

Summary: The Winchester brothers investigate a wishing well that turns out to be more than they expected and they're running out of time to save its victims.

Categories: [Supernatural](#) Characters: Bobby, Dean, John, Original, Sam, Sam/Dean

Genres: Gen, PreSlash, Slash

Warnings: Birth - Implied, Character Death, Complete, Implied Sexual Situation, Incest, m/m, Magical Conception, Paranormal Conception

Challenges: None

Series: The Well

Chapters: 15 Completed: Yes Word count: 50796 Read: 2574 Published: 06/22/2011 Updated: 06/22/2011

Story Notes:

Dean and Sam appear in every chapter except chapters 1 and 11. 1 is about OCs, introducing the plot, and 11 is primarily about John.

1. [Chapter 1](#) by Eleventh Guard Coruscant Exil
2. [Chapter 2](#) by Eleventh Guard Coruscant Exil
3. [Chapter 3](#) by Eleventh Guard Coruscant Exil
4. [Chapter 4](#) by Eleventh Guard Coruscant Exil
5. [Chapter 5](#) by Eleventh Guard Coruscant Exil
6. [Chapter 6](#) by Eleventh Guard Coruscant Exil
7. [Chapter 7](#) by Eleventh Guard Coruscant Exil
8. [Chapter 8](#) by Eleventh Guard Coruscant Exil
9. [Chapter 9](#) by Eleventh Guard Coruscant Exil
10. [Chapter 10](#) by Eleventh Guard Coruscant Exil
11. [Chapter 11](#) by Eleventh Guard Coruscant Exil
12. [Chapter 12](#) by Eleventh Guard Coruscant Exil
13. [Chapter 13](#) by Eleventh Guard Coruscant Exil
14. [Chapter 14](#) by Eleventh Guard Coruscant Exil
15. [Chapter 15](#) by Eleventh Guard Coruscant Exil

Chapter 1 by Eleventh Guard Coruscant Exil

Denton, Texas

Friday, January 19, 2007

Tap, tap, tap.

Melissa shot Amanda a dirty look. Immediately, the noise of Amanda's boot tapping on the painted wooden stairstep stopped. "Sorry."

Melissa grunted something that might have been "sokay" and hunched back over her notebook. She had been working on the lyrics to "Every Day Feels Like Rain" for two hours, and still puzzled over what to do with the third stanza. Every word that came out her pen looked wrong, and when she said them out loud in her head, she couldn't get the melody to work exactly right.

“Dammit, I give up,” Melissa snapped.

Amanda peeled her headphones off and pushed “stop” on her iPod. “What? I didn’t do anything. Christ, Melissa, you’re so touchy today.”

“It’s not you. It’s them downstairs.” Melissa looked down through the spaces between the weathered railing slats. “Do they ever shut up?”

“Maybe they’re having sex.” Amanda shrugged and started to put her headphones back on.

“Uh, I’m pretty sure the Gregory brothers are not having sex in their living room. They’re fighting. Loudly. For the fourth time this week.” She clapped her notebook closed and stood up, almost stepping on the hem of her black velvet skirt. “I can’t concentrate.”

“Tell them to keep it down.”

“What am I supposed to do, just go downstairs and poke my head in the door?”

Amanda stared at Melissa for several seconds with a blank expression. “Fine, never mind. I’ll do it.”

“Amanda, don’t. You know how Brian gets. Remember last month when Luke got drunk and told him off? And then had his tires slashed the next morning.”

“You just have to know what to say,” said Amanda, and she ground the smoldering end of her cigarette butt against the exposed metal of the railing before standing up and marching down to have a small battle of words with Brian Gregory.

The front door of Apartment 10 was cracked open, and one could clearly hear the voices of two young men shouting obscenities. She opened the door a few more inches and leaned into, but not over, the doorway. “What the hell are you two on about?” she demanded. “Melissa and I can hear you from the top of the stairwell and it’s getting on our nerves.”

Brian, a tall, burly sort who was mainly in college because the football team required it, paused only long enough to flip Amanda the bird. Then he grabbed his younger brother by the shirt and shook him.

“Where’s my jacket, Josh?”

Joshua squirmed out of Brian’s grip. “I don’t know where your damned jacket is, okay?”

“Nobody upstairs gives a flying fuck about it, either,” Amanda insisted.

“Mind your own goddamn business!” Brian yelled, and then he grabbed Joshua for a second time and slammed him into the living room wall. “You took it, didn’t you?”

“I didn’t! I swear!” Joshua flinched every time Brian made a menacing move towards him.

“Then where’d you get the money for all those CDs, huh?”

“I got paid this morning!”

“Then cough up your part of the rent and find my jacket, and maybe I won’t bash your head in!”

Amanda took a deep breath and shouted at the top of her lungs, “SHUT THE FUCK UP!”

Brian threw Joshua onto the floor and stormed over to Amanda. "Listen, you little goth wannabe bitch, you can take yourself and your vampire teeth back upstairs, or I can punch them out."

"Oh, no, you did NOT just call me a bitch. You wanna see a bitch, Brian? Come here and I'll show you. Maybe you'd better put 911 on speed-dial so you don't forget the number when you need it."

Melissa appeared behind Amanda then, and she nervously ran her hand through her own bleached platinum-blonde hair. "Amanda. Calm down. We'll go out to the parking lot or, hell, even to the park, and work on our song there."

"Did you hear what he said, Melissa?"

"Let. It. Go. I'm sorry I said anything. Come on."

*

Joshua watched the door close, a silent prayed on his lips that it wouldn't close. He could smell the alcohol on Brian's breath and he didn't want to be at the receiving end of his rage, but now it didn't look like he was going to be able to get away. He hadn't really stolen Brian's letter jacket; it got stolen from him when he borrowed the car and some petty thief broke into it and stole the coat, a bag of groceries, and an ashtray full of dimes and quarters originally destined for the President George Bush Turnpike.

It didn't matter, and didn't take any kind of special genius to know what a balled-up fist being pulled back meant. Joshua choked back a wail as pain exploded across his nose and cheek. A weight settled on his chest, making struggle to breathe, and Brian punched him until his eyes rolled back in his head and he was drawing in ragged gasps.

"You're paying for another one," Brian said. He grabbed two bottles of beer from the open 12-pack on the wobbly pine coffee table and stormed off to his bedroom.

Joshua picked himself up slowly and went into the bathroom to clean up. He gingerly sponged the blood off his face and leaned against the sink. "You've fucked with me for the last time, Brian," he muttered.

Joshua grabbed his black backpack and Brian's keys, and then quickly slipped out of the apartment. Even with Usher blaring from the other side of Brian's bedroom door, the other man was likely to hear the familiar jingle of his mass of keys. Sure enough, Joshua had barely gotten to the driver's side door of the beat-up silver Civic when he heard Brian's voice behind him. He jumped in and started the car up again, not even bothering to let the engine warm up before peeling out of the parking space. He pressed the gas pedal and raced away, swerving around an incoming car so that Brian wouldn't have time to catch up to him. As long as he got out of the parking lot in time, Brian wouldn't be able to keep up on foot.

"I'm sick of this bullshit," he mumbled, and wiped a tear from his cheek. It was the first time he'd cried since his mother's funeral two years earlier. Then again, he wasn't crying. Not really. His eyes were just watering, that's all.

Brian had promised to take him in and take care of him, so that their overtaxed Aunt Patricia wouldn't have to deal with a sixth mouth to feed. "All you've done is been a jackass."

He reached into the side pocket of his backpack and pulled out a map. He found it when one of the neighbor kids, Jorge, had dropped it. It appeared to be a fake, some kind of Halloween joke; he had, after all, found it about a week before Halloween, and he'd never heard of a wishing well so close to his hometown. But there were the directions, sure enough, with instructions for how to

invoke the spirit of the well. "You get one wish" was written in brown block letters near the bottom of the paper.

He would have given it back to the kid, except for two things. He knew that Jorge had gone out to the well with his parents, and that shortly thereafter the couple had a bigger, better car and dressed in new clothes. Not just Wal-Mart new, but upscale-mall new. There might have been something to the well after all ♦♦♦ and it couldn't hurt to try. Second, Jorge was dead, killed in an accident at the corner of Carroll and University when the traffic lights malfunctioned and two cars collided.

Twenty minutes after leaving the apartment complex, Joshua parked the borrowed car and climbed out. He followed the map as precisely as he could, only having to start over after a misstep once. However, when he got to the place that was marked with an "X" on the yellowed paper, he didn't see anything.

Joshua looked down. He was standing on a small rock ♦♦♦ one of a circle of rocks around two halves of a wooden board circle and weed overgrowth. At least there really is a well here, he thought, and slowly pulled the circle apart.

He glanced down into the well, but didn't see anything. Forgot my flashlight, he thought, and dropped a small rock into the well.

Plop.

"All right, let's do it." Joshua held the map up, straining to read it with the trees blocking so much of the sun. He studied the instructions and then groaned. He needed a 1947 penny.

Joshua looked through all the change in his backpack and in all his pockets. Finally he ran back to the Civic and searched on the floor and in the cushions. "Gotcha," he said, and snatched up his prize from the back seat.

He dropped the coin into the water, turned around three times, and closed his eyes. "I wish that, um, the next time my older brother is out driving ♦♦♦ without me in the car ♦♦♦ he gets into a crash and dies."

He heard echoes coming up from deep in the well, at water level. He thought it sounded like "I protect you" but he couldn't be sure, because his vision suddenly exploded into shades of black, white, and gray that didn't quite match what he should have been seeing. The ground melted into gray before him, littered with white dots, and he thought he saw a small hunched skeleton deep in the well. Ohgod-ohgod-ohgod. What's happening? He stumbled back from the well and started running towards the car, a blinding white outline on a background of white, gray, and black. The keys in his hand were brilliant white, as were the bones in his hand, but he could hardly see his skin.

I'm seeing in X-ray vision, he thought. How? Why? What the hell have I done? I'm hallucinating. He hit me in the head. I have a concussion and I'm hallucinating and it'll all be over soon, when he goes to the gym tomorrow.

He took off back towards the apartments, hoping that he wouldn't get into a wreck on the way home, or miss his exit.

*

"Amanda, we need three hundred dollars by Monday," said Melissa. She dropped the stack of bills on the kitchen counter and opened up the fridge. There was a pack of cheese singles, only fifty-one percent real cheese, and a Tupperware tub of leftover spaghetti. She wrinkled her nose

and shut the door again.

"I haven't picked up my paycheck yet. I'll get it tomorrow, and that should cover the rest of the rent."

"What about the phone bill?"

"I guess... we need the rent more than we need the phones. If one of us loses cell service we can share for a month or two. And who knows ♦♦" maybe we'll get some more gigs lined up after tomorrow night, and get some of the money in advance.

"I don't want to depend on that. It's a tough market. There are just too many people in music, and, let's face it ♦♦" neither one of us is Britney Spears."

"No, we're not. A toast to being unlike Spears, and not having FedEx baggage?"

Melissa half-heartedly clinked her glass of sangria against Amanda's. "Yeah. But I could use the cash. We're lucky to average a hundred dollars a week."

"And you just had to get a new keyboard," Amanda said.

"We needed it! The old one had three broken keys!"

"I'll just ask for more hours at work. Maybe pick up an extra shift on Sunday, and get an advance loan?"

"Are you nuts? Working Sunday morning after playing at Phantom House tomorrow?"

"Got any better ideas?" Amanda scowled and lit up another cigarette.

"I guess, if it gets desperate, I can borrow money from Brandon."

"It's desperate. We're a month behind on the electric bill, and another two weeks and they'll shut it off. I'm NOT staying here without heating. Call up your brother."

Melissa picked up the phone and slowly dialed the phone number. She hated asking for money, unless she was asking Amanda, but it had been six months since she'd asked Brandon for anything, and she had paid him back promptly last time.

"Hello? Is Brandon there?... Yeah, okay... hi. What's up? This is Melissa... Really? What?... Oh, that's great. I guess. I mean, that's what you wanted, right?... Yeah, seems that way. Way to go, big brother. How's Rachel?... I suppose so... Well, that's good... Uh, nothing really, just wondering what you were up to... No, I haven't... Um, sure, tell Dad I said hi... Okay. Bye." She sighed and put up the phone.

Amanda's eyes could have bored holes through Melissa's head. "You didn't ask him!" she snapped.

"Look, it wasn't a good idea."

"Why not?"

"Because he needs the money more than we do right now, okay?"

"He makes more than eight hundred dollars a week, Melissa! We barely make half of that put together! What the fuck? Why the hell does he need the money? Did he take up a crack habit?"

"Rachel is pregnant," Melissa finally said.

Amanda took a step back, and looked as though she'd just been slapped. "Oh."

"Yeah. Brandon is going to be a dad in about seven months, and now is not a good time to hit him up for money." She sighed. "Amanda?"

"What."

"You okay?"

"Yeah. Fine. I'm fine. Why?"

"Never mind."

Amanda slowly picked up her keys and her box of Camel Lights. "I'm going outside."

"Look, I only told you because you asked."

"Yeah, well maybe you should think more before you say something."

"Look who's talking! I know you're not really happy about the news 💎💎" I mean, with you being unable to have kids and all that. But it's hardly my fault. Or Brandon's. Or Rachel's."

Amanda opened her mouth to say something, but she shut it again when two voices burst from the apartment downstairs, loud enough to be heard through the floor.

"Get over here!" Brian shouted. They heard a loud collision, then a door slamming, and then feet running nearby.

Someone knocked at the door. Amanda rolled her eyes, and Melissa looked through the peephole. She groaned. "Guess who," she mouthed, and then opened the door.

Joshua, with a black eye and his T-shirt torn, stood shivering at the door. He looked around nervously and his breaths were fast and shallow. "Can I stay here tonight?" he asked.

"Huh, what?" Amanda raised her eyebrow.

"Josh, go home," Melissa sighed.

"It's just for one day. I just need to be here for one day. And then you'll never be bothered again, I promise. No more fights."

"Dude, go to a hotel," said Melissa, and she started to shut the door. Joshua took off running again, and as he did, something fell out of his backpack. Melissa made an "oo!" noise as the cold night air hit her, and ran to get the dropped paper. "Hey! You forgot something!" Josh didn't even look over his shoulder at her. She looked down to get a better look at the paper.

"What's that?" Amanda asked, when Melissa came back in and shut the door.

"Looks like a map."

"Of where?"

"Hard to tell. It's around here, I guess 💎💎" there's I-35." She pointed to a line on the map. "It

goes out to... to about four miles off Highway 380. Says something about a Townsend. Huh.”

“Let me see.” Amanda grabbed the paper and started reading the words at the bottom. “Yeah, I heard about this. My mom looked into for a story she was writing for the newspaper oh, maybe about six years ago. Haunted well, or something like that. I had no idea it was a real place, instead of one of those silly little superstitions. Well, it’s just a silly superstition, but the well is real, at least.”

“Okay, then. Why is that little punk kid going out there?”

“Dunno. But this lines up with the rest of the Fredericks story.” When Melissa didn’t respond to that, Amanda continued: “Okay, here’s what Nikki told me. Somebody went out there to drop an old coin in the well and wished for her son to be healed of cancer. And he was.”

“Seriously?”

“Yeah. About a year ago. And her husband wanted to get rich and wished for it and got a promotion, too.”

“Then what?”

“I dunno. They died last year in a car crash. Them and one of the kids who used to live in the complex across from us, all dead, but their son survived. I remember because I was late for work that day ♦♦“ the roads were closed off. But still... hmm.”

“What?”

“We could check it out. You know, wish for rent money or something.”

“Oh, please. Sunday shifts are a better idea.”

“It’s not going to make things worse, and it just might help. I mean, promotions aren’t rare occurrences and neither is chemotherapy actually working, but going to the well didn’t prevent those things, that’s for sure.”

“No.”

“Come on. I know you don’t believe in the paranormal, but you never know. Maybe it just makes funny noises and then you think it works. There’s a lot about psychology being behind weird events. If nothing else it would make you think more about getting money and you might look for more opportunities to earn it.”

“All right. I mean, it’s a load of bull, but you’re right ♦♦“ it won’t make it any harder for us, at least. And I’m running out of ideas except for the one. When do you want to go?”

“Tomorrow morning.”

Denton, Texas and surrounding areas
Saturday, January 20, 2007

“Okay, pretty painless procedure,” said Amanda. She shivered and drew her black trench coat tighter around herself. “Turn around three times, drop a 1947 coin in the well, close your eyes, and make your wish. Can be out loud or in your head.”

