussy, he doesn't know). "I didn't mean the kiss."

Dean frowns. "What did you mean, then?" he asks, feeling his hands sweat as he's still gripping Castiel's hips tight.

Castiel looks confused for a second, as if not sure what to say as an answer to that. Dean feels a tension build up in him; he breathes Castiel's nervousness in and it spreads through his system within two seconds. Dumbly, he wishes they would never have started talking. It was better when they just stood there in silence.

"The car accident, I guess?" he answers in the end and it sends shivers down Dean's spine with such urgency he ignores the sentence actually went up in a question.

"Cas," he says and this time, he's aware of using the nickname. Actually, he secretly hopes it makes Castiel tremble and want to lean in and steal another kiss. "Please, just don't blame yourself. It wouldn't help anything."

"But I was the one driving, wasn't I?" he asks rhetorically and raises his eyebrows at Dean, even though he doesn't need confirmation. "I was the one who fucked up."

"What's done is done," Dean insists even though Castiel's words bring a strange unease onto him, make it settle in his gut like a bad feeling that's telling him that there's something wrong. "We can't undo it. The only thing that bothers me is, what if I don't remember?"

"You still have that crush on me, so," Castiel jokes. Dean notices, with panic rising in his chest, that there are tears welling up in Castiel's eyes, for whatever reason. He's smiling while saying those words, but his eyes definitely do not lie.

He's at a loss for words once again. He just moves his hands from Castiel's hips up to his sides, chest, shoulders, and then down to his hands. He's not sure what he's doing, but then again, you don't usually go through stuff like this with someone you only have a crush on.

"I'm sure I will remember, eventually," he says and he actually sounds convinced, but then he realizes he's doing it again. He's making shit up just because he wants to make Castiel feel better about this, and he knows where that led the last time. He blinks a few times before correcting his statement. "Actually, I'm not sure. But I would like to remember. I'm sure about *that*."

Castiel shakes his head. "It sucks that you don't remember, but I can live with that. That sounds awful when you say it like that, but..." he shrugs, "I don't mean it that way. I just – I love you. And if the only way to get you back are dates and you getting to know me again, then so be it."

"You know, Sam defends you all the time. I mean, I had my doubts," Dean rolls his eyes, "and he always said that this is not fair to you. And I agree with him. It's not. I shouldn't put you through all this."

"He shouldn't have said that," Castiel murmurs but it's barely audible. "You can't kiss a boy like that and then send him home like nothing happened."

"You know, there's a huge 'I only want what's good for you' speech coming your way," Dean informs him, dropping his eyes to the floor. If he weren't pressed against the wall, he would take a step back now, just to show Castiel the distance between them, and the possibility of parting ways.

"Don't even try," Castiel shuts him up and somehow, he manages to twine their fingers. "Because you know what? You're a part of my life and I'm a selfish prick. So I'm going to call you first thing tomorrow. Now you just need to tell me – will you answer the call, Dean?"

Dean looks perplexed, not having expected this question.

"I guess I will," he says in the end, quiet.

"I don't want 'I guess' from you. I need you to be honest with me again. Will you or will you not?"

His fingers are squeezing Dean's, sending off a clear message - *please, say you will*. Dean is uncertain for a second, wondering whether he should just go for it or not. He licks his lips in concentration and he can still feel Castiel there; sweet and fresh, sort of like wine and the chili he had on his pizza.

"I will," he says, his tongue bathing in the taste. Knowing himself, he might as well change this decision in a few minutes or right after Castiel leaves, because he is a teenage girl like that, but right now, Dean is more or less positive he will answer when Castiel calls.

The idea of another kiss like the one they shared is too tempting. And, as he said, there's something pulling at his chest anyway – like a thread rooting in his heart, reaching out, settling down in Castiel's.

Castiel looks relieved when Dean eyes him. “Jesus Christ, I was scared you would say something else.”

“You can’t kiss a boy like that and then expect a negative answer to anything you might ask,” Dean acclaims, receiving a giggle in response. His heart skips a beat when he adds, “Can my crush give me another kiss, just out of pity?”

He’s flirting and he knows it, one hundred percent sure of it, one hundred percent embarrassed as hell.

For a second, he allows himself to forget that for Castiel, this isn’t just a simple little thing, or just a matter of a proper good night kiss. His conscience will go over that many times before Dean falls asleep tonight.

Dean’s words, though, seem to erase Castiel’s worries as well. He smirks and lets go of Dean’s hands, catching the front of Dean’s t-shirt between his fingers and tugging at it. “Needy, are we?”

Dean shrugs his shoulder. “Well, you *know* me,” he offers. For a second, he’s afraid he’s overdone it and that he shouldn’t have said that – the issue is probably too serious to joke about it; but if it hurts Castiel on a personal level, he doesn’t let it show.

He just shakes his head and tugs at Dean’s t-shirt with more force, pulling him closer.

Dean loves the kiss. It’s not too messy, not even as passionate as the ones before. It’s the calm *after* the storm, comforting and soothing. Castiel’s kiss, Dean decides, is the opposite of salt in a fresh wound – it’s sort of healing, even though that sounds stupid and pathetic in his mind.

“I’m just wondering,” Dean mumbles, still not fully letting go of Castiel’s lips, still sort of talking right into his mouth, “have I ever told you I like kissing you?”

Castiel, not letting go either, murmurs, “I think you have. But let’s pretend you haven’t for the moment, okay?”

“I like kissing you,” Dean informs him, smiling into the kiss as he deepens it a little.

They both know this is supposed to be just a good night kiss, but Castiel’s arms wrap around Dean’s neck as he presses himself as close as possible. Dean’s hands find their way back to Cas’ hips, obviously liking it there.

Much to Dean’s displeasure, Castiel pulls away way too soon. His lips are red, though, from Dean biting down on them.

“I need to go,” Castiel explains. “But I will call you.”

“And I will answer,” Dean promises with a soft smile on his face. Yes, still pretty sure he will.

“Bye, then.”

“Bye, Cas,” Dean utters and bites down on his lip when Castiel pulls away *completely* and they’re suddenly not touching at all – not even invading the other’s personal space.

Castiel is almost at the door, his fingers already wrapping around the doorknob, when he stops mid-movement and looks over his shoulder back to Dean. He lets out a sigh, then, and as if he couldn’t help it, he closes the gap between them again.

He forces a small kiss near the corner of Dean’s mouth and Dean, dumbstruck, blushes. “Now that was a proper good night kiss,” Castiel exclaims and this time, he makes it to the door, and he manages to walk out, and close the door behind him.

And Dean’s just standing in the hallway, leaning his head against the wall, eyes closed. He has no idea what he’s just gotten himself into. He’s pretty sure someone will end up hurt, because this is nothing but messy. Dating your husband who happens not to remember you at all? Yeah, nothing good can come out of that, Dean is pretty sure.

On the other hand, though, he knows he doesn’t want to fight it. He spent the past three weeks fighting it, ever since he felt that little *something* light up in him while looking at Castiel, and that wasn’t so good either.

It seems that someone will end up hurt no matter what Dean chooses to do.

Sub-consciously, or so he tells himself, he decides to try it. Either he remembers or he doesn’t. Either Castiel manages to not lose his mind through this or he doesn’t. Either way, nothing is ever only black or white. Dean decides it’s time to rely on things to figure themselves out on their own for a change, because overthinking certainly didn’t help.

His lips are still parted, as if expecting Castiel to come back and kiss them one more time, when Sam marches into the room.

“So what happened?” he asks, curiosity written all over his face.

Dean opens his eyes and peels his back off the wall. “We kissed. Well, he kissed me first. But then... Yeah. We kissed. Three times, actually. Four,” he rants with a stupid grin all over his face.

Sam looks confused, as he, just like Dean, expected this to go in a completely different direction. “What? You didn’t tell him, did you?”

“A little trust would be nice,” Dean pouts. “I did tell him. He said it was okay.”

“What exactly is okay?”

“I don’t know. Everything, I guess.”

“Christ,” Sam utters, obviously not happy with Dean’s answers so far. “Could you be at least a little bit more specific? I was dying in there while you were, obviously, just making out here.”

Dean has to hold back a giggle when Sam says it like that. “Calm down, Sam. We talked before we kissed. I told him I was sorry and I told him how I feel. And he said it was okay. He said he’s willing to put up with me, memory loss or no.”

Sam lets out a little breathless ‘oh’ as he shortly nods his head. “So are you two, like, dating now?”

Dean shrugs. “I don’t know. But he’s going to call. And then I guess we’ll just see how it goes, sort of. I really don’t know. Is the interrogation over now?”

“This sounds too much like when you were dating the first time,” Sam almost groans. “That was hell, please don’t do that again.”

Dean raises his eyebrow. “Yeah? What was it like back then?”

“Don’t ask me, ask *him*,” Sam says and fakes a cringe. “I’m still scarred. Still trying to forget all those times I found you making out on *my* couch.”

“That definitely sounds interesting,” Dean comments and snorts when Sam makes a grimace and repeats the fake cringe. For some reason, it’s much easier to joke about this now; even take it easier in general. He *likes* Cas, and as long as they are both okay with that, a little fun won’t harm them, right? “Anyway, I’m off to bed.”

“It’s not even that late – “

“Jesus, Sammy, I’m just trying to escape your questions here. I’ll go read,” Dean adds, laughing. Before he moves from the hallway, though, he licks his lips and breathes out, saying, “Thanks for inviting him over, by the way.”

“Yeah. You’re welcome. What wouldn’t I do for my older brother’s love life?”

“Too many words, too many of them,” Dean waves his hand and followed by Sam’s laughter, he almost flies to his room, feeling incredibly weightless.

*

Castiel certainly didn’t lie when he said he would call first thing in the morning. It’s half past six in the freaking morning when Dean’s phone rings, the Rocky melody echoing through his room.

”No,” Dean whines and rolls onto his stomach, burying his head in the pillow. “No. I want to sleep.” Because he, of course, didn’t get to go to sleep before three last night – the book just got too interesting and he actually dreamed about bits of it, and he’s slowly slipping back into that dream when his phone rings again.

Dean groans and his hand flies out, searching for the phone. When he’s got it, he narrows his eyes to decipher what it’s saying. He sits up like he just got electro-shocked when he sees Castiel’s name written across the screen.

Jesus fuck. He didn’t pick it up before, did he? It’s not still ringing for the first time, is it?

He hastily pushes the call button and closing his eyes, he rolls back onto his back. “Yeah?”

“Hi. Good morning, I mean,” Castiel on the other side says and despite his sleepy state, Dean can’t miss how much his voice is edging towards sad.

“I didn’t answer the call, did I?” Dean mumbles, rubbing his eyes with his free hand.

“No,” Cas answers simply. There’s a lot hiding in that word, though. *You really didn’t want to answer the call, did you? Did you lie when you said you liked me? Are we back to not talking again? Why did I have to call twice for you to pick it up?*

“M so sorry,” Dean breathes out, going *shit, shit, shit* in his head. “I didn’t expect you meant first thing in the morning, *literally*. I went to bed after three and I’m sort of – uh – still asleep.”

“Oh,” Castiel says, surprised. “I apologize for my tone earlier, then. I forgot you don’t have a job right now, I’m sorry.”

“That’s a harsh thing to say to someone who just woke up, you know,” Dean informs him, his sleepy voice really not delivering the sarcastic note to it. Well, whatever. It’s not like Dean possesses the ability to care at the moment.

“Oops?” Castiel offers and Dean laughs.

“I didn’t know you worked Saturdays,” Dean says when his mind clears a little and he’s able to think again. He sits up in the bed, leaning against the headboard.

“They’re short on pediatricians at the hospital, so yeah. I’m helping them out. I can’t during the week, but I take Saturdays when I can.”

“That’s really nice,” Dean says and nods, even though Castiel can’t see him do so. “I like what you do, you know. You help people. There are probably, like, hundreds of moms and dads thankful for your existence.”

Castiel falls silent for a second, and Dean can only wonder what’s going on in his mind. “Too much praise, Dean. I don’t deserve it.”

“Whatever you say,” Dean shrugs, “I’ll just keep it all to myself, then.”

“Listen,” Cas says and now it’s the excitement fighting its way to Dean’s ear. “Are you free on Monday? I’d like to ask you out on a date. How about that?”

Dean’s heart picks up a quicker pace as those words make their way to his brain. He bites down on his lip, and it’s funny how much he feels like a teenage girl all over again. And he wonders whether it was like this the first time, too. “Well, that depends,” he squeezes out in the end, happy to not have anyone who could see him blush around. “What kind of date are we talking here?”

