

Howl

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Howl

by [spnfanatic](#)

Summary

Post season 9. AU to season 10. Crowley thinks he can control Dean as a demon. Maybe he can. He's gonna at least try. How hard can it be to control a rogue Winchester with the powers of the mark and a lust for blood? He's the king of hell after all. Plus, they're fucking besties at this point. **Crowley and Dean Winchester bromance.**

Wake Up, Dean Winchester

Dean Winchester knew something was off the second he woke up. He blinked up at the ceiling. First of all, how the hell was he even awake? He remembered being stabbed and dying...by freaking Metatron of all people...er, angel? God? Whatever. Point was - he freaking died. In his brother's arms. He died and now he was awake. In Heaven? Dean groaned and slowly sat up. His body ached. He looked down at himself and realized he was still in the same clothes, bloody red stained plaid shirt and jeans - everything. So maybe not heaven then.

He lifted his shirt up. No stab wound though. Clean skin. *Huh*. That was weird. He was sure Metatron stabbed him. He felt up his chest and let his hand rest over his heart. No scratches, no scars. *Nothing*. Like the fight never happened. Dean was starting to feel panic crawl up from the pit of his stomach. *What the fuck was going on? And where was he?* He looked around him, noting the stone walls of the room. The floor was cold. For the first time since he woke up, he noticed how oddly cold his feet were. Dean looked down at his bare feet. He stretched, slowly got up. The room was dark. He vaguely recognized this place before it dawned on him.

No way. No fucking way. He was in...

"Welcome to hell, squirrel," a familiar voice said, accent and all.

Dean groaned internally and turned around. Of course it'd be Crowley. Dean tensed, backed into the wall. Just great. So he did die and instead of going up to heaven, his soul took a nosedive under, damned for all eternity. With the fucking king of hell. Winchester luck, right? Dean wanted to roll his eyes. He crossed his arms and glared at the demon.

"Crowley," Dean said in way of acknowledgement. What else was he supposed to say?

The demon took a step toward him. There was a grin on Crowley's face. Dean didn't like it. He wanted to step back, almost did purely on reflex. He caught himself and stood still, arms still crossed. Still tense. Dean exhaled a deep breath he didn't realize he was holding.

"So this is it," Dean finally said, the silence weighing too heavily. He saw the demon pause, one eyebrow going up as if to ask, '*elaborate*'. Dean wanted to laugh, his lips quirking up into a half grin that didn't reach his eyes. "End of the line for me. My soul's been damned to hell. To you. I died, Crowley. So you get me. Ain't that right?" He slowly uncrossed his arms. Extended them out to the demon. Watched as the demon looked at him in something like amusement. Dean didn't find his damnation particularly amusing however. "What's so funny, you son of a bitch?"

"Dean, Dean, Dean." Crowley shook his head but didn't move. Dean let his hands drift down slowly. The demon's smirk was infuriating. "I'm not here for your soul." He paused, let the words sink in.

Dean couldn't keep the surprise off his face. "What?"

“You’re right, half right. You did die,” Crowley said. “But you’re quite alive now.”

“I, uh, I don’t understand,” Dean mumbled peering down at himself again. He looked back up, a mix of confusion and relief in his eyes. Then anger. “Did you bring me back? Why?”

“Moi?” Crowley gestured to himself. “You’re giving me far too much credit, squirrel. I don’t have that kind of juice. At least not without a little bargaining.”

“Then who? Or *what*?” Dean asked, suspicion in his voice.

Crowley’s smirk widened, like that was what he was waiting to hear. He gestured to Dean’s arm. “See for yourself, darling.”

Dean almost groaned. Of course. He looked down, slowly rolling up his sleeve. Part of him dreaded what he was going to see. Part of him almost forgot about it. The mark. His breath hitched as he saw the pulsing mark given to him by Cain. The damn thing was still on him. There like something awful. Something *evil*. Dean pushed his sleeve back down to cover it. The mark prevented death, or revived him. Dean was almost nervous as another thought jumped into the forefront of his mind. What was he now? Unkillable? Was he still human? Could he still be stopped somehow?

As if reading his mind, Crowley took another step forward and suddenly he was just a foot away. Dean could reach out and grab him if he really wanted to. He could punch him til he was black and blue. The mark seemed to pulse and Dean unconsciously gripped his arm. Crowley’s smirk slipped a little. Damn. The demon must have noticed. Surprisingly the demon didn’t move.

“So what am I now?” Dean asked, voice strained. “Am I, uh...you know, still human?”