“If you say it to someone else, it won’t come true.”

“According to this paper about this well, it doesn’t matter. Here, you go first.”

Melissa set her mouth in a straight line, but went ahead, just to get it over with. She turned around thrice, humming the Hokey Pokey song, and then dropped the coin into the well. It fell for a long way and she couldn’t be sure the faint noise she heard was the penny hitting the water. “I hope that it really... urk, never mind. I wish that Double and Trouble would become the next major hit duo and rise to the top of the charts in three months or less, and both members, being myself, Melissa Hall, and my friend, Amanda Kline, would be famous and fantastically wealthy for the rest of our lives.”

“Long way from ‘I wish for money to pay the phone bill,’” Amanda remarked.

“Hey. If you’re going to wish, wish big. Your...” Melissa was about to say, “turn,” but then she heard something vaguely voicelike emanate from the bottom of the well. She jumped back. “Um, okay. That was an echo from the penny, right?”

“Maybe. Maybe not.” Amanda frowned, then walked up to the well. The voice had stopped. She dropped her coin down and waited until it hit the dirt, then spun around, then looked down into the dark pit. “I wish that, even though I’m not able to conceive, not having ovaries or a uterus and all that, that it would happen anyway and I could get pregnant and have a child, at least once.”

The echo came back. “Okay, that has to be from our voices. You know? From talking near the well?” said Melissa. “Let’s get out of here.”

Amanda nodded and looked back at the well only once as they walked back out of the woods.

*

“Paris Hilton. Oh my god. Paris Hilton has a song on the radio? YUCK! Change the station, Amanda. Please.”

Amanda fiddled with the search buttons, going through commercials and rap and country before leaving it alone on Mix 102.9.

“Tracy Chapman? You’re making me listen to Tracy Chapman?”

“Everything good is on a commercial break and we left our CDs at  Watch out!”

Melissa slammed the brakes just in time to avoid hitting the car in front of her. The traffic was backed up all along 380, and she couldn’t see any sign of it letting up. “Looks like there was a bad crash up ahead,” she said, and stuck her head out of the window to see more. She thought she saw a police car’s lights, but couldn’t be sure.

Evanescence’s “Call Me When You’re Sober” blared suddenly, and Amanda reached into her handbag. She pulled out her cell phone and flipped it open. “Hello? Gary? How are you? They... they what? You’re kidding! Whoa... yes, yes, we’ll be there! First thing Monday morning. Eight o’clock sharp, you bet. Thank you so much!” She hung up, and turned to Melissa, with her contact-lens-black eyes reflecting light and shining. She spoke in the excited tone of a six-year-old about to meet Santa Claus. “Melissa, you’re not going to believe this! That was Gary Young, you know, from Phantom House? Well, he gave a copy of our CD to a guy from Virgin Records, and he took it to his boss, and now they want to talk to us tomorrow about an album contract! Melissa? Hello, earth to Melissa!”

Melissa stared straight ahead, her hands gripping the steering wheel so tightly that her knuckles were bone-white. “The car,” she said.

“What car? Did you even hear me?”

“That’s Brandon’s car up ahead.” Melissa pulled her left hand free and pointed to a twisted mass of blue-painted metal partially wrapped around a telephone pole.

“Huh? Oh, oh my god, that’s not good. But you don’t know it’s his. There could be a hundred Tauruses that color in this city alone.”

“Not that many,” said Melissa.

They crept forward, the silence broken only by honks and the sirens of another police car and an ambulance. Melissa pressed her hand to the horn until someone finally let her through into the left lane, and she swerved around another car and the orange cones. “License plate,” she whispered.

“You can’t just drive up and park here,” Amanda hissed.

Melissa ignored her and parked the car just inside the cones, then jumped out. “Ma’am, you have to leave,” one of the policemen said.

“That’s my brother’s car!” Melissa cried. She ran towards the wreckage, but the police officer grabbed her arm and held her back. “Brandon!”

Her eyes went wide when she saw the scene beyond the cars. Two paramedics were lifting a stretcher with a blood-covered and broken body. Then she heard the words that would haunt her for weeks: “Dead at the scene.”

“You shouldn’t be here,” the officer repeated. “We can give you a ride to the hospital to identify the body, if you like. I can understand that you wouldn’t want to drive.”

Amanda came up behind them, and she took Melissa, who was sobbing, from the police officer. “It’s all right. It’s all right. Come here,” she said. “I’ll drive. Which hospital?”

“Denton Regional,” said the officer.

“We’ll meet you there. Come on, Melissa. I’m sorry.”

[Back to index](#)

Chapter 2 by Eleventh Guard Coruscant Exil

Wichita Falls, Texas

Wednesday, January 24, 2007

“Good morning, gentlemen,” the waitress said, smiling too brightly for six-thirty in the morning on such a cold day ❄️❄️ in the middle of the week, no less. “My name is Kimberly, and I’ll be your server today. Can I get you anything to drink?”

“Coffee, please,” said Sam.

Kimberly made a note on her little paper pad and bent over a little, just enough that the space between two of her shirt buttons puckered and exposed the silver clasp of her bra. “And for you, sir?”

“I’ll have a coffee, too,” Dean said. “Thanks.”

“All right. I’ll be right back.” She straightened up and half-winked with one eye before turning around and moving to the next table.

“What are you doing?”

Dean snapped his head back to face Sam. “Deciding what I want for breakfast.”

“You were staring at her ass.”

“There was a blue ink stain on her pants,” Dean said smoothly, and started to read his laminated menu.

“There was not.”

“How would you know if you weren’t looking, too?”

Sam shook his head and squeezed the sides of his menu tightly enough to crinkle the plastic. “Never mind. Just never mind.”

“What the hell is wrong with you, Sam? You’ve been moody since yesterday afternoon. Is this about Anna?”

Sam cringed at the mention of the little girl they’d found... well, they’d found half of her. “It’s not about anything. I’m fine.” It was nothing and everything, at the same time; the dead girl, the hunting, Dean, the nightmares...

“No, you’re not fine. And you need to snap out of it before it gets one of us into trouble. We don’t know when we’re going to be on another hunt and you have to be alert and ready.”

“We could have saved her. We knew who the werewolf was!” Sam latched onto the topic that was easiest to talk about, easiest to blame.

“No, we didn’t. Not early enough for it to have made any difference. You suspected her father at first, and I agreed with you. It was a good thing we waited until we were sure, because we were both wrong. We did all we could, and we killed it, and the town is safe. We can’t save everyone.”

Can’t save everyone. Sam’s mind went immediately to Jessica, now dead for over a year. It only added to his internal confusion to be reminded of her, bleeding, flames bursting all around her; something killed her. The same thing that killed his mother. He’d vowed to find the killer and destroy it... and he still did want that, but things had changed. He’d been moving on, and he felt guilty for moving on, guilty for letting the paranormal killer run loose, guilty for starting to feel less guilty. “Then why do we even bother?”

“You know damn well why we bother,” Dean said.

Kimberly came back then, holding two small mugs of coffee on ceramic coasters. “If you need any more cream, just let me know,” she purred. “Are you ready to order?”

Sam ordered a stack of pancakes, and Dean stuck with eggs and bacon. Kimberly wrote everything down in laboriously neat handwriting, and then left them alone for a second time. Sam opened up his newspaper and started to leaf through the pages.

“What are you doing?” Dean asked.

“Running for President. What does it look like I’m doing? Looking for the crosswords.”

“Crosswords,” Dean snorted. He poured a little bit of half-and-half into his mug and stirred it around.

“They’re good for keeping your vocabulary skills up. You should try them sometime. But don’t try the New York Times crosswords yet; those are hard.”

“I get your point, college boy,” Dean snapped.

Sam was starting to hate daytime between hunts. When they were busy, their minds were focused, and they worked together as a team ♦♦♦ no, as one person split into two, with perfect synchronicity. At night, in whatever motel they decided to crash at, they were either too tired to talk or ripping at each other’s clothes. But now... now they just sat on opposite sides of the table and argued like an old married couple. Trying to pass for normal to avoid attention and succeeding way, way too much.

A few words of an article caught his eye, and he read the headline and the first few sentences. He got a prickly feeling in the back of his neck, and it wasn’t just from the cold air that hit him when another patron opened the doors.

“That’s weird,” he mused.

“What?” Dean didn’t look up from his mug.

“There was a murder about a hundred miles from here.”

“What’s weird about that? Fort Worth is about a hundred miles from here. How many people live in that area? A million?”

“No, take a look at this.” Sam folded the paper and turned it around so that Dean could see it. “A football player was killed two days ago, by his younger brother. Played for the University of North Texas.”

Dean frowned at Sam, at the mention of someone being killed by his younger brother, and took the paper. He skimmed the article, and the creases in his forehead deepened. “Looks like the kid went insane,” he said. “Maybe he got a concussion and it did something to his mind. See?” He pointed at the fourth paragraph. “Says right here that he got into a fight with Brian and was hit on the head.”

Sam sighed. “He claims to have X-ray vision. That’s not normal, Dean. He knew his brother was coming at him with a knife because he saw the knife hidden on the inside of a coat. He couldn’t fake that or be deluded into seeing that.”

“Maybe it wasn’t weird for them. Joshua went crazy, knew Brian was going to attack him, and killed Brian first. End of story.”

“No, I think we need to go check it out.”

“Come on, Sam. We can’t run off and investigate everything that seems just a little bit strange. Everything in the world is a little bit strange.”

“But what if this is something supernatural? Who knows what this kid is capable of? What if he really does have unusual powers and hurts somebody else ♦♦♦ or what if other people are getting powers, too?”

“Look. If we had more time, maybe we could go out and talk to him on the tiny chance that something’s up, but we’re on our way to Austin. We have to be there by tomorrow afternoon for the gun show, or we’re not going to be able to get better weapons. We don’t have the time to drive out to some college town in the middle of nowhere.”

“Denton isn’t really in the middle of nowhere. It’s only about twenty-five miles out of our way, and if we don’t find anything worth checking out, we’ll just leave.”

“I don’t know, Sam. We need to get where we’re going and settle in for the night.”

“I’ll make it up to you.” Sam lowered his head and looked up at Dean, eyes smoldering. He reached under the table and put his hand on Dean’s knee. There was usually at least one way to get what he wanted, and Sam would use it if he had to. It wasn’t exactly a sacrifice.

“Well... all right. We’ll go after breakfast, and give it two hours. If nothing turns up, we go on our way.”

Both of them were suddenly aware of a shadow, and Sam snapped back into his seat, pulling his hand back as he did. “Here you go,” Kimberly said, her face fallen and her words clipped. “Please tell me if there’s anything else you need.” And she was gone before they could get any words in.

“Looks like somebody doesn’t want a tip,” said Dean.

Denton, Texas
Wednesday, January 24, 2007

“They’d kill me back at Stanford if they saw this,” said Sam, indicating the Texas A&M shirt that Dean had found in a thrift shop a half-hour earlier and talked him into wearing.

“Nobody you know is going to see it. Come on.”

They pushed the glass doors open and entered into the lobby of the mental hospital. The waiting room was small and empty, except for the receptionist who sat behind a panel of thick glass. Old magazines spread out over two wooden end tables, and pharmaceutical advertisements masquerading as mental health advice littered the single coffee table. Dean grabbed Sam’s arm and pulled him towards the desk.

“Hello, uh, Nancy,” Dean said. “I was wondering if I could get a pass to talk to one of the patients here.”

Nancy frowned over her glasses and looked up. “That depends. Who are you coming to visit, and are you on the visitor’s list?”

“I think I’m on the list. Our mom said she had our names put on it. Anyway, the patient is Joshua Gregory.”

Nancy’s eyes widened, and she typed a few things into her computer. “I’m sorry, but he’s not able to have visitors outside the family.”

“We are family,” Sam insisted, playing the role of the angry relative rather well. “We’re his cousins. Our mother is his mother’s sister.”

“What are your names?”

“I’m Dean Smith, and this is my brother Sam,” Dean replied.

“Aha... hmm... no, you’re not on the list. And we’re only allowed to admit immediate family to see Mr. Gregory.”

“There isn’t any immediate family,” said Sam. A few quick Google searches had turned up the information they needed. “My aunt Barbara died two years ago, and we’re the closest family Josh has. Please let us in. Only for a few minutes.”

“I don’t know, boys.”

“We just want to see him and make sure he’s okay.”

Nancy stared up at them sternly and opened her mouth as if to say no, but she stopped herself. “One time. But only for ten minutes.”

*

Sam and Dean sat on one side of a tall reinforced glass wall, and a boy who appeared to be about five years younger than Sam slowly walked into the room. He was dressed in a white hospital robe, and looked drugged and tired. His eyes were bloodshot and his face was covered in small cuts and bruises. As he walked towards the chair that was set aside for him, though, his eyes darted around from object to object, and he seemed to have difficulty gripping the wooden and plastic chair.

Joshua looked through the glass, glancing briefly at Sam and Dean, but not keeping his eyes on either one of them for long. He then fixed his gaze on the telephone in front of him, and kept staring at it.

“Telephone components must be less scary than skulls,” Sam said.

Dean only shook his head and picked up the phone. “Joshua Gregory?”

The boy picked up the phone gingerly and wrapped his hand around it as though he wasn’t entirely sure of its shape. Then he lifted it near his mouth. “I already talked to the police. Don’t wanna talk any more,” Joshua said.

“I’m not with the police,” said Dean. “My name is Dean, and I’m... a detective. This is Sam; we work together. We just want to talk to you for a few minutes.”

“You can’t help me.” Joshua’s voice came out somewhere between a whisper and a whine, and he shrank back into his chair.

“Help you with what?”

“Look at the hospital report. I’m sure they’ve written all kinds of things in there about me being delusional. Crazy. I see things, I see through things. I see metal, bones, just like an X-ray machine. I can’t close my eyes and get rid of it because I see through my fucking eyelids. It stays with me when I sleep and dream. The drugs don’t help. They just make me sleep and have nightmares and it’s worse than being awake.”

Sam winced and pressed in close enough to the telephone receiver to hear Joshua. His breath was hot on the back of Dean’s neck, and Dean’s legs tensed as that breath sent shivers down into his groin. “Sam, back up,” he hissed.

“I want to hear this,” Sam whispered back.

“I didn’t mean to kill him,” Joshua went on. “I swear I didn’t. I was aiming for his shoulder but he moved, and the bullet went through his heart.” He put one hand over his eyes, and started to wipe the tears away.

"You were just trying to protect yourself, right?"

Joshua nodded. "And make the visions stop."

Sam closed his hand over their end of the telephone and, after a brief struggle, Dean gave it up. "When did the visions start, Joshua?" Sam asked.

"Last Friday. It was Friday evening."

"Can you tell us what happened on Friday?"

"No. My lawyer said not to talk about it."

"It's all right," said Sam. "We won't tell anybody else. Information you give to us is kept strictly confidential."

"You promise?"

"Yes, I promise."

"All right." Joshua took a deep breath, wincing slightly as he did so, and he shifted around in his chair. "I went out to the Townsend well and made a wish there."

"And that's when you started seeing... differently?"

"It happened just a few seconds later. Everything went black and white."





Sam and Dean exchanged glances. The odds that they were dealing with something that concerned them instead of the psychiatrists had just jumped. A lot. "Is that what you wished for? In any way at all?" Sam asked.

"No. God, no."

"Can you tell us what you did wish for?"

Joshua shook his head slowly then, and he closed his eyes reflexively before opening them.

"It won't go in your files. We won't record anything. We just need to know so we can figure out how you might get your sight back?"

"All right. I... I wished that my older brother would get into a car crash and die. He hits me   he broke my arm last year   and I just wanted him gone. I didn't really mean it, though. I was just so mad and scared. I didn't really want him to die. Not even when I shot him."

"I know you didn't," said Sam. "Let me see if I understand. You went to a well and wished that he would die, and that's when you got X-ray vision?"

"Yeah. That's exactly what happened." Joshua looked up at them through the glass, and his eyes jerked a little bit, as if trying to find their eyes and finding only sockets. "You believe me, right?"

"I believe you," said Sam.



"I think we need to do a few tests first," Dean interjected. He reached into his pocket and pulled out a few quarters, which he held in the palm of his hand underneath the wooden table. He took the phone back. "Josh, how many quarters am I holding?"

