Heaven and Hell

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Heaven and Hell

by [thiccwhale](#)

Summary

Merlin, Arthur, and the rest of the gang are constantly being reincarnated. The story plays out the same every time, until Morgana seeks out Faye and Merlin crosses paths with the Winchesters. Then the game changes.
And spread, like weeds, their poisons wide,
Fresh healing plants came blooming bright,
And stood, to check them, side by side

Notes

The first few chapters jump around quite a bit. As the story continues though, there's fewer time jumps.
In the summary there's three lines from the poem "Good and Evil" by Samuel G. Goodrich. (Fantastic poem, definitely give it a read!)

Chapter 1

Chapter Summary

"They've taken it from you, haven't they?"

"Air around me, grant me fire." Faye focused entirely on imagining the candle on fire. She was alone at the abandoned house and already sick of not being able to do magic by herself.

A footstep from behind distracted her. She let the candle fall to the ground and spun around.

"Faye," the woman across the room greeted.

"Who are you?" Faye asked, trying to keep her voice from shaking.

"A friend," she said with an English accent as she slowly and deliberately began placing one foot in front of the other.

"Stay away," Faye warned, grabbing a glass bottle from the table.

The raven-haired woman took one more step before stopping. "You poor thing," she said. "They've taken it from you, haven't they?"

"What do you mean?"

"The circle's been bound."

"I don't know what you're talking about," Faye denied.

"You don't have to lie to me, Faye." The woman looked down at the dropped candle and it began to float through the air, guided by her eyes to the table. Once there, a flame leapt from the wick, taller than the candle itself.

"You…You're a witch," Faye said in disbelief.

"As are you," she said. "I am Morgana."

"How are you controlling that? Without someone else from your circle?"

Morgana laughed. "I do not have a circle. Circles were created after…a certain event, as a precaution. Nasty, limiting things. They take away your power, leaving you unprotected on your own. But I was born long before witches had circles."

"I don't understand..."

"I can give you back your freedom," Morgana said. "I can give you back your magic."

Chapter 2

Chapter Summary

"Did Morgana send you?"

Dean and Sam slowly raised their heads just enough to see through the dusty window. Inside the vacant house, the thing they'd been tailing for the past month was pacing. They still weren't one hundred percent sure what he was, but Dean had his money on witch. Sam agreed it was possible, but the pieces didn't fit together perfectly.

"What d'ya think?" Dean asked.

"I don't know," Sam replied. "This might be our one shot, but if we mess it up…"

"Well one of the things we've got has to be able to kill him."

"If we get the chance," Sam said doubtfully.

* * *

Merlin paced the length of the room, trying to figure out where Morgana could have taken Arthur. Six weeks, he'd been searching. He knew she hadn't killed him—not yet, that wasn't her style. And what was she planning? He'd been picking up her mess of bodies, unable to predict her next move.

He kicked one of the expensive chairs over in frustration and spun around, throwing a hand out and shattering all the windows along the length of that wall. At the same time, he saw two men who had somehow made their way in.

* * *

Azazel. Dean saw the eyes. Those yellow fucking eyes. He didn't know how the son of a bitch was back, and he didn't care at the moment. He pulled the colt out and fired a perfectly aimed shot.

* * *

Merlin had seen far too much in all his centuries to be shocked when one of the two pulled a gun. He fired a single shot and Merlin reached out a hand, catching the bullet that would have buried itself between his eyes if he would've let it.

"Did Morgana send you?" he inquired.

The other man fired a gun several times, and Merlin let those bullets drop to the ground.

"Honestly, that won't do any good." *If you kill me, I'll just be born again*, he added to himself.

The short-haired guy pulled a knife from his coat and Merlin snatched it lazily from his hand and pinned the men against the wall, without even taking a step.

"*Did Morgana send you*?" he repeated from across the room, though their stupidity made him doubtful.

"You son of a bitch—" the shorter one started to say.

Merlin slammed his head against the wall, shutting him up. Perhaps the idiot hadn't meant the insult literally, but Merlin was offended all the same. It wasn't his fault he was old-fashioned.

"So you're back," the tall one said.

Merlin laughed humorlessly. "Can't escape destiny," he said.

"Been there, done that," the mouthy one said. "We bitch-slapped destiny all the way to hell."

Merlin gave them a curious look. "Who exactly are you?"

"Don't play stupid, Azazel," the long-haired man said.

"I'm not." Merlin released his hold on them and they slid to the floor. "And I'm certainly not Azazel."

"Right," the first shooter said. "And I'm not Dean. What are you up to?"

At least he had one of their names now. "It's none of your concern," Merlin said. "It's best if you don't get involved—"

"All those people you killed and you expect us not to do anything?" Dean asked rhetorically.

"Those aren't my bodies!" Merlin said, baffled.

"Right," Dean said dubiously.

"Dean," the nameless one said, "I don't think he did it."

"*What?*"

"Look at him."

"Someone else is killing those people," Merlin explained. "I've been picking up her messes, trying to get ahead of her."

"Why's she killing them?" No Name asked.

Merlin shook his head. "I don't know. But I'll take care of it, you two shouldn't get involved."

"If you haven't found her yet, you could use some help."

"Now just hold on—we don't even know what he is, I'm not about to—"

Merlin cut Dean off. "I'm Merlin."

"I don't care what your name is, I—"

"Dean, I think...do you mean...*Merlin*?"

The raven-haired man smiled. "The greatest wizard to ever live, says the legend."

Chapter 3

Chapter Summary

Past centuries began to seem like childish games.

It was the middle of the day and the sky was pitch black with monstrous storm clouds. Merlin walked cautiously across the dead grass. The crunching of it beneath his feet made him uneasy, so he cast a silence spell. *Evil*. What had Morgana done? He stepped onto the rotting porch of the old abandoned house and turned to look back. The dead grass was a perfect circle, the house at the very center of it. He opened the door slowly. Deep breath. He stepped through the threshold into the black room, his skin crawling. *Evil, evil, evil*.

"Merlin," a familiar voice greeted in false cheeriness.

"Where's Arthur?" Merlin demanded.

Morgana smiled, the whiteness of her teeth disturbingly bright in the darkness. "He's here. Faye, dear."

Another raven-haired girl came down the stairs, a bit younger than Morgana. Merlin knew her immediately.

"Morgana, what have you done?" His voice was broken and angry. He was so tired of fighting. He was tired of always knowing—of Arthur *never* knowing. "You've poisoned her," he accused.

A wicked spark lit in Morgana's eyes and he was reminded of how *he'd* been the one to poison *her*. Holding her in his arms, feeling the life go out of her as she took her last breaths. All these centuries and he still couldn't escape that guilt, couldn't discourage the notion that this was all his fault.

His eyes moved to trace the black symbols on her translucent unsleeved arms. *Evil*.

Morgana smirked. "You know what these mean. Demons, monsters, Satan. I've unleashed hell, Merlin." She added sweetly, "Just for you."

Merlin titled his head to the ceiling and was shocked to see Arthur there, held by some invisible force.

Morgana tossed her head back and laughed. "Took you long enough! Are your eyes dulling?"

Gunshots rang out and bullets whizzed past Merlin's head. Morgana held a lazy hand up and the bullets dropped at her feet.

Merlin looked behind him and saw the Winchester brothers. "Get out of here!" he warned.

"But—" Dean started to say.

"*Get out*!"

"Faye, darling, please take care of those pests," Morgana said.

Merlin could feel Arthur's eyes on him as Faye and the Winchesters ran out the door in a game of cat and mouse. Who was cat and who was mouse, he wasn't sure.

"Let Arthur go," he said. "This is between you and me."

"Oh, but it all started with *Arthur*." She stood directly under him and looked straight up. "Poor incompetent bastard," she said emotionlessly. "Doesn't remember anything. His mind is dull."

"He was happy, Morgana," Merlin said, too tired of their never-ending game to even be angry. They were like the sun and the moon, in an unbroken cycle. And Merlin was old—so old. Just when he thought Morgana couldn't do any worse, she went and brought *hell* and all its pawns onto the board.

Lightning fast, Morgana made a dagger fly across the room, her eyes flashing gold, straight towards Merlin's heart.

Lightning had nothing on Merlin.

He tossed the dagger to the side and raised a hand, throwing Morgana to the side. That was his curse—he couldn't kill her. Not again. Once had been enough. *The hatred to your love.* He hadn't seen Kilgharrah in this lifetime, neither had he seen Aithusa. *But there's always the next*, he thought. Maybe the next time around he could take Arthur away, hide him from Morgana. He could introduce him to the dragons. He could tell him the stories of their pasts, and he wouldn't have to worry about Morgana. But fate had never been kind to him.

With a cruel twist of her wrist, Morgana let Arthur drop down from the ceiling. Merlin gentled his fall, but stayed focused on Morgana. She grinned wickedly as a screeching began to fill his ears.

"You can hear them," she said wickedly. "Beautiful, isn't it? All of hell, coming *just for you*, Merlin."

"You undid everything," he accused her. "Sam and Dean fixed it all and you're bringing it *back*!" This angered him—true anger, down to his core.

She wasn't just ruining his life and Arthur's now, she was going to bring the entire world to ruins. She'd made this bigger than them—she'd even brought a witch of her descent into it! Past centuries began to seem like childish games.

"Merlin, what the *hell*—"

"Ah-ah-ah!" Morgana said, slamming Arthur against a wall and holding him there.

Faye rushed back in. "They got away," she said, out of breath.

Merlin evaluated her eyes very carefully. There was something in the way Faye had said it… had she *let* them escape? Perhaps there was still a chance for her, maybe her humanity was still intact….

"It doesn't matter," Morgana said. "Their angel friend is dead. They can't do anything this time around."

Their angel friend. Merlin knew what he had to do. He began chanting, began the weaving of the most powerful spell he'd ever done.
"What are you…" Morgana was confused, but only for a second before she recognized the words. "*No*," she breathed. "You'll kill yourself, you fool!" And that was her curse. To love and hate her eternal enemy. To kill him again and again, but always with the knowledge that she'd see him in the next life. "All that power—you might not come back! Stop!"

He said the words faster, louder. Slowly the dark room began to almost glow. Merlin lost sight of where he was, even who he was. He knew only the words.

And then everything stopped. There was a moment of absolute silence, absolute *blackness*. And in that moment, Merlin thought, *What have I done?*

Then there was an explosion of white light. It was soundless, or so loud it was simply deafening, but when it was over, all the windows were shattered and there were cracks in the walls, ceiling, and floor of the already rotting house. In the center of the room, lying on the floor, was a rather insignificant body in a black suit.

Castiel.

Chapter 4

Chapter Summary

"What is it?"
"Hell."

"Wait!" Faye hissed.

The brothers stopped and turned to look at her.

"Morgana told me about you—about all that you've done—"

"If you're gonna kill us, just do it," Dean snapped, voice like a shot gun.

"Would you just be quiet a minute?" Faye fired back. "She's done something bad—"

"No shit, Sherlock," Dean mocked.

"*Dean*," Sam said with a pointed look.

Faye glared at them. "She's done something bad and I know you can fix it, because you've done something like it before."

"What is it?" Sam inquired.

"Hell."

Dean pulled out his gun and fired three shots at her. She dropped the bullets, an annoyed expression crossing her face.

"You bitch," Dean said through clenched teeth.

"I'm telling you because you can do something about it, okay? I'd appreciate it if you didn't *shoot* me." Her dark eyes flared in anger. "I would've stopped her, but she'd have killed me." And Faye didn't want Morgana to hate her. Faye *liked* Morgana, Morgana had just made a mistake—a big one. But that' didn't mean Faye wanted to see the woman who had given her back her freedom dead. She would never want that. Unleashing hell was just going too far for Faye.

She pressed her lips together. "I'll tell her you got away. Just keep hell where it belongs—don't kill Morgana either." She turned abruptly and jogged back to the house.

Chapter 5

Chapter Summary

"All angels know your name."

The angel looked at his fully intact body in wonder. "You brought me back," he said, turning his intense blue eyes on Merlin.

"And I'm still alive," Merlin said with a surprised smile of relief.

Castiel tilted his head, squinting slightly. "Emrys?"

The warlock gave a short laugh. "You know my name!"

"All angels know your name," he stated blatantly before swaying and staggering backwards.

Merlin grabbed his shoulders to steady him. "Whoa, there. Are you alright?"

"I'm fine," the angel said dismissively. "How long have I been dead?"

"Um…around a year? Maybe a little less."

From across the room, Arthur gave a low moan. Merlin was at his side in an instant, kneeling on the cracking floor, helping his oldest friend sit up.