Crowley pulled out a small mirror so that Dean could see his own reflection staring back at him. Dark short hair, green eyes, slightly paler than normal. Seemed everything was in order. Then he blinked. And black eyes looked back at him curiously. Crowley grinned, “What do you think? I must say, black does suit you.”

Dean jumped back in surprise and on reflex, swiped at the mirror. It was just out of reach but flew out of Crowley’s hands anyways and shattered against the wall. He exhaled a sharp breath, looking dumbfounded at Crowley as he muttered, “Holy shit.”

Crowley merely looked at him curiously. Then towards the shattered remains of the mirror. “Interesting.”

Dean couldn’t believe his luck. Seriously. As if it wasn’t bad enough being in hell. Then it got worse when Crowley had to show his ugly, smug face. Then of course Dean learned that not only was he alive, but he somehow turned into a demon thanks to the mark. Fucking great. What else could go wrong?

“So,” Dean said, drumming his fingers on the table. He still couldn’t believe he was having a civil conversation with Crowley in hell. He tried not to dwell on it too much. Looked around the room instead. He saw the throne centered against the back wall. Couldn’t help the snort.

Figures they were in Crowley's throne room. Dean turned back to the demon across from him. Crowley was relaxed in his chair. And wasn't that something. They worked together so much, the king of hell and a Winchester, they both became so comfortable with each other.

"So?" Crowley echoed, raised an eyebrow to prompt Dean back to the topic at hand. He jerked out of his thoughts. Right.

"So...if I'm alive, what exactly am I doing here?" Dean asked. He tilted back in his chair, staring back at the demon, trying to get a read on him. He soon gave up and sighed. "What do you want?"

Crowley seemed to ponder. Dean tensed. Finally after a moment, the demon quirked his lips into a smile and said, "What do *you* want, Dean?"

"What?" Dean hadn't thought about that. He had only woken up a couple hours ago. He thought he was dead. Metatron killed him. Then suddenly he was pulled from the dead against his will and turned into a demon. So of course he didn't know what he wanted, hadn't had time to even think about that question. He needed more time to think about it.

"What do you want, Dean?" Crowley repeated. Looked like he was enjoying this game he was playing with Dean. Enjoying watching the hunter battling internally with himself. Because Dean had no idea and Crowley knew that. He leaned over the table, elbows pressing against the top. Still relaxed. "I may have a little proposition for you."

"Proposition?" Dean asked, more interested than he wanted to let on. "What kind of proposition?" He was just going to hear him out. Dean was too curious for his own good.

"A kind of partnership. Now hear me out, squirrel. You need me," Crowley said. It was a bold statement and Dean couldn't help but stare at the demon, wondering if he actually said that. Still Crowley hurried on. "We need each other," he corrected. "The mark is going to want to be kept...satiated, and I may need some help ruling hell. Look. You don't have to give your answer now." Before Dean could open his mouth and answer, Crowley leaned back and stood up. "I'll let you take the day to think it over. See you in the morning." Then he was gone. Just like that.

Dean was alone in the throne room, just his thoughts for company. He paced, wondering how he fell so low to even consider a partnership with a demon. And not just any demon. He wanted to laugh. This was *Crowley*. The demon who double crossed him time and time again. The demon who worked together with Cas, his friend and angel, behind the brothers' backs. Who lied to Sam about resurrecting him from the cage and threatened him with his soul time and time again so they would do his dirty work in collecting alphas.

Dean blinked. Sam. Cas. He hadn't thought about them all day. His mouth twitched. How had he nearly forgotten about Sam and Cas? He looked down at himself. That wasn't the only strange thing. He just now registered he hadn't been hungry either. Crowley didn't offer him food. Dean sighed. This whole being a demon was going to take a while for him to get used to. He walked back to the table. Sat back down. Tapped his fingers.

There was some excess amount of energy swirling in him, trapped, trying to get out. It was menacing. Dark. The mark started to hum lightly. He could feel it. Dean looked at the door, the only exit. It was shut. Probably locked. Crowley wouldn't want him to escape until he said yes to the proposition. Dean didn't care about it though. Not really. He laid a hand on the table. Concentrated on the door. For almost a full minute nothing happened. Dean was about to give up.

But then...the door started to shake. The ground trembled. Like an earthquake. Then suddenly the door flung open, slamming against the wall. Dean stood up. The ground stopped trembling and the door hung just barely on its hinges. He walked over, slowly, on shaking legs. Did he do that? The mark seemed to respond to the power he released. The hum became a dull ache and Dean could almost ignore it.