Josh stared at the spot where Dean's hand was, like the table wasn't even there. "Three," he said.

Dean was holding three quarters. He picked another coin. "What about now?"

"No quarters, but the coin you have is either a dime or a penny. I can't really tell."

Dean pocketed the dime and nodded. Whatever was going on, it had to be something a little bit more than just psychiatric problems. "I believe you now," he said. "How did you find this well, the... Townsend well?"

"I found a map. It belonged to a kid who lived across the street from me. He died last year on Halloween, though, and I put the map away and kind of forgot about it. I found it again about two weeks ago in a stack of homework papers. The map had exactly how to get to the well and how to make a wish, but you only get one. You have to drop a penny in  a 1947 penny  and turn around three times, then say what you want. Except it didn't work!"

"It did something, apparently. Where's the map now?"

"I... I don't know. When I got back I had it, but between the apartment and the library I dropped it and couldn't find it on my way back. It blew away or someone picked it up or something."

"That's not going to do a lot of good, then. Listen, Joshua, I promise we're going to do all we can to help you out and protect other people. But we need your cooperation on this. Tell anybody who comes in that we're your cousins, or don't say anything at all. I'm going to see if I can find the well. Do you remember anything else about how to get there?"

"Not really. It's a few miles off Highway 380, kinda north, but that's all I remember."

"We're about out of time on our visit. Keep your head on, and we're going to get to the bottom of this."

Joshua nodded. "Okay. Thanks."

*

"I told you so," said Sam.

"It was a long shot. You guessed right, but it was a long shot."

"I wasn't guessing. I had a feeling."

"Don't get cocky." Dean threw his bags down next to the single bed in the little motel room and booted his laptop. "We don't have a lot to go on here. All we know is that there's a child who died last year and had the map, and that it has something to do with a Townsend. We can either look for the well or look for the kid."

"Straight to the source. We look for the well."

"Without having any idea what it does or how it works? It's a real place, and it does something, but it doesn't do what a wishing well is supposed to do. Maybe if we find out more about the ones who went before Joshua, we'd have a better grip on what we're dealing with. Spirits haunting the well? A demon? Could be anything."

"All right. Let's look up the obituaries for the first week of November."

There was only one death listed that week from any children; a nine-year-old boy named Jorge Sanchez, who had died in a car wreck, along with a middle-aged couple. "Here we go," he said. "This has to be the boy. And his parents still live here. Let's go talk to them."

[Back to index](#)

Chapter 3 by Eleventh Guard Coruscant Exil

Denton, Texas

Wednesday, January 24, 2007

"Amanda! Where's my other shoe?" Melissa hopped around frantically on one foot as she tried to pull one of her tall striped socks on the foot that was raised into the air.

"Check the living room by the TV stand. I had to squash a spider and it was the closest thing I had."

"My shoes," said Melissa, "are not weapons. Not these shoes, anyway." She grabbed the missing footwear from the edge of the floor and reached for her purse. "Let's go; I don't want to get caught in the rush hour traffic."

Amanda nodded quietly and followed Melissa out to the parking lot. It was good to see her friend acting normal again, even if she was pretty sure it was the fake-it-till-you-make-it variety of normal. Brandon Hall's funeral was on Tuesday, and only the day before, Joshua Gregory had been hauled into the police station after shooting Brian. It was not a good week, and as shaken as Amanda was, she knew it was much worse for Melissa.

They jumped into Amanda's pale green Corolla and took off towards the highway. As they turned out of the parking lot, Melissa whistled. "What wouldn't I give to have a car like that," she said, pointing at the black Impala parked across the street from their apartment complex. "Hell, what wouldn't I give to have a car that's not in the shop every other week?"

"If everything goes right today, you'll be able to buy any car in the world," said Amanda. "Picture yourself in a Ferrari."

"Let's not count our chickies before they hatch," Melissa replied. But she was already counting and the numbers were a bit on the high side.


*

Dean knocked on the wooden door and waited for a few moments before someone on the other side called out, "Who's there?"

"Department of Public Safety, ma'am," he said. The door opened a little bit. "Mrs. Sanchez? I'm Dean Patterson, and this is my partner, Sam Miller."

She nodded, brown eyes getting large and round. "What is this? Did something happen to Hector?"

"No, no, your husband is fine," Dean said quickly. "I didn't mean to scare you. I just need to ask you a few questions regarding the collision in October of last year."

Sam and Dean flashed their fake ID cards and followed Maria inside. They looked around the living room, looking for anything that was incongruous  but the only thing that came to mind was the furniture. The couch was upholstered in pure Italian leather, and the grandfather clock next to the entryway to the dining room was carved cherry wood and worth at least two thousand dollars. And both of them looked brand-new.

"Please, sit down," Maria said. "Can I get you gentlemen anything to drink? Coffee, hot

chocolate?”

“We’re fine, but thank you,” said Dean. “I don’t want to take up any more of your time than we need to. We have to compile a list of traffic fatalities taking place within a certain radius over the last twelve months, and I have a few routine questions to ask you regarding your son, if you don’t mind.”

Maria sat down hard on the leather love seat and closed her eyes. “I have already answered more questions than I ever want to.”

“I know it’s hard,” said Sam, “but we’re trying to prevent more accidents in the future. This won’t take long. I promise.”

She opened her eyes and looked up at them, at Sam’s sympathetic smile and Dean’s straight game face, and slowly nodded. “All right.”

“Thank you,” Dean said. “Just to verify, in the two-car collision that your son was in last year, the occupants of the 1998 Hyundai Excel were your son Jorge and your sister Elena?”

“Yes. She was driving him back from school because I had to work late that day. Elena had only minor injuries ♦♦♦ whiplash, some bruising, and a cut on her leg from broken glass. But my Jorge-”

“It’s all right. We know. What do you do for a living?”

“I was a dental hygienist. I quit in November.”

“I understand. It must be a hard time for you.”

Maria started to cry, and Sam carefully took her hand. They were quiet for a few moments before she started to speak again. “He was such a good boy. Straight A’s, played soccer, never any trouble. We were going to take him trick-or-treating with his friends that night. Had his costume all ready.”

“What was it?” Sam asked.

“Superman. Jorge loved Superman. Always has ♦♦♦ his blue and red pajamas were his favorite.” She wiped at her eyes.

Sam and Dean exchanged glances. X-ray, Sam mouthed.

“I liked Superman when I was little, too,” said Sam. “Flight was my favorite of his powers. I used to imagine that I could fly around my teachers at school and sit on the roof.”

“Jorge wanted to be able to see like Superman, you know, see through things. We even thought about buying him some goggles for Christmas.”

Sam felt the hairs on his neck stand on end again. “X-ray vision,” he said. “That, too.” He paused thoughtfully. “Would Jorge have ever wished for such a thing? For himself or for somebody else?”

“He might have,” said Maria. “He never did tell anyone what his birthday wishes were ♦♦♦ although I thought it might have been for a Playstation.”

“What about at any wishing wells that might be around here?” Dean asked.

“I don’t see what this has to do with the... the crash.”

"It doesn't, but I'm curious. I thought you might want to just talk about it."

"There was one. He got the map from a man we met at the doctor's office, who said that good things came from the well. In September Hector and I took Jorge out to the well and he made a wish there. He wouldn't tell us what it was." Maria paused. "I'm pretty sure it was the Playstation, though. He wanted one so much, and just that afternoon, we stopped into a convenience store for snacks and picked up a scratch-off lottery ticket. We won a quarter of a million dollars. My son was the one who picked out the ticket, too."

"Can you remember how to get to the well?"

"I really don't remember much," she said, and then looked at each of them in turn. "You're not really from the Department of Public Safety, are you." It wasn't a question.


"Well, no, ma'am, we're not," Dean admitted. "But we think there's something going on with that well, and we're trying to make sure nobody else gets hurt." He stood up. "Thank you for talking to us. I know it wasn't easy. We'll be on our way now."

She smiled without moving the rest of her face and nodded. "I hope you find what you're looking for," she said. "Nobody should have to lose their children like this."

"I hope we find it, too. Take care, Mrs. Sanchez."

Near Denton, Texas
Wednesday, January 24, 2007

"There's definitely something going on with that well," said Sam, trying to talk over the music. He looked down at his notebook, where he'd written down four names with a few notations beside each one. "Here's what happened. Donna Fredericks was the first person that we know of who went to the well, when her son Kevin was sick with cancer and not responding to chemotherapy. She wished for her son to get better. That was the same day that her co-worker Cindy Harper died of a brain aneurysm, which might or might not be related. Her husband, Charles, wished for a quarter of a million dollars. Within a week, Kevin's condition started to improve and he's now completely cancer-free."

Dean nodded. "So Kevin said he gave the map to Jorge, who might or might not have asked for X-ray vision. Jorge ended up with the quarter of a million dollars. Then Joshua gets the map, goes out, and wishes for his brother to get killed  and gets X-ray vision. There's a pattern here."

"Whatever one person wishes for, the next one receives," said Sam.

"Which means that if somebody else has the map, his brother is in a world of trouble. We're going to have to shut that well down."

"We don't know what's making it work."

"It doesn't really matter. If it always follows the same pattern, then we can turn the pattern against it. We just need two people to wish for the well to stop." Dean parked the Impala at the bottom of a tree-covered hill. "This is the place. There used to be a small farm here owned by a man named Eugene Townsend. All we have to do now is find the well and wish for it to stop granting wishes. Then everybody is safe."

"Two problems with that, Dean." Sam made no move to unbuckle his safety belt. "First of all,

everybody who made a wish there is dead ♦♦“ except for Joshua, and it’s only been five days since he came here. There might be some kind of time limit on a person’s life, and the fact that they all died on the same day, in the same collision, worries me. The second problem is that neither one of us can deactivate the well as long as Joshua’s wish is still hanging around.”

“What are you talking about?”

“Remember what he wished for? That his older brother would die. If I make a wish now, that means that you’re going to die, even if the time limit doesn’t count anymore. You’ll be its last victim.” Sam’s mouth contracted and he pressed his lips together. “I’m not taking that chance.”

“That’s why we have to go in the right order. That means me first. I don’t have an older brother, so nothing is going to happen, and then your wish will make the well spirit stop.”

“What if we do have another brother? Do we know that Dad didn’t sleep with anybody else before our mother? Do we know that they didn’t have a son before you and gave him up for adoption?”

“Quit it with the what-ifs. Anything we do could hurt somebody if the conditions are right. Taking a certain exit could hurt somebody if it delays them five seconds and makes them miss their bus. We can’t worry about it if we really don’t have any control over it.” Dean climbed out of the car. “Are you coming or not? I have a feeling that whatever’s haunting the well is going to get kind of pissed off at me and I need you as backup.”

Sam quietly followed him. Dean opened up the trunk and pulled out their usual complement of guns and knives, and Sam wordlessly took his. “Hey, Sam?”

“What?”

“Do you have the pennies?”

“Right here,” said Sam, and he showed the two 1947 pennies that he had in his hand. They’d had to buy ten rolls of pennies from a local bank to find them ♦♦“ the alternative was wasting five dollars apiece for collectors’ coins at the “mini-mall” in the center of town, which was nothing more than a pair of indoor flea markets.

“Then let’s get started.”

Dean pulled out his EMF monitor and scanned the ground around them, looking for signs of increased electromagnetic activity. They moved farther and farther up the hill, and after a few minutes, the monitor started to light up and beep in faint tones. “I think we’re getting warmer.”

“Hardly,” said Sam, all too aware of the cold air blowing through his thin jacket. He shivered and turned on his flashlight.

“Don’t be a baby. We’re in Texas. This isn’t exactly the middle of a Minnesota winter.”

The monitor beeped more and more as they climbed the hill, and they had almost reached the top of the gentle slope when Dean knelt down and leaned over a weathered wooden circle in the ground. “And look what I found,” he said. “The EMF’s off the scale here. Bring your flashlight over.”

Dean pulled open the two halves of the circle to reveal a pit in the ground that was about three feet wide and deeper than he could see. Even when Sam shined the flashlight into the well, they couldn’t see the bottom of it, until Dean dropped a small rock down and watched the faint perturbation of stagnant water many meters down.

Dean took one of the pennies and held it over the water, but Sam grabbed his hand. "What the hell are you doing?" Dean asked.

"This is dangerous!"

Dean scrunched his face and stared at Sam. "Do we ever do anything that isn't dangerous?"

"Dean, you could get killed if something goes wrong."

"I'm still failing to see how this is different from the usual."

"What if Josh's wish skips you and falls on me? I don't want to lose you, Dean."

"Sam. We have a job to do. Get your hand off my arm."

Sam jerked his hand back as if he'd been bitten. "What's wrong with you?"

"Now is not the time to get all touchy-feely, all right? Stand back and get ready to shoot if you see something that shouldn't be here."

Sam gripped his gun and waited. It gave him something to do; something to focus on that was outside of himself. Dean dropped his coin, turned around three times, and then said: "I wish that no more wishes would be granted to anyone who comes to this well, and that Joshua Gregory would be released from the effects that came upon him last Saturday."



"Dude, that's two wishes," said Sam.

Dean glared at him, but then noticed a flash of light at the bottom of the well, and glowing, iridescent vapors beginning to circle just above the surface of the water. Sam emptied his gun into the pit, but the bullets had no effect except making the vapors swirl faster before settling back down. Dean's hips twitched, but only once.

"Are you all right?" Sam asked anxiously.

"I'm fine. I think it was that greasy bacon I had on my burger. Now you go."



Sam holstered his gun and wiped his sweaty palms on his jeans. He had so many misgivings about messing with a spirit that they didn't even know the origins of, but he didn't sense any unusual fear coming from Dean, and even though his brother wasn't one to show fear, he was always honest with Sam about danger that was present. Anything less would get them both killed in short order. Sam took a deep breath and did his own coin drop and triple spin.

"I   "I wish that no more wishes would be granted to anyone who comes to this well," he said hesitantly, and when Dean nodded towards him and the well, he continued: "and that Joshua-"

A pillar of faint light shot out from the well, materializing over it in the form of a woman. The air filled with salt pellets and bullets, and the woman's shape dissolved into wisps and then into nothing. Sam spoke the words to banish the spirit, and when the incantation was finished, the air was still.

"Got her," said Dean. "There, see? That wasn't so hard."

"How can we be sure that she's gone?"

"We'll go down and check on Joshua tomorrow morning, before we head out for Austin. It's only about three hours from here   " maybe four if we have to drive through Dallas traffic. And

tonight, we'll get some beer and go back to the hotel."

"So I've gone from your weapon to your play toy again?"

"Sam, knock it off and let's get back to the car. We have to get to the store before midnight or we're not going to be able to buy any beer."

Sam sighed and followed Dean back down the hill. Eventually, they were going to have to talk about this dichotomy between their life in the light and life in the dark. However, there never seemed to be a right time, and the twilight between the two was so short.

[Back to index](#)

Chapter 4 by Eleventh Guard Coruscant Exil

Denton, Texas

Thursday, January 25, 2007

Sam leaned back against the pillows on the king-sized bed and picked up the remote control. He tapped on the channel-up button a few times. At half past midnight, there really wasn't anything on television worth watching, but he knew better than to try to fall asleep yet. They weren't going to be back on the road for six more hours, and he wasn't quite tired enough to catch any winks. He left it on the weather channel and absently listened to the report. Cold, but not too cold. Watch for ice on the bridges.

A little bit of extra light filtered in when Dean opened the bathroom door and came out with a towel wrapped around his waist. His wet hair clung to his scalp and little beads of water dotted his shoulders like fresh sweat. "There's still some hot water left," he said.

"Thanks." Sam eased himself off the bed; there wasn't anything else he wanted to do right then, so he might as well take a shower. "Are you going to get dressed?"

"I don't know," said Dean. He sat down in one of the two chairs at the motel's room's small brown table. "That depends on you." He picked up his half-full bottle of Coors and lifted it to his lips, eyes never leaving Sam's.

"The suitcase is on top of the dresser."

Sam stood in the shower for a lot longer than he needed to; long enough to lather his body with soap, rinse it off, and let it run cold through his hair. He shivered and hugged himself, trying not to think about the last time he'd been standing in a shower in a motel room in a new city. Last time, his back had been pressed against the yellowed tiles, and his front was pressed against Dean's arms wrapped around each other, hips grinding together, mouth fastened to hot mouth. And after they'd stepped out..