"What the hell just happened?" he asked, hand pressed against his head and looking at Merlin like he might be crazy.

"It's a bit of a long story," Merlin said as he slung one of Arthur's arms over his own boney shoulders and helped him to his feet. "But we've got to get out of here. This place could fall apart at any second." They made their way out, Cas following behind them.

The sky was still black as night, but it didn't feel as oppressive with the knowledge Merlin had of there being an angel right beside him.

"Thank you for bringing me back," Cas said. "But I need to find someone—"

"The Winchesters, right?" Merlin guessed, though he got the feeling Cas was thinking more of Dean than Sam.

"You know them?"

"Who on earth are the Winchesters?" Arthur muttered.

"I'll explain later," Merlin said to him. And to Cas, "It's safer for them if they don't get any more involved in this."

The angel shook his head. "The last time I didn't go to Dean for help, I ended up unleashing Purgatory."

"The way I heard it, you put everything thing back…except the Leviathan."

"What's a—"

"*Shh*," Merlin shushed Arthur. "I didn't bring you back for no reason. I need your help."

"Sam and Dean can help us, too," Cas said stubbornly.

"They helped me in tracking down Morgana and Arthur. That was more involvement than they should've had. Morgana's my problem and *she's* the one who opened the floodgates this time."

"Then why did you bring me back?"

Merlin fell silent, and, in the silence, they heard the sound of footsteps stopping abruptly.

"*What the hell did you do*?" Dean roared.

"I…I brought Castiel back…" Merlin said hesitantly, not sure he understood Dean's anger.

"Whatever you did, *that's* not Cas."

"But—"

"When an angel dies, it *dies*," Dean snapped. "They bring back to life, people don't bring them back."

"Merlin's more than a person," Cas interjected calmly. "I don't know exactly how he did it, but I'm alive again."

Dean just shook his head, and then Merlin began to understand. Dean was *hurt*. Castiel's betrayal had cut him deep and he'd been covering it up, burying the scar. Lying to himself. Carrying the burden alone. And he didn't want to feel it, he didn't want it coming to the surface. And Cas being here would do exactly that.

"Everyone makes mistakes," Merlin said gently. "God knows I have. But…forgiveness—"

"Is bull crap," Dean spat.

Merlin felt Arthur trying to stand a little straighter. "Do not—talk to my friend—that way," he attempted to warn.

"And who the hell are you?" Dean asked in a tone that said he really didn't care.

"This is Arthur." Merlin's supporting arm involuntarily squeezed around Arthur a little tighter.

"*King* Arthur?" Sam asked in disbelief.

"Well…not this time around," Merlin said with a small smile. "But, yes, Arthur."

"Stop trying to be funny, Merlin," the bush of blonde hair grumbled.

Merlin just rolled his eyes. The stupid prat never remembered and was always dubious when he was told the truth.

Cas took a few steps forward. "Dean, I'm sorry. And I know that doesn't fix much, but I…I *want* to fix things. I'm going to try. With everything I have. And if you never trust me again, that's okay. But I'm going to try."

"Don't bother," Dean said icily.

Cas retreated with sad eyes, but he must've been expecting Dean's reply. Merlin laid a comforting hand on the angel's shoulder.

"How *did* you bring Cas back?" Sam questioned sensibly.

"I created a spell."

"*To resurrect angels*?" Cas said incredulously.

"Yes."

"You shouldn't still be alive," Cas said. "Creating a spell is one thing, but such a powerful one…next to no one would be able to complete it, much less survive."

"I was shocked, too," Merlin said. "I didn't expect to live."

Chapter 6

Chapter Summary

Any crime was forgivable with time.

Cas was sitting silently in the back seat, Arthur the passenger's, and Merlin was driving. Three days after theirs and the Winchester's departure, Cas still wore the saddest puppy eyes Merlin had ever seen.

"So I'm King Arthur. And he's an angel." He didn't sound much like he believed it, but he would. He always did. "The stories say he'll rise again, not every time he dies."

"Misinterpretation," Merlin said dismissively, turning at a curve. "The legend keeps repeating itself. I don't know why—perhaps until it gets it right." *But that'll never happen*, he added to himself.

"And…Morgana is out to kill me because…"

"Because you're Arthur and she's Morgana," Merlin explained.

"Right. That makes sense," Arthur said sarcastically.

"That is why the story's repeating," Cas confirmed from the backseat.

"What?" Merlin asked, glancing in the rearview mirror.

"It's trying to right itself. It's been trying for centuries. Once it's as it should be, you'll finally be put to rest."

"Then how is it supposed to be?"

"I don't know," Cas admitted. There was a hesitant pause. "Do you…if you were in my position…how can I let Dean know…"

Merlin found the sight of an angel struggling for words quite adorable. "Just let him know you're still you. From the way he talked about you, you must've been close. He'll come around eventually." Any crime was forgivable with time. Even making deals with demons, swallowing Purgatory, and becoming God. *Any crime was forgivable with time.*

Chapter 7

Chapter Summary

"I was once a king, so if I want to try something, you have to let me, right?"

Merlin felt Arthur roll over in the bed beside him. They were in a cheap motel, and when they'd arrived, the only open rooms were one bed. Merlin had offered to take the floor, but Arthur had said that was ridiculous and insisted he sleep on the bed; it was plenty big. Since angels didn't sleep, Cas was off somewhere, probably trying to get Sam and Dean to forgive him—more so Dean than Sam.

"Merlin," Arthur said, watching Merlin's eyes carefully. "Where's Guinevere?"

"I haven't seen her in the past two lives. She's out there somewhere, probably terribly unhappy but clueless as to why."

"Should I be unhappy, too, then?" Arthur asked earnestly.

"Well…I suppose so, yes…"

"But I don't feel unhappy."

Arthur's breath was warm on Merlin's face. "Maybe…Maybe now that you know the truth about who you are…"

"Maybe that's part of what's wrong," Arthur hypothesized. "Perhaps I'm not meant to be with Guinevere."

"But that's ridiculous," Merlin said. "The problem that's been trying to right itself is Morgana."

"There's probably more than one issue," Arthur stated.

"Well, okay, but it's not Gwen. That doesn't make any sense."

Arthur's blue eyes were looking a little too deep into Merlin's and this point and Merlin squirmed under his gaze.

"Have I ever been king aside from my first life?" he asked Merlin.

"You had an affair with one of the Medicis," Merlin rambled. "And…you were a general in World War One. And you fought in the Crusades. About a century ago, you were a duke—"

"But never a king?"

"No, only at the beginning."

"Do we look the same?" Arthur asked, lifting a piece of Merlin's midnight hair to observe it more carefully.

"Um…y-yes. I mean, our clothes are different, obviously. And our hair. Sometimes a slight variation in weight."

"And how do we find each other? Why—or when—do you remember at all?"

"I usually start searching for you, Morgana never far behind me. And as for remembering… um…" Merlin was losing his train of thought, Arthur was so close, his blue eyes so intense that they burned Merlin wherever he looked.

"Remembering?" Arthur hinted.

"Ah…It's like…a memory—many memories, actually, that I've just always had. Like a child knowing its mother's love. You just…know."

He froze when Arthur placed a hand on his cheek.

"I was once a king, so if I want to try something, you have to let me, right?"

"R-right," Merlin stammered.

"Good. Now hold still."

Merlin didn't move a muscle as Arthur slowly brought his face closer, lips brushing softly against Merlin's before becoming more urgent. Arthur adjusted himself so his arms were on either side of Merlin's head and Merlin shocked himself by no immediately trying to stop Arthur. He slipped his hand up under Merlin's black button up, popping a few buttons in the process.

"Arthur, stop," Merlin said against his will. He pushed Arthur onto the other side of the bed. "You're confused."

"Or maybe I jfinally just know what I want," he debated, going in for another kiss. Merlin put a hand up to stop him, but Arthur just kissed his fingertips.

Merlin rolled over and got off the bed. "I should've slept on the floor," he announced. "You belong with Gwen, I'm not going to mess things up more."

"I've *tried* being with Guinevere, Arthur said. "For centuries, according to you. And the story hasn't 'righted' itself or whatever. Maybe it's time we try something different."

"No," Merlin said firmly. "This would only complicate things even more."

Chapter 8

Chapter Summary

It was unfair.

Cas watched the Winchesters, invisible to their eyes as they went about their business. The walls of their motel room were covered with maps and articles and sticky notes, all hinting at Leviathan activity. Though it seemed impossible, Castiel's heart grew heavier.

Sam stacked a pile of papers and set them on the table. "Dean, what's going on?"

"What do you mean, 'What's going on'?"

"I mean…since Merlin brought Cas back…you've gotten worse. I didn't think it was possible for you to drink anymore, but you've proven that you can. You sleep even less—it's been at least two days, probably closer to three, since I've seen you so much as lay down."

"Shut up, Sam."

"Dean, you need to talk—"

"*There's nothing to talk about*!"

Cas contemplated revealing himself. It wasn't the best time, but he knew if he continued to put it off, he would never do it.

Sam inhaled sharply and Dean turned to see what had surprised his brother.

"*Get out*." he said in a dangerously low voice.

"Tell me what I can do—" Cas tried to say.

Dean repeated his words louder. "*Get out*!"

"I want to help," the angel said.

"Well, in order for that to work, I'd have to *trust* you. And that's not gonna happen again."

"You trusted Sam again after he consorted with Ruby."
The shock of that statement stole Dean's breath momentarily. He desperately searched for a way to deny it. "Sam went to hell after he unleashed it. He *died*. He learned his lesson."

"*I died too, Dean*." Cas' blue eyes bore into his own, so intense that Dean nearly backed away from their force. "I know I'm not your blood, but there was a time when you said I was like a brother to you. Doesn't that count for anything?"

Dean's heart was hammering uncontrollably in his chest. Cas was right—why *was* Dean so mad at him? It was unfair. Why *was* Cas' betrayal so much harder to forgive than Sam's?

Castiel couldn't believe the words coming out of his mouth, couldn't believe how low he was hitting. But he couldn't stop himself either.

Sam's phone rang and he awkwardly walked outside to answer it.

"We lost Bobby," Dean said quietly, a slight waver in his voice. "A Leviathan *shot* him."

Castiel's stomach dropped. His mistake had led to Bobby's death. "I'm so sorry," he said before disappearing.

When the angel vanished before his eyes, Dean swiped the lamp angrily off the nightstand, sending it shattering to the floor below. That son of a bitch *would* disappear just as Dean was about to take a step in the right direction and *talk*, damn it.

Instead of pouring himself a glass like he wanted to, he changed up his usual life-sucks-let's-drink routine, and grabbed the keys to the car.

Chapter 9

Chapter Summary

"How are we supposed to fix things this time?"

Dean sat in the car that was not the Impala, having called Merlin to see where he, Arthur, and Cas were staying, outside the shabby motel. He didn't get why Merlin didn't just voodoo up some money so they could stay in a nice place, but when he'd brought it up, Merlin just shook his head and laughed.

When Dean had talked to Merlin yesterday, Cas was still with him and Arthur. On the long drive here, Dean had unwisely let his thoughts run unchecked and now he found himself trying to slow his racing heart, thinking about the angel, warlock, and king who were all in that one room.

He took in a deep breath. The lights were all off, but it was only eleven—they couldn't be asleep yet. He forced himself to march up to the door and push it open, only to immediately slam it shut again.

What the fuck?

He must have seen something wrong. It was dark. That would be totally natural. Because he definitely had not just seen Merlin pinned against the wall, with Arthur's face no more than an inch away. No, that was crazy.

Seconds later, and after some muffled, frustrated words, the door swung opened. "Dean!" Merlin said, a little too loudly. "Sorry—Arthur's a bit confused—Right, dollop head?" he called over his shoulder. "This is a bit awkward. Erm…you're here for Cas?"

"Uh…yeah. I can come back later." But he really couldn't, or else he'd lose his nerve.

"Nonsense, just wait a moment." Merlin closed his eyes. "Cas," he said. "Someone's here for you." His blue eyes opened again. "There you are." He shifted his weight awkwardly. "I've… Arthur…"

"Right," Dean said, equally awkward, as Merlin shut the door.

He turned and almost jumped out of his skin when he saw Cas standing behind him. He'd grown used to it, but after Cas' death, he'd lost that accustomed feeling. "You just disappeared," he accused. "What the hell was that about? Just *ignoring* me?"

"I didn't want to be constantly told Bobby's death was all my fault. I know already, I don't need to hear it from you every five minutes."

"Blame you? For Bobby dying? You think that's why I was constantly calling you? So I could whine and bitch?"