Then suddenly he doubled over in unexpected pain. He fell to his knees. The mark pulsed even more. His hand went immediately to clutch the mark. What the hell?

"Going somewhere?"

Son of a bitch. Gritting his teeth, Dean looked up to glare at Crowley. His eyes widened when he noticed what the smug bastard had in one hand. It was a small box but both Dean and Crowley knew what was in it. Before Dean knew what he was doing, he was reaching out for the box. He needed it. The mark needed it.

Searing pain shot through him before he could register was lying on his side. Crowley's leg extended like he'd kicked him. "You, *bitch*," Dean spat. He tried to get up but Crowley kicked in his stomach again. "Give me the damn blade!"

Crowley crouched down beside him. Dean badly wanted to wipe the smug look off his face but he couldn't summon the energy to do so. Huh. That was weird. "Isn't it interesting, squirrel? The one thing that makes you an unstoppable monster is also your Achilles' heel?"

"What are you talking about?"

"You don't have the strength to take me on. At least not yet. You don't feed, you'll remain weak," Crowley said. He stood back up, looking down at Dean with something akin to pity. Dean hated that look. He tried to get up again but it was hard to concentrate when the mark was trying to call to the blade. And if Crowley could also shut up too...that'd be nice. "See? You need me, Dean. And you need this blade." Dean tried not to let Crowley's taunt get to him. But everything was too noisy. He launched up, snarling, trying to grab the box.

Crowley flung him back against the nearest wall. Dean's head hit the wall hard. The room was spinning. Dean groaned, gripped his head. He spat out blood. "Fuck you," Dean murmured.

"Come now, Dean," Crowley said, walking over to him. He crouched back down in front of Dean, gripped his chin tightly in one hand. Dean glared back defiantly. "We're practically besties."

Dean just spat in his face. He flashed the demon a grin that was all teeth and blood. “Give me the blade and we’ll see about that.”

The Other Winchester

Sam was pacing back at the bunker. He just got back from talking to Crowley and wasn't happy to hear that the demon couldn't resurrect Dean. He knew Crowley had the juice to, at least if there was a deal involved. And Sam tried. He tried trading his soul for Dean's. Tried bargaining his life. Even threatened Crowley. Nothing worked though. Crowley wouldn't budge.

And that right there annoyed Sam. It made him angry. And before he could even think about pulling the angel blade on the motherfucker, he was gone. Leaving Sam alone. Alone like he'd been a couple years back, when Dean and Cas were in purgatory. Because Cas, the angel of the lord with no wings, was gone too. Had to rebuild heaven, atone for his sins, something like that. So here Sam was...alone. Again. Not even his brother's body for company. Sam checked. Dean was gone too. And Sam briefly wondered what that meant. Only briefly.

Then he buried himself in grief and alcohol. Pretended not to notice the irony of channeling his inner brother at that very moment.

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Dean was in a predicament. He knew it, Crowley knew it. Hell. Even some of Crowley's lackeys knew it. He wasn't sure what pissed him off more. But it didn't matter. What mattered was that he was pissed and he couldn't do anything about it. Because of the slimey ass that was right. Dean was weak, and the mark needed to be fed. And Dean didn't seem to care about anything else at the moment. Just getting free, getting the blade, then going on the war path so he could satisfy his addiction. Was this how Cain felt? This dark hunger? Like an empty black hole that needed and needed and just...needed.

He was still in the throne room. After Crowley beat him up and taunted him with the first blade, he had a couple his lackeys truss him up and left him in the corner to think about the offer (and Dean had to snort at that - a partnership, right). So here he was in anti demon cuffs, bloodied and bruised sitting in the corner like a good dog waiting for the king of hell to come back so he could show the *'master'* how much bite he still had.

Because trying to keep a Winchester in check never, ever ended well for anyone, even if you are the king of hell. Dean grinned when another demon was sent in. Crowley didn't like getting his hands dirty. He had been sending one of his stupid lackeys every hour to see if Dean would finally give into the proposition of becoming one of Crowley's minions. He could see the tremble in the demon's legs as he slowly approached. Dean found it amusing. Even before Dean possessed the mark, before he became a demon...he knew some demons feared him and his brother. They made quite a name for themselves since the first apocalypse. But this was different. He had never seen demons actually quake in their meat-suits before he did anything. He kind of liked it.

The demon stopped barely halfway into the room. He cleared his throat awkwardly and pulled out a piece of paper. Dean raised an eyebrow. It was still weird to see demons running

around in suits and pulling out books and papers instead of knives and guns. Crowley was a weird motherfucker who was all about deals and business. Unlike most other demons Sam and Dean used to hunt. So of course his stupid minions would follow suit.