“Um,” Castiel hums, “I could take you to the movies, if you wanted.”

“Hamburgers and french fries after the movies?” Dean suggests, his breath stuck in his throat.

“Why the hell not. I’ll pick you up at six. Deal?”

“Deal.”

There’s a pause. It’s time to hang up, but none of them says anything – Dean can only imagine this is the moment to say the ‘I love you’s; but Dean doesn’t have that and Castiel probably doesn’t want to say it again, not twice in such a short time. It’s unbelievable how much he tries to make it feel casual and normal to Dean, like they really just met somewhere and are trying to make it work. It hurts, kind of, but it’s pleasing as well – knowing that someone cares about him that much.

For the hundredth time, Dean realizes how much he regrets his previous behavior.

“Bye, Cas,” Dean finally breaks the silence and he hears Castiel breathe out in relief.

“Bye,” he says back, his voice gentle and soft, almost quiet.

Right after he hangs up, Dean considers going back to sleep – and while he’s totally on board with that plan, he also wants to do something else first.

“I have a date on Monday!” he yells, loud enough for Sam to hear it in the next room.

There’s nothing at first, and then – “Fuck you!” followed by a loud groan.

Dean giggles, but – with it being only half past six in the morning, they both go back to sleep.

*

Dean is the kind of guy who does everything properly. So when he went into his avoid-Castiel-at-any-cost mode, nothing would have been able to stop him (except maybe his brother, or so it seems). Now that the decision has been made and they’re sort of... dating now, Dean, of course, goes for it properly.

It’s four in the afternoon, still the same Saturday and all, when Dean toys with his phone for a little while before going ‘fuck it’ and dialing Castiel’s number.

He picks up after a long enough time for Dean to reconsider it – he’s actually just about to give up and never try again.

“Sorry,” is the first thing Castiel says into the phone, sounding a bit breathless. “I just got back from an emergency. Is there something wrong?”

“No, nothing,” Dean says quickly. “I didn’t realize I would interrupt. Should I call later?”

“Nah,” Castiel says in a final deep exhale. “I just – uh. What kind of parents let their four year old boy play on the street alone?”

“Cas?” Dean asks, his voice going up. “Did something happen?”

“This boy got hit by a car. Broken elbow and a really nasty scratch all the way down his calf. Will probably scar forever. And they could have prevented it if only they kept an eye on him.”

Dean hums, not very sure what else to say to that. “Do you get a lot of patients like this?”

“Yeah. At least once a day. And it still pisses me off.” Castiel huffs out a breath after the last part of his statement. “Never mind. So why did you call?”

Dean blushes, because it sounds utterly stupid now, especially after what Castiel had said. Dean feels childish for even bothering him, for not being able to stay away from him, not even for a whole day. He liked the idea of talking on the phone for a few minutes, and hands down, he sort of *searched* for an excuse to do it ever since he woke up.

It’s a proper crush, he knows. For the thousandth time, Dean just wishes it would be normal, too.

There’s still a small something bugging him, eating at him; the fear of letting Castiel down, the unfairness of the situation still not having left him completely.

“I just wanted to talk,” Dean murmurs, feeling stupid. If he could, he would hang up now. “I just finished reading a book and I guess I wanted to share my thoughts with someone? It’s nothing.”

“I’m glad you called me, you know,” Castiel urges and his voice sounds so sincere Dean has no trouble falling for it, not caring whether it’s a lie or not. “So what book did you finish?”

“You sure you’ve got time to listen to me rambling about fictional characters, man?”

Castiel laughs. “Go ahead.”

*

“So it’s serious, isn’t it?” Sam asks on Monday when Dean asks him for the hundredth time if he looks good in this t-shirt or if he should try on another one. “You already had that one on. Like, fifteen minutes ago.”

“Yeah,” Dean mumbles and looks down, examining the Harley Davidson logo on his light brown shirt. “I’m just not sure. Maybe it looks better than the other ones?”

Sam shakes his head and snorts. “You’re unbelievable,” he informs him, “First you don’t even want to talk to him and now you’re obsessed with making a good impression on your first date. How are you even real?”

“You say it like you’re not the same,” Dean scoffs, and tugs at the hem of the t-shirt. “Okay, I think I’ll go for this one. What do you say?” Dean waves his hands in a wild gesture and smirks while Sam shoots him a quick glance.

“Yeah, really makes your eyes stand out, princess,” he jokes.

“You’re all jokes,” Dean says and grabs his leather jacket from the hook, “but that’s just because I didn’t make you look at my ass and tell me how it looks in these jeans. Yet. Consider yourself lucky for now.”

“Oh, just get out of my face already,” Sam whines and glues his eyes to the TV screen, watching intently whatever is on right now.

As Dean walks out of the apartment – he wants to wait for Cas outside – the nervousness finally gets to him. During the weekend, they called a few times and talked for a decent amount of time, but still. Talking on the phone is different from going on a proper date, and Dean’s suddenly not sure if he’s not overdoing this. He tried so hard to look presentable, but Christ, they’re just going to the movies – maybe he should have tried to look casual.

It’s not even that cold outside and Dean immediately regrets taking the leather jacket with him – he’ll most likely end up leaving it in the car.

He shifts his weight from one foot to another and checks his watch, seeing it’s still three minutes to six. Why the fuck didn’t he just wait inside? He looks like some freaking hooker waiting for the first customer of the night and what is he even doing? His heart is running a hundred miles an hour.

A blue Ford Focus pulls over near him, then, and Dean eyes the car. Did someone really mistake him for a hooker, for fuck’s sake?

It’s Castiel who gets out of the car, though, and he looks *delicious*. Their styles match – they’re both wearing jeans and a t-shirt, so maybe Dean didn’t overdo it in the end.

“Hey,” Castiel says with a smile, “get in.”

Dean mirrors the smile and after Castiel disappears into the car again, Dean, although somewhat hesitant at first, follows him. He shifts in the passenger seat to find a comfortable position and then closes the door with a thump. He’s still wearing a soft version of his previous grin when he turns his face to Castiel.

“Hey,” he says finally, his sweaty palms resting against his thighs.

Dean sees Castiel break the eye contact as his eyes fall down upon Dean’s lips; and he can feel the kiss even before Cas leans closer and presses his lips against Dean’s gently.

Dean melts into the touch, can feel himself going softer under Cas’ mouth, and he lets out a sigh of relief when Castiel pulls away with a grin.

Dean idly licks his lips, trying to savor the taste for later. “So what movie are we seeing?” he asks, feeling high on his own emotions.

He finally categorizes this as a high school crush. He’s got a high school crush on his husband. Castiel is going to start hating it at some point, Dean is practically sure. The idea wraps its fingers around Dean’s chest and squeezes it, leaving him breathless; but he fights it off within the next five seconds.

Castiel pushes his key into the ignition, eyes already focused on the road. "I thought I'd take you to see the new *Carrie* movie, since you like the book so much."

Dean nods in appreciation. "That's... That's nice, yeah. I wanted to see that movie."

Castiel looks almost relieved. "Thank God. I'm never sure about you when it comes to remakes. I know you hated the Evil Dead one."

"Because that was a horrible movie," Dean argues with a serious expression on his face. He recently re-watched both versions and he's still in love with the original, not with the remake. "And who knows, maybe I'll end up hating this one, too."

"Might happen," Cas agrees, "But for the sake of my conscience I really hope you like it."

"If you think I would blame you for making me see it..." Dean trails off and they exchange a quick glance. "Well, then you're probably right."

If Dean wasn't sure if this was a proper date before, he is sure when they end up in one of the love seats, pressed against each other without any armrest separating them.

It's quite hard to focus on the movie like this, to be honest. Especially when, halfway through it, Castiel rests his palm on Dean's thigh; high enough for it not to be all that innocent. Dean's breath hitches at the back of his throat, and he shivers; he covers Castiel's hand with his own, then.

He can't possibly calm down for the rest of the movie, even though he does try. Castiel's knee bumps into his every now and then, each time Cas shifts in his seat. It takes Dean a few minutes to realize that Castiel is actually trying to get into his personal space like this.

"Keep your distance, mister," Dean warns him with a grin, trying to keep his voice quiet even though a surprised gasp escapes his mouth when Castiel's fingers squeeze his thigh. "I actually want to watch the movie."

Castiel, obviously disappointed, huffs out an annoyed breath. "This was a horrible decision."

"*Yours*, too," Dean reminds him and he congratulates himself for keeping his eyes on the big screen. He's totally missed the last few minutes due to Castiel invading his personal space, though, but it's not like he's about to start complaining.

While Castiel remains silent for the rest of the movie, his hand never leaves Dean's thigh and it feels strangely familiar and sweet. Dean doesn't mind, he actually enjoys the closeness that comes with it and he feels comfortable, like he's actually supposed to be here. He hasn't felt this good in ages.

When the credits start rolling, dramatic music and all, Dean pulls his hand away and goes to get up, just like other people in the room.

Castiel's hand holds him down, though, forcing him to sit back.

With a questioning look on his face, Dean turns his face to Cas. “Let’s go?” he offers.

“You owe me a huge make-out session that should have happened here,” Castiel informs him in all seriousness.

Dean giggles, uncertain. “Seriously? You’re well into your twenties, shouldn’t you be done with experimenting at the movies?”

Castiel rolls his eyes, his hand finally leaving Dean’s leg. “Like I care about what I should and shouldn’t be done with. Let’s go, then,” he sighs and he’s the first to jump up from the seat.

Dean is left confused for a second, unsure whether he let Cas down with this, entirely on accident, just because he didn’t want to make out during the movie. He literally feels *too old* to do that kind of thing, and it doesn’t feel good to anyway, knowing there’s plenty of other people in the room with them... But hell, if he’d known it’s why Castiel dragged him here, he would have at least considered it.

Castiel, as if sensing Dean’s uncertainty, reaches out and takes Dean’s hand in his. “You’re such a dork,” he comments with a grin tugging at his hand.

“You love it,” Dean responds, relieved and happy to feel Cas’ skin brush against his own.

They follow the plan, then, Cas driving them to a nearby diner and ordering them both burgers. They talk through the whole time, mouths full and fingers greasy from the french fries - *delicious*, Dean comments a few times because he can’t hold it back.

“Yeah, this is your favorite place,” Cas finally says when Dean compliments Cas’ ability to choose the right diner to go to.

The atmosphere thickens after that, and it’s up to Dean how he decides to continue the conversation.

He is unsure about it for a second, not knowing how to respond. The date went too well up until now – of course there must be some kind of a reminder that this is not as casual as they want it to be and that there’s a catch, as it is with all things. Dean, once again, realizes that they’re both here for different reasons – Castiel is here because he loves Dean, wants to help him and is willing to go through anything for him; and Dean is here because he simply likes the man sitting opposite him. They’re a peculiar couple, even though they may look normal to anyone passing by.

“What are my other favorite places?” Dean asks in the end. He decides it’s time that he doesn’t run away from these conversations – he could enjoy them instead and learn more things about himself in the process.

“Well, um,” Castiel mutters and looks surprised for a second. He then takes a napkin and cleans his mouth a bit, along with his fingers. “You like the library that’s just one block away from our house. And you, um, I guess your favorite place ever is Café Colore, we used to go a lot there even though it’s all the way across the city.”

The moment Castiel mentions the café, Dean remembers it. He remembers the comfortable chairs, the small fake library near the window, the oval tables. He remembers their Irish coffee and their wine, and he remembers he used to write all his articles there.

For a second, he almost goes there. He's so, so sure he's just one blink away from remembering Castiel sitting there with him, just talking or reading while Dean's working. He feels like that might have happened at some point, and he's a second away from literally reaching out to catch the memory, but yet again, it slips through his fingers and finds another place to hide, unreachable.

"You just remembered, didn't you?" Cas asks, in awe. Dean simply nods; he wasn't aware that it would reflect on his face. "Wow. Do you...?" He doesn't end the question, but they both know what he wants to ask.

Dean purses his lips and shakes his head a little. "No."

"Oh."

"But I almost got there," Dean says, sounding almost desperate despite wanting to push that feeling away. "I know I just *almost* remembered you."

It seems to be enough, because a small smile spreads across Cas' face. It's good news in the end, isn't it? Even small progress is still progress.

"It's okay," Castiel soothes him. "You'll remember at some point. I know you will."

Dean cracks a sad smile, and as he looks down, he completely misses the second Castiel's face turns uncertain and afraid.

*

Dean's pressed against Castiel's Ford, his hands clutching the front of Castiel's shirt. He breaks the kiss, breathless. "Is this for not making out with you during the movie?"

Castiel grins. "No. This is just a bonus. You'll make that up to me next time."