Cas titled his head in that very birdlike way of his and Dean's stomach twisted. He didn't want to yell, he wanted to talk. He wanted to not be strong, if only for a few minutes.

"Then…what do you want?"

"*To talk*. Damn it, Cas, I need to tell *some*body about how messed up everything is and I can't tell Sam because he's got friggin' Lucifer in his head and I can't tell Bobby, 'cause he's dead, and you—"

Before he had time to react, Cas wrapped his arms around him in a hug and held him tight.

After a moment of shock, Dean returned the embrace and found himself never wanting to let go. It was like Cas was holding him together and if he took his arms away, Dean would shatter, the cracks in the glass finally breaking completely. Cas must've sensed this, because he waited for Dean to pull away first.

"You can talk," Cas said. "I'll listen."

A tiny smile touched Dean's lips, part of the weight lifted off his shoulders. "C'mere, I've got something for you first." Cas followed Dean to the temporary blue car and Dean lifted the hood and pulled the folded trench coat from it. "Here," he said, handing it to Cas. "It's a little weird seeing you without it. And don't worry, I cleaned it." He tried to be light-hearted about the latter, but found the memory of the bloodstained coat jabbed painfully at his mending wounds.

The angel slipped his arms in and shrugged it over his shoulders, looking patiently at Dean.

"We handled Hell," he said after a minute. "And we were handling the Leviathan. But we can't handle both, not at the same time. Throw in some centuries old arch enemies and the freaking King of Camelot, and I don't know what to do." His voice cracked. "How are we supposed to fix things this time?"

Cas enveloped him in another hug. Normally, Dean wouldn't have liked all the huggy-touchy-feely stuff, but he found he didn't mind the angel's comforting arms around him right now.

"I'm gonna kill that bitch," Dean said into his shoulder.

"Who?"

"The witch."

Cas held him out at arm's length and looked him straight in the eye. "You cannot kill Morgana le Fay."

"Why the hell not?"

"She and Merlin must discover the proper ending for their storyline. If you kill her, they'll have to start all over again. It would be useless. Our job is to take care of the Leviathan and put Hell back."

Our job—Dean liked the sound of that. Not my job, not your job, *our job*. He liked it a lot—more than he probably should.

Chapter 10

Chapter Summary

"Are you fucking kidding me!" Merlin exploded.

Arthur's advances were getting ridiculous. Almost every night now, he would try something. A kiss, a hand where it shouldn't be, suggestive language. The worst part was, Merlin wanted to let go and try it, too. He wanted to give in, to feel Arthur's lips on his again—but he couldn't. That wasn't the way the story was meant to go, it would only throw them more off track.

Dean and Sam were traveling with them again. They made quite a group, five grown men, waltzing into hotels. Their standard lie was that they were brothers or cousins, depending, heading to a family reunion. "Cousins" had a tendency to be used more often, since the only two who looked even slightly related were the Winchesters, naturally.

It had been three weeks and the news had been far too quiet. Merlin didn't understand why, but the longer the silence, the louder the boom.

"Sam," Merlin said quietly, while Dean checked them in to two rooms.

"Yeah?"

"Do you mind if you and I switch rooms tonight?"

Sam gave him a funny look. "Sure…why?"

Merlin shifted his weight. "Dean didn't tell you," he mumbled to himself.

"Didn't tell me what?"

"Arthur…Arthur's got this idea in his head that he and Gwen aren't meant to be together. That that's part of what's wrong. He's been…he thinks he and I…"

"You—you mean…"

Merlin nodded.

"Right. Yeah, of course. Wow. Awkward."

"Yeah. Thanks."

"Thanks for what?" Arthur asked unexpectedly.

"Nothing," Merlin said dismissively.

Arthur went to dump his stuff in what he thought was his and Merlin's room. When Sam followed and Merlin stayed behind, he asked, "Isn't Merlin coming?"

Uncomfortably, Sam said, "He's staying with Dean tonight."

Arthur frowned and muttered, "Of course he is."

After dropping off their things, they went next door to Merlin and Dean's room.

"So," Dean said, shoulder brushing against Castiel's. "This 'big boom' you were talking about. How much longer do you think it's going to take?"

"It's Morgana," Merlin said. "It could be tonight, it could be next week. But I don't think we'll be waiting much longer."

"Good," Dean said. "Then we can finally get this show on the road."

"We'll need to be prepared," Cas said sensibly, eyes shifting to Merlin. "You can exorcise demons."

Merlin raised an eyebrow. "I can?" In all his years, it had almost always been just him and Morgana. Occasionally another problem would arise and Merlin would get rid of it, but he'd never actually dealt with a demon before, though he knew plenty about them.

"It'll be easy for you. You can also spell weapons so that they can kill demons."

"Great. Any idea *how*?"

"Of course. Sam, Dean, we'll need guns, knives…whatever you have. The more, the better."

"Fantastic. We'll go get some." The two brothers left to go out to the car.

"Really?" Arthur said immediately after they'd gone. "Separate rooms? What are you, five?"

"Oh, of course, *I'm* the five-year-old."

"Should I leave?" Cas asked hesitantly.

"You're an angel, you're smart, right?" Arthur asked rhetorically, ignoring his previous question. "We're obviously doing something wrong here, or else we'd be dead, so does it not make sense for us to try something new?"

Cas understood what he was talking about. "…Yes, I suppose. What do you want to try?"

"He's meant to be with Gwen!" Merlin almost shouted, exasperated. "But apparently he's gotten too thick to realize that!"

Castiel's brow furrowed. "What makes you think that?"

Merlin gaped. "Really? Are you serious!"

"Guinevere was destined to betray Arthur. Her and Lancelot were destined to love each other. She and Arthur were never—"

"*Are you fucking kidding me*!" Merlin exploded. "All these centuries I spent…unbelievable. Why the hell did you even marry her in the first place then!"

"Hell if I know!" Arthur yelled. "I don't have a freak mind that remembers every single fucking life I've ever had!"

"Well, did you *love* her?"

"You tell me!"

"I'm not psychic, you supercilious bastard!"

"Well, look who knows big words!" Arthur shouted.

"Oh, shut *up—*"

"Are we interrupting?"

Sam and Dean were standing in the doorway, weapon-loaded duffle bags in hand.

"*No*!" Merlin and Arthur said in unison.

Dean glanced Cas' way, but the angel gave him an I-don't-know look, which hardly differed from any of his other looks.

"Alrighty then. Here's half our arsenal and then some," Dean offered up.

Sam dropped the bags onto the nearest bed and Arthur found himself wondering if it was Sam's or Merlin's.

Chapter 11

Chapter Summary

"Heaven is…otherwise occupied."

The enchantments necessary turned out to be very powerful. They took a lot out of Merlin and he didn't wake up until around ten the next day.

"Hey, sleepyhead," Sam teased. He was sitting at the small table on his laptop, an empty glass of something beside it. Though if it was empty, Merlin supposed there was no something. He wiped a hand down his face, still tired.

"Why didn't you wake me?"

"Cas said you needed rest. Arthur came in to talk to you a few minutes after you were out, but Cas got all defensive. I didn't want to set him off again."

Merlin pushed his hair back and got up. "What did he want to talk about? Arthur, I mean."

Sam shrugged. "He wasn't very persistent about it. I think he just wanted to chat."

There was the almost silent flap of wings and then Cas appeared in front of the door.

"You're awake. Good."

"What's going on?" Merlin asked, acutely aware of the angel's changed tone.

"I found Morgana," he said.

Immediately, Merlin became 100% awake. "Where?"

"The next state over. She had at least two dozen demons in the house, but plenty more at her beck. I could feel it."

"And Faye?" Sam asked.

"She wasn't there. Morgana believes you kidnapped her," he said to Merlin. "She plans to strike in five days. We have to be ready.

"I'll call around," Sam offered, "give everybody a heads up at what's coming."

"That would be wise," Cas said.

After a moment, Sam began hesitantly, "Do you…What about heaven? I wasn't gonna ask, but you haven't mentioned anything. What do they think of what's happening down here?"

"Heaven is…otherwise occupied."

Sam's brow furrowed. "What do you mean?"

"With God still missing, Raphael dead, and me not there…they have no one to take orders from."

"You could tell them to help us, couldn't you?" Sam asked, somewhat hopeful.

"No," Merlin said quickly, in unison with Cas.

Castiel had already explained this to Merlin when they and the Winchesters were split up.

"They haven't realized I'm back yet," the blue-eyed angel explained to Sam. "I'm guessing it has something to do with the fact that Merlin brought me back, but I'm not certain. But when they find out, they won't be happy. After what I did, I can't say I don't understand why. It's better that they don't become involved."

"Right," Sam said. "You should tell Dean that. He'd like to know."

Cas disappeared without another word and Merlin heard him talking to Dean in the next room.

Chapter 12

Chapter Summary

"You seem…different.”

Faye stood at the end of the driveway, eyes locked on the door of her old home. Why was she even here? She shouldn't be, she knew that. Who was she to ask for the help of her old circle, to tell her mother she hadn't been kidnapped, that she'd just gone off with a centuries old witch? She had no right. She turned quickly and began walking away.

"*Faye*?”

She stopped dead in her tracks. Disappear or face Adam, disappear of face Adam?

She turned on her heel to face him. "You caught me,” she said, immediately falling into her old act.

"Where—Where have you been? It's been months, you just disappeared! We all thought he got you!”

"Who?” she asked, somewhat truly curious.

"It's a long story. What happened to you? You seem…different.”

"Look, it's best if you don't know.”

"Faye, what are you talking about? Whatever it is, it can't be as bad as what we're in right now—“

"Yes, Adam. It can be. It can be much, much worse, and if you have any sense at all, you, Cassie, Dianna, Melissa, and Nick will forget whatever petty thing you have going on right now and focus on protecting yourselves.”

Adam's face fell. "Faye…Nick…he's dead.”

She tilted her head, lips parting slightly. "What?”

"He was possessed and…a lot's happened since you vanished.”

She tried to shake the mix of dread and guilt that was beginning to settle in her gut. Nick was dead. *Nick was dead*.

"I can't…I can't be here.”

"What? Of course you can. You're part of the circle—"

She shook her head violently. "I'm not, Adam. Not anymore. I can't help you." *And you can't help me*.

He squinted at her, becoming wary. "What did you do?"

"I didn't do anything," she said. And that was the truth—she'd done nothing. *Nothing*. "Tell the others I'm sorry." She started backing away from him. "And be ready. For hell."

She teleported away as fast as she could.

Everything was wrong.

So very, very wrong.

Chapter 13

Chapter Summary

And suddenly, Dean could see this guy on a throne with a big fat crown on his head.

"Is famine back in town?" Dean asked after the busty blonde waitress left.

"No, Dean. Morgana unleashed many things, but the horsemen were not among them."

Dean laughed at the angel's seriousness. "Dude, you ordered a burger. Since when do you eat?"

Cas frowned at him. "I can eat whenever I please."

Dean looked to Sam. "Did I miss something?"

Sam shrugged from across the table. "Angel wants to eat, angel's gonna eat."

"Okay, then. So. How are we gonna play this? Do we want to split up, cover more ground?"

"No," Cas said from the middle of the corner booth. "Under no circumstances do we separate. It makes us far too easy to kill. This won't be like the last time—Morgana is organizing her forces."

"This bitch is organizing hell?" Dean questioned, with a note of disbelief. "So…no chaos, they're just out for Mr. Pendragon and his trusty servantman?"

"Manservant," Cas corrected.

"Whatever."

"There's still going to be chaos," Merlin stated from the other side of the angel. "But it will just be…It will be more strategic. Less 'kill whoever just make it a lot' more 'kill him and her and this kind of person'."

"So there'll be an order? Could we prevent more of the killings?" Sam asked from beside Merlin.

"Our focus won't be civilians," Cas said. "We kill as many demons as we can and as often as we can without being foolish."

"We're not going to let innocent people die," Arthur said from beside Dean. "If we can save someone, we're going to save them." There was a subtle note of finality in his words.

"If we can and if it is convenient—"

"I will not have innocent people dying on my account," Arthur said. And suddenly, Dean could see this guy on a throne with a big fat crown on his head. "That's happened enough already with all the people Morgana's killed."

"Would you shut up, you blithering dollop head?" And he could see Merlin by Arthur's side, advising him and, when he needed it, giving him a slap in the ass. Dean tried to shake the mental image. Bad word choice. "You have no idea what this is going to be like. For once, just do as you're told!"

"I'm not a *child*, Mer—"

"Alright you two, save it for later," Sam said as the waitress approached carrying a tray of food.