Before the demon could read off the proposition, one Dean heard too many times to count at this point, Dean rolled his eyes and said, “Stow it. Tell your king my answer is still no.” He paused, watched as the demon hurriedly put the proposal back in his pocket. Then, “And to give me the fucking blade or he’s not gonna like the consequences. Understood?”

He stood up slowly, grinned menacingly for dramatic effects. It seemed to work because the demon staggered back and stammered, “Uh, yeah, OK.”

“Then get the fuck out,” Dean snarled, his voice booming across the room.

The demon hurried out without a backwards glance. Dean slid back down, grinning to himself. He couldn’t believe that worked. He looked down at the cuffs, studying them. The swirling mass of energy in the pit of his stomach had been dampened since they were put on. But an hour ago, he could feel it coming back up again. Like the cuffs’ warding was dying. He flexed his hands, watched as the cuffs seem to pulsate a little.

For some reason, he knew the cuffs wouldn’t hold him for much longer. Which meant he just needed to wait a little longer and he was free. Dean liked the idea of being free. He liked it a lot.

It took Crowley another hour before he decided to make another special appearance. He didn’t look all that perturbed by what the demon must have told him. But that was OK with Dean. He was going to learn. Dean could feel the cuffs weakening. He was sure he could snap them off now if he wanted to.

“Well if it isn’t my favorite Winchester,” Crowley said. He was leaning against the table on the other side of the room.

“Did you get my message?” Dean asked.

“Yes, I did.” Crowley didn’t look happy. Which was fine by Dean. Like he gave a crap about the asshole’s happiness. “I’ve come to ask you to reconsider. We can do good things, squirrel.”

Dean snorted. “Good things? Like getting humans to damn their souls? That kind of good thing, right?”

“By hell’s standards, of course,” Crowley corrected, his mouth quirking up to an amused smile. He walked over to Dean, his expression turning serious again. “Look I don’t want to sound like a broken record but we need each other.”

“Right,” Dean said. “I don’t need anything from you. So like I said before...you can take your little proposition and shove it.”

Crowley sighed, looking a little annoyed now. He crossed his arms. "Listen to me, you little shit. Whether you like it or not, you do need me and you bloody well know it," Crowley hissed, getting in Dean's face. "I've been a demon a lot longer than you have. I'm the only one who has a chance in, *bloody*, hell to teach you to control the mark and your inner demon."

At that moment, Dean decided to take his chances. He broke the cuffs easily and quickly pulled back a fist. Crowley was taken by surprise and didn't have time to dodge a quick uppercut. Dean got up to his feet and landed another surprise punch across his face before Crowley flew back and gracelessly fell on his ass, with a loud, "Oof."

"What was that about teaching me?" Dean asked. He grinned, feeling more powerful than ever. And damn it felt good being free again.

Crowley got up to his feet faster than Dean thought he would. He felt the bruise on his face. Much to Dean's disappointment, it was already healing. Damn. Crowley spat out a little blood. He glared at Dean. "Ow."

Dean tensed. Honestly he was hoping that Crowley would've taken more damage than that. Stupid demonic healing. "I have a new proposition for you, Crowley."

Crowley snorted. "I don't think you're in much position to be proposing anything, darling."

"Just give me the blade and you get to live," Dean said.

In a flash, Crowley was in his face. Before Dean could think to move, he felt all the air leave his lungs and he was staring up at the ceiling. Damn Crowley and his impossible grip on his neck. Dean was slowly suffocating and he couldn't do anything about it.

"I'm stronger than you," Crowley hissed. Dean tried weakly to pull the demon's hands off him. Crowley shook his attempts off effortlessly. "I'll always be stronger than you, darling. As long I control the blade. As long as you don't learn to control your powers." Before Dean could pass out, Crowley threw him down like a rag doll. "So again, I'll come back in an hour to check on you." He started to walk out before glancing back at Dean. "Oh and Dean...I hope you understand now. I'm not giving you a choice."

Dean didn't say anything. Crowley left without another word. The satisfied grin told Dean everything. As soon as he was alone again, Dean slammed a fist against the floor. It left a small indent. "Goddamnit," he muttered.

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Sam was bleary eyed when he woke up. He didn't remember sleeping. He looked around the bunker. Vaguely remembered the beer strewn all over the table. Remembered crying and drinking and reading all the lore for bringing back the dead. Remembered trying to make a deal with Crowley and all his minions. Each answer a resounding no. A grin, a snicker. Demons thinking it funny to see the desperation in his eyes. Funny to deny a Winchester a resurrection.