"Oh," Dean breathes out, biting down on his lip. "You sound very sure that there's going to be a next time."

Castiel grins, the grimace looking almost devilish, and he attacks Dean's mouth with his once again. Teeth clashing, Dean momentarily forgets they're still outside. He lets out a moan, his knees giving up on him and making him rely on Castiel.

Castiel, nibbling on Dean's bottom lip one more time, breaks the kiss. "So is there going to be a next time?"

Dean nods. "I hate you."

"I've been told that, too," Castiel smirks and takes a reluctant step back. Dean feels embarrassed and exposed, hoping Cas won't notice the bulge in his jeans. The fact that it's

dark might help, but he still gulps and fidgets, trying to fight back the urge to cover his crotch with his hands.

“Call me? Or should I call you?” Dean asks in a small voice instead, trying to keep Cas focused on the conversation.

Cas shrugs. “We’ll see. We don’t have to plan everything, right?”

Dean feels hopeless and empty-handed without a plan, not knowing whether to call or expect a call instead, but he nods anyway. “I guess you’re right. I had fun tonight,” he adds softly, and yeah, if anything, the swollen lips and aforementioned bulge say that for him just nicely.

“I’m glad,” Castiel says excitedly, “I mean, I had fun, too.”

The small talk’s weird, making them more uncomfortable than any conversation they had tonight, but Dean’s not sorry for bringing it up.

“Okay,” Dean murmurs then and straightens up. “I’ll see you, or call you, or whatever. Have a nice day at work tomorrow.”

“Aren’t you a gentleman,” Castiel quips and with a smile, he pecks Dean’s lips just like he did those few days ago in Sam’s hallway.

They part ways, then, and Dean enters the building, trying to look cool by not seeing Cas away with his eyes.

His way up to Sam’s apartment is awkward. A little girl, maybe nine years old or so, gets in the elevator with him and he’s seriously covering the bulge in his pants by now. His heart is obviously trying to call a heart attack on itself by racing ridiculously fast and he’s so hot and red in the face the girl could probably fry bacon on it.

He has no idea whether she noticed or not, but she gives him a look before getting out on the third floor. Dean tells himself it’s just because he acted all weird.

When he walks into the apartment and then to the living room, Sam’s on the phone with someone.

He says, ‘hold on’ to someone and looks up at Dean. “How did it go?”

Dean clears his throat. “It was okay. Great, actually. I’m going to take a shower.”

Sam just nods as Dean stupidly points towards the bathroom. Sam’s unfocused and that’s good, because Dean doesn’t want to see his face in case he notices Dean’s current trouble.

Just to be safe, Dean locks himself in the bathroom and strips quickly. He knows exactly what’s the point of this, and he successfully fights off any hint of embarrassment that could eventually get to him.

When he’s got hot water running, he steps under the stream. He ignores his erection for the first few moments, just letting the water clean him, wash off any remains of sweat and the day

he'd had. He runs his fingers through his hair a few times, as if faking shampoo, and while one of his hands rests against the tiles, he trails the other one down his chest.

He rests it against his abdomen for a few seconds, closing his eyes and leaning against the tiles with his whole back now. Behind his eyelids, Castiel's face pops up, but Dean changes the scenario, bringing back the moments where they kissed.

Instead of the running water, he feels Cas' lips against his, wet and needy. He can feel his tongue examining his mouth, every inch of it, his hands all over Dean's body.

It's Castiel's hand, not his own, that slowly moves from his abdomen and gives his cock a firm squeeze. Dean exhales, a little 'ah' fighting its way from his mouth.

In his head, Castiel's hand starts working, going up and down in a teasing, slow pace, while their mouths are still connected. In his head, Dean is holding onto Cas' shoulder, not the wet, cold tiles. In his head, Cas is there with him, kissing him, biting, licking away the dirt as if water wasn't good enough to do the job. In his head, Cas murmurs soft words into Dean's ear, seducing, loving, understanding.

Dean lets out a soft moan, trying to stay as silent as possible. His fingers slip down the tiles and his knees give in, wobbly... But in Dean's mind, Castiel is holding him up.

Castiel is everywhere. Dean wishes he would be everywhere for real, having him, making him forget about the world, about everything.

He comes unexpectedly, in a far too short time. It's not overly enjoyable, and the knot in his stomach almost makes him sick. He jerks himself through it, happy to see the water wash away his come, and when it's over and it's done, he leans back and bangs his head against the wall.

He feels dirty, which is quite unexpected, too, considering *how* he reached his orgasm. It was definitely nothing like any sexual fantasy he can remember.

Dean decides to ignore the guilty feeling he's got sitting in his chest and trying to smother him, and finishes his shower like nothing ever happened.

He spends the rest of the night with Sam, spread on his couch, watching some stupid soap opera that just happens to be on.

"So," Sam says during the commercials, a half-empty bottle of beer in his giant hand. "Are you going to tell me anything about your date at all or...?"

Dean raises his eyebrow. "I thought you didn't want to know all the dirty details."

Sam rolls his eyes. "Leave the dirty details out and update me on the rest, then."

"There's nothing to say, Sam," Dean shrugs and his eyes go back to the TV screen, watching a promo for some TV show with fake interest. "We talked. I had a good time. That's all."

"So – "

“No, I didn’t remember,” Dean cuts him off. “I know that’s what you’re actually asking me about. I didn’t remember him. I... I almost got it, but it never came back to me.”

“What do you mean you almost got it?” Sam asks with interest, completely ignoring the TV now.

“I felt like I almost remembered, but in the end, I didn’t. That’s the whole story. But I did enjoy the date, so if anything, at least we’re not wasting time here. I hope he feels the same way, uh.”

Sam nudges him in the shoulder with a knowing smirk on his face. “Of course he feels the same way.”

“I hate that you’re being such an older brother now,” Dean complains, but he’s not really mad about it or anything. He does feel like their roles should reverse already, but he doesn’t exactly know how to do that what with his life being a bloody mess at the moment.

“And I’m not even tucking you into bed every night yet,” Sam comments, sounding ridiculously proud. He tries to put his arm around Dean’s shoulders in a protective gesture, but Dean fights and shakes Sam off.

“Leave me alone, I want to watch this extremely interesting commercial,” Dean whines and Sam laughs in response, going back to his beer again.

It’s all just meaningless conversation, all just meaningless teasing, but Dean takes something from it anyway. He takes special care to remember the comfortable feeling he gets every time he’s around Sam, and he also tries to remember the familiarity – perhaps to compare it with what he feels around Castiel.

Dean enjoys the family time, and he’s truly able to appreciate it, especially after remembering how his parents died a few nights back (nothing too dramatic, but it left him feeling lonely and small anyway. He had wished his mother could have been there with him).

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They have another date in three days. It’s Thursday and when they meet in front of the building again, Castiel doesn’t look so cheerful this time.

The week is showing on him, making him look tired.

“We don’t have to go out,” Dean says when he joins Castiel in the car. It feels more comfortable now – he’s already been in this space and even Castiel feels more like a part of his life now, as they talk daily and Dean is updated on everything that’s going on in his husband’s life, just like Castiel is updated on Dean’s.

“What do you mean?” Cas asks, and the tiredness is pretty audible even through his voice. “You mean you don’t want to do this today?”

Dean laughs. “No, idiot. I mean that we can just go to your place and order pizza or something. I dunno.”

Castiel looks to the side from behind the wheel, only allowing himself a few seconds to examine Dean’s face. “Really? I thought you weren’t comfortable with going back to the house.”

Dean shrugs. “It’s just an idea. It won’t kill me or anything. And you look like you need sleep, not a date to take care of.”

“Dean – “

“It’s okay, Cas. You told me you’ve had a rough week, and I get it,” Dean says, trying to comfort him a little. “So I’m just saying we could head back to your place and just relax.”

Neither of them misses how Dean calls it ‘Castiel’s place’ and not ‘their place’, but even if it hurts Castiel or if he minds, he doesn’t say so. He goes with it and doesn’t even comment on it, doesn’t try to force Dean into calling it for what it is.

“Okay,” Cas agrees in the end and takes the next left turn. “You sure it’s no problem?”

“Positive,” Dean confirms.

The drive to Castiel’s house – uh, to *their* house, Dean could call it the right name in his head if nothing else – is not all that long. He wonders whether they searched for a house that wouldn’t be too far away from Sam or if it’s just a lovely coincidence. Considering that Sam is Dean’s brother and Castiel’s good friend, it’s probably not a coincidence, though.

Dean keeps the conversation going the whole time, even though he has to try hard a few times. It’s not normal to just talk non-stop, but Dean makes it work.

It’s selfish, for his own sake. He knows he would get nervous if he didn’t talk and didn’t have Castiel’s voice to listen to. He would probably stress over seeing the house again and while he wouldn’t really mean to, he would think he’ll remember everything once he sees the front yard, the hallway, the furniture; and Castiel in all that. He would think that it will happen. This way, with him and Castiel constantly talking, it’s more like just some stupid wishful thinking.

And wishful thinking proves to be exactly that, and only that.

Dean likes the house, that’s true. If he narrows his eyes and looks at it, trying to *see* it there, he can tell that he’s been a part of this when they decorated it. It has a certain ring to it, something that reminds him of himself, and he likes that about the house.

It doesn’t bring back the memories, though. Not even a glimpse of them.

He doesn’t regret making the decision to come back here, though. Well, okay; he does, once. When he realizes how empty this house looks and how Castiel must feel every single day after coming back to it – nothing but walls and knowing that there should be someone else waiting for him. Never mind that the certain someone decided to live with his brother instead.

Don't get him wrong, Dean still thinks it was the right thing to do at the time. But, as Sam liked to say before Dean got around to trying and fixing things, it wasn't exactly fair.

He always thought so, but stepping into this house, he can also see it, and it stings. He feels like apologizing, but Castiel smiles at him in such a gentle way Dean doesn't dare to ruin it.

They end up ordering pizza, but only one so they can share.

They eat it on the couch – so freaking comfortable, nothing like Sam's that feels like you're sitting on a pile of wooden sticks –, the box in Cas' lap. They're not talking – they're actually watching Ellen DeGeneres and having fun that way. They never even turned the lights on, so they're mostly in the dark.

Dean doesn't even know how, but he ends up cuddled against Castiel's side. He tells himself it's only because he wanted to be closer to the food, but hell, he knows well it's a very stupid lie.

It's not like he's not in control of what he's doing. Oh, no. He knows perfectly well what he's doing.

He knows that after eating his fourth slice of pizza, he presses even closer and rests his hand on Cas' hip. If he didn't know, he wouldn't understand Castiel's surprised, loud exhale. Dean is perfectly aware of moving his hand, while holding himself up on the other one so that he can lean in and press his lips against Castiel's neck.

"I'm trying to eat," Castiel breathes out, but it's soft and so very unconvincing.

Dean smiles to himself, knowing Cas must feel the smile on his skin as well. "I don't care," he mumbles and places an open-mouthed kiss there, and then another one, slowly working his way up to Castiel's jaw.

When he gets there, he feels the slight stubble there, and he brushes his trembling lips against it. There's just something... something that makes him want to do this, something that makes him feel all these things, something that makes him fall for Castiel all over again.

Nothing can tell Dean as well as this that maybe, they were actually made for each other. Why else would he fall for a man he doesn't remember so easily?

And maybe, just maybe, this really isn't just a crush. Maybe it's what his heart remembers, maybe it's the actual love he used to feel for Cas. Dean might not remember the man, but who says he didn't get his feelings back instead of his memories? He's not in the mood to complain, though, because being pressed against Castiel, begging for his attention with soft, small kisses, that feels good. It feels like heaven.

"Dean," Castiel breathes out, but it's not a complaint. Dean knows it isn't; he can hear it in Cas' voice.

"Yeah?" Dean murmurs and then Cas is finally facing him. Dean feels like he's going to get cross-eyed soon if he doesn't stop looking down at Castiel's lips.

Oh, well, being cross-eyed isn't that bad, is it?

It's not in Dean's head anymore – Castiel's hands really are everywhere. He shifts on the couch and the box of pizza, still not completely empty, falls off his knees, landing on the floor with a loud thump. Neither of them cares.

Dean's mouth is greedy, making the kiss a bit sloppy when it happens. Their mouths never part as they shift until Castiel's able to spread his legs on the couch and Dean's body slides between them. He's not scared to put all his weight on Cas – no, he enjoys it, and guessing from Cas' satisfied groan and his hands squeezing Dean's ass through his jeans, he enjoys it as well.

“What has – gotten into you?” Castiel stutters, his head thrown back as Dean mouths at his neck, licking it, sucking on it.