He felt a familiar tingle creep down his stomach to his crotch. Damn it.

The cold water wasn't helping anymore, so he quickly turned it off and dried himself. And it definitely didn't help that he knew Dean was in the room with the single bed waiting for him. Not this time, Sam thought, and he contemplated jerking off right there, to get it out of his system.

No, he was going to get through the night with sheer willpower. He ignored the small sense of defeat that sparked inside of him with that thought (did "sheer willpower" ever work?) and pulled his boxers and T-shirt on.

Dean was already in bed, wearing nothing but a pair of ratty shorts. He was nursing his fourth beer and staring at the television set, obviously waiting for Sam to hurry up. Quite obviously; his free hand was resting on his thigh, only inches from the erection that lifted his shorts away from

the rest of his body.

Sam strolled past his line of vision and settled himself down on the far edge of the bed. He slid under the top layer of covers and faced the door. "Good night, Dean."

"All right, Sam, I give up. What's eating you?"

"Can't a guy try to get some shuteye without an interrogation?"

"You're not fooling me. You've been in a mood, and no, it didn't just start yesterday. It got worse yesterday, but it's been building."

"I don't want to talk about it."

"Fine." Dean changed the channel, and the TV set came alive with black-and-white images of cowboys on horseback.

"This is the problem," Sam muttered.

"What? Couldn't hear you."

Sam ground his teeth. "I said, this is the problem. You're hot and then you're cold, and I never know what the hell to expect."

"Personal life and professional life. They're separate, and they're supposed to be separate, and you can match which one we're in with how we act. That clear it up for you?"

"No, it doesn't. I'm tired of keeping everything in the shadows. I care about you and not just some of the time."

Dean looked over at him in the dim lamp light, eyebrows down over squinted eyes. "Look, maybe I don't show it the same way that... some people would have. But," and he inched closer to Sam on the bed, close enough to lean over him, breath hot over Sam's cheek, "do you think I'd be risking my neck to save yours if I didn't care?"

Sam twitched and twisted. "You said yourself that you need me as backup."

"And I wouldn't choose anyone over you," Now Dean was close enough that Sam could feel the warmth of his body right behind him, and Sam mentally cursed at himself for being so sensitive to the gentle heat and vibrations of the voice whispering past his face. "You need to unwind a little bit, Sammy."

"It's Sam." He pulled away, even though that put him precariously close to falling off of the bed.

"Sorry," Dean said, and he took Sam's hand. "Come here."

Sam was melting at the touch now, and he hated himself for it. His resolve had lasted exactly three minutes, and now he was looking up into Dean's green eyes, feeling the tension in his limbs weaken, his insides turn to jelly. "Dean, I-"

Dean bent his head down and kissed Sam hard. Dean tasted like beer and beef taquitos and sweet comfort, all mingled together, and Sam resisted the urge to slip his tongue into Dean's mouth and drink it deeper. It was Dean who broke the kiss first, though, and he ran his thumb over Sam's lower lip. "I'll stop if you want me to," he whispered.

"No." Sam found his voice - distant, raspy. "I don't want you to stop."

“That’s what I like to hear.” Sam thought he heard triumph in his brother’s voice ♦♦ and despite the swelling between his legs, the way his breaths were already coming out faster, the uncomfortable heat of his shirt, he still remembered that he was not a thing to be conquered.

He threw Dean off of him and knelt upright in the bed. He pulled his shirt over his head and tossed it onto the floor, pulling energy from the look of surprise on Dean’s face.

“Sam, if you wanted to be on top, all you had to do was tell me.”

“Then I’m telling you.” He thought could hold out on Dean another day; now he didn’t quite have it in him to pull back. He yanked his boxers down to his knees and kicked them off the rest of the way; the sudden release of pressure made him sigh with relief even though the recycled air in the hotel room felt colder to his cock than it did to his face.

“I could get used to this view,” Dean remarked, but Sam shut him up by covering his mouth with his own and finally giving himself permission to explore every inch behind those seductive lips. Oh, yeah.

Sam slid his hand down Dean’s tight chest, over firm abdominal muscles now rock-hard with anticipation, down to the loose elastic band around his waist. He held back for a moment, hovering just enough above Dean to look right into his eyes and read the impatience. “You’re enjoying teasing me,” said Dean.

“You bet I am.” Sam’s thumb slid under the band, feeling warm skin and a few wiry hairs. It took all of his control to go slow, dragging it out as long as he could withstand waiting. He already felt the beginnings of fire in his veins, sparks collecting together, and he reached further under Dean’s shorts. His fingertips brushed against the rigid cock hidden under thin fabric, and both men gasped at the same time.

“Sammy ♦♦ Sam. Get on with it.”

“Shh.” Sam massaged the hard length, softly at first, then applying more pressure with every stroke. He collected the leaking drops dripping from Dean’s cock and lifted his hand to his mouth, then sucked his fingers clean.

Dean let out a strangled yelp and jerked forward when they broke contact. Sam pressed Dean’s hips back against the mattress and peeled his boxers off. Even though it took all his effort, he fought to keep his limbs steady and his motions smooth. “You know, I’m liking the view, too,” he said. Almost too breathy.

He stood up and dashed for the open suitcase. The room felt cold now, too cold when he wasn’t touching Dean. Sam reached into the small pocket attached to the inside lining and pulled out a bottle of Astroglide. He carried it back over to the bed, and knelt over Dean, one knee at each side of Dean’s waist, before opening the bottle and pouring a small amount out onto his hand.

Sam watched Dean’s eyes shift, his gaze traveling from Sam’s face to crotch, while he reached down to apply the lube. He took his time; he savored every stroke while the cold slick warmed to body temperature and his fingertips left trails of fire on his skin. He had to sit back on Dean’s thighs to keep him from shifting around, and it was only after about two minutes had passed, marked by quickened breathing from both of them, that he scooted back and rested his hands on Dean’s knees.

“Ready to get started?” he asked.

“Waiting on you.”



Sam grinned and pushed Dean's legs up. They were both strong and agile, and now they found a use for those talents beyond fighting demons and other pests. Dean held himself in position, knees pressed into his chest, while Sam sat down in front of him. Dean braced himself, resting his ankles on Sam's shoulders, when Sam hunched over and pressed his dampened fingertip against Dean's hole.

"Relax," Sam whispered, and when he felt the tension fall away, he pushed his finger inside, inch by inch. So warm, so soft when he relaxes... mm, he thought, and swirled his finger in a small circle.

Dean sucked in his breath, sharply, and Sam took that as his cue to continue. Truthfully, he didn't know how long he could wait; the throbbing in his groin had gone from a pleasant tingle to painful demand for attention. He slid his third finger next to his index finger and pumped them both in and out, slow and rhythmically and then faster.

Can't wait longer. He separated his fingers and withdrew them, then wrapped his hand around the base of his cock. Dean pulled his legs back even more.



Sam drew in a long breath and scooted forward. He pushed the swollen purple head towards Dean's ass, up against the slicked hole. Dean wouldn't beg him, wouldn't even ask; Sam knew better than to wait for a verbal cue to proceed. Dean's half-closed eyes were all he needed, and Sam thrust his hips as far as he dared in one motion. Tight heat enveloped him and he swallowed the moan that began to collect in his throat. He continued to push in, deeper... deeper... ohhh. He leaned down and pressed his lips against Dean's.

Dean wrapped his legs around Sam, and Sam held himself upright, part of his weight supported by his arms and part resting on Dean. He thrust in and out with more and more force, and Dean writhed against him. Sam became aware, through the haze of burning pleasure, that Dean was gripping his shoulders and digging his fingers around Sam's bones   and that both of them were moaning loudly enough to wake the dead.

Sam saw exploding lights, and he put his head down on Dean's shoulder, gently sucking on his neck while the shuddering bliss ripped through his body. It shot out of him in one long gush, spilling deep inside Dean, and a series of lighter ripples milked the rest.

He felt a warm spray on his chest and stomach, and reluctantly he pulled his spent cock out of Dean's trembling ass and settled down beside him. "That was... wow," Sam said, and was surprised to find himself suppressing a yawn.

"Yeah. I taught you well." Dean gave him a lazy, tired smirk and pulled Sam close. "Are you going to be able to get some sleep now?"

Sam nodded, and gave Dean one more kiss before closing his eyes, lips touching softly to a flushed cheek. The whole situation and their whole lives were incredibly fucked up, but at that moment, he hardly cared. I love you, he wanted to say, but didn't. It didn't work that way. He and Dean were friends with benefits   okay, very good friends and brothers with benefits, but he knew better than to expect some kind of fairy tale romance. And definitely knew better than to talk about it and ruffle the veil of post-coital sedation that was settling over both of them, lulling him gently into a short sleep.

[Back to index](#)

Chapter 5 by Eleventh Guard Coruscant Exil

Near Dayton, Ohio

Saturday, February 10, 2007

So cold. Bitter, freezing cold. For the life of him, Sam had no idea why anybody would want to be out and about in this kind of frigid weather when there were so many warm places to go. Houses, libraries, even hotel rooms with temperature controls. A brisk breeze and some snow could be fun, but a cold front and the weatherman encouraging people this far north to stay indoors? Not a good night to be out. He put his hand up to the glass, and it felt like a sheet of ice. 10:50 PM.

"Sometimes the best way to hide is not to hide," he said. Even with the heater in the Impala on, he fought to keep his teeth from chattering.

"What are you talking about?" Dean glanced over at Sam.

"This isn't a good time for vampires. People don't go out and plan on being gone for long times, long enough that they could disappear for a night and not make others suspicious. In the summer, it's easy enough for a vampire to catch somebody who isn't paying attention, somebody walking alone, and drag them off for a meal. Now? A smart vampire would binge on as much blood as possible, and try to do it in a way that won't attract too much attention. Not for a few hours, at least, so he'd have time to cover his tracks before somebody notices that there are dead bodies."

"Well, then, we're not dealing with a smart vampire. The doors open in ten minutes for one of the most heavily advertised parties of the winter. There are probably going to be at least two hundred kids in that warehouse and they're looking for vampires and blood and the rest of that goth shit."

"Right. So a real one is probably not going to be noticed until it's too late."

"You'd better have a better reason than that for us being here. We have a warm room, a warm bed, some privacy, and dinner waiting for us in Cincinnati. We could be there by midnight."

"You're never in bed this early," Sam said.

"We've been running for weeks, and the weather takes a lot out of a person. Up here it'll even wear us out. We have to be a hundred percent or something is going to catch up with us."

"All right. But there have been deaths almost every week in the area for the last two months and now for three weeks, nothing. There's going to be a feeding frenzy soon and it's going to be right here."

"Okay, Buffy." Dean ruffled Sam's hair, then reached into the floor space behind the driver's seat and pulled out a box of chocolate chip granola bars. "Want one?"

"No, thanks. Not hungry right now."

Dean shrugged and grabbed three bars out of the box.

"Hey. I might want one later," Sam protested. "We don't have a lot of money right now and that box is supposed to be all our snacks for the next two days."

"There's one left. Take it easy."

"You know, you've been acting weird all week. Ever since that poltergeist threw you into Mr. Delaney's hutch on Sunday. Are you sure you didn't hit your head?"

"I hit my head, yeah, but I'm fine. No concussion. And... the doors are opening. I think we'd better go get in line if we're going to find this vampire."

Sam was dreading facing the Ohio night air, but he wrapped his coat around himself and opened

the door. A gust of freezing air hit him in the face and he covered it with mittened hands. The glass flask of holy water was in a pocket on the inside of his coat, and he was sure that it would freeze and shatter the glass if he exposed it to the sub-zero temperatures.

They moved quickly towards the doors of the abandoned warehouse. Two older teenagers, a boy and a girl, stood near the entryway, shivering although dressed head-to-toe in layers of black leather and velvet. "Ten dollars," the boy said, and held out his gloved hand.

Sam pressed a twenty-dollar bill into it, making a mental note to make sure to grab the last granola bar and let Dean be the one without dinner, and they made their way through to the warmer air inside. He finally took a breath, when he was sure that it wasn't going to make him gasp and wheeze.

"Hey," somebody said behind him. He turned around and saw a malicious-looking girl with pale pink hair. She was about half his size, but she had spikes on her wristbands and choker, and was doing her best to look threatening. "What are you doing here?"

"Do I know you?"

"I think you need to leave."

Sam slipped his hand into his jeans pocket and closed it around the small silver crucifix he was keeping there. "Hey, I'm just here for the music. I don't want to start anything."

"Well, don't," she said, and brushed angrily past him. He pulled out his hand and let the crucifix dangle, and it touched the exposed part of her arm. She turned around slightly and stuck up her middle finger at him, but he noted that the crucifix didn't actually do anything.

Dean came up behind him. "See anyone who looks suspicious?"

"Yeah, about two hundred and fifty people. I think we should split up and work through the crowd."

"I'll handle the snack bar. You go and check out the dance floor."

"You spend any more money, and you'll be eating your shirt tomorrow," Sam warned. All they had left was another forty dollars, and that was probably going to be gone by morning, if they were lucky enough to even find a hotel room for that little.

"Dude, calm down. If you don't find the vamp, meet me back near the front in twenty minutes."

The music was loud and hypnotizing in a headache-producing way, and Sam resisted the urge to cover his ears. The dancers seemed to like it, though, and he watched the sometimes sinuous and sometimes jerking motions of several dozen teenagers and college kids lost in the sounds. He smelled tobacco smoke, cloves, a little bit of pot here and there.

He carried the bottle of holy water like a flask, and pretending to take a drink from it every now and then. Once, someone tried to take the bottle from him, but he pushed the hand away and let a few drops spray out. No fizzing.

A twanging guitar sound twisted into something that could only be described as country from the pit of hell, melding with the electronic screech of an synthesized organ. It was overlaid with a woman's voice, gravelly and guttural, with only the vaguest hint of a southern drawl:

Darkness coming up around the curve of the road
Drowning out the light and I'm drowning in this dream

Darkness in my soul and everywhere around me
Drowning out the light and I'm drowning in my scream

He would have given anything for a huge boombox and one of Dean's Metallica tapes.

"Exquisite, isn't it?" someone shout-whispered into his ear. "My boyfriend just downloaded it from iTunes yesterday. Can't even get it in the stores yet!"

"I don't know about exquisite. Intense, maybe," Sam replied.

She reached out to take his hand, and then she saw the silver chain dangling from it, and pulled back. Sam spun around in a half-circle, as if sliding past her, and let the necklace fly out a few inches. It caught her across her white throat and left a blistering red line.

He reached for the wooden stake he had strapped to the inside of his coat, but he was too slow; her foot shot out and caught him in the stomach. Sam saw the lights overhead hurtle past him and he slammed into one of the warehouse support poles. Pain exploded through his back, and his legs shook as he tried to stand.

Someone grabbed him by his coat. He looked up into the gnarled face of a vampiress, and briefly wondered how she had gotten so tall, but then he remembered that he had fallen in a heap on the floor. She picked him up with her unnaturally strong arms and hurled him three meters away onto a fold-up table, which broke from the impact and collapsed around him. Half-full glasses spilled over him, and the room flowed and bobbed around him as though he was looking at it through a tank of water.

He pulled himself together just enough to close his hand around his gun. It wouldn't kill a vampire ❖❖ "wouldn't even do any lasting damage ❖❖" but it might slow her down a little bit. And that was all he wanted; just a little time, to clear his head and make another strike at staking her. Sam lifted the gun and aimed it unsteadily at the black-clad figure advancing on him with inhuman speed.

He squeezed off two shots before she jumped on one of the raised ends of the broken table. The impact catapulted him into a metal railing at the edge of the dance floor, and he hung over it for a moment, trying desperately to catch his breath.

More shots rang out, and he twisted around, just in time to see Dean drive a broken chair leg through the chest of the vampiress. She stopped and looked down at the wooden spike, reflexively grabbing at it. However, she was weakening, and Sam ran over and doused her with holy water while Dean took out his ten-inch blade and brought it down over her neck.

"Would help if we had an axe," Sam said.

"Hold her still. Can't hide an axe under my coat."

Sam wrestled the dying vampire down while Dean sawed through its neck with quick, sure strokes. Dark blood spurted out from the wound and then flowed freely, leaving a sticky, copper-smelling pool on the floor. Finally, he finished sawing through her vertebrae and yanked her head free from her thrashing body.