Nothing worked. Nothing ever worked. Part of Sam, the part that was drowning in desperation and hurt, wished he was back with Amelia. Or Jess. When life was a little easier. Maybe not simpler because when was the Winchester life ever simple? But it was easier and safer and hurt less. Sam realized for the first time in a long time...he was scared and lonely. Dean was gone. Truly gone.

It took Sam a week before he started his search back up. It sucked, really sucked. Because for a week Sam was moping. He felt hollow, a shell of his former self. He never realized just how big of a gap Dean had filled. Dean completed Sam on a level Sam never quite understood. Without him, Sam was like a zombie. A desperate soul wandering without direction. Without a sense of purpose.

He tried calling Crowley a few days in, not quite believing the demon had nothing to do with his missing brother's body. But Crowley stuck to his story. He didn't resurrect the elder Winchester. Couldn't even if he wanted to. *Just suck it up, Samantha. Your brother's gone.* Sam didn't call again. At least not for a while. Fuck Crowley then. Sam was going to find his brother. Alone if he had to.

A Proposition Answered

It took a little longer than Crowley expected but in the end, Dean came around. Everyone seemed surprised. But honestly they shouldn't have been. Crowley was the king of hell, after all. And Dean? Sure he was a demon. Sure he had the power of the mark. But he was still Dean Winchester. A man who liked the simpler things in life. Sex, alcohol, and more sex. And who was Crowley to judge? To deny? If this was how he could control one of the most destructive weapons on Earth, well...he would keep feeding the beast, so to speak.

Honestly after the last couple weeks, Crowley was sure their relationship solidified even more so to *besties* stature. Certainly if you asked one of the demons Crowley liked to keep around, they would say they saw more of Winchester than they cared to admit. It wasn't always perfect. Dean seemed to have a thing with sticking to a particular town, having sex on Crowley's bed (admittedly one he didn't spend very much in himself but that wasn't really the point), and a rather nasty penchant for singing some bad karaoke. But hey, if this was a small price to pay for keeping Dean around...well Crowley wouldn't complain too much.

Of course on the other hand, there was the other Winchester to think about. Crowley was rather annoyed that Sam Winchester was killing off his demons to try and get intel on his demonic brother. He needed those demons after all. They were crossroad demons. Very important to keep those guys alive because well, it was all business. And obviously any demon killing was the opposite of good business.

Again all good things had a price tag. He was definitely not going to give up crazy monster Dean to *Samantha*. No matter how much the human pissed him off with his little tantrums. Crowley was the bigger man, demon, here.

Crowley looked up from the drink he was nursing as Dean Winchester stumbled over. Obviously had a little too much. And it took a lot to intoxicate a demon. Crowley would know. "Yes, can I help you?"

Dean's easy going smirk gave Crowley pause. He reached the table and gripped it with both hands, trying to find balance. "Uh, you, uh, mind if I use your room for the night?"

Crowley shrugged, wondering if that really was it. Dean never cared to ask for Crowley's permission before. He leaned over and studied him closer. Could smell alcohol coming from him, drenching him. Crowley leaned back again, wrinkling his nose in disgust. "What is this really about? You've never asked for my permission before."

Dean shrugged, glanced back, and Crowley followed his gaze to a group of women. Oh. *Oh*. Dean's smug look was enough answer but he whispered, "You're invited too. The more the merrier, right?" He pushed off the table, took a staggering step back. Gave a wink and was walking off, leaving a perplexed Crowley and an open invitation.

Crowley took it. It has been a while since he let himself indulge in sex. It was good, not great. Not bad sex either.

Crowley knew his relationship with the Winchester boys had always been complicated. Full of mixed feelings, torture, addiction, betrayal on both sides, and mostly though, survival. However with Dean Winchester's latest predicament - the whole taking on the mark, dying, coming back and losing most of his humanity - well that just complicated things much more. There was some truth to Crowley claiming the two to be besties. But he never really thought he'd ever find himself having casual sex that involved lots of booze, women and Dean Winchester.

He tried not to dwell on it for too long. Crowley just needed to find a way to get Winchester out of his rut. They stayed in this town way longer than Crowley intended. Dean was a little too content not wanting to explore more of his demonic nature and well, Crowley had a business to run. He had work to do.