He pulls away, breathing out, as Castiel buries his fingers in Dean's hair and pulls at it. He looks up, and he knows that Castiel can feel the scar underneath his fingers.

“C'mere,” Cas murmurs in the end and pulling at Dean's hair again, he licks his lips.

Dean doesn't have to be asked twice. He moves upwards again, his hands pressed against Cas' chest.

He closes his eyes before he forces his tongue into Castiel's mouth, warm and *so* familiar by now. It's the familiarity Dean needs, seeks. It's what does it for him right now, anyway. The fact that he trusts Cas, feels like it's the right thing to do, believes his own senses that are telling him that this is right.

“I want you,” Dean says, although it sounds more like he's whining because he can't get what he wants.

But Castiel is right here, right underneath Dean's heavy body, not trying to escape. Dean knows, he knows it better than anything else in the world, that if he wants this man, he can have him. He sees the devotion in Cas' eyes as they exchange another look.

“Then for Christ's sake, have me,” Castiel demands in a voice that bears a shaky vibe, but sounds stern and one hundred percent sure anyway.

Dean shivers and his mouth goes down Castiel's jaw, the burn of Cas' stubble pleasant and provoking. Dean slowly gets to Castiel's neck and licking it, he goes to mark him as his – he closes his mouth around the soft, soft skin that tastes like sweat and aftershave and *Cas*, and starts sucking. He's not gentle about it – he knows he's going to leave a mark, and that's what he intends to do.

Castiel arches his back and moans, his body heat hitting Dean. His hands slip underneath Dean's t-shirt, quick and warm and so familiar with what they find there.

Dean's too focused to realize what Cas is doing, and when he feels Castiel's fingers run over his nipples, his mouth gives up and he gasps into Cas' skin, his crotch moving and meeting Castiel's.

"Fuck," Castiel groans low in his throat, his hands now resting on Dean's side, tickling, but not too much.

Dean licks the bruised skin on Castiel's neck repeatedly, loving how it burns hot under his tongue, loving how Cas squirms every single time.

Dean knows he doesn't want to go all the way, but he can't stop himself from moving his hips against Castiel's again and again, until they're both grinding against each other, panting.

"Cas," Dean moans, needy, as the movement drags on and his dick is throbbing in his too tight jeans, leaking and staining his underwear. "I don't –"

Cas' hands are even quicker getting out from underneath Dean's t-shirt. His fingers work on Dean's zip with practiced movement, and it takes only a second and there Cas is, stroking Dean's dick through his briefs.

"That good?" Cas mumbles, looking up. There's so much concern in his eyes, like he's forgetting about his own erection for the time being, his only mission to make Dean feel good.

Dean rests his head against Castiel's shoulder, speechless, simply nodding a few times.

It's a surprise when Cas stuffs his hand inside of his underwear, then, and his sweaty fingers envelope Dean's cock in a brand new sensation. It's good and soft and just enough of pressure and Dean wants to moan and scream and he wants to melt into Castiel's body. His head, still rested against Castiel's shoulder, is just one frantic mess of *Cas, Cas, Cas, Cas* as he can feel the orgasm building up in him.

Then Castiel slowly runs his thumb over the tip of Dean's cock, and that's it, Dean's whole body tenses, every muscle in his body squeezed, and Dean's pretty sure that if someone tried to cut him with a blade now, there would be no blood, because he stops existing.

He gives himself to Cas, completely, trusting him to hold him through this, and Castiel does. He never fails at this, Dean is pretty sure.

When he comes back, the return to the normal world almost leaving him annoyed as this was one of the best orgasms he's ever had – he's such a *teenager* Jesus – Cas' hand is gone and Cas himself is moving desperately against Dean, his hips jerking, looking for release.

Dean considers returning the favor and stuffing his hand down Castiel's pants, but he's stopped by the intense expression on Castiel's face.

His eyes are closed and he has no clue of the world or that it's still going on around him. He's simply pressed against Dean, and Dean can feel his dick through the denim of Cas' jeans as it rubs against his thigh at least three times a second.

Dean shoves his tongue into Cas' mouth, earning a moan. Castiel's hand travels up to Dean's shoulder blade and it stays there, fisting Dean's shirt.

"I just came in my pants," Castiel says with a giggle a few minutes later, Dean still sprawled on top of him. "How pathetic is that?"

"Shush," Dean commands. "It's still better than what I did." Which might as well be true, because Castiel at least didn't ruin the couch like Dean did. He has no idea, really, how his come ended up on the fabric there, but it did and it's already dried. Embarrassing.

"The only comforting thing about that is that it's not only my couch that you ruined," Castiel informs him and the atmosphere is so light and intimate it doesn't even bug Dean at the moment.

"I don't remember buying it," he says instead, "and therefore I have nothing to do with it."

"Aw, c'mon," Castiel whines and tries to shift under Dean's weight, possibly finding the position a bit uncomfortable by now.

"Well, anyway," Dean says, changing the subject. He's moving his fingers across Castiel's stubble, loving how it feels against his skin. "Sam told me to invite you over."

"When?"

"Saturday. He wants to have lunch together. What I really think is that he should get a girlfriend, get married and annoy other people with these things."

"It's sweet," Castiel argues and trades his fingers through Dean's hair. "I'll call him, but you can tell him he can count on me. I just hope it won't be as awkward as the dinner we had."

Dean rolls his eyes, pretending to be hurt by it. "I'm not being an asshole now, am I?"

Castiel narrows his eyes. "You kind of are. You're making my legs go numb, you know."

"Uh, sorry," Dean groans and shifts, climbing off of Castiel and sitting cross-legged on the other side of the couch. "I'm not that heavy, though. You're just a girl."

Castiel bats his eyelashes at him. "Your girl, sweetie."

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The Saturday lunch is really not awkward.

Dean tries to not think of it that way, but it generally feels like everything has gone back to normal. It feels like he has already remembered everything and now they're all back to being one big happy family.

All he knows from his and Castiel's past, though, is simply what Castiel has told him. Nothing of it is his own memory.

They chat about nothing at all, the conversation merely casual; and both Sam and Cas compliment Dean's cooking skills, because he prepared the meal this time. It's lasagna and this time, it really *is* delicious. And, well, if they end up throwing up again, it's quite easy to bond while bent over the toilet.

"Okay, kids," Sam says after they're done with the lunch. "Go have fun now."

Castiel laughs at his tone, but Dean gives him a scowl, sort of like, *Stop fucking embarrassing me*, but hands down, Castiel has known Sam for years. It's likely that nothing could surprise him now.

They end up in Dean's room.

"Well, it's just a guest room now, but it used to be mine," Dean explains before he realizes that Castiel must already know that. Cas' sympathetic smile proves that theory.

It takes them about five minutes to start making out. Dean basically can't keep his hands off of Castiel's tempting body, and now that he knows the face Cas makes when coming, he wants to see it again. Little does he care that his little brother is in the same apartment with them. They just need to keep it quiet.

It's an easy task as long as they're only kissing, Dean lying on his bed and Castiel straddling his hips.

But Dean has a serious problem with little moans and a little sound escapes his mouth every now and then. It's all good when there's Castiel's hot mouth covering his, breathing in all the noise and not letting it travel through the air. But once Cas' mouth is gone, Dean has to occasionally bite down on his fingers to prevent himself from moaning out loud.

It all happens in haste. Suddenly, Dean is naked and so is Cas, and he's not even sure when they lost their clothes. It just happened, their mouths always connected in a messy kiss.

It's flesh against flesh, so close. And for Dean, it's their first time. He concentrates on that.

"We're doing this," Dean breathes out, as if surprised, Cas already positioned between his legs. "We're doing this with Sam in the apartment." And then he giggles, loud and genuine.

"He didn't kill us for worse," Castiel informs him with a grin, his hands travelling up Dean's inner thighs. "He'll live."

Dean looks down at Cas' hands and gasps when the gentle touch turns into a needy, wild one, and Cas digs his nails into the soft skin, dragging them upwards, leaving red marks behind.

Dean notices that the hickey he left on Cas' neck two days ago is still there, even though it's starting to fade.

He makes a mental note to make at least dozen more of them, everywhere, all around Castiel's body – on his hipbone, on his collar bone, his elbow, belly button, ribs. Everywhere.

Having sex with Castiel is the best experience Dean remembers – mostly because Cas knows Dean’s body by now. He knows where to touch him to drive him absolutely mad, and he knows how to kiss him to make him whine and ask for more. He knows exactly how to move his fingers when preparing him; knows how to do it until Dean’s a restless, whining little mess writhing underneath him, hopelessly trying to fuck himself on Castiel’s fingers.

At one point, as Castiel guides himself inside, Dean lets out a loud moan, and he sounds like a slut to himself – so willing to take anything Cas could give him, ready to let him know how much he loves it.

“Shh,” Cas whispers, moving in him for the first time, slow and teasing. “You need to stay quiet, love.”

Dean makes a grimace and shakes his head. “Can’t,” he breathes out and as Castiel leans closer, covering Dean’s body with his while thrusting into him, Dean grabs his shoulders and holds on to them.

“You have to,” Castiel urges. His voice is breathy, Dean’s pretty sure he doesn’t even know what he’s saying.

But when Dean moans again and the volume in the living room goes up, Castiel giggles. “Forgot you’re so loud.”

“Shut up,” Dean manages to squeeze out, moving his hips desperately to meet Cas’ thrusts halfway, trying to quicken the pace.

“No, *you* need to shut up,” Castiel corrects him and Dean seriously has no idea how he is even capable of forming real sentences right now. The bed sheets are sticking to his back, his legs wrapped around Cas’ waist and pushing him even closer.

Castiel shoves two fingers into Dean’s mouth in the exact moment as his dick hits Dean’s prostate.

Dean arches his back and sucks on Castiel’s fingers, biting down on them, not even careful enough to not make it bleed. He just – he just can’t find it in him to care right now.

Before losing it for good, Dean wonders whether it was this good when they hooked up that first time, because this – this makes Dean see red with passion. He doesn’t want to let go of this moment, even though his body is protesting, letting him know that this can’t go on forever.

“Feels so good,” Castiel mumbles, his fingers now hooked over the row of Dean’s sharp teeth, or else they would slip out, just like that. Castiel is losing it as well, and it’s a beautiful sight. “So fuckin’ good.”

Dean says something back, the words slurred and incoherent, lost in the hurt reddened skin of Castiel’s fingers. *How could have I ever forgotten this, Jesus fuck*, goes through Dean’s mind.

The act keeps dragging on and on until Dean’s fingers slip down Castiel’s sweaty shoulder. Castiel’s lips are everywhere now, mostly licking and sucking on Dean’s nipples, and it’s just,

it's too much. It's too much to see how well Castiel knows him, knows how to make love to him, and Dean just can't take it anymore.

He whines around Castiel's fingers, desperate, and his fingers awkwardly wrap around his own dick, going in a messy, unsteady rhythm.

"Oh, fuck," Castiel spits out when Dean comes without a warning and tightens around Cas, trapping him inside for the following seconds. Dean feels like he might go crazy, filled to the top, coming and coming and coming for minutes, his come staining both his and Castiel's stomach. He can't catch his breath for a second, mouth wide open and eyes closed, just gasping. The only thing keeping him alive is his heart beating a frantic rhythm, and Castiel pressing against him, asking for permission to move again.

Dean finds his breath eventually, and relaxes. It doesn't take long for Castiel to come, their fingers twined. Dean feels like Castiel might break his hand, crack all the little bones in it, but he doesn't care.

He's completely exhausted and almost hurting when Cas finally comes inside of him, collapsing on top of him only a minute later, just as exhausted.

Dean waits for Cas to regain his balance and respect gravity again, trading his fingers through his dark brown hair, breathing him in. He watches Cas' head, resting against his chest, going up and down as Dean breathes. And yes, it does feel normal.

"Damn, I missed this way too much," Castiel informs him when he comes back to himself again. "Although I do feel like a teenager hiding in my boyfriend's bed, afraid we might get caught. But yes, worth it. Missed it too much."

Dean remembers the first conversation they had after he woke up – the one where Castiel admitted he only talks too much if he's nervous. And okay, Dean gets it. He gets that Cas might be nervous right now, but he wants to make it go away somehow.

"I wish I could remember already," he says with a grin on his face. He doesn't know where it comes from, but he's pretty sure he *will* remember at some point. It's not just wishful thinking again.

"Me too," Castiel agrees in a little sadder voice than Dean would have liked.

"Okay," he says and catching Cas' shoulders, he moves him gently to the side, just to let him know he's about to get up. "Old man needs to pee. But I'm so ready for round two, you don't even know."