Sam stuffed a few garlic cloves into the vampire's mouth and stood up. He kicked her body, just to make sure that the spirit was gone. "So, what do you think?" he asked. "Should we burn the body?"

"No, we don't have to. This one was a young vampire," Dean said. "The older they are, the more powerful they get, and the decapitation is enough."

“And you think that means she was young?”

“Not more than thirty, thirty-five years. See? The skin is already starting to shrivel on her bones.” Dean made a face. “And the smell. Rotting flesh.” He started to sway.

Sam caught his arm. “Yeah, you’re looking a little green. Let’s get out of here.”

“Oh, my god!” a boy shouted. “Look at that!”

“Quickly,” Sam urged.

“This is the best party ever! They even hired actors!”

Dean rolled his eyes, and Sam followed him towards the exit.

*

“Clothes off,” Dean said, as soon as they got outside.

“What the hell? It’s twenty below! Your balls are going to freeze off!”

“We’re covered in blood, and I don’t want the seats stained. At least throw your coat in the trunk.”

Sam stripped off his coat as instructed, wasting no time in slipping back into the passenger seat and shutting the door behind him. Dean slid in next to him and started up the car. “To Cincinnati?” Dean asked.

“Yeah. We ought to be able to get there before one o’clock.”

They flew down the road at seventy-five miles an hour, slowing to seventy, and then to sixty-five as they reached a bumpier stretch of highway. “We did good,” Sam said, trying to make conversation. “You did, I mean. She was kind of beating me.”

Dean didn’t answer. He only gripped the steering wheel tightly and took a few shuddering breaths.

“You okay, man?”

Dean slammed the brakes and pulled over to the side of the road. Sam braced himself with one hand on the dashboard as they rapidly decelerated. Dean threw the car door open and ripped his seat belt off, then leaned over with his head over the asphalt. “What are you doing? It’s freezing!”

Dean threw up on the road, barely missing the Impala as his stomach emptied itself. Sam waited until he was done, four heaves and one shaky rise back into his seat. “Sorry,” Dean said weakly. “Hand me a napkin.”

“Dean? Are you all right?” Sam grabbed a handful of napkins from their mostly empty snack bag and handed them over.

“We’ll have to get the shocks checked when we get to the city,” Dean said, after wiping his mouth and tossing the sour napkins back into the plastic bag.

“Maybe you’re getting the stomach flu,” Sam said worriedly. The last thing they needed was to get sick; they could be laid up for a few days, and they’d have no way to get money except with Dean’s fake credit cards.

"I feel fine now. Maybe the sandwiches we got at the truck stop this afternoon were bad, or something."

"I ate one, and I'm not sick."

They pulled over two more times in the next ten miles, and eventually decided that Cincinnati could wait. They rolled slowly into a run-down motel advertising rooms for twenty-nine dollars a night.

Sam nervously stood at the check-in desk while Dean made a run for the men's room. "He's carsick," Sam said to the elderly man behind the desk.

The man just nodded and handed Sam the key to room 142.

Sam fished two quarters out of his pocket and got a can of Sprite from the dusty vending machine just outside the lobby, and handed it to Dean when he came out. Dean took it with a tired smile and let Sam lead the way to their room.

[Back to index](#)

Chapter 6 by Eleventh Guard Coruscant Exil

Salt Lake City, Utah

Thursday, May 10, 2007

"How much money do we have left?" Sam asked. It was a tired, routine question in a tired routine; he usually knew the answer already.

"Depends on if we go to the pool hall tonight or not," said Dean. He scowled out the window at the driver of a car that swept a little too close to his in the crowded parking lot of the 7-11.

"Let's assume we don't."

"Then we have twenty dollars and fifty cents." Dean handed Sam a five-dollar bill. "That ought to get you through to tomorrow."

Sam sighed and climbed out when they pulled up to one of the back gas pumps, and he didn't say anything even when Dean pushed his scammed credit card into the pay-at-the-pump reader. They were even more desperate for cash than usual; in the past few months, Dean wasn't winning quite as much at billiards as he normally did, and went to bed early without even trying more often than was wise.

Sam grabbed a half-dozen box of donuts and a two-liter bottle of Coke, and then walked up to the counter. The clerk standing at the register was a young girl with auburn hair, probably no more than eighteen years old, and she paused in her change-counting to look up at him. "Have a nice day," she said absently to her last customer, and then continued on to Sam, in one bubbly run-on sentence: "Hi welcome to 7-11 my name is Kelly will this be all for you sir?"

"I don't know. What's the total?" I could really go for a hot dog, he thought.

"Four dollars and... eighty-six cents."

"No, then. That's all."

Another woman, about ten years older than the clerk, walked up to the second register and punched in a secret code. "I can help the next person in line here," she announced, and then turned to Kelly. "I swear, the ice machine is possessed."

Kelly tossed her head and nodded, then slowly counted out fourteen cents. "Here's your change. Have a nice day," she said.

"Wait," Sam said, and Kelly's eyes lit up. "Your manager said something about the ice machine?"

"Oh, it's just broken. It busted three days ago and we haven't been able to get anybody to come out to fix it yet. Michelle will have it working by tomorrow morning."

"That's why they pay me the big bucks," agreed Michelle. "A whole nine-fifty an hour."

"So, wait. You're saying that the ice machine isn't possessed?"

Michelle frowned and finished bagging three cans of soda and a bag of chips. "No, sir, there aren't any evil spirits hiding in our equipment. It was just an expression; the machine is on the fritz."

"Oh. Never mind, then. Thanks." Sam took his bag and gave them an awkward smile.

Michelle raised her eyebrow and opened her mouth as if to send him on his way and get out of the way of other customers, but her eye caught something behind him and she stopped. "Kelly, you can go on a 10-minute break," she said abruptly.

Kelly shook her head, giggled, and excused herself from the checkstand. Sam turned around to see what was going on, but all he saw were two more customers ♦♦ and Dean. This is getting ridiculous, he thought. Were they giving off pheromones or something? Well, probably... Sam shot Michelle a dirty look and stepped aside.

Dean went up to the counter and laid his purchases on it ♦♦ a jar of mustard, a jumbo bag of crunchy Cheetos, two king-sized Twix bars, a bag of marshmallows, and a chicken sandwich. "Fourteen dollars and sixty-two cents," said Michelle.

"Dude, what do you think you're doing?" Sam hissed.

"Buying food?"

"That's all the rest of our money!"

"I'm hungry. What's your problem, Sam?"

"How are you paying for this, sir?" Michelle cut in. "Cash or credit?"

When Sam didn't speak and didn't change his stance from arms folded across his chest, Dean handed Michelle the credit card. "Just charge it," he said.

"Will do." She handed him a receipt to sign and one to keep, and he scribbled "Frank Johnson" on the signature line.

As soon as they were outside, though, Sam couldn't keep quiet any more. "If you're going to be crazy shopping like this, then we need to go to a grocery store. We're getting overcharged and we can't afford it."

"All right, we'll go to Albertson's tomorrow."

"And maybe we ought to buy a little less junk food."

"Hey." Dean lowered his eyebrows and glared at him. "Watch it, Sam."

"You're the one who was complaining this morning that you could hardly zip up your jeans."

"It's probably gas. It'll be gone in a couple of days."

Sam bit his lip and sat down in the passenger seat. "Roll down the windows, then," he said. "You know, I'm worried about you."

"Don't be. I'm fine. Whatever was bothering me this winter is gone. I've got my appetite back." As if to prove the point, Dean opened up the jar of mustard and the bag of marshmallows.

"I believe you. Oh, god, no. Don't. That's gross."

"Come on, Sam! Expand your horizons. Try something new." Dean dipped a marshmallow into the mustard and stuffed it into his mouth.

"No, thanks. And whatever you do, don't put the Twix bars in the mustard. Because if you do, I'm going to be sick, and you're going to clean the car afterwards."

"I'll wait until we get to the Super 8, then."

"Look, there is something wrong with you. I know it, and you need to get it checked out. Maybe it's hypercalcemia."

"Hyper-what?"

"Hypercalcemia. Too much calcium in the blood. A lot of different things can cause it, like your bones breaking down, and it causes a lot of symptoms you had. And it'll upset your body's balance of nutrients, so now you're craving salt and sugar and who-knows-what to get them back into the right balance."

"Then I'm cured, right?"

"I don't know. Maybe you should see a doctor. And you know what else I thought of? Cancer. It can strike at any age and that would explain a lot of things, too."

"Sam, I'm fine. I feel fine. Better than usual, and a lot better than a couple of months ago. Let it go. I'm not going to the doctor. So I gained five pounds or so. I'll work it off. Michelle was still flirting with me, gut and all. And you still want me, right?"

"Of course I do, I just--"

"Nothing's wrong. Drop it." And so, Sam dropped it, for the evening.



Salt Lake City, Utah (and surrounding area)
Friday, May 11, 2007

Flames shooting up from the ground in a circle. An arm hooking around his waist, dragging him down, down, down to the dirt, down into the grass that was on fire. He tried to breathe and only got a lungful of hot vapors - ash, sulfur, and brimstone.

He tried to scream, but he couldn't. His throat burned, hot enough to blister, hot enough to sear the flesh closed. A blonde-haired woman stood in front of him, immersed in the flame but untouched by them. "You," she said with unmoving lips, "will come with me."

She wore a simple, straight skirt, vaguely like something out of a World War Two movie, and her hair was sleek and shoulder-length, blonde wisps that didn't move in the roiling currents and didn't singe in the heat. He smelled his own hair burning, a sickening undertone to the scent of charring human flesh.

He couldn't move.

She threw her head back and started to laugh. "You thought you could destroy me," she said. "But you only earned yourself a place in Hell   " next to mine."

"Sam!"

Sam opened his mouth to shout back at Dean, but he couldn't separate his lips, melted shut. I should be dead. I should be dead.



"Some things are not as they should be," she said. "You're being saved for last."

"Saaaaaaa--!!!" Dean's voice pierced through the crackling fire, then dissolved into it. Sam's vision began to fade, but the heat only intensified, past pain, past death, into-

He sat up, sweating and gasping. Strong hands grabbed his shoulders and he felt a familiar presence behind him. "Sam," Dean whispered.

"Another nightmare," Sam whispered back. His throat felt raw, but he could speak. "I was... I was dying. I think it killed you and was dragging me to hell."

"What was?"





"I   " I don't know. A woman, or her spirit. She said I was being saved for last." He swung over the edge of the bed and stood up, testing out his limbs. They still worked, at least, although he was shaky for the first few steps on his way to the bathroom sink for water.

There was no use in trying to go back to sleep now, so Sam waited until Dean had drifted off again, and then booted up their laptop.

He stared at the Google search page for a few minutes before typing anything. He wasn't sure what to enter, and "1940s deaths" yielded too many results when he tried it. Over a million, he thought, and tried again: "1940s violent death." Still about 750,000.



Wait. 1947. That well we went to. I was the last one to make a wish at it... and Dean was next to last.

He tried a few more search terms until he got to "drowning wishing well Denton." That didn't give up any immediately useful information, either, and he was about to start the search over when a brief article caught his eye. It probably didn't have anything to do with his dream, but it was strange nonetheless.

"On February 19, 2007, Double and Trouble   " known in their hometown of Denton, Texas as Melissa Hall and Amanda Kline   " released their first album, Null and Void. It reached gold-record status at the end of April, marking one of the fastest rises in the history of American music..."

Sam shivered and continued skimming the article, then clicked on the website of the band. Two women, probably about Dean's age, posed with vacant expressions on a red Ferrari in the background image, and he heard instrumental music, without voices, over the laptop's small internal speakers. It sounded awful, and also familiar.

[Click Here for song lyrics!](#)

This is what was playing when we found that vampire in Dayton, Sam thought. He read the rest of the lyrics   “all dark, empty, and utterly hopeless. The only one that seemed to have any shred of humanity in it was “Angel Too Soon,” one of the last-minute additions to the album. The lyrics were written by Melissa Hall, to honor her brother Brandon, who was killed on January 20.

Oh, shit.

The other song had been co-written by both members of the duo, and was titled “Life-Giver.” At first, he thought that it, too, might have been something resembling hope, but it quickly degenerated into the clichés of the generation, and...

He could hardly bring himself to read the last verse.



She comes in the night at the witching hour
A circle of flame and a pillar of light
She holds out her hand and says to me
Close your eyes, my dear, sleep tight
She gives and she takes
It burns and it aches
Try to slam on the brakes
We can't win the fight.

Ten minutes later, he was shaking Dean awake. “We’ve got to go to Denver,” he said.

“Denver? What?” Dean sat up and looked at the clock, still hazy with sleep. “It’s three o’clock in the morning, Sam.”

“We have to talk to these girls.”

“What girls?”

“Melissa Hall and Amanda Kline. Double and Trouble, the dark-rock twins. Well, not twins   they’re not even sisters - but you know what I mean. They’re having a concert in Denver on Saturday and we need to talk to them.”

“I know you’re still young enough to get starstruck, but I am not driving across the state just so you can have a half-chance of seeing a couple of girls walk out of Starbucks.”

“Remember Joshua Gregory? The kid down in Texas who could see through walls and skin?”



“Well, yeah. But he was fine when saw him the next morning. Heavily sedated, sure, but I think we got rid of whatever was bothering him.”

“I don’t think we did. And it’s still out there, somehow, even if it’s not in the well anymore. Melissa and Amanda used to be Joshua’s upstairs neighbors. They’ve moved out now, and I think their permanent residence is in New York City, but listen to this. They went from being nobodies to being very much a pair of somebodies in only months. They didn’t even have a record deal until the end of January, and then their album was released in February and now it’s May and they’re on a nationwide concert tour. That’s fucking weird.”

“Okay, I’m following, but I don’t see what that has to do with us, or anything evil, other than they were Joshua’s neighbors.”

“And they wrote a song about some of the stuff I’ve been dreaming about. Might just be coincidence, since it wasn’t that specific, but there’s more. Melissa’s brother died on January twentieth.”

“January twentieth, January... wait.” Dean sat up straight. “That’s the day after Joshua’s vision problems started.”

“Right. If Melissa and Amanda went to that well, after Joshua and before us  which is probable given how fast they got their start and that they lived upstairs from him  then we didn’t need to worry about you dying, because Melissa was the one who got Joshua’s wish. Her brother died in a car crash that same day. Which also happens to be the same day that they got the news that they might be signed on for a record.”

“That’s wonderful, Sam. Just wonderful.” Dean shook his head. “What else did you find out?”

“I think they wished for success. Or at least one of them did; couldn’t have been both because then you would be the one at the top of the charts. And whatever Amanda wanted, you got.”

Dean got up and looked at the website Sam had left up. “Which one’s Amanda?”

“Amanda is the skinny one with black hair. Melissa’s shorter and, uh, thicker.”

“Christ. I hope she didn’t wish for anorexia.”

“I wouldn’t worry about that. You ate the whole bag of marshmallows and most of the Cheetos,” Sam pointed out. “Look, we have two problems here and I think they’re all linked. First, the problem with the Townsend well is still there, although it’s changed. Second, if we talk to Amanda, we might find out what made you sick.”

Dean nodded and said, “All right. But we don’t have to leave right this minute; Denver isn’t going anywhere and it won’t matter if we leave now or in a few hours.”

“Fine, but we’re checking out at seven.”

*

“Sam, how many times are you going to call that radio station? You’re wasting our minutes.”

“As many as I need to. This is going to be a lot easier if we can get backstage passes for after the concert.”

“We can get in without passes. And as a bonus, we won’t have to listen to them sing.”

“Shut up, Dean! It’s ringing!”

Sam held the cell phone up to his ear, then scowled and put it down. “I was caller eighty-five,” he complained. “Eleven away.” He started to dial the number again, but Dean grabbed the phone from him and snapped it shut.

“I think we can handle a few bodyguards,” Dean said. He popped a tape in the tape deck and they sped on towards Denver.

[Back to index](#)

Chapter 7 by Eleventh Guard Coruscant Exil

Denver, Colorado

Saturday, May 12, 2007

It was a beautiful bar and dining area, looking much like something out of a movie. Getting into the Brown Palace Hotel wasn't easy, but luckily the concierge had been so busy with a long line of guests that it was a small matter for Sam to ignite a piece of paper, stick it in a porcelain trash receptacle, and let the guards deal with the mess. Then he and Dean slipped past them and past the concierge desk, heading towards the tavern room.