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Sam was on a mission. He was going to save his brother. He didn't care what it took and how many demons he had to gank. Because he was going to find Dean. He was. He talked to Cas, the angel who became just as much Sam's best friend as he was to Dean, and if Dean's soul was in heaven, Cas would've said so. He would have told Sam no matter what. So when he was told that Dean's soul wasn't in heaven and no, he hadn't seen Dean since he died, and *what's going on, Sam? Is Dean missing?* Well that was enough and Sam tried not to think of a million different, bad, very bad scenarios and he had to go, *bye Cas, I'll call you if anything comes up.* He hung up and went to as many cross roads as he could and tried to make demon deals with as many demons as he could. Because if Dean wasn't in heaven, then he was either in purgatory again (somehow) or in hell.

Because maybe Crowley was being an asshole and somehow marked Dean's soul for hell because all demons were asses and wanted the Winchesters tortured for all eternity, right? Or the mark made Dean into something other than human and he went to purgatory because that was where most non-humans went. There were so many possibilities, each one freaked Sam out more and more.

Sam hated being on edge lately but it was hard to think these days. Not with Cas still trying to be a soldier of heaven and trying to fix things and wasn't at Sam's side. Not with Dean gone somewhere where Sam didn't know, couldn't reach. Not with Bobby long dead. Not with all the demons laughing and mocking Sam Winchester for losing his brother and not making deals with him because fuck the Winchesters. They were all more trouble than they were worth. And maybe they were all right. Maybe Sam was just a freak who lost too much and couldn't do anything right. People died coming in close proximity with the Winchesters. Maybe he was cursed. But it didn't matter. Because he realized with horror that Sam was nothing without his brother. And well...he needed Dean back. Maybe when he got him back, Sam could feel something other than this horrible numbness that was quickly spreading.

He looked down at the demon he caught in the devil's trap. The demon was just another crossroads demon. Just another stupid, nameless deal maker working for Crowley. Sam took out the angel blade he always kept on hand. He made a quick cut on her neck, watched as she hissed at the pain, her eyes blinking to black. Sam still felt nothing. The poor girl whose body

this demon possessed was more than likely long dead. Sam was sure a lifetime ago, he would never have considered torture, not even against a demon.

“Look how the mighty has fallen,” the demon said casually. “What happened, Sam Winchester? Done with deals so you’re just going to kill every demon you find now?”

Sam ignored her. He cut her again, a little lower this time.

“Poor little Sammy, always knew you’d go dark side without your self-righteous brother and pet angel,” the demon continued, her mouth quirking into a smirk.

“Shut up,” Sam said quietly. He sliced a longer cut on the side of her neck. “You’re just a demon. You all deserve what you get.”

The demon threw her head back and laughed. “Please. What happened to saving the meatsuits?” She asked as she lifted her head back. Her eyes shifted back to a terribly human brown. “What if this human I’m wearing is very much alive?” And then the demon’s whole body started to shake, her demeanor shifted. Like she was becoming a different person.

Sam held his breath, tried to ignore the girl suddenly gasping, her heart thudding fast in fear. It was a trick, it had to be. With his free hand he suddenly reached out and grasped her shoulder. “I know this is a trick,” he said fiercely. “Your host died a long time ago.” He lifted her chin up, made her look him in the eyes. “Just tell me where my brother is, and I can make this quick for you. Your call.”

He took a step back, hoping he was right to call her bluff. The demon gave up after a minute, realizing Sam wasn’t falling for her ploy. She looked at him with an unreadable expression. “Oh Sam, you really have changed,” she said, smirk in full force. “I like this new you by the way.”

Sam glared at her, tightening on the blade in his hand. “Just tell me where Dean is,” he said through gritted teeth.

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Dean wasn’t sure, exactly, how to define this relationship (or partnership according to the king of hell) he had with Crowley. For the most part Crowley left him to his own devices top side. It was a freedom Dean never realized he wanted. Well initially at least. It was a part of their proposition. Dean got a chance to taste freedom as the new him as long as he came when Crowley called. It wasn’t really like Dean had much of a choice. He, after all, detested the idea of being bound to anyone, much less a lowly crossroads demon like Crowley (and whatever, so what if he was the king of hell - Dean was definitely not gonna call him that). Crowley still had the blade though. The one thing Dean wanted in this universe.

“Call it insurance,” Crowley had said.