"I bet, cowboy," Castiel smirks and winks at Dean, looking absolutely delicious like this – naked, in Dean's bed.

Before Dean makes it to the guest bathroom, he can feel Cas' come running down his thighs. He shivers, because it's uncomfortable, but before he does anything about it, he relieves himself. Only then does he grab a towel and marches back into the room.

"You got some mess to clean up," he says, "and you can either use this or your mouth."

Chapter Three

Castiel ends up spending the night in Dean's bed. It's a small bed, in that matter, and they're constantly pressed against each other, which is probably why they only go to sleep around three, both absolutely exhausted and absolutely sore.

Despite that, Dean wakes up around seven in the morning. He panics for a second, thinking it's Monday and that Cas is going to be late for work, but then he remembers it's only Sunday. They basically have another day to spend together.

Dean shifts in the bed, trying to find himself a more comfortable position as he suspects that's why he woke up. He sort of relies on the thought that Castiel is not a light sleeper, but that ends up to have been a bad assumption, because Castiel groans and then opens his eyes slowly.

"Sorry I woke you up," Dean whispers, trying not to ruin the sleepy expression on Castiel's face, and not to wake Sam up by talking too loud. They've put Sam through enough during the night.

"I don't mind," Castiel murmurs and nuzzles his face against Dean's shoulder. "You had a bad dream?"

"No. Don't know what woke me up."

"Let's go back to sleep, then?"

"Sure," Dean murmurs quietly and forces a kiss somewhere into Castiel's hair.

Castiel falls back asleep within seconds; Dean can tell by how limp he goes by his side and how his breathing goes even again. But Dean himself can't fall asleep again for the love of him.

It gives him a lot of time to think. He doesn't feel like getting up and leaving Cas alone here, and so he just scoots closer to him – he's not sure how that is even possible, but it is – and lets himself get lost in his thoughts, his eyes closed.

He reaches a lot of solutions that morning, while Castiel is still asleep. He is so full of love he could explode any second, and by now, he's sure that while it's also something he developed over the past few weeks, most if it is just what he felt towards Cas before.

Castiel doesn't wake up until half past nine and Dean is fucking restless by then.

"Have you even gone back to sleep?" Castiel asks with a grimace as he sits up in the bed and rubs his eyes, trying to fight off the sleep that's still getting to him.

Dean shrugs. "I couldn't. But I spent the time thinking and... Listen." Dean shifts on the bed and sits up, facing Castiel.

"Yeah?"

“Could I move in with you again?” Dean asks in a small voice, as if thinking Cas might actually turn him down.

Castiel looks confused for a second, and then, only a second later, he looks absolutely fresh. His eyes are wide, no leftovers of sleep in them whatsoever. “Are you serious? Do you – you actually mean this?”

Dean nods and bites down on his lip shyly, gathering the sheets around him because they’re still naked and he feels vulnerable anyway. “Yeah. Maybe it will help me remember and I – I want to be with you.”

“Why the sudden change? I thought – “

“Well, back then, you really were just a stranger to me, you know? I didn’t lie about that. But...” Dean trails off and looks around him, and at Castiel, a small smile fighting its way onto his face. “You’re not a stranger anymore. I – I love you. And I know I loved you before. And if that doesn’t mean that we should be together, then I don’t know what does.”

Castiel falls silent, his face unreadable, the only emotion coming through being utter confusion. Dean has been full of surprises recently, he knows that, but no answer leaves him restless.

“So? Is that a yes or a no?”

Another second of silence and Dean is pretty sure he will blow up. He knows he shouldn’t, but he lets the silent pause get to him – what if this is not what Castiel wants, what if he likes it when it’s casual like this? What if he, in the end, doesn’t want to put up with Dean’s memory loss anymore, and he specifically doesn’t want to live with him under one roof? What if he thinks this arrangement is much better, what if he doesn’t want Dean to remember anymore?

The longer he has to wait, the more ridiculous his thoughts and questions get, and he fidgets, tearing his gaze away from Castiel.

“Could you fucking please say something?” Dean gets out through his gritted teeth.

“Oh,” Castiel breathes out and rubs his face. “I didn’t even realize I never said anything, I was just – I didn’t expect this, I mean, I wanted it to happen but I certainly didn’t think it would happen this soon and – what I’m rambling about is of *course* it’s a yes. I just – whoah.”

Dean lets a small smile dance onto his lips. “Don’t ever do that to me again, I seriously thought you’d tell me to fuck off.”

Castiel shakes his head. “I wouldn’t. I’m sorry, I just got lost in my thoughts – and my surprise, Jesus.”

“You looked like you saw a ghost or something, though,” Dean informs him and scoots closer to Cas, planting a small kiss near the corner of his mouth. “Did you?”

Castiel smiles softly, only a small curve of his lips. “No, I didn’t.”

Dean, for some reason, doesn’t believe him. Perhaps it’s the uncertain smile that gives it away, but Dean knows there’s something wrong.

It occurs to Dean that Castiel must have lost himself in his own memories, most likely of them being together before the car accident. He doesn’t want to dig into that, and so he stays silent, waiting for Castiel to say something. The air around them has gotten thick, nothing like the atmosphere they had shared not such a long time ago. Dean doesn’t dare to ask, and Castiel perhaps doesn’t dare to talk about it without permission.

“Does breakfast in bed sound good to you?” Castiel asks in the end, trying to make his voice sound less sad and more enthusiastic.

Dean is glad they dropped the whole house issue for now, although he knows he will bring it up sooner or later. Sooner, probably.

“Sounds more than good,” he says with a smile and he straightens his legs. “Should I get us some?”

“No,” Castiel says quickly and even waves his hand, motioning that Dean should stay exactly where he is. “I’ll take care of it. You just wait here for me, okay?”

Dean’s lips curl in an appreciative grimace and he nods and watches Castiel put on his shirt and underwear. “Sure. Won’t even move from this spot, if you wish.”

“Yeah,” Castiel huffs out a breath and before Dean can examine his face a little more, he’s out of the room, closing the door behind him.

Dean stays true to his promise at first, waiting for Castiel rather patiently. He only gets up to pee and then falls back onto his bed, hands above his head, staring up at the ceiling. Despite Castiel’s strange behavior in the past few minutes, Dean still feels weightless.

It’s awful, really, but he thinks that maybe that’s what he finds so intriguing about Castiel – the way he is able to make him feel. Dean loves that. He, of course, loves many other things about him, and he loves them enough to even admit to himself that it is love. If it wasn’t love enough, he wouldn’t even consider it, he’s sure about that.

His stomach rumbles, then, interrupting the flow of his thoughts. He’s determined to stay in bed and wait for Cas at first, but when it rumbles again and it actually feels rather uncomfortable this time, Dean hops off the bed, putting on his briefs and a t-shirt.

He’s barefoot, making practically no sound as he reaches the kitchen.

Dean almost walks in, enters the room, when something startles him and makes him stop dead in his tracks. Castiel is not alone in the kitchen – Sam is there, too, and they’re talking.

That, of course, wouldn’t make Dean stop from walking in. It’s the expression on Sam’s face that does that – it’s disoriented and yes, if Dean narrows his eyes and looks closely, Sam’s

mad. Sam's definitely mad at Castiel, and Castiel is saying something, rushed, in a hushed voice.

"What?!" Sam snaps then, exasperated, with lips in a thin line. His voice is up and it reaches Dean just finely, and Sam seems to realize he's too loud because when he continues, it's quieter and Dean has to focus to hear what he's saying. "What the hell are you telling me here?"

Castiel opens his mouth and says something, but it doesn't reach Dean's ears. Dean takes a reluctant step, then, almost reaching the kitchen's doorstep. He's too caught up in this, not understanding what's happening, to care about getting seen too much.

"...and we were fighting over it and that's when I lost focus and the truck hit us."

"That's just sick," Sam spits out and runs his fingers through his longish hair, looking desperate and helpless, like he doesn't know what to do.

Dean frowns and he wants to step up, protect his brother, but once he knows what this conversation is about, he doesn't dare to interrupt. He wants to know more, because something is telling him that this is not just casual talking while making breakfast – they're exchanging secrets there, or at least Castiel is. And considering Sam's expression, it's not something shiny and full of unicorns and rainbows.

"When do you want to tell him?" Sam adds then, a questioning look on his face.

"I don't know," Castiel whines and he finally puts down the butter knife. "I mean, I wanted to tell him. But he doesn't remember and everything's going well and –"

"And when he *does* remember?" Sam cuts him off mercilessly.

Castiel exhales deeply. "I have no idea. But it will happen, and then... I guess then he's going to hate me. Just like he hated me before the accident."

"I just –" Sam trails off and shakes his head, the expression on his face so full of disgust it's more unsettling to Dean than the words being said. "Why the fuck would you cheat on him, Cas? You *love* Dean."

Dean's mouth drops open involuntarily, and he shakes his head to himself, like *no, that's not possible, they know I'm listening and they're playing a stupid prank on me, this time for real*.

"I do!" Cas whisper-shouts, red in the face. "We were at a party and Dean left early because he wasn't feeling well and I got *so* drunk and I lost control of myself and it *happened* and I hate myself for it and if I could I would undo it, but that's not possible as far as I know."

Sam almost growls low in his throat and then shakes his head, his chest heaving with anger. "You're so fucking stupid sometimes," he says in the end, his voice sounding calmer.

"I know," Cas utters, the words barely making it all the way to Dean. "I can't even imagine what happens when he remembers or finds out. Sam," Cas says, alarmed, "You won't tell him, will you?"

“Are you kidding me?”

“He just – he asked me if he could move in with me and I didn’t know what to say because I feel so fucking guilty and I – I had to tell someone.”

“You should have told him,” Sam tells him, face blank and emotionless now. “Because if you think I’m going to keep your dirty little secret, then you are fucking wr – “ Sam looks up in that moment and his eyes meet Dean’s. His eyes widen. “Oh, shit.”

Castiel turns around, then, fear written all over his face.

He almost looks adorable in his t-shirt from the day before and his underwear, Dean thinks dumbly. The innocently twisted look on his face just adds to the adorableness.

“Dean – “ Castiel tries, making a step forwards. He’s not sure if Dean’s heard everything, and that’s why he doesn’t dare to say anything else in case there’s a way out of this situation.

Dean leans against the doorway, his knees weak, ready to betray him. He feels *cold*, cold all over as both Sam and Castiel stare at him. He distinctly realizes he’s shaking, and he goes from angry to sad in the span of two nanoseconds.

“If you could get your clothes,” he says then, not looking at Castiel but addressing the words to him, “and get the fuck out of here, please.”

“Dean...” Castiel trails off, trying again.

Dean’s head snaps up and although he doesn’t want to, he makes the eye contact Castiel wishes for so badly. He hopes the hurt he’s feeling all over himself is readable on his face, and he hopes Castiel remembers it for the rest of his life.

“Just get out of here. Please.” The ‘please’ is awful and burns Dean’s lips like he just pressed a burning candle against them and held it there for minutes, letting the wax dry on his chin. But it’s what he needs. He needs Castiel out of this – out of *Sam’s* apartment, and he needs it now.

Castiel doesn’t make any more attempts to say something or to stay. He brushes past Dean, trying not to touch him while doing so, and in a minute or two, Dean can hear the door close as Castiel leaves the apartment. Dean’s eyes flutter closed, but he allows himself to rest only for a second.

“Dean?” Sam voice is soft, cautious.

“Yeah?”

“I didn’t know about it, okay? I had no idea – “

“I know,” Dean cuts him off tiredly. “I heard the whole conversation. Well, most of it, anyway.” And stupidly, he wishes he didn’t. He wishes he had his lie back.

“Are you okay?” Sam offers, still sounding careful and uncertain.

Dean opens his eyes and straightens up. Sam’s still standing where he’d stood when Dean walked in on them. The disoriented expression is still plastered on his face, but the anger is gone and Dean hates to see pity there instead.

“Peachy,” Dean mumbles. “I’ll be in my room.”

Sam doesn’t dare to stop him and really, even if he did try, Dean wouldn’t listen. He relies on his feet to get him to the guest room and when they do, he closes the door behind him and eyeing the messed up sheets, he goes ‘fuck it’ in his head and falls on top of them.

Castiel’s scent immediately fills his nostrils and Dean rubs his face, wondering how come there are no tears running down his face. Because he feels like *shit*. Complete, utter shit – he feels like a used napkin, or even worse, used toilet paper. Yeah, pretty accurate. It’s like Castiel has wiped his ass with Dean’s feelings, and did a nice job of it.