Dean could also see Arthur throwing shit at Merlin—probably mindlessly, sometimes daggers—when they got in a fight, and Merlin sending Arthur flying into walls.

Damn it. Another bad picture.

Merlin.

Merlin took another bite of his salad.

Can the angel hear us?

He chewed and carefully set up a wall in his mind. *He can't hear me now, and he's not attuned to you—but be quick.*

When he found Morgana, she knew he was there.

He caught sight of the back of her head, hair black as ever and in slight disarray.

If he catches a whiff of your energy, you're dead. You shouldn't be here.

Faye shifted her weight on the stool across the room.

She's not waiting that long. You don't have five days. You—

Cas turned his head to look at Merlin, eyes squinting ever so slightly, and he felt a push from the other side of his wall.

Faye, you need to leave.

But—

NOW!

Cas broke through Merlin's wall just as he zapped Faye somewhere far away.

"*What did you do?*" he spoke and thought simultaneously.

"What are you talking about?" *Just leave it alone.*

"Who was that?"

Arthur, Sam, and Dean exchanged looks.

"Did we miss something?" Dean asked.

"Someone was here," Cas said.

Green eyes grew immediately suspicious. "Who?"

"I don't know. Merlin sent them somewhere before I could figure out who."

"Who was it?" Dean demanded. "*Who the hell was it*?"

"Just—" Merlin heard a gun click from under the table. "If you're working against us, I'll kill you," Dean threatened. "And if you come back, I'll kill you again. And I'll *keep* killing you until you stop coming back."

"Dean, that's not—" Cas started to say.

"I don't think so," Arthur interrupted as another click came from under the table. "If Sam dies, he won't come back."

Even if there were no aimed guns under the table, the looks that were being exchanged were plenty strong to kill.

"How is everything?" the waitress asked unexpectedly, seeming to appear from nowhere.

For several moments, no one spoke. Then Sam said, "I think we'll take our bill."

Chapter 14

Chapter Summary

"She tracked down Mordred."

In the parking lot, things got a bit out of hand.

When Cas picked out of Merlin's head where he had sent Faye, he immediately disappeared.

"Damn it," Merlin muttered.

"Dean, just calm down," Sam tried to say.

The guns that needed bullets were put away, but that didn't mean much.

"Shut up, Sam. If he's not with us, he's against us. And if he's against us, we don't have a chance in hell of winning this."

"Cas already found out where she is—she's probably already dead," Merlin growled bitterly.

"*She*? You're working with Morgana now? What, the ship is sinking so you're just abandoning it and climbing aboard team fucking evil?"

"*She's not evil*!"

That was when Dean hit him. Square in the jaw, sending him slamming into the pavement.

"*You fucker*!" Arthur tackled Dean to the ground and Sam was left trying to separate the two.

Merlin sat up and pushed Arthur against the car door, along with Sam. It would be best if they didn't interfere.

"Merlin, what are you—" Arthur struggled against the invisible force.

"Shut up, Arthur," Merlin ordered, getting to his fee. He could taste blood in his mouth. "Come on, Dean. Hit me. Get it out."

Dean swung his fist again and it landed just below Merlin's eye.

"You're mad because after all you went through—" Another hit. "—after all Sam went through, Morgana unleashed Hell again." Another hit. "And you blame me. And it's my fault and I'm sorry—"

"You stupid ass!" Dean snapped, surprising Merlin. You think *I* blame *you*? Why does everyone think I'm going to blame them!" Cas was standing a few feet behind Dean, but he didn't notice. "Cas ignored me because he thought I blamed him for Bobby's death, you think I'm blaming you for Hell—"

"Then what's the problem?" Merlin asked.

"*What's the problem*? You were trying to protect Morgana!"

"It wasn't Morgana." Dean spun around at the sound of Cas' voice. The angel shot Merlin an apologetic look. "It was Faye Chamberlain."

"Great. So instead of Lucifer, he was just chatting with freaking *Ruby*!"

So that was it. Faye reminded Dean of Ruby. And why wouldn't she? The bad guy, pretending to be good, pretending to help. That was who she was from his point of view. It made sense.

"She was trying to warn him, Dean. Morgana knew I was there. It was a set up. We don't have five days, we have two. And something else—she tracked down Mordred."

The air went out of Merlin's lungs.

Hello, Emrys.

The two were never supposed to be reunited.

It's been awhile.

He'd performed the spell perfectly…

Morgana's upset, Emrys.

How was he alive again?

But not as mad as me.

"Merlin?" Arthur's hands hovered over Merlin's body, unsure if he should touch him or not.

Castiel lifted the too-skinny man and carried him to the car. Sam held the door open and right about the time he shut it, Merlin started screaming.

"What's happening to him?" Arthur demanded desperately.

"I fixed the damage you did," Cas said to Dean, ignoring Arthur, disapproval and maybe even a note of anger obvious in his voice. "But what's coming will be much worse."

"What's going on?" Dean asked. "Who the hell is Mordred?"

"Ask Sam. I'll explain later. Get him somewhere safe—not the hotel."

"Cas—"

"*Do as I say, Dean*!" Morgana had undone the binding spell. How wasn't important, only that she'd done it. Mordred was free. All those centuries of stored up energy and he was taking it all out on Merlin. He'd run out, of course. His power would eventually come back down to normal, but not without damage. "I'll get your things."

He left Dean standing in the parking lot and began packing their items, when what he really wanted to do—stupidly—was go kill Mordred.
After Merlin had brought him back, a bond had formed between them. He supposed it was something like the bond that had formed after he'd raised Dean from Perdition, though it was different from that. But it still made Cas want to hunt down the child and kill him.

He dropped the bags in the back seat of Merlin's car, driven by Sam, and then arrived in the passenger seat of Dean's temporary car. "Where are we going?" he asked politely, instead of picking it out of Dean's head.

"Shit, Cas!" Dean almost swerved off the road. "I don't know."

"It's alright, you'll be fine." In the back seat, Arthur was comforting a paler than usual Merlin —he'd stopped screaming—raven hair is his lap.

"I don't really know anybody around here—"

"That house," Cas instructed, pointing to a large farm house with a "For Sale" sign in the yard.

Dean obediently pulled into the driveway, Sam following in the car behind.

Arthur lifted Merlin out of the car and carried him to the porch. Dean picked the lock easily enough and they were in.

"You wanna explain what's going on now?" Dean asked Cas as Arthur set Merlin gently down on the couch.

"Did Sam tell you anything?"

"Just that Mordred is supposedly Arthur's son or nephew and they wound up killing each other."

"They're actually not related. Mordred was a druid boy, and back in the days when Arthur's father was king, magic was banned. Mordred came to Camelot and Merlin, Arthur, Morgana ended up helping him escape. Kilgharrah, the Great Dragon, warned Merlin the boy would one day kill Arthur. A later event brought Merlin and Mordred together again and Merlin tried to get rid of the boy. He was unsuccessful, of course, and so they became enemies. In Merlin's third life cycle, he killed Mordred and performed a binding spell, putting the boy in something like a coma. But somehow Morgana's found him and unleashed him."

"So this kid is bad news," Dean inferred.

"Very," Cas confirmed.

"And he's doing this," Dean guessed, gesturing over his shoulder to where Sam was handing Arthur some water.

"Yes."

"When's he gonna stop?"

"I don't know. Mordred's magic was dormant for so long and he is extremely powerful. But causing this much pain to someone without knowing where they are…the spell must be extremely strenuous—eventually his powers will come back down to normal and then it will end."

"Well, how long are we talking? A couple hours, a couple *days*?"

"*I don't know*," Cas repeated.

He knew perfectly well what Dean was thinking, without even reading his mind. With Merlin incapacitated, how were they supposed to fight? And without splitting up?

"Hold on a sec—" Dean grabbed Cas' arm to stop him from walking away. It would seem dying (again) had no effect on the feeling he got when Dean touched him. He was no closer to placing it either. "If Morgana knew you were there, why didn't she just roast you?"

"She was likely saving her energy for breaking the spell that held Mordred."

"But she has the juice? To kill you," Dean added for clarification.

"Yes. If she wants to. But it would not be wise—using all that power would leave her almost, if not completely, drained."

"What if she got one of the knives that can freaking kill you?"

"Then that would be a very bad situation and we should hope it never happens."

Chapter 15

Chapter Summary

"And I don't plan to die again any time soon."

Around one in the morning, when the night was at its darkest, black pushing heavily against any and every source of light, Dean took Cas outside. Merlin was still on the couch, shivering, Arthur had fallen asleep with his knees on the floor and head on the couch cushions. Even Sam had dozed off in a chair a few minutes ago. Dean stood up straight from the doorframe he'd been leaning against and gestured for Cas to follow.

"Can't you do something to help him?" he asked once they were outside.

Cas shook his head. "The kind of magic Mordred's using…I don't dare interfere. It could make matters worse."

Dean couldn't help but notice the way the moonlight just barely highlighted Cas' features. The bridge of his nose, ever so faintly his bottom lip. Tiny glints of it in his bluer than blue eyes. "And Mordred…this guy is just a kid?"

"In the physical sense, yes. He actually bears a stunning resemblance to Merlin and Morgana. Completely coincidental, of course."

Cas was standing a little too close, completely oblivious to the idea of personal space, as always. He wondered what Cas' hair would feel like…

Dean didn't stop to think what he was doing. "If you ever die again, I'll have Merlin bring you back just so I can kill you myself." The angel's dark messy hair was soft against Dean's fingers, his breath warm on Dean's face.

"That would be pointless. And I don't plan to die again any time soon," he said before pressing his lips to Dean's.

Cas' mouth on Dean's surprised him. He wouldn't have thought angels really knew how to do all that stuff—especially so well. But then he remembered Meg and how she and Castiel had kissed and an unexpected bout of jealousy surged through him. He backed Cas down the porch steps and onto the grass. He pushed the trench coat off Cas' slim shoulders as he nipped at Dean's ear. Hands made their way to buttons and buttons came undone and they found themselves lying on the ground, Dean's teeth scraping against Cas' perfect collarbone. Dean wasn't quite sure what happened to the other man's tie, but he didn't actually care.

"All this time," he said against the perfectly sculpted, pale neck, "did you have any idea?"

Cas rolled Dean over and kissed him hungrily before replying. "I knew you were special, Dean. I just didn't know…in this way."

Dean undid Cas' shirt the rest of the way, trying not to pop any buttons, but unsure of his success. And for a little while, he forget about how fucked up everything was. For a little while, his only thought was Cas.

It was still dark when they woke to Merlin's screams.

Dean yanked his pants on and pulled his shirt over his head as he ran into the house. Cas somehow managed to get his pants on before Dean and he swung his white shirt on, not even bothering to button the front in his hurry.

Merlin was still on the couch, but now there were red gashes on his white skin, blood soaking through his still whole clothing.

"Help him!" Arthur shouted at Cas.

"I can't—it might make it worse."

"What's happening?" Sam asked, eyes darting from Merlin to Cas to Dean and back to Cas.

"Mordred's—stepping it up," Cas said.

Dean couldn't peel his eyes away from the gashes that were appearing from nowhere on Merlin's skin. All he could think was *Hellhound*, but he knew that didn't make sense. Merlin's clothes were still fully in tact; if it was a hellhound, they'd be in shreds.

Some unseen thing clawed three vertical lines down Merlin's cheek.

Cas pushed past Dean and knelt by Arthur, at Merlin's side.

"Hey—Dean." Someone was shaking his shoulder. "*Dean.*"

He snapped to attention and realized it was Sam, a worried expression on his face.

"It's not hellhounds," Sammy promised. "Do you hear me? It's okay."

"Actually," Cas said with a frown, "it is a hellhound."

"*What*?" Sam said in obvious surprise. "How?"

"He must be using…I believe it's commonly called a 'voodoo doll'."

Sam questioned, "How is that kid controlling a *hellhound*? Those things are…they're vicious."

"He is very powerful."

"Obviously," Sam muttered.

"The good news is, this sort of spell cannot be maintained for long—even by the boy."

"What if he dies?" Sam asked, gesturing to Merlin.

"Morgana wouldn't allow it. She raised all of Hell for Merlin. One hellhound attack won't be enough to satisfy her. Especially since she thinks Merlin took Faye."

"Why does she think it was him?" Dean tore his eyes away from Merlin. "Why not any of us?"

"Faye is a witch, and a powerful one. It is extremely unlikely that you or Sam could manage to take her. Arthur is incompetent as far as Morgana is concerned and if she has the choice of blaming me or Merlin, she will always choose Merlin."

"She really hates him," Sam stated as Merlin let out another scream.

"She chose the wrong path," Cas said cryptically.