"Lying to police officers in small towns is one thing," said Sam. "Breaking into a luxury hotel, especially with all the extra security guards, is something else and it's a lot more dangerous. We should have just waited until after the concert."

"Don't be such a worrier. Nobody is going to suspect that we're not supposed to be here unless they look at the security cameras and see you dropping lit paper into the trash can. Just look ahead, walk fast, and act like you own the place."

Easier said than done. Sam nervously smoothed down the front of his tuxedo jacket and tried look casual as he glanced around the bar. There weren't quite enough people in it to constitute a crowd, not at a little before two o'clock in the morning, but by his estimate there were about three dozen patrons in the bar — enough that two more wouldn't be an aberration. And they were dressed appropriately, at least, with rented tuxes. The hardest part had been convincing Dean to rent a size 34; the 32 pants made him look like he was stuffed into ill-fitting clothes, and that would be a giveaway that they really weren't rich and almost-famous people milling around.

"All right, they shouldn't be too hard to find," said Dean. "If they really are here. Maybe they're still in their room."

"Two o'clock," Sam replied.

Dean checked his watch. "Close to it. One-forty-five."

"I meant look in the two o'clock direction."

Two young women sat at the bar, perched on barstools. Only their backs were visible, but they matched the pictures that had been posted on their website. Melissa wore a short blue dress with blue-and-white striped stockings and a white pinafore, and Amanda wore black satin. "Not the most inconspicuous here," Dean said.

"No, but that's a good thing. Come on."

They casually sat down, leaving a stool between Sam and Melissa, and ordered their drinks. Sam ordered a Long Island Iced Tea, briefly flashing his driver's license, and Dean took a Coke. The bartender raised his eyebrow, but nodded, probably assuming that he was the designated driver (not entirely false) and went away to prepare their beverages.

"They're not looking at us," Dean whispered.

"Then we'll have to talk to them," said Sam. He started to spin around.

"I'll do it." Dean climbed down and walked up to Melissa. "Hello, ladies," he said.

Now they both turned to face Dean, with nothing more than mild curiosity and slight annoyance at being interrupted. "What?" asked Melissa.

"I couldn't help but notice the two of you sitting here by yourselves and wondered if I could buy you a drink," he said, and gave his best smile. Sam was boring holes into the back of his head with an angry glower, but they were on a mission, and he would do whatever it took to get the information he was looking for. Sam knew that. He just didn't like it.

“No,” Amanda said flatly, and started stirring her screwdriver with a small ribboned straw.

“Aw, come on, I’m not wanting anything from it. Just a few minutes of conversation, that’s all. Your boyfriends let you talk to people, right?”

“Our what? We don’t - who are you?” Amanda asked.

“That’s kind of a long story, and it’s not important. We’re more interested in you. My brother is a fan of yours, and we were in town, so I’d hoped we could sit and talk for a little bit. It would mean a lot to him.”

“How do I know you’re not going to be a pain in the ass?”

“Because,” Melissa cut in, “if he is, then we call security and get him thrown out. No harm done. And to be honest, I’m a little bit bored.”

Melissa and Amanda chose a table away from the bar, one with four chairs, and Sam and Dean followed them. Melissa folded her hands and waited for one of them to speak, looking from one to the other and then back, and there was a long silence. Finally, Sam spoke up: “Um, well, I’m Sam, and this is my brother Dean. The truth about why we’re here is that we’re investigating some strange things that happened in your hometown and think that you two might be in some kind of trouble. Hopefully we can deal with it and nobody will get hurt, but we need more information.”

“Are you threatening me?” Amanda asked. She sat up straight and made a motion as if to reach for her cell phone.

“No, we’re not threatening you. The danger isn’t coming from either one of us. Here, let’s get to the point in a different way. Do you know a boy named Joshua Gregory?”

Melissa and Amanda exchanged worried glances, and Amanda mouthed “oh, fuck.”

“Sort of,” said Melissa. “We used to live in the same apartment complex, upstairs from him. But that was a long time ago. Why? Is he all right?”

“You did know that he’s in a psychiatric ward and has been charged with killing Brian Gregory, right?”

“Yeah. We were there when it happened. Well, not there in the same room, but we heard the gunshot. And if you need any more information, we’ve already talked to the police, a long time ago, and they have every word on file. We don’t even live in the county anymore and we’re very busy. I hope he’s okay and I’d bet he was provoked 💎💎“ Brian was a real bastard 💎💎“ but I didn’t actually see what they did.”

“Did he have any vision problems?”

“Not that I know of. He might have worn contact lenses but I never saw him in glasses.”

“What we meant was, was he able to see through things.”

“Uh, no,” said Amanda. “What kind of a retarded question is that?”

Sam pressed his lips together and ignored the second part of what she said. “Not even on the night of January 19?”

She jumped. "Look, this conversation is over. I don't know exactly what you're doing here, Sam-and-Dean, but you're getting into my private business and it's pissing me off. If you don't want me to call security and make a scene, then you'd better get out now."

"One more minute, and then you can throw us out," Dean said.

"One minute and that's all," Amanda countered. She pulled out a pack of cigarettes and pulled one out, then stuck it in her mouth and lit the end. Dean grimaced and coughed. "What? You're in a bar. People smoke in bars. Get over it."

Dean swallowed hard and took a sip of Coke to settle his stomach. "We think Joshua went out to a wishing well and there's something wrong with it. Specifically, that it gives people the wrong things ♦♦" the thing that the previous person asked for. Not only that, but that everybody who bothers the spirit there dies within a year."

Melissa raised one eyebrow, and Amanda started to laugh. She clapped her hands and said, "What the hell are you on, Dean? And do you have any to share? Because that's got to be some good stuff."

"I'm serious. Joshua is in trouble right now because of what happened to him. He has X-ray vision ♦♦" and I tested him, and he really does. It's not just a psychiatric problem or something he made up to get out of criminal charges. And do you know why? Because that's what someone wished before him. A nine-year-old boy who died last year."

"Okay," said Melissa. "Let's see if I understand. You're telling me that this wishing well is cursed or something, and that it messes up and kills people. Now, I think you're bullshitting, because I know from experience that it works correctly." Amanda scowled at her, and elbowed her, but she went on: "What? I'm not telling them anything."

"Really?" Dean leaned forward. "And how do you know?"

"That's none of your business. Let's just say that I wished for something and got it and nobody has been threatening my life ♦♦" well, nobody but you. Even if you're telling the truth, which I doubt, then maybe the spirit-whatever just didn't like Josh. Or doesn't like boys. Or something. Because there was that woman last year who wanted her son to get better, and he did. And then there's me, and I got what I wanted. And Amanda..."

"No opportunity to check yet," Amanda said curtly. "But that's not important."

"Melissa," Sam said, "I really don't want to have to bring this up, but it's very important that we know the whole story. I promise that no matter what happens, I'm not going to do anything to hurt you. But I have to know what's going on, so that I can help Joshua get better and hopefully protect myself and Dean ♦♦" and the two of you, if that's needed. I need to know if anything strange happened on the day that the two of you went to the well."

"How do you know we went together?" Amanda demanded.

"Because you wouldn't have reacted that way if you didn't."

"I don't want to talk about it," said Melissa.

"It's public information, though," Amanda said gently, and she looked up at Sam. "If we tell you, will you go away and leave us alone?"

"We promise."

“All right. We went out there, and that was the day... that was the day that Melissa’s brother died. But later. Like, a half-hour later.”

Melissa busied herself with her drink.

“And that was the day that I got the phone call about Virgin Records picking us up.”

“Wait a second,” said Dean. “You got the phone call?”

“Yeah. We always gave out both of our phone numbers, though. The call was for both of us.”

“Okay. So Josh went to the well, and you know he was having problems with Brian. The next day, Melissa... I’m going to assume that you wished for someone to hear your album and want to make copies, or something like that. And that’s the day your brother was killed. Then Amanda, not you, is called with a record contract.”

“Excuse me,” Melissa snapped. “Are you accusing me of having something to do with Brandon’s death? Because it wasn’t my fault. I wasn’t there until later. It was a fucking accident!” She twisted her face and looked as though she was about to cry.

“Nobody’s accusing you of anything, Melissa,” Sam said softly. “We’re just laying out the facts. If anybody is to blame, it would be Joshua, if he wished harm on Brian. And the well itself. Things happen, and people get hurt, and it’s not your fault at all.” He took a deep breath. “We’ve already gotten the evil spirit out of the well. That’s not what we’re worried about. What has us concerned is that Joshua still isn’t okay, and there’s a possibility that the spirit is going to come back later this year and hurt everybody that went to talk to it. That would be the two of us, the two of you, and Joshua.”

“Then go and handle it,” said Amanda. “Just don’t make it stop. Because I’m enjoying my life. You know, I can afford groceries whenever I want them now. I don’t have to worry about my phone bill. If I need something, I just go get it, or send somebody out after it. I don’t have to work my fingers to the bone at that stupid store anymore and my credit is enough that I can actually get credit cards for once in my life. I like what I’m doing now. So think twice before you start messing with stuff.”

“I’m not trying to take away what’s worked out well for you. But Joshua needs help. And so do we. Amanda, can I ask what you wished for?”

“No. That’s private. And it has nothing to do with my career, or with you.”

“I won’t tell a soul. You have my word.”

“How do I even know you’re trustworthy? For all I know, you’re with the National Enquirer. And I swear, if you snap one picture of me here, I’m going to-“

“Amanda, cool it,” said Melissa. “They know something and if it’s all the same to you, I’d rather not die.”

“You’re not going to die. You’re the one who’s always saying to be realistic, and now you’re worried about some stupid story about a spooky ghost coming out of the well to kill you. That’s dumb.”

“There are too many coincidences. Just tell them what they want to know and then we’ll forget this conversation ever happened.”

“Let me think about it. Um... no.” Amanda started to stand up.

Sam looked over at Dean, hoping there was a plan in the works. As usual, there was. Dean leaned back in his chair and picked up his soda. "I guess we're finished here," he said. "It's Saturday, so I won't be able to get in touch with the press until Monday morning. Well, I could, but Monday would be easier."

"What are you talking about?" Amanda asked. She sat back down and looked at Sam and Dean warily.

"You used magic to get your careers started. Sure, it's kind of an unbelievable story, but they might just print it. After all, you've got the darkness theme down pat, and there are enough superstitious people in America that some of them would believe you used black magic to get your way. There might be some backlash. Expect to be banned from the radio in conservative cities. Your sales will drop. I hope you've invested in the stock market because that's going to be the only way you'll make any money when the story breaks."

"You can't do that! It's a lie!" Amanda balled up her fists and pounded on the table.

"Maybe, but if you don't talk to me, I have to talk to the papers."

"You said you could keep a secret!"

"Let me think about it." Dean grinned sarcastically at her. "Um... no."

Amanda's mouth dropped open, and she looked desperately to Melissa.

"All right," Melissa said slowly. "Amanda, I know you're going to want to kill me for this, but I'd prefer that our concert ticket sales not take a nosedive, and we could do without the bad press this early on. Amanda... well, she had bad endometriosis while we were in college. Almost missed a semester because of it. Medication didn't help, so she had her ovaries removed about four years ago."

"I'm sorry," Sam said.

Amanda shrugged. "Beats being sick. But I was still sick for awhile, so I had a hysterectomy after that. And now I feel better." She closed her hands around her glass. "But that means I'm never going to have a child. Not now, not when I'm 30, not ever. And... I mean, I'm not ready now, but I will be someday and it bugs me that I can't, you know? So I wished that I could get pregnant anyway, even though I don't have the parts."

Sam's first impulse was to comfort her, and thank her for sharing such intimate information, but then he realized exactly what she had said, and it hit him like a fist to the chest. He coughed when he remembered to breathe. "What? Wait. What exactly did you say? I mean, the exact wording."

"I don't remember. I didn't want my sick organs back, that's for sure. I just- Look, it was stupid, and impossible, and it doesn't matter, okay? I've got about as much a chance of bearing a child as your loudmouth brother does. Can we go back to the bar now?"

Sam nodded. His mouth was dry, and he had to work his jaw around just to be able to speak. "Yeah. You can go. We won't call the tabloids. Look, I'm going to leave you my cell number, and you call me if you remember anything else that's important or you need help." Amanda rolled her eyes, but snatched up the receipt that he'd written on, and left, with Melissa close behind.

They left the bar and made their way back outside. “Dean,” Sam said, “we have a real problem now.”

“Damn divas,” Dean replied. “Pair of bitches, that’s what they are. You’d think they’d remember where they came from, but it’s been barely three months since they left the college-town life and they think they’re princesses, with egos to match.”

“That’s not what I’m talking about. We still have to do a lot of research and find out about patterns of death and see what we can determine about the Townsend well. But there’s more. You’re sick, remember?”



“Not anymore.”



“Not much anymore. But you had morning sickness, and now some of the weirdest food cravings I’ve ever seen, and you’re gaining weight. And you were the one who made a wish after Amanda.”

Dean stopped walking and looked up at Sam. “Okay, that’s bullshit. I’m not pregnant, Sam. First of all, I’m a man. And second, there doesn’t have to be a second. I don’t even have a uterus.”

“Neither does Amanda,” Sam pointed out.

“If it makes you feel better, I’ll get one of those pregnancy test kits and use it, and it’ll show up negative, and then we can quit playing the what’s-wrong-with-Dean game and get back to work.”

An hour later, Sam was waiting nervously for Dean to come out of the bathroom. He glanced at his watch   it had been five minutes, and the test box said to wait for three for the results. Then he heard a doorknob squeak, and the bathroom door swung open.

“You know,” Dean said, “I hate to say I told you so, but, I told you so. Take a look at this.” He thrust a finger-sized plastic case at Sam, one with a narrow band of chemically treated paper glued to it. “See? One pink line. Ever seen those ads   a minus sign is negative, a plus sign is positive. Looks like a minus to me.”

“Yeah, but you picked up a generic brand.” Sam turned the cardboard box over in his hands and looked at the instructions again. “This one is no lines for a negative and one line for a positive.”

Dean scowled at Sam, but grabbed the box and read it. “Oh.” He sat down hard on the edge of the bed and tossed the box onto the floor. “Do-it-yourself pregnancy tests always make a lot of false positives. And I really don’t think they’ve been tested for accuracy on men.”

“Stop it, Dean. Just stop it. Quit with the denial, already.”



“I’m not in denial.” Dean put on a T-shirt and started to pull on a pair of long shorts over his boxers. He got them up to his hips and then strained to pull them over his belly, which was a little bit distended. He sucked in his breath and tugged harder at the waistband, then untied the waist string to loosen the fabric enough to pull it into place. When he did, he tied the cord again, leaving the very short ends hanging down from the knot. Sam watched him study his reflection in the mirror and give up, and then sag his shoulders as he shuffled over to the single chair in their room.

“Dean?”

“Sam.” Dean shook his head and rested his elbows on the table, with his face buried in his hands. “What are we going to do?”

"I don't know. We'll think of something. I mean, there has to be a doctor around somewhere that could help." He stood behind Dean and put his hand on his arm.

"Don't fucking touch me."

Sam's hand pulled back as though he'd been burned. "Sorry. I   look, we'll get through this. We've been through worse."

"You can say that, but you're not the one with a half-demon growing in your belly!"

"What makes you think it's a half-demon? Dean, that child is probably mine. We can get a paternity test if that'll make you feel better."

"Feel better? Oh, yeah, having to tell the whole story to a doctor and then getting needles stuck into me to prove on paper that I've been fucking my little brother and am now carrying his child is going to make everything okay. You're so good at thinking; why don't you do it before you talk?"

"Look, Dean, I'm sorry, but what do you want me to say?"

"I don't want you to say anything. I want you to shut up."

Sam shook his head and picked up their cell phone.



"Sam, who are you calling?"

"We need to call Dad. We're dealing with a spirit a little more powerful than we realized and he might know who's safe to contact about your... medical problem. Someone who will help you through it and not spread rumors."

"Help me through it? This little monster is getting cut out as soon as we figure out how to keep it all a secret. And if you tell Dad about this, then he's going to know what we've been up to." Dean tried to grab the phone, but Sam held it up over his head. "He doesn't need this right now. He's busy, and he thinks we've been behaving, doing exactly what he's told us."

"And we have been," said Sam.

"Except that little part about sleeping together. Do you have any idea what it would do to him if he found out?"