Dean rolls onto his stomach and holding his breath, he buries his face in the pillow. He wonders if he could suffocate, if he could kill himself like this.

Out of all things, the numbness is the worst. Dean feels a variety of other things, but this is getting to him, eating at him, making him go crazy – yes, numbness can do that.

He doesn’t know what to do with himself, and he doesn’t understand the mess that his mind is at the moment at all. It’s just a lot of facts cramped in a space too small. Castiel cheated on him. Dean hated him for it. They were fighting over it when they got into the car accident. Dean doesn’t remember. Dean hates Castiel for it. He hates him for that and for more – for lying to him, for letting Dean fall for him despite knowing it wasn’t so ideal right before the accident.

Dean wonders, and doesn’t know, why he is so fucking surprised. Of course there’s a catch. He used to think that the stupid memory loss was the catch, but he was so wrong.

This catch is much, much worse.

He almost laughs into the pillow when he remembers Dr. Simpson and what she said such a long time ago.

And your mind’s obviously blocking any memories of your husband.

Next time he goes to the hospital for a check-up, he simply ought to tell her how clever she was.

He finally holds himself up on his elbows and takes a deep breath. This method is obviously not affective, but he’s in too much mental pain to actually get up and do something about the fact he’s still alive.

The moment all the other emotions catch up with him, he wishes to have the numbness back. He is, once again, completely surprised with what the strongest emotion is – it’s love.

“Fuck,” he swears then and rolling onto his back, he covers his eyes with his hand. “Fuck. Fuck this shit. Fuck, fuck.”

He has no idea how many times he says it in the end, but it brings tears to his eyes as a resolution and his face scrunches up. He thinks that maybe, these are the last tears he can cry for Castiel. Maybe he already cried and wasted them all before the car accident. Maybe there’s not much left of the tears.

Maybe there’s not much left of him.

It’s a distressing idea, but he falls asleep thinking exactly that.

Intermezzo

Dean’s head is throbbing as if his brain was trying to get out of there, using hammers and nails and even axes, if he says so.

“I think I’ll go home,” he tells Cas, having to talk louder than he’d like, making the headache even worse. The music is awful, filling the room and obviously entertaining anyone but him.

It’s not that he hates going to parties with Castiel, not even when it’s one of Cas’ colleagues birthday party --

Well, he actually does hate it. A lot.

Cas has already had too much to drink, but there’s another glass with whiskey in his hand. “You sure, D.?”

“Don’t call me that,” Dean frowns. It’s what Cas always calls him when he gets drunk – it’s a habit he can’t shake off. “And yeah. Do you want to come, too?”

Castiel bites down on his lip and he looks guilty when he looks up with his glassy eyes. “I’m kind of having fun. Would you, um, mind if I stayed here for the night? You know Anna lets various people crash on her couch.”

Dean sighs, but nods. “Yeah, I know, baby. Are you sure you don’t want to come home with me?”

The DJ, or whoever is responsible for the music, puts Lady Gaga on and Dean feels like he’s going to punch someone in the face really soon; unless his head explodes before he can do anything.

“Pretty sure. In case it’s okay?”

Dean manages to give his husband a smile, even though he doesn’t really feel like it’s okay. “Don’t get too drunk.”

“And you be careful,” Castiel says right back.

Before Dean disappears from the party, Castiel catches his wrist and pulls him closer, forcing a sloppy kiss onto his lips. It tastes like booze and it's quite disgusting.

"Love ya," Castiel murmurs into the kiss and even though it *is* disgusting and it makes Dean's stomach twist, he can't hold back the giggle.

"Love you too. And seriously, don't drink too much."

*

Castiel did drink too much. When he gets home the next day, it's early in the morning, but Dean's already up.

"Jesus," he murmurs, worry written all over his face. "How are you even walking?"

Castiel's got dark bags under his eyes, and his pace is pale, so pale it could be easily compared to chalk. Dean jumps up from behind the kitchen table and crosses the room to get to Cas.

"You okay?" he asks in a quiet voice, trying not to make his husband's headache worse – because he must have one motherfucker of a headache right now.

Castiel shakes his head.

"Gonna throw up," he announces and still mastering the ability to walk, he goes right for their bathroom.

Dean follows him, frowning. He knew Castiel would drink, but he didn't think he would drink this much. When did the party end, for Christ's sake? Fifteen minutes ago or what?

Castiel's throwing up session doesn't last all that long. He only throws up once, but the gagging sound is sharp in Dean's ears. He massages Cas' back through it. In a minute, the strong odor of vomit travels through the air to Dean and although he can smell booze in it, it's not that strong. It's still disgusting, though.

Once Cas is done with this lovely activity, he sits back on his heels, then proceeds to sit down and lean his head against the wall. He wipes his mouth with the back of his hand and looks up at Dean with his best innocent eyes.

"Sorry," he says and his words are a bit slurred, probably thanks to his state.

"It's okay," Dean reassures him and then helps him up. "Let's get you to bed."

*

Castiel sleeps nearly through the whole day, and Dean doesn't mind. He wakes up around four, though, and he looks remarkably better compared to how he looked when he got home.

"That was one wild party, huh?" Dean jokes when Cas joins him on their couch. Dean's watching baseball, but he mutes the TV and aims his attention completely at his husband.

“Yeah,” Castiel breathes out. He sits down a considerable distance from Dean, and he rubs his face. “I’m afraid I’ve got to tell you something.”

Dean frowns. “Did something happen?”

Castiel looks uncertain for a second, opening and closing his mouth a few times as if he couldn’t decide what to say or whether to say something at all. His eyes are penetrating the cushions with an intense glare, his voice barely audible when he finally speaks.

“It’s kind of a blur,” he mumbles, “But I’m like, seventy-five percent sure I, uh, hooked up with one of my colleagues.”

Dean laughs, the sound small and nervous. “What?”

Castiel finally looks up, and Dean can see it there, can see it on Castiel’s face, all over it, that what he’s telling him is true. His heart skips a beat, and then another one, and Dean feels like he might just collapse to the ground in a million small pieces, sharp and broken.

“Who?” Dean breathes out in the end. He’s surprised when his voice doesn’t break, doesn’t even shake at that matter, because inside, he’s shaking alright.

“Uh, Robbie?” Castiel peeps up, his eyes breaking the eye-contact again as if he couldn’t even look at Dean. “He’s one of our residents in the hospital.”

Dean tears up involuntarily, ashamed that he can’t hold it back, not even for the time being. He rubs his face hastily, hoping Castiel didn’t see.

“I’m so sorry, Dean,” Castiel pleads all of a sudden, his eyes wide and glued to Dean’s face again, his voice raised and loud with urgency. “I got so fucking drunk and I didn’t know what I was doing, and suddenly this guy is all over me and – “

“Jesus, shut up,” Dean cuts him off, every word forever burnt into his brain so he can have nightmares about it. “Shut up.”

“Dean,” Castiel repeats and even that hurts, hurts on such a personal level Dean wants to crawl out of his skin and simply dissolve into nothing, into thin air, just so that he could stop thinking and forget what just happened.

“I have to go,” Dean exhales in a surprised sigh and gets up from the couch, leaving Castiel and their house behind. As he approaches his car, he thinks; how the hell do these things happen? One moment you think you’re inseparable and you would die for that person, and then the person tells you you haven’t been good enough.

Well, that’s what Dean makes out of it, anyway. Why else would Castiel go to someone else?

*

He’s sitting behind the wheel of his Baby. He’s been driving for three hours now, stopping for gas an hour ago.

With the fifth hour in the car, Dean finally starts crying and his vision blurs. He's on some abandoned dusty road in the middle of nowhere, and his fists are hitting the wheel so hard he's afraid it will break his fingers. It hurts, but it's nothing like what he feels inside.

He does not know where he is headed. And not just with his car. He has no idea where his mind is running to, either.

*

Dean gets back home a few minutes past three in the morning. He finds Castiel curled up in a ball on the couch, asleep. He wants to take a blanket and tuck him in at first, but then he realizes what happened and he absently goes to their bedroom.

It's hard to fall asleep lying next to an empty space, and he grows cold and angry and silently sad before he drifts off.

They make it a rule then. Castiel takes the couch every night, and Dean the bed, fearing it more and more every night.

They barely talk.

*

Dean is trying to write the ending to his article at his favorite café when his phone rings. He doesn't want to answer it at first, seeing Castiel's name written across the screen, but he snaps and does answer, bringing the phone up to his ear without saying a word.

"Dean?" Castiel's voice is uncertain. It's the first time Dean has picked up when Cas called ever since that afternoon when Castiel told him.

"Yeah," Dean utters.

"I'm getting home early. So unless you're, um, home already, I could pick you up, I guess?"

"I'm at the café. Pick me up in half an hour if you want."

Castiel sounds genuinely happy and relieved when he responds. "That's great. I'll be there."

They hang up, then, without saying bye or uttering any other word. Dean's staring down at the blank page in front of him, and he's pretty sure he won't write down anything in the following thirty minutes.

He has no idea why he just agreed to Castiel's plan, no idea why he even wants to bother with him now, after days and days.

Those have been most likely the worst days of Dean's life, and he blames it on Cas without much hesitation. He barely talked to anyone, not even Sam. He knows Sam would notice there's something wrong and Dean just – he doesn't think he could just talk to anyone about what happened. It's bubbling up inside him, pushed deep down, but it still hurts and Dean's

chest is so, *so* empty most of the time that he's sure he could put a knife through it and it would come out clean.

Castiel is a few minutes early and the moment Dean notices his car, he pretends to be writing frantically. He's strangely pleased when Castiel doesn't dare to come inside.

His heart is furious, pumping against Dean's ribcage as if trying to escape, when he finally packs his stuff and paying for the coffee he had, leaves the café.

He manages to get to the passenger seat without shooting a glance in Castiel's direction, but once he's inside, breathing in the oh-so familiar smell of the car, he can't help himself. He looks to the side and meets Castiel's eyes that are watching him, not even blinking.

"Hey," Castiel says. He looks nervous, Dean can feel the aura all around him. "I'm really glad you're talking to me again. Do you want to go out for dinner? We don't have to head straight home, we could always stop at some restaurant and –"

"I don't want to have dinner with you," Dean cuts him off and breaks the eye contact, looking to the other side instead, out of the window.

The engine's running and the radio is on, some shitty 90s pop song filling the air, and it's definitely not enough to fight the sudden silence.

"You're still mad at me," Castiel says after a while, not so surprised at all. He escapes the crazy traffic in front of them and takes a turn to the right, going for the highway to circle the city that way.

Dean wants to say something to that, perhaps defend his actions or explain to Castiel why this is happening, why their relationship is shattered all around them, why he's mad at him. But then he realizes that Castiel knows; Castiel knows very well what happened, knows that there's no way out of this. Or is there?

"If you could just talk to me," Castiel says in a whiny voice. "If we talked, maybe we could fix it somehow."

Dean snorts. "I don't think talking would take us back to that night so that I could drag you home with me. But in the end, if it hadn't happened that night, it would have happened later." Dean knows he sounds bitter, and he's fumbling with his fingers just to keep himself busy, just to prevent himself from tearing up again because the pain hasn't eased on him at all, it's still as fresh and vicious as it was all those days ago.

Castiel seems outraged by what Dean said, his foot pushing down on the gas pedal. "You're so wrong about me, Dean."

"Oh, yeah?"

"Yeah," Cas insists. "I *know* it was a mistake and I would never, *ever* do something like that again, and I will never touch alcohol again."

“You’re just blaming it on the alcohol, but if you didn’t want it to happen, that it wouldn’t have happened,” Dean spits out.

“Fuck, the only person I want to have sex with is *you*, Dean.”

“You should have said that to *Robbie*,” Dean informs him in the same bitter voice, his lips curling about the guy’s name like it’s poisonous.

“I was drunk,” Castiel emphasizes for the thousandth time and Dean fidgets in his seat, shooting a death glare in Castiel’s direction. He already regrets taking the ride with him, thank you very much. He doesn’t need this conversation to feel even shittier.

“That’s not an excuse, okay?” he argues, his voice going up as he gets angrier and angrier about the whole thing. “Do you remember how we met, Cas?”

Castiel purses his lips. “At a club.”

“Yes. And we were both drunk, and we hooked up. And you do the same thing with some kid you barely even know?”

Castiel breathes out. “I never realized you see it that way,” he admits, quiet.

“Jesus, Castiel!” Dean exclaims, wishing he could kick something or punch something.