"Merlin said that same thing," Dean said. "Right before he went on about how he should've guided her more."

"What's that phrase…" Cas wondered out loud. "You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make it drink. Morgana found something that tasted better than water. She drank too much of it and it poisoned her."

"Merlin always took credit for that," Sam said. "The poison thing."

Glancing over, Dean saw Arthur was totally oblivious to their conversation. He was completely absorbed in trying to comfort Merlin.

"Merlin killed her to save the whole of Camelot. It was a necessary sacrifice, mostly thanks to Morgause."

"He shouldn't blame himself," Sam said sadly.

"No." Cas turned to look at Dean. "He shouldn't."

Chapter 16

Chapter Summary

Yes. Sam had definitely known.

Sam's thoughts were bouncing wildly around in his head. He wasn't an idiot and he certainly wasn't blind. Cas had barely been wearing a shirt, for crying out loud! It wasn't as if he wasn't okay with it…just the *timing* threw him off.
I saw it coming, he reminded himself. He'd seen it coming ever since the invasion of personal space. Ever since the awkward jokes, that 'look' they always shared. Ever since the "profound bond".

Sam had known. An inkling in his gut that wasn't strong enough to consciously acknowledge before. And when Dean saw Cas after Merlin brought him back…Dean had come so close to losing it completely. Worse than Cas dying, worse than Bobby dying. After that, the drinking had got even *worse*—Sam hadn't thought that possible.

And then Cas had shown up at their motel room. That was when Sam had started to realize what was actually going on (whether or not Dean and Cas actually knew it). While the other two weren't looking, he'd played his ringtone, pretending someone was calling, and leaving them by themselves, in hopes that they'd make amends. He prided himself on having resisted the urge to press his ear against the door and listen in.

Yes. Sam had definitely known.

He looked from his brother and the angel, Dean sitting on the floor with his back against the wall, asleep, and Cas standing inside his brother's bubble, watching him, a look on his face somewhere between protective and adoring. The look of a guardian angel.

And then he turned to look at Arthur, who was half asleep, unmoved from Merlin's side. The two were centuries old and, though you couldn't tell from looking at Arthur, it could definitely be seen in Merlin's eyes. *Especially* when he'd been looking for Arthur when he'd been kidnapped by Morgana. There'd been a couple times, Sam had noticed, after the two were reunited, when Merlin looked truly happy. Of course, the rare moments were brief, but it was obvious he lived for Arthur. And watching them now, Sam was thinking Arthur had the right idea. They really were everything *but* lovers, so why not?

Sam refrained from sighing. Why not? Because losing someone you loved hurt. He still missed Jess, some days worse than others. And that had been *years*. He knew she'd want him to move past her, perhaps stop and say hey to Sarah again…but how could he? That would only put her in danger and he had come to terms, long ago, with the fact that he would never be able to have a normal life and settle down. Ever.

"Oh, Sammy. Poor, poor Sammy. You'll never be happy. Boo. Hoo. Hoo."

Sam raised his eyes to stare at Lucifer, standing across the room. *Not real*, he told himself, squeezing his hand. *He's not real.*

"Sam." Cas' voice was quiet from behind him.

"Yeah, Cas?"

"You're still hallucinating." It wasn't a question.

He shrugged. "I'm used to it by now."

"But you never should have had to get used to it," the angel said sadly, cryptically apologizing. "I can fix the wall now. You won't have to see Lucifer anymore." He reached his hand out, but Sam stopped him.

"I think…I'll need to think about it."

Cas gave him a puzzled look.

"Look, I've been seeing Lucifer for months now, and…it's sort of become a part of me. And it'd be *great* not to have to deal with it, but…just not right now."

"As you wish," Cas said after a moment. "If you change your mind, all you have to do is ask."

"Thanks. And Cas?"

"Yes?"

"You and Dean…was tonight…"

"I'd rather not talk about me and Dean," Cas said in an almost awkwardly human way.

"Right. Sorry." Of course he'd just ask his brother about it later.

Cas hesitated. "It is…alright with you…"

Sam smiled. "Of course."

Chapter 17

Chapter Summary

*"Yes, good job, lover boy," he said dully, first looking Dean up and down, then Cas.
"You don't say..."*

Around midday, Merlin's eyes opened.

"You're awake!" Arthur shouted immediately. "Thank God!"

"Not quite."

Everyone turned to look at the source of the voice, though three already knew it.

"*Crowley*," Dean hissed.

"Yes, good job, lover boy," he said dully, first looking Dean up and down, then Cas. "You don't say…*really*? You two? Guess I can't say there wasn't something there, but—"

"Why are you here?" Sam pressed.

"Because I can be, now shut up, you giant *moose*. Now. We all have a common enemy here—the equally lovely and thorn-in-my-side-*bitch*, Morgana."

Dean snorted. "Right, because you're totally team anti-evil."

"No, you insolent prat, I'm team I-want-Hell-back. As much as I enjoy having it taken from me—"

"You can forget it," Dean said. "We're not working with you."

"You think you can win on your own?" Crowley said with a bark of laughter.

Dean and Sam glanced at Merlin.

"Oh, *please*. That pathetic warlock? He can't kill Morgana anymore than a fly can kill a whale. Or rather he won't."

"What do you mean?" Dean asked, eyes narrowing suspiciously.

"He's like the deadliest spider in the world—he could take down the hypothetical very large mammal of your picking without even trying, but he won't."

"Why not?" Sam asked.

"Oh, that's not my story to tell. Consider my offer. It's the only way you idiots stand a chance. And Cas, no hard feelings."

And then he was gone.

"Fucking demons! What was he talking about?" Dean snapped, directing his words at Arthur.

"How am I—"

"I'll explain," Merlin said weakly, making a pitiful attempt to sit up.

Arthur pushed him gently but firmly back down. "You need to rest."

"It's my fault Morgana is the way she is," Merlin confessed.

"We've heard your self-hate story," Dean said.

"And it's not your fault," Sam added.

"*Yes*, it *is*," Merlin lashed out, voice quickly growing softer again. "You don't understand. I didn't just *lie* to her about her magic and my own. *I killed her.* Morgause made her into a vessel for a powerful spell that would've brought Camelot to ruin and killed Arthur, his father, and many others. So I took the easy way out and I killed her. I didn't even try to talk to her. I was so *selfish*, all about keeping my magic a damned secret. I should've just told her. I should've showed her magic could be used for good, but I *didn't*."

No one breathed a word.

"So I can't kill her again," Merlin barely whispered. "She was my friend—"

Cas laid a hand on Merlin's forehead, instantly healing him and making him fall asleep. "That was completely unnecessary," Cas growled. "Why couldn't you just accept he can't kill her? You could've at least waited until he was feeling better—"

"We're on a bit of a time crunch here, Cas. Dumbo's feelings can't come before everything else."

Cas glared at Dean and he had to back down from the fierce blue eyes.

"Speaking of feelings," Sam said after a minute, "I think you two need to t—"

"Shut up, Sam." Dean silenced him with a raised finger.

"Is it over now?" Arthur asked quietly, eyes never leaving Merlin.

"Yes," Cas confirmed. "Mordred's power must have returned to normal. I suggest you sleep now. You'll need to be well-rested."

Arthur nodded in resignation and stretched out on the floor by the couch.

"I'll go pick up some food," Sam volunteered. "Later we should see how well Arthur can fight."

"If at all," Dean muttered sourly.

Sam pretended not to hear as he grabbed his coat and left the house.

Arthur was already out like a light, breath rising and falling steadily.

Dean went to the sparse kitchen and, after a few minutes, so did Cas.

"Dean, last night—"

"Leave it, Cas."

"I just want to be clear—"

"Be clear on *what*?"

Cas frowned at him. "Don't shut yourself off, Dean. I'm sorry if—"

"You're *sorry*?" How dare he say that, how dare he *apologize*. "Look, Cas, if you ever apologize again…for *anything*…" Dean wished he knew what his problem was. He wasn't mad at Cas, but here he was, practically yelling at him. For apologizing! And last night…he didn't regret it, he was *glad* he'd finally figured out that that was what Cas was to him. But at the same time, it scared him. It wasn't the gay thing—he'd try anything once—it was more I-know-I'm-gonna-fuck-this-up-and-I-don't-want-to.

He realized he'd just dropped off midsentence, leaving Cas hanging, so he slid his hand behind the pale neck and kissed Cas full on the mouth.

"Are we clear?" he asked when he had to take a breath.

Cas placed a light kiss on Dean's lips in answer.

Chapter 18

Chapter Summary

"Don't worry, it's just my Hellhound."

"Faye!" The obvious joy in Morgana's voice alone was enough to make Faye feel guilty for the betrayal. The taller woman wrapped her arms around Faye and kissed her forehead. "I thought Merlin had taken you."

Faye returned the warm embrace and laughed. "Merlin? Please. I'm sorry, I should've told you—I went back to Chance Harbor. I was curious as to how everyone was doing."

Morgana raised an eyebrow. "And how did that play out?"

Faye shrugged. "It was stupid. I saw Adam and he tried to tell me I needed to stay. They were in the middle of a crisis or something."

This was stupid. She needed to get back to Morgana. Or disappear completely. But she knew she shouldn't be here. *Sneaking around, checking on the others. But since Adam had told her Nick was dead…she just had to make sure the rest of the circle was safe. She pieced together that Adam and Diana weren't a couple anymore, surprisingly, and that Melissa was getting on okay without Nick—how long had he been dead?—but what was most intriguing was Jake Armstrong was back in town and there were sparks between him and Cassie. Cassie, who apparently had "dark magic." The circle appeared blissfully ignorant to what that meant. They classified "dark" as evil and that it could be done without the circle. Faye, however, knew that was a load of bullshit. Dark magic was stolen magic.*

"But I did find out something interesting—Cassie Blake has dark magic."

A fire flared in Morgana's eyes. "The little blonde girl?"

Faye nodded. "I know you told me it was a rare thing—"

"It's only happened *twice*," Morgana hissed. "Next to no one knows the ritual to steal magic. It's risky and stupid and wrong. Her parents—who were her parents?"

Someone barged into the expensive mansion unannounced and rude. His eyes were black. "My Lady, Mordred is asking for you. He was unable to maintain the spell any longer. He's quite upset about it—"

"Tell him I'll be with him as soon as I can. Inform him Faye has returned to use safe and sound and with some important news. He may come in if he likes."

The large man made his exit and they were alone again. "Her parents?"

"Her mother was Amelia Blake and I guess they recently found out her father is John Blackwell?"

Morgana slammed her fists on the nearest object—in this case, the marble fireplace—and it turned from gray to black. "*Blackwell,*" she seethed.

"You never finished explaining to me this stealing magic thing."

"Several centuries ago, Merlin was foolish enough to try and lessen my power. He used the ritual that damned *dragon* gave him to try and extract some of my magic. Of course, it needed a vessel and he was the one performing the spell, so he couldn't take it in. A lucky stranger received some of *my* magic. Merlin never found out who, and he never tried it again. After he did that spell, he created the restriction spell—a circle—so to limit power. He tried to clean up after himself and failed. Stolen magic wasn't affected by the restriction spell and he found out the hard way it can sometimes poison the receiver's mind, begin to twist them. They'll kill without reason, they let their tempers rule, and they're idiots until they learn to control it—if they do. Blackwell was the name of the man who has a piece of my magic and if Cassie dear is his daughter, she's more than likely going to go mad."

"Cassie has a piece of your magic?" Faye felt a twinge of jealousy. Here she was, thinking she was special, but that little bitch had to take even that away from her.

"Faye." Morgana laid a comforting hand on Faye's cheek. "You're my blood. Cassie is just the latest in a line of witches that wrongly possess some of my magic. Don't worry, I would never take her in."

"When I overheard them talking, they made it sound like she was *really* powerful."

Morgana's musical laugh filled her ears. "Anyone with even a particle of my magic would be powerful in their eyes. You are *much* stronger than her, Faye. You come from the le Fay line. Once you can use your magic to its full potential, you won't even have to look at her to kill her."

Faye took comfort in Morgana's words. She would be great one day. Her power would be *immense*. But there was something bothering her. "Morgana, what about my mother?" she asked as she took a seat on a velvet-cushioned chair. "Why were the elders able to take her magic away?"

"Your mother didn't know how to use the old magic residing in her to its full potential," she said. "How could she? She doesn't realize who she is. She let them take it away from her because she didn't know how to stop them. But le Fay magic is ancient—if she digs deep enough inside herself, she'll discover there's still a tether between her and her power. Once she knows that, it will snap back to her. You see, the prior generation didn't steal your parents' magic, only blocked it. They couldn't extract it from them, or else it would have to have a vessel."