Dean vowed he was going to get strong enough to take it from Crowley by force one of these days. Of course the jackass wasn’t stupid enough to keep it on his person. He hid somewhere no one knew but him. So for now, Dean was going to have to be content with his ‘freedom’ in

the form of booze, drunk singing, bar fights (and occasional killings of Abbadon groupies), and sex. He was still Dean. Somewhat. Just without the constant guilt and self loathing and having to find and protect Sam, of course. A better version of the past Dean Winchester. One that was faster and stronger, guilt and conscious ridden, could heal instantaneously and throw things up walls with a single thought. Yeah. He liked this Dean Winchester.

He never felt free-er sitting here, nursing another beer, watching sluts pole dance. The old Dean wouldn't think that. He flashed a smirk, all white teeth and predatory. The old Dean had morals and too many emotions. And little, baby brother, Sammy. The old Dean was boring.

Angel Soldier

Chapter Summary

Sorry if time lines might be confusing. There are a couple time skips.

Castiel was tired. He remembered once upon a time being a holy warrior. He remembered having a higher purpose. Remembered that once he was confident and sure, knew every action he took was for a reason. Castiel missed those days. They were simpler times and everything made sense. Then he met the Winchesters. The humans who broke all the rules and brought on the apocalypse. The ones who defied everyone and everything each step. Even when Castiel assured them he was on their side, the angels were the good guys, heaven had a plan (from God) and it was just and fine and they just had to believe.

But they didn't believe. They wanted to at points but he could feel when Sam Winchester's faith had wavered, could feel when Dean had started to believe then wavered and had no faith only to believe again when it became almost hopeless. But it had been too little, too late. Castiel had fallen and Dean Winchester, the human who was *The Righteous Man* (whom he gripped tight and raised from perdition), had shaken Castiel's core. He...they had chosen free will. Free will was supposed to be better than paradise.

This was no paradise certainly. But this was not better than paradise. How could it be? His brothers and sisters fell from heaven. They wandered Earth lost and devastated, aimless. No guidance. After Metatron...after Lucifer and Michael, the apocalypse, finding out God left, everything. Nothing was the same. Everything was ruined. And Castiel...Castiel knew he had a large part in all this chaos. He was at fault for the shut down of heaven and the rise of Metatron. And even with Metatron under lock...Castiel needed to atone. Castiel was just as lost as the other angels. He made bad choices, endless bad choices.

He was sorry for the Winchester brothers. Truly he was. Dean Winchester had died because their plan to overthrow Metatron and take out the angel tablet came too late. Sam Winchester was in agony over the loss of his brother. And Castiel, the once angel soldier of heaven, could not provide more information on Sam's brother's whereabouts other than his soul was not in heaven. He wished he could say more. The phone call was short. Castiel felt numb as he listened to Sam's panicked voice. Then suddenly Sam was saying '*bye, Cas, I'll call if anything comes up.*'

And Castiel could only say in return, '*Goodbye, Sam.*'

The phone call was dropped and he turned back to Hannah, another fellow angel. And he saw her watch him carefully as he worked his jaw. He shut the phone, pocketed it. He still felt nothing. And it was frightening. Because there was chaos all around him. And he needed to focus on one thing at a time. And he knew Sam was a stronger man than he ever would be.

Castiel had a mess on his hands. The angels needed him and he hoped, needed, Sam to be strong enough to find his brother without a fucked up angel that didn't even have wings to accompany him.

Hannah looked at him, probably wondering what he was thinking about. Wondering if he would turn tail and leave her like the coward Castiel felt. And he almost did. Castiel was getting better, each day, at running from the problems he caused. But no, he made up his mind now. He cleared his throat, smiled just a little as he watched Hannah. He would not be running from this mistake. He needed to fix heaven.

I'm sorry, Sam, he thought.

"Let's go, Hannah," he said finally.

Hannah tilted her head. "What was that? *Who* was that?"

Castiel shook his head. "Nothing. Don't worry." But it wasn't nothing. It felt like another betrayal on an ever growing list.

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Dean was getting bored. He killed four more Abaddon followers this past week alone. As he wiped the blood on his jeans, he vaguely wondered if Crowley would ever admit to sending Dean's way. It had been a month and a half now since they entered this weird partnership. Dean realized a while ago Crowley was how those stupid demons kept finding Dean, no matter what stupid bar or gas station or town he jumped to.

And he suspected it was sate his endless blood-thirst. Still it was getting annoying. Because now it was happening more frequently, like the time when a bouncer turned out to be a demon and tried to get in a fight with Dean as he was heading out after a good night of drinking and karaoke. Then the time a demon came and scared off some stupid whore he picked up somewhere in town (he forgot if he flirted with her at a bar or a club or what). Then there was the time when he was just trying to grab pie. He knew Crowley was bored. He had been blowing up Dean's phone for the past couple weeks.