“What?!” Cas actually shouts. “I know I’m stupid and I know I fucked up,” he says, his words clear and cutting through the thick air. He peels his eyes off the road and looks at Dean. “And I said I’m fucking sorry. I am. But I love you and I will fight for this, okay? Because it might have started with a hook up, but fuck, it’s not like I could ever give up on us.”

Dean huffs out a breath exasperatedly, the words ‘I love you’ stinging him and taking the breath out of him. “I can’t even fucking trust you right now.”

“Well,” Castiel says, his eyes still only glancing at the road from time to time, “I’ll just have to wait till you trust me again.”

Dean’s just about to open his mouth and say he’s not sure if he’ll trust Castiel ever again, say he’s not sure if they shouldn’t just go for a divorce – which is exaggerating the whole thing, but Dean feels that way anyway – when he hears a car horn blaring loudly and repeatedly.

Dean’s eyes jump to the road and he, with horror, notices that Castiel has led their car to the wrong lane.

“Watch out!” he yells and tries to catch the wheel between his shaky fingers, because while Castiel’s going fast, way too fast, the truck that’s closing up on them is even faster.

Too fast, actually.

Dean can hear Castiel’s surprised shriek as he tries to get out of the truck’s way, and he can hear the tires screeching against the asphalt, and then the truck hits their car and Dean doesn’t feel anything at all.

Distinctly, he realizes he's screaming as the force pushes him out of his seat. His head hits the windshield and Dean's pretty sure it cracked his head open; he doesn't scream, though, because as the fresh air hits his bloody face, he loses consciousness.

The last thing that flashes through his mind is, peculiarly, not his life – he thinks about Castiel and whether he's okay. And then Dean wonders if he'll die.

He could. He might. He should.

Chapter Four

Dean wakes up with his head full of memories he doesn't want anymore. He rubs his eyes, feeling exhausted, like he hasn't gotten any sleep in *years*. He buries his nose in the pillow with a soft groan on the top of his tongue, and breathes out.

He hears the TV running in the living room and he thinks of joining Sam and trying to watch something lame and meaningless with him, but even though he needs distraction, any kind of it, actually, he wants to be alone.

He *needs* to be alone, with the memories he no longer wants inside his head. The numbness has gotten back to him, and so he just thinks he shouldn't have remembered, and he shouldn't have overheard Sam's and Cas' conversation. Everything would be peachy for real.

It's stupid, because he *would* remember or find out at some point, anyway, but this was like a punch in the face.

For a second, he dumbly thinks he deserves this, because everything must happen for a reason, right, but then he shakes his head at himself. Like fuck he deserves this. He doesn't.

As he reaches out to the nightstand to get his phone, an invisible hand is squeezing his gut, telling him not to do this. There are four missed calls and two texts. He's tempted to listen to his voicemail, but he decides against it and deletes everything. He looks at the texts before he can do the same with them.

I know you're angry with me, but please, please don't shut me out again.

And then, an hour later.

Whenever you decide to call, I'll answer. I love you.

Dean doesn't think he'll ever decide to call.

He deletes the texts, then, but despite the feeling in his gut, he keeps Castiel's number safe in his contacts. He puts the phone back on the nightstand, then, and lets himself fall back onto his back.

He really considers it a blessing when he falls asleep again, and it must be a miracle that he doesn't dream this time at all.

*

“He didn’t call today,” Dean says in five days as they’re sprawled on the couch in Sam’s apartment, both drinking beer.

Sam hums. “And are you glad about it or not?”

Dean shrugs, toying with the half-empty bottle in his hands. “I guess. I did want him to stop calling, didn’t I?”

“Yeah, you complained about it a lot,” Sam agrees and empties his bottle with one giant gulp. Dean can hear him *swallow*, for Christ’s sake. “The question is, are you glad now that he stopped?”

Dean grins to himself when he realizes that these conversations are actually his therapy sessions. After his first day of isolating himself from the world, they’ve talked a lot. And it actually helped, which was kind of a surprise to Dean, because he never thought talking about his issues would help – he always thought it’s just unnecessarily painful and doesn’t solve anything. The evenings with his little brother have proven him wrong.

“I guess I’m just surprised he gave up so quickly, you know?” he explains, his voice a bit bitter. He wraps his fingers around the neck of the bottle as he brings it up to his lips for a quick sip.

Sam snorts next to him. “Dude. You never picked up. Besides, I think he’s had enough of it. He’s just giving you time, and you can’t say he didn’t try.”

“Oh, he’s ‘had enough of it’, well I’m sorry I hurt his feelings.”

“You’re a stubborn idiot sometimes,” Sam tells him with a frown, a wrinkle forming in the middle of his forehead. “You put him through a lot, you know.”

“You mean in the past few months?” Dean asks and raises an eyebrow at his brother. “You mean in the past few months when he constantly lied to me about how perfect our marriage was and how much we loved each other and all the other bullshit? He kind of forgot to mention he fucking cheated on me during those sweet times. ‘I put him through a lot’, my ass, Sam.”

“Well,” Sam sighs and shrugs, “I guess you’ll get it one day. Until then, I’ll have to deal with your emotional excesses.”

“‘Excesses’?” Dean scrunches up his nose. “Of course you don’t have a girlfriend if you use words like that.”

“See, wrong again,” Sam says with a lop-sided grin. “I do have a girlfriend.”

“You’re bullshitting me right now,” Dean insists and he can’t help the smile tugging at his lips. “Sammy got himself a girl? Is she pretty?” When Sam shoots him a displeased look, Dean corrects himself. “I mean, is she nice?”

“Yeah,” Sam nods and the expression on his face changes rapidly, from normal to dreamy, dimples making an appearance. “You two should meet. You’d like her.”

“Man,” Dean says and shakes his head at Sam, like a proud father would. “Why have you been so mysterious about this? I literally thought you’re too much of a pussy to get some.”

Sam nudges him in the side. “Because of comments like this, you know,” he teases him. “Her name’s Jess, by the way.”

“Well, good for you,” Dean tells him, keeping any other comments to himself – he’s got some up his sleeve, though, and he’s almost sorry he can’t say them out loud. “Listen, man – do you need me to move out? I don’t want to be in the way of something.”

“No,” Sam says quickly and waves his hand. “It’s not even that serious. Besides, I would never kick you out like that, okay? You can stay for as long as you need to.”

Dean nods. “Thanks. But I think I should start looking for some small apartment or something. I can’t stay here forever.”

Sam chances a glance at Dean, sighing. He doesn’t like it, Dean knows he doesn’t. Hell, Dean doesn’t like it either, but what can he do? He’s not the one who cheated, and besides, all the drama that went down with it, it’s too much. He can’t overlook it – or, to put it better, he doesn’t want to. Not right now, and in his mind, not ever.

“I’m sorry you don’t think you could work it out,” Sam utters in the end in a small voice, as if already regretting letting it out.

Dean doesn’t say anything to it, though.

*

“Come on, Sam,” Dean practically begs now.

“No,” Sam shakes his head as he says so for the thousandth time in the past twenty minutes. He looks up from the file he’s been studying, then, and sighs. “I mean it, Dean. No.”

Dean has been trying to lure Sam out for the past half an hour, but it’s to no avail. Sam is like a stone wall Dean is throwing rocks against.

“Why the hell can’t you just go clubbing with me?” Dean insists with a pleading expression on his face.

He feels restless, and he needs to do something to make his mind go blank. He needs *booze*, but drinking locked up in the guest room is really not an option. But clubbing is – except he doesn’t want to go alone and Sam’s not showing any interest. Which is, to put it gently, driving him *mad*.

“Uh, because I’m not twenty-one anymore? And because I’ve got work to do.”

“It’s *Friday*,” Dean whines, “Normal people don’t work on Fridays, trust me.”

“Yeah, normal people do work on Fridays,” Sam says back with a grimace and his eyes go back to the file, reading it like there’s no conversation going on at all.

Dean lets an unsatisfied growl escape his mouth. “Would it kill you, seriously? You’re really going to let me go alone?”

“You’re a big boy, Dean,” Sam mumbles and this time, it sounds annoyed. Dean knows he’d better shut up now, when Sam talks like this. “You’ll be fine.”

“Whatever,” Dean sighs and as he was leaning against the table, he steps back now. “Don’t complain when I show up absolutely wasted in the middle of the night. I might even bring someone with me, you know.”

“I honestly doubt that,” Sam comments with a blank expression on his face. He looks up and forces a little smile – it’s not very convincing since he’s completely buried in the case he’s working on. “Have fun, though.”

“Thanks,” Dean murmurs.

He almost wishes he could back out of this, but it would make him look dumb now, after trying to make Sam go with him for such a long time. He still doesn’t want to go alone, but it seems he has no other choice anyway, and so he makes the mental note to seriously hook up with someone.

He looks at his reflection in the mirror in Sam’s hallway and he decides he looks decent enough to be able to bring someone home with him.

Dean doesn’t really want to, he realizes. But he might as well go and have some fun. Besides, maybe he *will* want to once he’s got enough alcohol circulating in his system. Alcohol makes you want to do lots of things – Castiel could tell a lot about that, Dean is sure.

Bitter, Dean leaves the apartment and heads out, letting the city swallow him.

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It doesn’t surprise him that he ends up in a gay club.

It is a surprise, though, that he ends up talking to a girl at the bar for the rest of the night, both of them drinking like there’s no tomorrow. Although, Dean drinks more, and he also handles it with less glamour than she does.

Her name is Charlie, or so she tells him, but he can’t really rely on anyone telling their real name in a club like this. He doesn’t bother with coming up with a fake name, though.

“So what happened to you, Dean?” Charlie asks him after two shots of vodka.

He, dumbly, thinks she’s referring to his scrunched up face, and he says, “Nothin’, vodka is just really not my thing.”

“No, I mean,” she says and laughs, her full lips twisting into a smile Dean considers quite beautiful, “Why are you here alone on a Friday night talking to a lesbian instead of hitting on some hot guy?”

“Because guys are bastards,” Dean confesses and empties another glass, already waving at the bartender to get him another one.

“You’re a guy,” she points out and then raises her eyebrow at Dean’s tempo with the drinks. “And I’d slow down if I were you, you know.”

“But I’m *special*, as all guys always say.”

“Well, at least you know what you’re dealing with,” she says and as the bartender gets to them with Dean’s vodka, she orders tequila. “You want to tell me your tragic backstory? I could tell you mine afterwards. Quid pro quo.”

“Are you quoting *Silence of the Lambs*, Charlie?” he asks with a grin and a raised eyebrow. When she shrugs like ‘well, what can you do?’, he nods. “I like you.”

“And you like good movies! You are friend, then.”

The serious conversation is forgotten for the time being and they end up talking about movies and novels, but the drunker Dean gets, the more slurred his words are, the more he wants to talk about Castiel and just whine about everything. And Charlie is still willing to listen, because she repeats her question after an hour. She’s still only tipsy, but Dean is headed down a bad road here.

“I really love my husband, you know?” Dean cries out when she asks again.

“Oh, so you’re married?”

“Charlie,” Dean says her name for emphasis. “I really love him. But he cheated on me. And then we had a car accident and I lost my memory. Temporarily. I recently remembered.”

Charlie frowns. “That’s one hell of a drama. So what are the details?” she wonders.

Dean tells her everything and he makes it more detailed than necessary. He doesn’t leave out the dirty parts with her like he did with Sam, and she doesn’t even blush. He *likes* her, a lot. She reminds him of Jo a lot – it’s not her face or her interests, but the way she talks to him and deals with his drunken whining.

“Well, no wonder you’re trying to drown that in alcohol,” she says when he’s done. “But you should forgive him. Because you love him.”

“But I – “ he stutters and blinks a few times, the world spinning around him. He hasn’t been this drunk in years and it makes him giggle. “I can’t trust him.”

“You could,” she insists and when he looks up at her, her red hair is shining bright in the lights.

“Could I?” he asks her dumbly, lips apart. He’s strangely interested in what she’s said, as if seeing a true meaning in it, when he burps and feels the vodka rushing back into his mouth. “I’mma be sick,” he mumbles and although he swallows it back down, he panics for a second.

“Whoa, whoa,” Charlie exclaims and slides off the bar chair, losing balance for a second before catching Dean’s shoulder and steadying herself. “Hold it down. Can you hold it down?”

Dean swallows again and even though it’s disgusting, it’s also effective. “I think so.”

“Okay,” she sounds relieved as she says it, tucking her hair behind her ears. She tugs at Dean’s shoulder, then. “Let’s get you out of here.”

“What?” Dean squeaks. “I’m fine! I wan’ more vodka. An’ I still wanna hear your backstory an’ all.”