"Can you help her?"

"I'm afraid not. I can't force her to discover the tie, and if the elders found out, they'd start digging and might find out and that would just be an unwanted hassle. And your mother is a selfish person—nothing against her, but she would use her magic for personal gain, frivolous things."

Faye couldn't deny that. Her mother was selfish. Morgana was probably right.

"Is this Faye?"

Startled, Faye looked up and saw a boy, maybe twelve years old, with the bluest eyes she'd ever seen.

"Yes, this is Faye." The child had leaves in his hair and a certain calm yet wild look about him. Echoes of extreme power floated around him and Faye could feel how dangerous he was. "Faye, this is Mordred. The boy Merlin fears more than anyone in the world."

"He's strong," Faye stated, realizing how stupid she sounded after she'd already spoken.

"Oh, he is. So much so, that Merlin locked him away for centuries. But he's back now. Was your revenge satisfactory?"
"I suppose," the child said. "I wish it would've lasted longer."

A growl came from outside and Faye's heart did a little jump. Mordred turned to her. "Don't worry, it's just my Hellhound."

Morgana smoothed down his midnight hair. "Why don't you go back outside," she suggested. "Meg's found a couple more people who helped Merlin and the Winchesters. About an hour ago, they brought in Ben and Lisa Braeden. You and your hound can get some more practice."

"Sanguinem," Mordred said. "I named her Sanguinem."

Chapter 19

Chapter Summary

"You wanna share with the class?" Dean suggested.

"Woah, PDA to a minimum, please," Sam said as he walked into the kitchen, two paper bags in hand. Dean and Cas had been making sure things were crystal clear between them since Sam had left to get lunch.

"Right. Sorry, Sammy." Dean gave an empty apology as he redid Cas' tie. Cas watched him intently as his fingers worked the fabric, which Dean found extremely distracting.

Sam went into the other room to wake up Pendragon and Mr. Magic, and Dean snuck in another kiss, Cas returning it eagerly.

"Gah—seriously?" Sam returned, followed by Arthur, whose hand was resting lightly on Merlin's lower back, un-protested.

"Didn't think the Sleeping Beauty couple would be so easily woken," Dean remarked.

Arthur grumbled something inaudible.

"So I was thinking," Dean began as Sam spread out the contents of the bag.

"Don't hurt yourself," Arthur interrupted, more clearly.

"Shut up, Princess. The whole reincarnation thing--do you get reborn in Europe every time or just get born with accents?"

Arthur opened his mouth to say something, but Merlin slapped him upside the head, shutting him up.

"It's all up to chance," Merlin said. "Sometimes we're born in England, sometimes in the states. Canada, Mexico, Russia, down under." He totally missed his own pun. "This time around it was England again and I came here, following Morgana, after she'd taken Arthur."

"Like, on a plane? Or did you mojo yourself across an ocean?"

Merlin raised a dark eyebrow. "I teleported. It was faster." He smirked. "And cheaper."

"Okay, so your parents." Dean grabbed a burger and a box of fries from the McDonald's bag inside the paper bag. "Are they in this deal? Is Uther out there or is he over and done for

good?" He was quite proud of himself for remembering the name of Arthur's predecessor, but he didn't say anything about it.

Merlin shook his head. "It's just our generation. Apparently we're the ones who messed up destiny."

"Then how do you have the same names?" Sam asked before taking a drink of his soda.

Merlin shrugged. "I guess our names just suit us?" He attempted a smile, then added, "Sometimes we do have different names. Once I was a Colin. As soon as I left though, I went back to Merlin. Arthur was even a Bradley once, James twice."

"Weird," Dean remarked. He glanced over at Cas, who wasn't eating. "What, no burgers today?"

"I'm not hungry," he stated simply.

"Alrighty. Hey, what about the knights?" Dean asked. "Are they around somewhere?"

"Yeah, scattered. I haven't made much of an effort to find them recently."

"What about Morgause?" Sam asked.

Merlin shook his head. "She's not a part of our never-ending group."

"No." Everyone turned to look at Cas. It sounded like he'd said it to himself, like he'd realized something.

"You wanna share with the class?" Dean suggested.

"Morgause went to Hell," he said, pacing to the other side of the kitchen, around the buffet-style counter. "She must have, because she's not in Heaven."

"Morgana opened Hell," Sam stated needlessly.

"It's only a matter of time before they find each other," Cas said, pacing back. "I can't believe I missed it—"

"Would she be a demon?" Sam questioned.

"That many centuries? Over a millennia? I think we should just assume she is," Dean said.

"This is *not* good," Cas said, borderline angel-freaking out.

"Hey." Dean grabbed his arm and made him sit on a stool. "Just calm down a minute."

"Why would Morgause be a demon?" Arthur asked.

"All demons start out as human souls," Sam explained.

"You spend a little time in Hell, eventually it takes it toll," Dean finished for his brother. He turned to Cas. "If she's a witch, shouldn't she have gone to Purgatory?"

"She wasn't a witch," Cas said impatiently. "She was a sorceress, a priestess of the old religion. There is a difference."

"Right," Dean said, not even trying to understand. "So, demon."

"Powerful demon," Cas corrected. "Lilith, Azazel, Alistair—they were also sorcerers long ago."

"Fanfuckingtastic," Dean commented.

Cas frowned at him before he caught onto the sarcasm.

"Maybe Crowley—"

"No." Cas' one word was obviously final. No Crowley. But if Morgause turned out to be a mean ass bitch from the fancy eyes club, then they couldn't do everything on their own.

"We don't have—"

"Dean, I said *no*." Underneath his glare was pain, begging Dean to understand. "I went to Crowley and you hated me for it. I made a mistake. It won't be made again. Crowley is still the enemy, he's just the least of our worries right now."

Sam glared at Dean, like, *are-you-stupid?* and Dean glared back. *Idiot*, he called himself in the back of his head.

Sam released Dean's eyes and said to Arthur, "How are you with fighting?"

Chapter 20

Chapter Summary

Morgana smiled, somewhere between warmly and wickedly.

Faye didn't like Mordred. He scared her, to be honest—though she would never admit that out loud. But what if he found out she'd helped Merlin and the Winchesters? She got the feeling he wouldn't hesitate to snap every bone in her body. She had no doubt he was perfectly capable, small as he might be. What was worse was the *Hellhound* that followed him around everywhere like a God-forsaken puppy. She wanted nothing more than to leave the room when he and his giant mutt walked in, but she didn't want to seem suspicious. And she didn't want Morgana to see her as weak either.

She was always relieved when everyone went to sleep. It gave her a single shred of peace if only for a few hours. She didn't think Hellhounds needed sleep, but when Mordred did, apparently so did his dog.

In the middle of the night, she awoke to hear Morgana crying softly and immediately went to check on her. She opened the door and didn't think Morgana had heard her, but then she whispered, "Faye," followed by a pause. "It's Morgause. She's here." When she turned to look at Faye, her eyes were a dam about to burst and she just looked so small, so…exposed.

Faye knelt on the ground beside Morgana and wrapped her arms around the usually invincible woman.

"She needs a vessel," Morgana said, refraining from sniffling.

Faye attempted to say something comforting. "Well, there's plenty of those."

"She wants it to mean something," Morgana continued, a waver in her voice, but also a renewed strength. She turned to look Faye straight in the eyes, the light from the fireplace reflecting deceptively in her eyes. "I told her about Castiel and his vessel. She's going after Novak's daughter."

Calm. Calm. Calm. "A nice choice. That will definitely get a response out of Castiel."

"Indeed. And since they believe we won't attack for several days, we have the upper hand guaranteed."

"…How strong is he?" Faye asked hesitantly. "Castiel."

"He's an angel. Or at least he was. I'm not sure now. Merlin created that spell on the spot, Castiel might not be 100%...Castiel. And he wouldn't dare return to the heavenly host. I'm

hoping he's been cut off from his power source and it's just a matter of time before he runs dry, but it's best not to rely on luck."

Faye titled her head. "What are you planning?"

"I'm trying to get my hands on a blade that can kill angels." Morgana's voice dropped several notches from her already hushed tone. "They're practically impossible to come across, but I figure, with all of hell at my disposal, I must be able to get at least one of these handy little knives."

"I'm sure they won't stay hidden for long."

"Yes, the sooner, the better."

Morgana. Faye jumped at the sound of an unexpected voice in her head. Mordred was standing a few feet away in the threshold.

"Speak, Mordred," Morgana said gently. "Faye's not become accustomed to exchanging thoughts yet."

"No, it's okay," she interrupted quickly. "He just startled me."

"You're happy," he said anyway, ignoring Faye almost completely. "Why are you crying?"

Morgana half-laughed. "Morgause contacted me," she explained. "My sister's *alive*…"

Not alive, Faye thought in unison with Mordred, who spoke it.

"Well, you know what I mean."

Just then, a young girl, maybe a little older than Mordred, appeared.

"Sister," the girl addressed Morgana.

Morgana sprang from Faye's arms and embraced the small girl.

Faye could feel waves of power rolling of the small body, intense but different than Mordred's. This was darker, heavier. If anything, it only made Faye want to disappear even more. She hated the feel of Morgause and Mordred's magic. She wondered vaguely if she would've felt like this about Morgana if she'd never restored Faye's solo magic, but, in the back of her mind, she knew it wasn't' just different with Morgana—Morgana *was* differet.

Maybe she should go back to Chance Harbor…and *stay* there. She could tell Morgana this time. Maybe she could focus on getting Morgana's magic back, impress the older sorceress. In her head, she laughed at herself. None of her old circle would believe her if she told them about Cassie's power. Her "dark magic". *This* was her circle now, in it's own sense. Morgana, Mordred, Morgana. She felt less fitting with Mordred and Morgause, but it was still who she was now. (She may or may not have took a small comfort in the idea that Merlin was a part of the circle too—that he'd just rebelled and went off on his own.

"And who is this?" Morgause asked, looking pointedly at Faye.

Morgana smiled, somewhere between warmly and wickedly. "This is Faye. Faye le Fay."

"A sorceress of your blood?" Morgause sounded impressed.

"Yes. There is so much to tell, sister, so much you've missed."

That twinge was beginning to familiarize itself with Faye's gut. And it was completely unreasonable. This girl—*woman*, she corrected herself—was Morgana's sister! Faye had no right to feel jealous.

Morgause turned to look at Faye again—this time really look at her—and her ice colored eyes seemed to see right through her. Faye suddenly felt transparent under the child vessel's gaze.

It was animal instinct.

Evil, evil, evil.

Chapter 21

Chapter Summary

"Fine. So none of you like Faye."

If Arthur was good with a gun, then he was beyond fantastic with a knife—of any kind, as was found out. Several times, Sam caught sight of a twinkle in Merlin's eye when he and his brother were particularly amazed at something Arthur did. Like he'd known just how great Arthur would be. Cas showed little to no reaction, mostly just observing.

"Seirously," Dean said, throat at the mercy of the machete in Arthur's capable hands, "you *have* to have learned this from somewhere."

"I told you." Arthur dropped the blade by his side. "It's like instinct."

Glancing over at Merlin, Sam saw that twinkle again.

"It's because he used to fight with a sword, isn't it!" Sam exclaimed.

"Oh, but that was *ages* ago," Merlin said playfully.

"That's like cheating!" Dean accused.

"It's good that he remembers," Cas said from a few feet away where he was seated on the bottom step of the back porch, feet bare in the grass. At Dean's insistence, he'd left his suit jacket and trench coat inside along with his shoes. Dean was concerned about him never feeling the grass beneath his feet or something like that.

"Yeah, I love feeling like an idiot," Dean said.

"Dean—"

Dean cut his brother off. "He makes us look like five-year-olds fighting with sticks!"

"Dean, he's practically medieval."

"Yeah, whatever."

Merlin moved to take a seat by Cas and Arthur plopped down onto the ground. Apparently, it was break time. Sam was okay with that; there was something he'd been wondering.

"Merlin, did you ever meet any hunter? Like…medieval hunters?"

"One or two," Merlin answered. "There was one time…" He paused for a moment, smile on his face. "A hunter came to Camelot after Elyan—one of the knights—awoke a ghost. I convinced him he should leave, that some of the things he did might be considered too close to magic for Uther, but, of course, he didn't leave immediately. He ran into Gwaine at the tavern and they had a bit too much mead and the two got to talking." Merlin laughed at the memory. "The next day, Elyan brought up ghosts and Gwaine told him to put a circle of salt under his bed and that that would keep spirits away. I'm fairly certain the drinks jumbled his memories."

"What were they like back then?" Sam asked. "The hunters."