"We were never told specifically not to have sex," Sam said. "And I'm not going to tell him anything." He waited until the phone started ringing, and he hoped that his father would pick up   and hoped, at the same time, that John wouldn't, because then he'd have time to think of a suitable story to tell him. "Dad? If you're there, pick up the phone... this is Sam. I'm in Denver right now, with Dean, but we might not stay long. Look, we're in real trouble right now, and need your help. We stumbled onto something pretty big, not the demon but still nasty, and there's more that I don't want to tell you over the phone. Call us back as soon as you get the message." He shrugged. "Voice mail."

Sam closed the phone and folded up a blanket on the floor, a makeshift mattress to sleep on, while Dean lay on the bed. He stripped down to a T-shirt and shorts and started to lie down.

"You don't have to sleep on the floor, Sam," Dean said.

"I figured you'd want the bed to yourself."

"It doesn't matter." Dean tried to look like he didn't care, but Sam knew by the way his forehead

was creased that there was more he wasn't saying.

"Well... okay."

Dean let Sam slide in bed next to him, and pressed his back against Sam's chest. Sam reached down and took Dean's hand, the only offering of comfort that he thought might be accepted, and when it was, he was both relieved and more terrified; Dean wasn't angry with him, but to even show that little bit of fear, must have been scared almost to death.

[Back to index](#)

Chapter 8 by Eleventh Guard Coruscant Exil

Topeka, Kansas

Wednesday, May 23, 2007

"I don't know about this, Sam. I don't want to spill my guts to a stranger."

"There's no way around it. You're going to have to go to a doctor whether you want to or not, and I know you want to... get well as soon as possible. Either you're going to have to have surgery now, or later, and if it's later, then you'll need someone to check up on you. Missouri said that Dr. Hughes is very good, and won't run off to tell everybody about our private business."

Dean folded his arms stubbornly and stared at Sam. Sam was stretched out on their bed, in yet another old hotel in another town, with the phone book opened in front of him. "I bet he's never had a pregnant man in his office, either. And Missouri doesn't know the whole story."

"He's a she. Her name is Lisa. I have her number right here. We can call and make an appointment, and if you start getting a bad feeling about her, then you just walk out. Okay?"

Dean shrugged and said nothing. He held his EMF meter in front of himself and turned it on; nothing happened. Even when he pointed it at his stomach, the meter gave no reading.


"You're not going to get a reading," Sam said. "It's a human baby. Yours and mine. Now are you going to call, or am I?"

Someone knocked on the door. Sam jumped up and ran to it, then looked out the peephole. "It's Dad," he whispered.

Dean clapped the phone book closed as soon as the door started to open and arranged himself casually on the mattress. "Dad," he said.

Without fanfare, John entered the room and closed the door behind him. The corners of his mouth turned up. "I see you're both still alive," he said. "What's going on?"





"The usual. It's good to see you again, though."

"Dad, we found a spirit," Sam said. "I don't know who or what it is, but it was resting in a well for about sixty years. Granting wishes to people who called upon it, and then killing them in gruesome ways on the next October 31. Here. I'll show you." Sam opened up a brand-new white binder with a few pages of computer printouts in it. "I got most of these from libraries. There aren't deaths every year  at least, not that we can tell. I don't think it matters how far the wishers go from the well, though. They die. There could be a lot more that we don't know about and we can't go through sixty years' worth of obituaries all over the country."

"It's probably the spirit of a person," said John. "An angry person who had some power in life, and in death it got stronger. Find the corpse and burn it. You didn't need me to come all the way from Sacramento for this."

“Dad, the spirit isn’t in the well anymore. I don’t think the corpse was there, and nobody lives around there anymore or remembers who did. We tried to find out more, but all we know is that there was a couple who had a farm in the forties, after World War Two. Eugene and Laura. No kids, no relatives. Laura disappeared in 1947, and Eugene moved a few months later - February or March of forty-eight. That’s it. He’s probably dead by now; he’s pushing ninety if he’s still alive.”

John nodded and sat down. “You remembered to check the well to see if her bones were in it, right?”



“Not at the time,” Dean admitted. “We figured out the pattern   “ she gave wishes to the next person to get to the well   “ so Sam and I both wished for her to stop. It seemed to work, but we didn’t know that the October 31 deaths were almost every year.”

“So, do it now.”

“That’s the problem. She’s not there. We looked in the well. We, uh, hired a guy to come in with X-ray equipment and he confirmed that there was nothing there, nothing but a bunch of coins and a few small animal bones. Rocks, too, and a little bit of garbage. That’s all.”

They’d actually smuggled Joshua out for part of a night and practically forced him to go with them, which was the better of two bad options; the other one was to actually climb down into the well without knowing what, if anything, was in it.

Sam and Dean shared some of they’d learned about the well with John, who took it in calmly and nodded in all the right places. “You’re right,” he said. “This is a big problem, but I’m confident that the two of you can handle it. You have ways to find out where Eugene went, and track him down. If he’s dead, somebody knows about him, and will talk. Come on. I’ve taught you better than this.” He looked at them each in turn. “What? If there’s something you’re not telling me, I need to know about it.”

“I told you about Amanda and her wish,” said Dean. “I was the one who went to the well next after her. I didn’t know it at the time   “ we thought that it was just us and Joshua. And now I got what she wanted, and, uh, I’m due in November.”

“October,” Sam corrected. “Last half of October.”

“What? Dean, this isn’t a joke.” John stared at him, impassively and coldly, the look of the unhappy drill sergeant.

“I’m not joking,” Dean said. “I wish I was making this up. Your son is pregnant. You’re going to be a grandfather.”

John’s eyes traveled down to a point near Dean’s navel. When wearing a jacket, Dean could hide the evidence of his condition, but now that he wore only pants and a T-shirt, the swelling in his lower abdomen was visible. John exhaled loudly, and it was a moment before he spoke again. “So this Laura, she’s really an incubus, one who can impregnate men? There’s never been anything like that, not in any legends I’ve ever read. If you’re telling me the truth, then that means there are two spirits working together.”

“Maybe it was Eugene,” Sam said.

“That is a little bit less like nonsense, but I still think there’s something more you’re not telling me. Even an incubus couldn’t do this unless there was some kind of attraction to begin with. One wouldn’t have any success with a man unless he was a homosexual.”

"I'm not," Dean snapped. "There was Wendy in high school, Misty a few years ago..."

"I am not buying this, Dean." John started to shake, and visibly steeled himself. "There must have been men, too."

"Maybe once or twice," he admitted.

"How long ago?"

"Matt was five years ago. Derek, uh, maybe one and a half. Or two years. Yeah. I'm sure it was two."

John's face scrunched in that I'm-a-tough-man-I'm-not-gonna-cry way. "This is your mess now. You handle it. I can't believe you, Dean. After everything I've taught you 💎💎 you're supposed to be out there finishing jobs! Saving people's lives, not hooking up with random men across the country!"

"There are five lives at stake right now," Sam cut in. "Joshua, Melissa, Amanda, Dean, and me. We barely have five months before the 31st of October!"

"That's more than enough time, boys." John stood up and then made his way towards the door, but he stopped before he got to it and turned around. "Sam?"

"What, Dad?"

"Did you see the incubus? Or know when it came, somehow?"

"No, not really."

"Then how the hell did you know Dean's due date?"

"I didn't. I'm just, uh, guessing. From when his symptoms started."

"You know who the father is, and it's not any kind of spirit. It's a person. And you weren't going to tell me, were you?"

"I didn't think it was important." Sam withered under John's glare.

"He might be connected to this problem with the well, and if you want to get to the bottom of it, then he's the place to start. I'm washing my hands of this, right now." He looked Sam up and down as the younger man shrank back, then closed his eyes tightly. "Sam, I am going to ask you one time and I want a straight answer. Are you the father of Dean's baby?"

"Dad 💎💎" Sam's voice broke and he felt his eyes begin to burn. "I'm sorry. I—"

"The two of you disgust me. You dishonor your mother's memory. She destroyed her own spirit to save the two of you, and now you... I'm finished. Don't ever call me again!" John stormed out of the room and let the door slam closed behind him.

"Wait!" Sam cried, and he threw the door open. But John had already turned the corner and didn't answer the yell. Sam pressed his forehead into the doorframe, a part of him wanting to chase his father down and deny everything, and the other part simply not wanting to go back into the room and face Dean. He'd done exactly what he was not supposed to do: confess, even if his confession wasn't the kind that would hold up in a court of law. It did the damage even while implicit.

"Dean, please don't be mad at me," he said quietly. "I couldn't lie to him. He's our father. I've always been a bad liar and sometimes I think he can read me like a book. Dean?"

Sam turned around. Dean was now standing by the window and staring out of it, with his arms hanging at his sides. He moved forward and leaned against the window, and Sam was beside him in the time it took to cross the room in a few long strides. "I tried. I really did," Sam said.

"I know." Dean didn't look at Sam for almost an entire minute, and before he turned his head, he pressed the sleeve of his shirt against his face. Sam did his best to pretend he didn't notice the wet spots on Dean's sleeve and the liquid redness in his eyes. "We can do this. We'll do just what he said ♦♦" we'll find out what happened to Eugene and start from there. Maybe he'll get over it. Maybe if we just stop he'll get over it and forgive us. We deal with a lot of evil, Sam. Some might be powerful enough to put a... a lust spell over us. He might believe it."

What? "Do you even hear what you're saying? That you'd say all these months we've been together ♦♦" over a year now ♦♦" weren't even real?"

"Sam, Dad isn't talking to us now. All my life I've done everything I could to be a good son. I've always done everything he told me even when I didn't want to. And now he's gone, all because of one stupid mistake."

Sam couldn't have felt more stricken even if Dean had reached out and punched him in the face. He sublimated his dejection into fury. "Fine, if that's how you feel about me." Sam grabbed their suitcase and started throwing Dean's clothes out of it.

"Hey! Where do you think you're going?"

Sam snapped the case shut and picked it up. "I'm going down to the lobby to check in to my own hotel room. I'm not going to stay where I'm not wanted," he said, and marched towards the slightly open door.

"Sam, get back here! You can't just walk out on me like this!"

"Oh, yeah? Watch me."

"How do you plan on getting around without a car?"

"I'll figure something out."

"And what about finding Eugene? Joshua doesn't deserve to be stuck in a mental hospital just because you're in a bad mood."

Sam dropped the suitcase and turned around. "I thought you said that being with me was a 'stupid mistake.'"

"I ♦♦" listen to me. It came out wrong. You know how much I respect our father, how much what he says means to me. And we need him right now. But we have a job to do and we need to do it, and not let other stuff get in the way, with or without him. Okay?"

"Okay." It wasn't quite an apology, and Sam remained unconvinced that Dean's words were just an outburst, but he was right. They did have an important task. Sam sat back down on the bed and pulled the laptop computer over his thighs; at least it gave him something else to think about. "So, Eugene was born in 1918, and he's a veteran of World War Two." He typed into a few fields and pressed the "Find" button. "The name search pulled up 107 listings, but there isn't any information about the years they were born. And it only lists people who were alive as of 2005. Still, it shouldn't take long to go through the list. I'll work on this and you call Dr. Hughes' office."

Tuesdays are good; there won't be as many other people coming in."

"What if we're busy on the appointment day?"

"Then you reschedule."

Sam was able to work through half of the list that afternoon and evening, eliminating 46 out of 50 names and adding the other four to a shorter list of people to research in more detail. He saved his search results and switched the laptop off.

He was too hungry to continue, so he walked two blocks to a small Chinese food take-out restaurant and returned with a pair of covered Styrofoam trays and a box of fried rice. Sam left most of the rice for Dean and jabbed a piece of orange chicken with his fork.

"Thanks," Dean said, and took the second tray.

"Cheaper than room service," Sam said.

"You know, you could just say 'you're welcome.'"

"All right. You're welcome."



Dean smiled around a mouthful of broccoli and beef. "And I'm, uh, sorry about what I said earlier."

"Hey, man, you were mad and upset. Happens to the best of us."

"Does this mean we can forget about it?"

Sam nodded. "Sure."

Dean got out of his seat to get a can of soda from the twelve-pack sitting next to the television. On his way back, he stopped next to Sam's chair, and pressed his lips against Sam's for a few seconds.







Sam couldn't keep his heart from speeding up   "it had been too long since they'd even kissed like that. Weeks, he realized. But he only shook his head and said, "You don't have to prove to me that you still want me."

"Why do you always think everything is about you?" Dean asked. He looked hurt when he sat down heavily and dug back into his dinner.

"What are you saying, Dean? That you think I wouldn't want you anymore? That's ridiculous. You were mad earlier, and so was I. We both said things we didn't mean."



"Look at me, Sam."

Sam fixed his eyes on Dean's, but Dean got back up and stood up straight next to the table, making no move to bunch and blouse his green T-shirt. "My body is changing. It's not just my fucking waistline, either. My hips are getting wider, and that's not extra weight. My bones are spreading. It's disgusting, and there's nothing I can do about it right now."

So that's why he's been so moody, thought Sam. Well, beyond the obvious stresses, and the fact that his hormones had to be a mess. "In a couple of weeks, it'll be over," Sam said. "You're going to see the doctor on Tuesday   that's six days away. Maybe they can get you into the hospital right away for the... surgery." Sam couldn't bring himself to say 'abortion'   "not when the baby was his. He knew that it was up to Dean   after all, it wasn't Sam's health on the line -

and that carrying the child to term would probably be extremely dangerous. Not worth the risk of losing Dean. He slid into a slightly different topic to avoid being lost in his thoughts and evoke too many questions: "And it's not going to take us very long to find Eugene. If he's still alive, it'll be easy. If not... then we might have a little more digging to do, but we have handled tougher jobs than this."

"Never mind." Dean started to sit back down.

"Wait a minute. You thought   " you thought that I wouldn't want to be with you anymore? Just because your figure isn't perfect? Come on, you know me better than that. Look at me, then. All limbs and bones. And that's never stopped you before."

"This is a little different."



"I don't mind, Dean. I'm the one at fault, anyway."

"You always find a way to blame yourself, don't you."

"That's not the point." Sam was desperate to get Dean out of his sour mood. "Listen, come here. Come over to me. He reclined on the bed and held out one of his arms.

Dean raised his eyebrows, but did as Sam suggested, and lay next to him. "I still want you," Sam whispered. "I promise."



"Great. Now we have to hug like girls, don't we."

Sam answered by leaning down and tilting his head to the side, then brushing his lips against Dean's. "It's up to you. And, you know, you're going to have some recovery time. Maybe a week before you're even out of bed much, after you go into the hospital, and for being back to full health   " it could be a few weeks after that."

"And?"

"And that means we don't have a lot of time before then. If we want to enjoy each other, we'd better do it now."

"So... so I've still got my mojo, huh?"

"Definitely." Feeling Dean's shoulders pressed against his arm, and smelling him so close, had an effect on Sam   " he could already feel the beginnings of warmth in his shorts. That had never really changed, although he'd held back lately, slipping away to the bathroom to take care of himself instead of bothering Dean.

"I don't know if I believe you," Dean said, and Sam was about to push him away when he realized that he was just being teased.

"Then I guess I'm going to have to give you a chance to prove it." Sam peeled off his shirt and shorts and stretched out on the bed. "Come on, Dean. Just like you did that night in Philadelphia."

"You're sure, Sam?"

"Fuck, yes." He reached down and touched his dick, all the while staring into Dean's green eyes. He felt it go from half-hard to very rigid in his hand, and he never looked away, focusing only on Dean as he pumped himself to full arousal.

Dean hesitantly climbed on top of Sam, over him on his hands and knees, and kissed him. The

kiss rapidly went from soft to crushingly hard, with both of them simultaneously sucking and licking the mouth of the other. It's been so, so long, Sam thought, and he thought he could never get enough, wanting more, more, hoping that kiss wouldn't end.

But it did end. Sam bucked up, frustrated, and Dean whispered in his ear: "Roll over for me."

Oh, yeah. He could do that. Sam obeyed immediately, and felt the bed bounce as Dean got off of it, then climbed back on. "Dean?"

"What?"

"Can I turn around and see you? Just for a few seconds."

"Why, Sam?"

"Because you're hot, and I want to look at you."

Sam twisted around and saw Dean kneeling behind him. Dean was flushed and already glistening a little with lust and heat, and Sam watched his chest heave. He was obviously as hard and ready as Sam was, and Sam turned back around and pushed his bottom up into the air, shoulders pressed into the blanket. "All right, Dean. Now you can fuck me."