The damn demon had been complaining about Dean partying too much. *Come on, squirrel, just get with the program already. You're a demon now, so bloody act like one.* Right. Dean had black eyes and super strength and telekinesis and super healing. And he could probably teleport to wherever he wanted if he tried. If only he would put effort in some training. But Dean just...didn't care. He didn't care that he still had some of his soul in tact. Didn't care he had the mark. Didn't even care that he was a demon.

Dean liked what he was doing now. He could do whatever he wanted, right? He said as much to Crowley and the demon just rolled his eyes, looked annoyed. Like he was wondering why he even tried with Dean. And that was the question right there. Hell if Dean knew why the king of hell wanted to try to keep a leash on a Winchester. Dean had given him his most feral grin. Probably looked a bit crazy. The demon had taken a small step back, had that stare going like he wasn't sure if Dean was for real. Like for the first time probably wondering just how much of a loose cannon Dean really was. And Dean? Well he just kept looking at him

like he wanted to bite Crowley's head off and use him like a chew toy. Because at that moment, he kind of did.

So yeah Dean was almost certain after that conversation a couple weeks ago, he was sure Crowley would give up for a while. Let Dean do whatever he wanted in peace. It sort of worked. It worked for a few days. Then Abbadon followers started showing up in rapid fire and Dean was annoyed again.

So now he was standing in the bathroom of a crowded, smelly strip club with blood staining his jeans and shirt, and dammit, it was also all over his hands and arms still. He looked up at the mirror, caught sight of blood splattering his neck. His face was fine though. He looked down at the body. There was a giant hole in its stomach and there was blood oozing on the floor. He sighed, ran a bloody hand through his hair. *Fuck you, Crowley*, he thought.

Clean up sucked.

After a moment of just staring at the dead body, Dean realized this might be a golden opportunity. He never tried teleporting before but he knew the basics. Crowley tried to train him the first week. Dean hadn't been paying much attention though. He didn't want Crowley's help at the time and found it funny to be as defiant as possible, frustrate the shit out of the demon. He did pick up a couple things being explained though.

He picked up the body with one hand and slung it over his shoulder effortlessly. He had to admit, there were quite a few perks that came along with being a demon. Like super strength. He admired the large amount of blood on the floor for a few seconds before concentrating on one of the motels he saw in town. Dean pictured the parking lot vividly and suddenly, the floor trembled and everything around him blurred and then he was stumbling forward in the dark of a parking lot near a couple large dumpsters.

The lot was nearly empty. There was maybe one or two cars and Dean opened one of the dumpsters before dropping the body in it. He grinned, didn't care it was sloppy work. Human Dean would have been wide eyed and paranoid and would have done a much better job covering his tracks. But new, more improved Dean didn't care. It was just a demon anyhow. He wiped more of the blood on his shirt. Then he decided to teleport to his actual motel room and grab a shower before grabbing some sleep.

He wondered how many more Abbadon followers would mysteriously show up to try and kill him tomorrow. It didn't matter how many Crowley sent his way though. He was going to kill them all. As he turned on the shower, Dean thought, *bring it*. And he grinned to himself while he hummed some Metallica.

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Sam was angry. Of course he was. Dead end after dead end would make anyone in his position frustrated. It had been a month, almost two months and he was no closer to finding where Dean was than in the beginning of his search. He killed a lot of demons though. So many...that Crowley started to take notice and...well interest. Crowley had called him a week ago to tell him to stop killing his demons. Sam's answer? Well, defiance and rebellion just

ran in the family. Because Sam didn't bother saying anything. He just smirked, ended the call and continued to hunt down more crossroad demons.

He didn't hear back from the king of hell after that though. Which was where Sam's frustration came in. Sam had been so sure if he continued this path, Crowley would have no choice but to set up a meeting for some kind of negotiation. Sam would demand for his brother's whereabouts in exchange in stopping his relentless pursuit of the asshat dealmakers.

But instead Sam got a surprising...silence.

Sam had just got back from killing yet another demon. He wondered how many more he had to go through before Crowley cracked and decided Sam would finally be worthy of a deal. He was in the bunker cleaning one of the many guns his brother liked using when the bunker door suddenly, unexpectedly swung open. Sam jumped to his feet and spun around, his stance defensive and his eyes already narrowed. He switched the safety off the gun in one fluid move and pointed it up in the direction of the entrance.

Sam wasn't sure what he was expecting to see step in.

It certainly wasn't... "*Cas?*"

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