"Same as now, I'd say. Killer instincts, taste for alcohol, and just the right amount of crazy for the job. Of course…things were a little less extreme back then. Monsters, ghosts, a rare dem—*Faye*?"

Sam and Dean whirled around to face the witch standing behind them. Arthur was on his feet in one swift motion.

"Wait," Merlin said, standing up in sync with Cas.

Faye's image flickered before their eyes.

"What, she's a ghost?" Dean questioned.

"No," Merlin said. "She's not dead." He waited for her to explain herself.

"It's a spell—an out of body experience, so to speak. Coming here wouldn't be safe. For me or any of you. I only have a few minutes, so listen. You know Morgana found Mordred. The boy has a Hellhound—he treats it like a puppy—and she's huge. Much bigger than the others. And Morgause came to Morgana, without a vessel at first. But Morgause found a body…"

Faye flickered again, this time more contorted. A pained expression crossed her features.

"Someone's interfering with the spell," Merlin said in quick explanation before he began spewing out Latin at lightning speed.

"Whose body?" Sam pressed.

Blood dripped from her nose. She opened her mouth but no words came out.

"*Whose body*?" Sam repeated.

Merlin stopped the Latin. "Keeping her here when she's being pulled somewhere else could kill her."

With unexpected forcefulness, she locked eyes with Merlin. Five. Ten. Fifteen seconds passed and then she vanished completely.

"What the hell was that about?" Dean growled.

"She sent me a picture." Merlin's brow remained furrowed as he spoke. "She tried words, but she couldn't get them out. Speaking is more difficult that sending thoughts in some cases."

"Okay, so what was the picture?" Arthur asked.

"It was a girl. I've never seen her before."

"The vessel," Sam guessed.

Merlin nodded. "She was young. Blonde hair, blue eyes. And there was something…off about it. Not the image itself, but the feeling she conveyed—"

Cas reached a hand out to Merlin's forehead and withdrew it quickly. "That's Claire."

"Claire?" Dean questioned. "As in Claire Novak? Jimmy's daughter?"

"Morgause can't possess her for long," Cas said anxiously. "I once used her a s a vessel—to have had an angel and then a demon inside you…"

"Do you mean can't as in *can't*," Dean asked, "or can't as in Claire'll die if Morgause stays in her?"

"Claire could die," Cas said in answer to Dean, but his eyes were already somewhere else. "I have to go—"

"*No*!" Dean grabbed Cas by the arm, fingers digging into cloth and skin. "We don't split up. She probably did this just to push your buttons. We go in with a plan and together."

"It wasn't Morgana or Morgause or Mordred who pulled Faye back," Merlin said with a frown. "The resistance wasn't strong enough."

"Who cares about that bitch!" Dean snapped.

"She came to *warn* us," Merlin said stubbornly. "*Again*."

"So what! She's still working with Morgana."

Merlin shook his head, obviously flustered that no one was understanding. "Fine. So none of you like Faye. But now there's a third party involved! Someone else was summoning Faye."

"That sounds like *her* problem, not our's," Dean said dismissively. "Right now, we need to focus on getting Morgause of out Claire."

Sam watched Merlin's expression carefully. Something—not quite resign, though there was no more defiance—settled on his features.

Sam wished he could understand Merlin's fondness of Faye, but he didn't get it. But with Claire, it was simple. She was Jimmy's daughter. Jimmy was Cas' vessel. They couldn't let anything happen to her.

Chapter 22

Chapter Summary

"You're second rate next to me."

Faye felt like she'd just fallen a thousand feet and slammed into the ground below. She turned her head up slowly and straightened her legs out of the fetal position. She was anything but helpless.

In her head, she heard the faintest echo of *I'm sorry*. It could only be from Merlin.

It was dark in the room, the only light coming from purposefully arranged candles. She was lying in the middle of a circle heavily decorated with symbols. Surrounding her was her old circle, plus one.

"*Jake*?"

A smirk pulled at the boy's lips. "Nice to see you, Faye."

"What do you want?" Faye glared at Adam. "You interfered with a powerful spell—you could have killed me!"

"You said the spell wouldn't hurt her!" Melissa said in an accusatory tone to Cassie.

"She's exaggerating," Cassie said. "Or flat-out lying."

"She's bleeding," Diana said in a quieter voice.

Cassie ignored Diana's words. "Why did you leave? And why did you come back?"

The old familiar jealous, hungry feeling Faye got whenever she was round Cassie made a reappearance and now Faye knew what it was. It was *her* magic, *Morgana's* magic, inside of Cassie. Of course, no one would believe her if she said as much. They followed the blonde bitch like a pack of blind dogs.

"Someone offered me my solo magic back. I said yes, then I left."

"The circle was bound. You can't have your own magic anymore," Jake said.

"Thank you, Sherlock, but you're wrong. You don't know the half of it. None of you do." Faye got to her feet and wiped her bleeding nose with the back of her hand. "She'll find you. All I have to do is call and she'll kill every last one of you."

"Who's 'she'?" Adam asked warily.

"She's better than any of you witches."

"As if you're not a witch," Cassie said, raising an eyebrow.

Faye did *not* like that bitch's new attitude. She lifted her chin. "You're second rate next to me. All of you."

Cassie smirked and Faye's fingers twitched as she restrained herself.

"Adam said you told him something was coming. What did you mean?"

"Had I known this was going to happen, I'd have just let you all burn. I regret having come back at all."

"Maybe you shouldn't have."

"I'm sorry, was that a threat?"

Cassie shrugged. "You tell me."

"You *don't* want to play this game with me, sweetie."

"I'm sorry," Cassie mocked. "Was that a threat?"

That was it. Faye threw her hand out and Cassie went flying back into the wall.

The circle gave a collective gasp.

"Her eyes!" she heard from Melissa.

"That's what *real* power looks like," Faye hissed. "Not stolen or bargained."

Cassie made an attempt to glare her down and Faye felt an annoying prickle in her throat. She raised her hand and held Cassie up to the ceiling before letting her slam back into the ground.

"Faye, stop!" Diana yelled. "Just explain what's going on."

"Okay. Lesson one. Dark magic is stolen magic. Cassie's supposed 'dark' magic was stolen from one of my ancestor's, centuries ago. It's not compatible with her—which is why she's being such a *bitch*, and also why I never really liked her. She has a piece of powerful magic that doesn't belong to her."

"How could you possible have found all that out? It's ridiculous."

Faye glared at Jake. "You don't believe me."

"It's not that," Melissa said. "It's just—you've been gone for so long and Cassie's been here —"

"I didn't steal your magic," Cassie said vehemently. "I'm John Blackwell's daughter."

"And I'm a descendant of Morgana le Fay!" Faye shouted, windows shattering.

"You mean…the witch? Like, from King Arthur…" Diana's eyes were wide.

"Yes," Faye said, bringing her voice back down and adding a layer of honey. "That's exactly what I mean. There's been a war going on for hundreds of years and we just haven't noticed it. But now it's going to affect all of us. All those natural disasters a couple of years ago? That was the beginning of the apocalypse. Luckily, it was averted. But a rebel angel and two human brothers, believe it or not. But Merlin and Morgana are in the middle of this thousand-year-old feud and Morgana may or may not have unleashed Hell…again. So, some serious shit is about to go down. I did you a favor, I warned you, and *this* is what you fucking give me."

"I'm confused," Jake said, a mocking smile twitching at his lips saying he didn't believe a word that came out of her mouth. "Let's say this is all real. You're working with Morgana and Cassie's magic isn't actually Cassie's and you're not power hungry, you just want what's yours. Then why would you *warn* us about what your new BFF is doing?"

Faye just shook her head. "I don't have to explain myself to *you*. But pull a stunt like this again,"—she turned to glare at Cassie—"and I'll kill you."

Faye stepped out of the circle and zapped herself back to the plantation house Morgana was staying at. She'd given them fair warning. Now the real war would begin.

Chapter 23

Chapter Summary

His angel.

Sam was out cold on the couch in the living room, Merlin and Arthur asleep upstairs—apparently Arthur had tamed down enough that Merlin felt comfortable sleeping in the same bed as him. Dean was sitting in the kitchen, staring down into the almost empty glass of whiskey.

Amelia was dead. Her throat had been cut so deep it left the vertebrae of her neck exposed.

Cas had really lost it then and everything just went to hell. Dean started yelling at Merlin to bring her back because if he could resurrect an angel, why not a human? But then Merlin went all philosophical on his ass and started spewing crap about the balance of nature and going against the old something or other and Sam said Merlin probably knew what he was talking about and then Dean socked Merlin a good one which led to Arthur slamming Dean into a wall and Sam suddenly questioning Merlin about why bringing Cas back didn't upset the balance and Merlin wouldn't say anything and by the time they stopped going for one another's throats, Cas was gone.

Well, then Merlin went into a panic and started freaking out about how if Cas died then they were all screwed and why was he such an idiot and then *he* disappeared and then Arthur started shouting at Dean again and Sam finally just had to whop him over the head and knock him out for a few minutes. Merlin returned after a while and zapped them back to the for sale farmhouse.

And Cas still wasn't back.

Tomorrow was when the war would really begin, if Faye could be trusted. There was no way Heaven could miss the armies of Hell, no matter how preoccupied they were.

Dean lifted the glass and downed the remaining liquid.

"Dean," came a familiar voice from behind him as he placed the glass firmly back down on the table.

He spun around and let an audible sigh of relief escape when he actually saw the angel.

"You stupid son of a bitch," were the first words out of his mouth, followed by, "Do you know how fucking *worried* we all were? Merlin looked about ready to wring his own neck! Where the hell were you?"

And then Dean took in Cas' appearance in full—he looked completely drained. On the floor behind him, Dean heard something dripping. He grabbed Cas' shoulder to turn him around and his fingers came back wet and sticky.

"Shit, Cas! What happened? Is this yours?" he pressed as another red droplet hit the floor. The entire back of the trench coat was saturated in blood and before Cas had a chance to respond, Dean was pulling it off him.

"Dean, it's not my blood," Cas said, but he didn't resist as it was slipped from his shoulders. "It's demon blood," he went on to explain as Dean set the coat on the counter, bloody side up. "Morgana has them stationed everywhere, ready to fight when given the order. I found a group of a dozen and…after I killed about eight, one of them knocked me down. There was blood everywhere and—"

Dean unexpectedly jabbed a finger in Cas' face. "Don't you *ever* take on twelve demons by yourself again. And don't you ever, *ever* disappear without telling me where you're going and when you'll be back."

"I panicked," Cas confessed, quivering slightly. "They killed Amelia and I…I had to…I had to do something. I didn't think. I knew I couldn't go to Claire with Morgana and Morgause probably inseparable and I just—I'm sorry," he finally apologized as he crumbled.

Dean wasn't sure if he reached for Cas or if the skinny guy just fell into his arms, but either way, that's where he was. Cas melted into Dean, just like he'd managed to get into Dean's bloodstream all those years ago.

One hand on Cas' back and the other just above his shirt collar, Dean pressed his nose against a mess of dark hair. And then, because he could, Dean picked the frail angel up and carried him up the stairs. There was another, smaller bedroom, at the opposite end of the hall from the one Merlin and Arthur were occupying and Dean placed Cas gently down on the mattress.

"You should try to sleep," Dean encouraged, instinctively placing a kiss on Cas' forehead. "Or at least rest." He stood to leave, but Cas pale fingers wrapped around Dean's wrist. "Stay," he whispered hoarsely.

And how was Dean supposed to say no to that?

He laid down on the bed and carefully helped Cas out of his black jacket before making adjustments to his malleable body. Dean fitted Cas' back to his chest and laid a hand over Cas' side. In a matter of minutes, the angel in Dean's arms was out and Dean buried his face in Cas' wild hair, inhaling deeply. *His angel.*

Sleep didn't find Dean so easily. His mind was pacing, thoughts crowded and bumping into each other. How long had he felt this way about Cas? He tried to remember, retracing their time spent together. How long had *Cas* felt this way about *him*? Cas *had* gone to Hell to get Dean back, put him back together, piece by piece, atom by atom. But those had just been his orders. Dean pondered over this for a while, retracing more, until Cas stirred from under Dean's arms. The act of Cas waking up made Dean realize he should never have fallen asleep in the first place—angels didn't do that.

"Cas, you fell asleep," he said stupidly.

The angel hummed, sounding content, and rolled over, pressing his face into Dean's chest.

"I thought you didn't sleep," Dean said.

"I need to conserve my power," Cas said sleepily. "If I take too much at once from Heaven, it will be noticed. Sleeping helps."