“Another time, big boy,” Charlie says and tugs at Dean’s hand again, making him slide off the bar chair. He leans onto her and she, small but surprisingly strong, throws his arm around her shoulders and drags him across the club. “Get him a taxi, eh boys?” she says to one of the big guys guarding the door.

They both give her a nasty look, but as Charlie manages to make Dean stand on his own and not fall on top of his ass, one of them nods. “Sure, miss.”

“Thanks.” She slips her fingers down her t-shirt, then, and fishes out a small paper. She forces it into Dean’s hand. “My number. Call me when you sober up, okay? I’d like to hear more about the drama of yours.”

“Sure, Capt’n,” he squeezes out and salutes her with two fingers.

The guy gets him a taxi and Dean folds himself into it.

“Mind giving me an address?” the taxi driver asks with a raised eyebrow and Dean murmurs something in response. It must have been coherent enough, because the car moves the next second.

That’s when the fun stops. Dean comes down to Earth from his ecstasy and even though the world is still spinning around him, making it hard to focus and not to throw up while he’s at it, he’s more or less okay.

He rests his sweaty forehead against the cold surface of the window and closes his eyes. It makes his stomach twist and he blinks his eyes open again, trying hard to keep himself awake. His hands are lifelessly placed in his lap and he’s leaning on the door, hiccupping once or twice. Fortunately, no more vodka comes up his throat and out of his mouth.

Dean doesn’t realize he’s given the taxi guy Castiel’s address until he spots the house. He frowns, unaware of the mistake, but before he can say anything the guy asks for twenty bucks and even gets out of the car to help Dean out. He’s probably glad Dean hasn’t thrown up in there and he wants to get rid of him as soon as possible, just to eliminate the danger of having to clean up vomit the next day for good.

“No,” Dean whispers to himself, but he hands the taxi driver the twenty bucks and even gets a thank you out of his dry mouth.

He looks up at the house, then, considering his options. He’ll either simply sit down here on the curb and eventually fall asleep, or he could go, wake Castiel up and... Yeah, he could tell him to call Sam. And that’s all he’s going to say. No explanation, no anything. A very simple demand, Dean thinks as he struggles to make it to the door, staggering to the right or to the left with almost every step.

When he gets there, he rests his head against the door while his finger goes for the bell. He presses his finger on it, persistent. Only after five seconds does he realize he doesn’t have to keep his finger there – that’s when the bell ringing really gets to him – and he pulls it away.

He manages to step back before the door opens a little, Castiel in a simple white shirt and shorts appearing in the doorway.

“Dean?” he frowns. “What are you doing here?”

“Gave the taxi driver the wron’ address,” he explains, breaking his own rule in less than two seconds. “M sorry. Call Sam to pick me uh, to pick me up, ‘lease?”

“Are you drunk?” Castiel asks, a surprised expression on his face.

“Ob’iously. Call ‘im for me?”

“No,” Castiel rejects him, his voice stern and convinced. He catches Dean’s arm before Dean can hide from the touch – his reflexes being minimized and all – and pulls him into the house. “You’ll stay here. You’re not going anywhere in this state.”

“No,” Dean argues, but it’s soft and he doesn’t really mean it. He needs to sleep, now, or he is going to throw up.

He lets Castiel drag him to their bedroom, now so painfully familiar – he recognizes it even in his drunken state – and he even lets him take off his shoes. Dean himself shakes off his jacket and then falls face-first onto the mattress, not having a care in the world.

He’s asleep within one minute, not even realizing that Castiel is asking him something.

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Dean wakes up to Castiel shaking his arm. “It’s almost eleven. Advil,” he says and offers Dean the pill in one hand, a glass of water in the other.

Dean’s tongue glues off of the roof of his mouth and he makes a grimace when the awful taste hits his taste buds. “Fuck you,” he mumbles as he tries to sits up, rubbing his forehead furiously as if trying to fight off the horrible headache that’s sneaked up on him. Despite his harsh words, he takes the pill and swallows it, the clear water tasting pretty much like heaven.

“More sleep?” Castiel asks in a gentle, quiet voice.

Dean nods and rolls onto his side. Once again, he falls asleep before he has the chance to feel Castiel tucking him in carefully.

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He wakes up half an hour later. His head is still pounding, but it's more bearable than before. He's almost sad that there's no Castiel and no Advil this time, but then he remembers the situation and is suddenly thankful for it.

When he recalls last night, and the fact that he gave the taxi driver the wrong address, he groans and hides his face in his hands. What the fuck is he supposed to tell Castiel now?

It takes a lot of willpower and it sucks out a lot of his energy – and he doesn't have that much of it for starters, hands down – to get out of the bed and find Castiel somewhere. He puts on his shoes first, though, so he doesn't have to come back for them later; and to be honest, he hopes it will tell Cas that he's not going to stay, that this is a mistake. Stupid, right? To think that having his shoes back on could indicate such a thing. But he's desperate and has a hangover. That is definitely a good enough excuse, okay.

He finds Castiel in the living room, which is not all that surprising. He's just sitting there as if he's been waiting for Dean to wake up and come to him.

His face lights up when he spots Dean standing in the doorway. He looks too afraid to say anything, but as Dean takes one hesitant step forwards, he is obviously holding back a grin.

"You gave our address," he says and it's the exact thing Dean didn't want to hear at all.

"It was a mistake," he mumbles almost angrily. "I was drunk and I didn't know what I was doing."

Castiel moves forwards on the couch, sitting on its edge, his eyes widening. "Did you just – did you just say that you made a mistake because you were drunk?"

"I didn't hook up with someone, though," Dean says quickly, but his heart skips a beat when Castiel says those words. They make way too much sense for his liking, and he's suddenly not able to look Castiel in the eye, as if ashamed.

"You changed the scenery," Castiel says, watching Dean intently, "but it's basically the same situation. I mean, okay, it's different. But the basics are still the same, Dean."

"So you're telling me that giving a random guy the wrong address on accident is basically the same as sleeping with someone. Right?"

Anger is rushing up to Dean's head and it's definitely not making his headache any better. But Castiel makes him so, so mad with this – maybe, possibly because he's a tiny little bit right. Dean never realized that he would trap himself by saying he made a mistake while being drunk. He *doesn't* think it's the same, he doesn't even think the basics are the same, but Castiel's words make sense nonetheless.

Castiel frowns, looking small. “No.” He sighs, the sound so loud it reaches Dean all across the room. “I’m just – never mind. You don’t want to see it through my eyes.”

“And you want to? See it through my eyes? This whole situation?” Dean desperately waves his hand. He could have saved himself from this situation if it weren’t for his stupid drunk adventures. Fuck him, seriously. The conversation is making its way to his heart, awaking the pain – the betrayal, the lies.

“I’ve tried,” Castiel acclaims and runs his fingers through his hair. He tears his gaze away from Dean. “Many times. And I’ve never hated myself more for what I’ve done, really. But that doesn’t mean I’m going to stop trying.”

“You know,” Dean says and sub-consciously, he closes the gap between them. “As if it’s not enough that you cheated on me. That fucking hurt, you know? But then, after the car accident, you could have told me. But you lied to me, you kept telling me lies for *weeks* while we *dated*, while we pretended we were back to normal.”

“So we were just pretending?” Castiel murmurs, looking up at Dean, the sadness in his eyes killing Dean on the spot.

Dean manages not to break the eye contact when he says, “No, we weren’t. *I* wasn’t.”

“I wasn’t pretending, either.”

“But you lied to me,” Dean repeats in case Castiel decided to ignore that part of his speech. He lets himself fall onto the couch, nestling on the other side, away from Castiel. The typical Castiel-y smell gets into his nostrils anyway, and he shivers.

“I guess I shouldn’t have done that. I was selfish and I wanted you back. I thought it was the right thing to do.”

“It wasn’t,” Dean breathes out and rubs his face. He’s tensed and he’s already said too much – he never meant to let his feelings explode like this, especially not after the night he’d just had. “You did the worst two things. Cheating, and lying.”

“I know I fucked up, royally,” Castiel utters, telling it more to himself than Dean. “But I already told you that.”

“Yeah, I remember,” Dean informs him and Castiel’s head snaps up, eyes wide with surprise and, despite the situation, love, and Dean’s pretty sure he can also see a little spark of happiness there.

“You do?” Castiel breathes out in an almost silent whisper. “You remembered?”

“I did,” Dean confirms and lets out a soft, sarcastic laugh. “Kind of wish I didn’t, though. It makes it even more difficult than it already was.”

“I’m sorry,” Cas says quickly, out of nowhere. Dean didn’t really expect yet another apology – he’s already received enough, and it’s not like they didn’t mean anything. They did; Dean

just never knew what to do with them, never knew whether to listen to them or whether to treat them as another pathetic lie.

Looking at Cas, looking so lost and helpless, Dean realizes they weren't a lie at all. But does that change anything at all?

"I'm sorry this happened to us," he continues and Dean feels almost embarrassed when he sees Castiel – who is still just staring into nothing in front of him, too afraid to meet Dean's eyes – tear up, and yet he keeps watching him, hanging on to every word. "I'm sorry for letting you down and fuck, I'm sorry for losing control over the car. I was – I was so fucking scared you would die. I could have *killed* you that day."

"You didn't," Dean says softly, knowing now that the urge to comfort Cas anytime when needed comes from how much he cares about him, and how much he loves him. It's the truth, in the end; Cas didn't kill anyone that day.

"I know," Castiel laughs, the tears audible in his voice. His face is red when he finally looks at Dean. It's another sight Dean would like to forget. "But what does it change? I lost you all those weeks ago, didn't I?"

Seeing Castiel's face, Dean feels tempted to prove him wrong. He feels something pull at his chest, trying to get him closer to the man sitting not so far away from him, but he refuses. Dean decides not to forgive, because whatever it is that's forcing him to trust and love again, it's also tugging at the wound, still open and gaping in his chest. And it hurts – it still hurts, even after months.

"I can't trust you," he says instead in a small voice.

They both fall silent after this statement, and Dean finally manages to look away from Castiel's face.

Absently, he rubs his palms against his thighs, feeling uncomfortable in the silence. He doesn't even mind his headache even though it's still bugging him – he's too busy trying to ignore Castiel's presence so close to him. He could reach out and they would touch, they're just inches apart – and it would only take a word or two to take everything back. It would take two smooth movements of his mouth to wipe away Castiel's tears, it would only be one stretch of his arms to pull him close to him, chest against chest, clinging to each other, searching for a safe place.

He could have Castiel any second, and the trouble is, he does want him. He's torn, so torn between two sides of him – one that is unforgiving and in pain, betrayed and scared; and another, willing to do anything to see Castiel smile again.

"Maybe you could," Castiel whispers after a few minutes. "Maybe you could trust me again."

It strikes Dean, and he instantly remembers Charlie and one specific moment of last night, when he said the same thing to her and she said, *You could*. And Dean remembers how much sense it made back then, and how true those words sounded, and how much he wanted to believe them.

“I could,” he nods and it’s not a question anymore.

“Would you – “ Castiel trails off and scoots over to Dean, not too close but close enough to catch Dean’s fingers in his hand. “Would you give me a chance to prove it to you? That you can trust me?”

Dean lets out a soft laugh, almost snorting. He twines his fingers with Castiel’s, squeezing. “I guess I’m already doing that, Cas.”

Castiel brings their connected hands up to his mouth and forces a kiss onto Dean’s knuckles. Dean shivers, sort of involuntarily, wondering how a simple touch like that can be so intimate.

“I’m just wondering,” Dean says, chest still heavy with worry, but Dean is ready to fight that and try, “How many times are we going to do the whole ‘starting over again’ thing?”

“As many as it takes, really,” Castiel answers right away, a small smile slowly spreading across his face, lighting his eyes up. “I know you remember now, but I’ll just remind you that I also said I would never give up on us.”

“You love us that much, huh?” Dean huffs out a breath and looks to his side and eyes Castiel’s face, trying to read it. He’s not sure whether this is the right thing to do – maybe he should protect himself from Castiel, just in case they get in the same situation again. But something, be it the look in Cas’ eyes and how relieved and happy he seems, or the way Dean’s gut squeezes when he thinks that yeah, maybe they could go back to normal, makes him go for it.

Castiel always makes him go for it. Because Castiel is somehow always worth it.

“I do,” Castiel agrees. “More than anything.”

“I think I do, too,” Dean confesses and this time, he is the one to bring their hands up to his mouth, repaying the favor by brushing his lips across Cas’ fingers.

It’s calm, and many minutes pass before either of them speaks up again. Everything important has been said already. They’re together, and although they’re both uncertain about what may happen next, being together is what matters and it is enough for now.