Dean relaxed again and Cas shifted a little more, tucking his head under Dean's chin, and Dean went back to his memories.

There was the time Cas died for him—hell, there were *lots* of those. But…that wasn't it either. He didn't fall in love with every person that died for him. There was the time famine had showed up and Cas had been downing burgers, one right after another. Dean had found that rather adorable, now that he thought about it. And then there were times that never happened, the days that never came. Human Cas, fallen Cas, world's-gone-to-shit Cas. Maybe Dean couldn't recall when he'd started to feel this way, maybe there wasn't one set moment, but that—2014, *that*—was when Dean realized how badly he needed Cas. Not necessarily in *this* sense, but desperately needing his angel there, by his side.

And now he was. His angel was right there, so close Dean could smell him, feel his pulse, touch him, kiss him. And even though tomorrow they would start fighting the war on two fronts, Dean was pretty damn content in that moment.

His arms tightened around Cas—*his* Cas, *his* angel.

Dean was pretty damn content.

Chapter 24

Chapter Summary

How could she.

"So…what're we waiting for?" Arthur pressed. "For the news to announce the world's going to shit? Again?"

They were gathered in the kitchen, the clock slowly ticking its way past 8:30. Sam was eyeing Cas' trench coat, left from the night before, but not saying anything. When Dean and Cas had come downstairs, Merlin had practically tackled Cas with a hug. If Cas wasn't a brick wall, Dean was pretty sure they would've ended up on the floor. Sam welcomed Cas back with a hand on the shoulder and Arthur just stood there grinning, probably just glad Merlin was happy.

"If we knew what their first move was," Sam said, "we could prepare. But we have no idea."

From his pocket, Merlin's phone rang. He answered with a wary "Hello?" There was a moment of silence before his eyes darkened. "She doesn't know anything. Let her go."

* * *

How could she. Gwen knew nothing. She'd once been Morgana's closest friend and now…of course, that had been centuries ago. Merlin could only imagine what Morgana would do—or was doing—to her now.

"You could have found Gwen yourself. You don't need Hell for that."

"You think that's all I'm doing? I'm disappointed, Merlin. I thought you knew me better than that. My army's been given their orders, don't worry. And *demons*…well, they have a wonderful set of skills. It makes things a bit more fun."

"Don't you touch her—"

"Too late. But listen—I didn't call just to dangle her just out of your reach, as fun as that would be. She's leverage. Your soft heart is a serious weakness, Merlin."

"What do you want?"

"An exchange. Guinevere for Castiel."

"No," Merlin said almost before she finished.

"Mordred." There was a snarl followed by a scream. Merlin cringed, recognizing it as what could only be Gwen's. "Are you sure you don't want to reconsider? Mordred's been working with his Hellhound. I can have him continue practice on Gwen—"

"No!" Merlin ran his free hand through his hair, bringing his voice back down. "No."

"Then deliver Castiel to me."

"What if I gave you something else?"

"You have nothing else I desire."

"What about your magic?" Merlin blurted out before he stopping and thinking. "In the Blackwell line."

There was a beat of silence.

"That would be a fool's move, Merlin."

"Better a fool than a traitor."

"You make a tempting offer. I'll consider."

The call ended.

"What the hell was that?" Dean asked.

Merlin didn't answer, so Castiel explained. He'd of course been listening. "Morgana has Guinevere and she wants to make a trade. Me for Guinevere."

"No way," Dean said vehemently.

Merlin squeezed his eyes shut, hardly able to believe what he was thinking. "Morgana won't kill her," he said. "If she did, she'd have to track her back down again—that takes time." There was something about being born again that made tracking spells extremely difficult. You had a better chance of finding someone by hacking into computer systems, or hiring someone to do it for you.

"Merlin, we can't…" Arthur struggled with his words. "We can't leave her at Morgana's mercy."

"She's *safe*, Arthur. In a sick, twisted way, but she is."

"If you're going for sick and twisted, then we'd be better off just killing her ourselves! It would save her a lot of pain and she'd only be born again, with any luck in another country."

Merlin fell into a chair and buried his face in his hands.

"It's not either lose Cas or lose Guinevere," Sam said after a few moments. "We could save her."

"Morgana would kill you," Merlin said, voice muffled by his hands.

"Or maybe we'll kill her," Dean said.

"Don't be an idiot," Arthur snapped. "You couldn't kill her. But we could save…Guinevere." He said the name carefully, like it was something precious, which was only natural since they had been married all that time ago.

"What was the last thing you said?" Sam asked. "Something about magic, and Blackwell."

"When I was younger—and stupider—I tried to stop her by separating her from her magic. Only a small part of it left her though, and it went into the nearest available vessel. Joseph Blackwell. Of course, it just so happens that one of the girls in Faye's circle is part of that line. I don't know if Morgana knows or not."

"Whoa whoa whoa, hold on," Dean said. "You mean that bitch isn't even at maximum power?"

"No."

Dean threw his hands in the air. "Great."

"Morgana cannot be allowed to reach her full potential," Cas stated.

"So we leave her," Merlin said darkly. "She won't even remember this in the next life. It barely matters."

Except that it did matter. It mattered a lot. Merlin felt Castiel's familiar presence in his mind, trying to understand his feelings.

If it had been anyone else, Merlin might've told them to kindly fuck off.

Chapter 25

Chapter Summary

It was eating away at him.

Everyone was quite preoccupied with the two dozen demons that had shown up a few minutes ago. Cas knew his moment to get away unnoticed and this was it—but one particularly aggressive demon had Dean pinned against a wall and was clawing her nails along his jaw, drawing blood that trickled down his neck.

Cas grabbed her shoulder and threw her across the room, sending her crashing through a window.

So maybe he wouldn't leave just yet. Twenty-four against four would hardly have been fair.

"What, no smiting?" Dean yelled as five other demons charged them.

Cas ground his teeth together. His power was so low he didn't dare attempt it. He snapped the neck of one and tore an arm off another. The sound of flesh tearing and bone snapping was closely followed by a shriek. There was only one knife and Sam was making good use of it, so Cas decided tearing the demons into pieces would suffice.

On the other side of the room, Merlin was beginning an exorcism, but two demons tackled him. Except…one of them wasn't all demon. The bigger of the two sunk his teeth into Merlin's white neck.

Arthur jumped on it, only to be ripped off by the smaller one. A burst of energy came from Merlin and the vampire-demon fell onto its back.

One with fiery red got its hands around Dean's wrists and another from behind raised his arm, knife glinting, as the red head moved to allow for a direct stab. Cas tore one's head clean off and, without time to take care of the monster wielding the knife, Cas threw himself in the blade's way, taking the stab for Dean. He pulled the knife from his own chest and buried it in a midnight eye. He spun around to grab the demon whom held Dean's wrists and squeezed, shattering the creature's bones, but it only growled at him. Cas applied pressure in the right spot and snapped them off completely. He let them fall limp to the ground and spun Dean out of the way just as another leaned in to take a chunk of his neck. Cas recognized it as a rougorou and shouted it to Merlin.

"*Ignis*!" And the creature was engulfed in flames.

I can exorcise them, Merlin thought to Cas, *If I don't get attacked every five seconds*.

Cas grabbed Dean's arm and pulled him in front of Merlin. "We have to keep them away from him."

Dean nodded, catching on quick, and within seconds Sam and Arthur came to stand beside them.

"*Exorcizamus te, omnis immundus spiritus*," Merlin began.

One of the monsters swiped at Arthur's face and Merlin yanked him back protectively, continuing the exorcism.

Heads began to twist and distort, but some of the stronger ones still resisted.

Sam passed Dean the knife and he plunged it into the base of one's neck.

Merlin was finishing the exorcism and Cas knew he had to leave now. He stole a last glance at Dean. He'd be alright. He had his brother, a king, and a sorcerer at his side. He no longer required a fallen angel to stay alive.

Merlin needed Guinevere though—he needed her to be safe. It was eating away at him. And Morgana could not be allowed to get back the rest of her power.

And Cas wasn't supposed to be alive anyway.

Chapter 26

Chapter Summary

"A deal is a deal," she said.

When Cassidy and Eric brought Guinevere in, Faye wasn't sure what to think. She was kicking and screaming, freaking out about their black eyes, while Faye watched. Morgana descended the stairs and broke into a sinful grin when she saw the struggling girl.

"Wonderful! Guinevere, it's been a while."

"H-how do you know my name? Please, I don't know what I've done, just let me go!"

"Tell me, have you met Lancelot yet? Of course, it's probably something simpler these days, Lance maybe."

"Has he done something?" Guinevere asked. "I promise you, he's changed—he's not in that business anymore, he—"

Morgana raised a hand and slapped her. "You were much more tolerable the last time I saw you."

"The last time…what? I don't know who you are! This is a mistake—if I've done something, I'm *sorry*—"

Morgana looked up to Eric and Cassidy, who each held one of Guinevere's arms. "Was Lancelot there?"

"We didn't find him," Eric said.

"Hmm…that's a shame. He would've been a nice bonus."

When Morgause started torturing Guinevere, Faye found herself flipping the switch on her emotions, otherwise she couldn't bear it. The fact that Morgause was in a young girls' body made the whole thing very eerie. Like an extremely real horror movie.

The majority of Guinevere's fingernails had now been torn off and Morgause was placing hot coals on one of her eyelids. The girl screamed and squirmed, but to no avail. Her torso and sides resembled a filleted fish, and Mordred watched in rapt interest as Morgause went about it all.

One of the girl's legs was absolutely drenched in blood from the gash Sanguinem had given her. Faye thought about how deep it was and shuddered. It stretched all the way from her kneecap almost to her hip.

"Stop."

Everyone in the room—Morgause, Morgana, Mordred—turned to see Castiel, one hand pinning Faye's arms behind her back and the other around her throat.

"Let Guinevere go."

Morgause looked to Morgana, whose eyes were trained on Castiel, to make a decision.

"I'll take it Merlin doesn't know you're here," Morgana guessed.

"It won't take him long to figure it out," Cas said.

"A deal is a deal," she said.

* * *

"Morgause, let her go."

Faye felt the change in Castiel's breathing when he watched Claire's body go about undoing the straps and buckles that held Guinevere to the table.

"There's no need for that, you know," Morgana said, gesturing to Faye and Castiel. "You came—I would've let Gwen go."

"This isn't because of Guinevere," the angel said.

Morgana tilted her head in her signature style. "Oh?"

"Heal her," Castiel demanded.

"That, little angel, was not part of the bargain." She pulled a cell phone out of her jeans' back pocket and sent a text. "Eric, Cassidy." The two demons sauntered into the room. "Please take out precious Gwen to the address I texted you. Once you've left her there, let me know."

The pair nodded in response to their orders and each grabbed one of Guinevere's arms.

"Alive, please," Morgana added as they drug the limp, whimpering girl out the door.

"Now, Castiel. What is it you want?"

"Let Claire go," he said simply.

Faye's stomach knotted. Morgana would have Morgause do that, wouldn't she? She wouldn't let Faye be killed. They were family.

Castiel's grip tightened around her throat. "*Now*."

Morgana glared at him and then looked to Morgause.

If she dies, you die.

Faye gulped. "M-Morgana…could you...could you not kill Claire?"

The sorceress' green eyes narrowed.

"Um…Mr. Feathers, here, just let me know that if she dies, he'll kill me."

"Castiel." Her lips shaped each syllable perfectly, stressing the 'el'. "You're a thoughtful little bastard. Very well."

She turned to Morgause. "Can you find a new body quickly?"

She shot Castiel a venomous glare and the proximity of it made Faye squirm.

"I suppose."

Black smoke poured out of the little girl's mouth and disappeared through the door. For several moments, Claire laid on the floor, unmoving. Then she began to stir and sat up slowly.

She glanced around the room, looking lost, but then her eyes locked on the angel that still held Faye.

"*Castiel*," she breathed. Then she was shouting and running at him. "Castiel! Take me back! Oh please, please—"

Castiel's arms dropped Faye in order to take up the girl running towards him. Faye scrambled to Morgana's side, relieved that her life was no longer under the direct influence of an angry, rebellious angel.

"Castiel, please," Claire continued to beg. "I'm so disgusting—I can feel it—that demon, she was inside of me. Please, take me back—possess me again. I want to be your vessel—" Her hands were tugging at his coat, desperation clear in her every move and word. "Please," she whispered. "I miss the fire. Everything's cold and dead now. And I'm weak—and now I'm covered in filth and—please, Castiel."

Faye thought it very unnatural for an angel, but perhaps he was picking up on more human ways, because then he lowered his head and kissed the top of Claire's head.

And then she vanished.

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