He sighed happily and groaned into the pillows as Dean pumped his fingers in and out of his ass, loosening him up, making him push backwards and want more, now, don't keep me waiting, I can't take it much longer. And then there were hands on his hips, to hold him steady, and he felt the blunt, slow pressure of Dean pushing inside him. It was enough to force all the breath out of his lungs; he felt stretched out and filled up, completed.

The first few thrusts were gentle, dragging out the pleasure of each stroke over several seconds but never coming close to quenching the fire that was starting to burn from within. Sam found himself rocking his hips back and forth to speed Dean up, and then they both moved faster, harder, like their lives, running from one thing to the next. Intense, thrilling, breathtaking, leaving them spent but knowing every minute was worth the exhaustion. Sweat ran down Sam's chest, from his navel to his collarbones. How had he gone without Dean's touch for three weeks? He didn't know and then he couldn't think; he could only move. Slammed his pelvis backwards, felt the backs of his thighs press against the fronts of Dean's, over and over. Words and wordless sounds tumbled from his mouth.

Dean jerked behind him with a grunt and a moan, then pulled back. "Sorry, babe, you're a little tighter than I remembered," he whispered.

Sam turned his head, gasping, and looked desperately at Dean, who now lay next to him, looking dazed and sleepy. He must not have been as dazed as he appeared, though, because he reached up and rubbed Sam's cock, thumb tracing circles around the head, fingers squeezing and stroking. Sam felt the building pressure, I'm coming, Dean, oh god, don't stop, please, finish me off. He cried out incoherently, face pressed into the bleached pillowcase, and came in pale threads all over the blanket and Dean's hand.

Sam rested for a few minutes, not caring that he was sticky and messy, but then he helped Dean peel off the blanket and they lay on top of the sheets instead. Dean held Sam possessively, because holding and protecting Sam wasn't the same as hugging him. And Sam was perfectly okay with that, as long as he could be close to Dean. Maybe they were going to be all right, after all. If they could keep from thinking about their father and the challenges that lay before them, forget for just a few hours, and enjoy the silence.

[Back to index](#)

Chapter 9 by Eleventh Guard Coruscant Exil

Shawnee County, Kansas
Tuesday, May 23, 2007

Dean sat in the parking lot of the Land's Crossing shopping center and counted the cars in the immediate area of the lot. "There are four of them. Why would there be four cars if there aren't any other patients scheduled until nine o'clock? That's an hour and a half away."

"They probably all work at the clinic. Now come on," Sam urged.

"If you see anybody we know, tell me, and we're leaving. This was a bad idea. We're too damned close to Lawrence."

Dean followed Sam anyway, though, and they walked into the empty waiting room of the Land's Crossing Women's Center. "Go on," Sam said, and pointed at the reception desk. Dean paused for a few moments, but then went on and leaned against the counter.

"I have an appointment at seven-thirty," he said.

The heavy-set receptionist put down her coffee cup and looked up. She tilted her head to one side. "Oh... you do?"

"Yes. Look, is Sabrina here? She's the one I talked to last week and she set up the appointment."

"No. Sabrina won't be in until ten o'clock. Let's see here... okay, there it is. Deanna Summers at seven-thirty, to see Dr. Hughes?"

"It's Dean Summers."

"Oh. I'll correct that on the schedule, um, Summers." Geraldine frowned and made a few keystrokes. "All right, you can wait over there in the waiting room, and we'll call you in in a few minutes."

Dean sat down next to Sam and picked up the stack of magazines strewn haphazardly on the small table to his left. "Ladies' Home Journal... Elle... Highlights... isn't there anything good to read?"

"Here." Sam handed over the copy of Time Magazine that he'd picked up; it wasn't the best reading material, but better than makeup tips and handbag fashion. Dean leafed through it while they waited.



A short woman in a white coat opened the door next to the desk, holding a clipboard. "Deanna Summers?"

The receptionist growled something at her, and she winced. "Dean Summers?"

"What did I do in a past life to deserve this?" Dean sighed. He got up from the chair and nodded at the nurse, then looked back at Sam. "I'll be back in a little while. Don't get into trouble while I'm gone."



"I'll behave. I guess this means no throwing the Tyco trains in the corner?"

"Or the Legos." Dean rolled his eyes and walked back through the hallway.

"We'll be in Room Four," the nurse said. "My name is Julie. I apologize for the confusion   her handwriting, Sabrina's, that is, is a bit scribbly. Hard to read." She held one of the doors open for him. "Up on the exam table, now, and I'll take your blood pressure."

Dean waited tensely while Julie put the cuff around his upper arm. She tried to close the Velcro, then frowned and removed the cuff. "I'll have to use the extra-large cuff," she said. "You have a lot of muscle mass."

"I work out," he said. Julie was better-looking than Geraldine, he decided. Curvy, but not to the point of being round. If he wasn't already seeing someone... well, it couldn't hurt to look.



"That's good. I should get to the gym more often, really   " now, hold still." The cuff ballooned and tightened, then started to loosen in small increments. "One twenty-five over eighty. Normal. Now we'll get your height and weight."

Dean stood against the ruler and watched Julie stand on tiptoe to put the measuring bar over his head and check to make sure that it was straight. She copied down a number from the ruler and then started tinkering with the weights.

She tapped the 50-weight to the 150 line, then slid the pound weight across its balancing bar. 20... 25... 30... 35... 40... 42. "I do not weigh a hundred ninety-two pounds," Dean protested.

"No, it's a hundred eighty-nine. We subtract three for clothes." She looked him over, heavy jeans and thick shirt. "Maybe four for you. One hundred eighty-eight. Well, your vitals are fine. What brings you to the clinic today?"

"Uh." Dean glanced over at the door to make sure that it was closed. "I need a pregnancy test."

She raised her eyebrows, but jotted something down on the clipboard. "All right   " there's a twenty-dollar fee for urine testing, though, and most insurance companies won't cover this."

"That's fine. I'm paying with a credit card."

"The bathroom is down the hall, last room on the right. Do you know how to do a clean catch?"

"A what?"

"Okay. There's a box of wipes on the counter in the bathroom, wipe from front to back with one of those, then catch the urine mid-stream." She handed him a cup. "We'll need up to this red line here... it's not much, just an ounce. Bring this back to me and we'll analyze it, and Dr. Hughes will be with you shortly."

"Um, sure." Her instructions made no sense, but he took the cup and did his best to follow them.

Dean was stuck waiting for more than twenty minutes. He heard voices outside, but couldn't make out what they were saying. Just when he was getting frustrated and ready to leave, the door creaked open and someone else came in.

She was probably in her mid-forties, with dark blonde hair going silver on the sides, and was only a few inches shorter than Dean. "Good morning," she said, with an apologetic smile. "I'm Doctor Hughes." She closed the door and flipped through a few pages on the clipboard, the same one that Julie had been carrying. "I'm very sorry about this. I'm going to need to ask you a few questions, if you don't mind. When did your last menstrual period start?"

"My what? I've never had one!"

Dr. Hughes nodded and laid the clipboard down next to the sink. "I'm sure this is all a shock to you, and I'll do all I can to help, but I need more information. Did you ever have a period before starting hormone therapy?"

“Hormone therapy? What are you talking about? I’ve never taken steroids.”

“I meant androgenizing hormones,” she said. “You were born female, am I right?”

Dean snorted. “No. I’m a man, and I always have been.”

“I’ve worked with transsexuals before. I’m a professional and I don’t judge. You can tell me the truth.”

“I understand that. But I am not, and have never been, a woman.”

“Then there must be some other cause for your symptoms and test results, possibly a hormone imbalance of a kind. I’ll do what I can to diagnose you here but I may need to refer you to an endocrinologist. The pregnancy test came back positive.” Unfazed, she pulled a plastic package out of the cabinet underneath the sink and tore open the plastic, then handed him the white fabric contents. “Undress and put this gown on, and I’ll start the exam, Mr. Summers.”

“Just call me Dean. If you’re going to see me naked, we ought to at least be on a first-name basis.”

Dr. Hughes nodded, unimpressed. “If that makes you feel more comfortable, Dean, we can do that.”

She poked and prodded his abdomen, sometimes nodding, sometimes frowning. Dean took it all in silence, hoping that she would eventually say something. After several minutes, she pulled the hem of his exam gown back down to his thighs and straightened up. “I don’t mean to scare you, Mr. Sum - Dean, but there is a mass in your lower abdomen that is unusual. Normally I would have an X-ray taken, but without knowing the cause, I’d prefer to start with an ultrasound. We’ll have it set up in ten minutes.”

Even though he was absolutely sure of the cause of his symptoms, Dean couldn’t help but be a little bit worried. Sam had mentioned cancer, and he’d heard of some cancers that developed teeth and hair. Was that a possibility? Could a cancerous mass be producing excess hormones and grow so fast? He was only twenty-eight, sure, but Kevin Fredericks had only been two years older than that when he was diagnosed...

He lay down bravely in the ultrasound room when he was called in. Julie calibrated the machine and Dr. Hughes put on a pair of thin rubber gloves. They took a small blood sample to be analyzed, and sent it off with another nurse. Then Dr. Hughes pulled the bedsheet up to the bottom of Dean’s belly and lifted his gown enough to expose him from the bottom of his chest to about six inches below his navel.

Nervousness was sufficient to keep him from getting aroused.

“This is going to feel cold,” said Dr. Hughes, and she spread a thin layer of a clear, jelly-like substance over his skin. “I’m just going to be making a picture of what’s inside you... it uses sound waves, so we won’t need to be using a needle or scalpel today.” She drew a probe, one inch wide and about a third of an inch thick, across his abdomen, while Julie stood beside her with a narrower probe, staring at the screen. Several minutes passed and the screen began to show a picture.

Julie shrieked and dropped the probe.

“What? What is it?” Dean twisted his head around to see the screen, but at his angle, he couldn’t make anything out but gray blotches on a black background.

Dr. Hughes put her hand on Julie's shoulder to steady her and looked up at the screen. The color slowly drained from her face and her jaw trembled, but she otherwise contained her reactions. "Julie, make me a few printouts, if you don't mind," she said quietly. Julie nodded and shakily walked over to the printer.

"What's wrong?" Dean shouted.

"I'm not sure that anything is really wrong," said Dr. Hughes, "but that is clearly a fetus. I'd estimate eighteen weeks, maybe nineteen." She put the probes away and handed Dean a few paper towels to clean himself off with. "In my sixteen years of practice ♦♦♦ five in general practice and eleven in obstetrics and gynecology ♦♦♦ I have never seen this. I don't understand how it's even possible for a man to become pregnant. The only mentions of such a thing in medical journals, that I'm aware of, are one quack's experiments almost thirty years ago, and a few instances of parasitic twinning, which isn't technically a pregnancy."

Dr. Hughes took the printouts from Julie and picked up the blood results and then led Dean back to the exam room. "Do you have any idea what might have caused this? Are there any stretches of time, maybe in January or early February, that you don't remember?"

"Not other than when I was sleeping," said Dean.

"All right." She nodded, and handed the first of the small stack of papers to Dean. "As you can see here, there's no question that the mass I felt was the fetus." She pointed to a blurry image that looked not like the otherworldly creature that he had been expecting to see, but more like a doll, with a human-shaped head and defined limbs that folded near its torso.

He stared at the picture, and his throat tightened. "It's human, right?"

"Of course, Dean. A completely human boy." She smiled sadly and shook her head. "It's a miracle that you didn't miscarry and have life-threatening complications. As I'm sure you know, you don't have a uterus. I didn't see any female organs on the ultrasound, although a more detailed one and possibly an MRI later might find them. It's entirely possible that you have undeveloped ovaries and they somehow... were triggered to develop later. I don't think that's what happened, because of the location of the fetus, and the fact that you don't even have a vagina, but at this point any explanation has to be taken as a possibility."

Dean shook his head. "There's nothing like that. So where is it... he?"

"It appears that a pocket of tissue near the end of your sigmoid colon has pinched off and has been growing and stretching to accommodate the fetus. At the place where your colon and rectum join. Luckily the growth is slow enough that your organs can shift around it, and it doesn't appear to be obstructing your bowels at all. Any of that could change, though."

Dean clutched the printed picture as she went on. It wasn't an amorphous blob anymore; he was Dean's son. And Sam's son. A little Winchester boy.

"Everything appears to be normal. Most of your hormones are within an acceptable range for this stage of pregnancy. Your testosterone is very high, but given your sex, it's also within reasonable standards. I don't think your life is in any immediate danger. If it was, I'd suggest that we call an ambulance to take you to the hospital now and terminate the pregnancy. However, you should be fine for another few days."

"Why? What happens in a few days?"

"There is no guide to go by for a case like yours. Complications could arise at any point. It's

possible that they won't, but that's a chance I don't recommend taking. Your intestines could twist around each other or become blocked; the tissues around the fetus could tear and leak. Those could kill you if left untreated. I don't think you should wait any longer than necessary before aborting. If you had a surgeon in mind, I suggest that you get in touch with her or him as soon as you get home today. If not, I can perform the procedure as early as Friday morning; this is simply termination of an ectopic pregnancy, although a highly unusual one." She gently touched his arm. "Dean?"

"I can't," he said. "This is Sam's boy."

"Who's Sam?" Then she shook her head. "I'm sorry. That's not any of my business. The choice is yours, ultimately. I can't force you to do anything. But the longer you wait, the more you risk your own health and your life."

"What if we waited just part of the time? Premature babies can survive. I know it's probably too early now, but what, another month? Two?"

"One month would give him a small chance at survival. He would be in neonatal intensive care for a long time and even if he does survive, which he might not 💎💎" he would probably have permanent health problems. Living to adulthood in a situation like that is rare. Two months would be better, but you're playing a chancy game if you think you can even make it that long."

"It's not a game. This is my son," Dean snapped.

"I understand that. But I have to be honest with you. Continuing this pregnancy is dangerous. There is no way to predict what will happen to you or your son. And right now there isn't enough room in your pelvic outlet for a full-term baby to pass through, or one even close to full-term. If for some reason you couldn't get to an emergency room for a caesarian in time, both of you would die. The gap is wider than I would have expected it to be, but you need at least another inch of space."

"I'll make sure I'm not more than a couple of hours away from a hospital, then," said Dean. "When's my due date?"

Dr. Hughes sighed and shook her head, but she flipped open a chart and ran her finger down the side of the laminated page. "I can't give an exact date. I can estimate to within a week, and my estimate would be October twenty-seventh."

"What's the soonest he could be delivered and still be healthy?"

She stood next to him and looked straight into his eyes with a firm stare before her gaze dropped. "Early in October. Possibly late in September. He would be small, and take a little longer to thrive, but I wouldn't anticipate any serious problems."

"Then I want to schedule the caesarian for the first week of October."

Dr. Hughes nodded. "We can do that for you. I have to tell you one more time that this is a very hazardous choice, and my official advice is for you to terminate the pregnancy this week."

"No."

"In that case, I'd like to see you back no later than June twenty-sixth; that's four weeks from today. Call me if any problems come up and if you even think it could be a medical emergency, go to the ER." She gathered up her papers, except for the printout that Dean still held. "You can get dressed and go back to the desk, and Geraldine will check you out. Best of luck to you, Dean."

They shook hands and Dr. Hughes left. Geraldine confirmed the next appointment and asked for payment. "Look, I, uh, am going to have to bring it tomorrow," Dean said. "I forgot. My credit card has a limit on how much I can use it one day and I forgot that I used it to get gas this morning. Can I bring it in tomorrow?"

"You have twenty-four hours, and then we have to bill you an extra twenty-five dollars per day," Geraldine explained.

"Not a problem. I'll be here at this time tomorrow. Thanks."

Sam jumped out of his chair when Dean came back into the waiting room. "Well? What happened? What did she say?"

Dean shrugged. "Not much. Confirmed what we already knew." He handed the sonogram picture to Sam, and they went out towards their car. "That's him."

"Wow," Sam said. "I didn't think it would look that much... that much like a baby already." Then he frowned. "How does she know it's a boy?"

"You know, for all your time in college, you sure didn't learn much."

"Okay, I know how to tell the difference between a boy and a girl, but I can't see details that fine in this picture."

"Dr. Hughes was probably in grad school when you were in diapers and has more practice at picking out details on fuzzy ultrasound images. Now come on; we have to figure out how we're going to get four hundred dollars in less than twenty-four hours."

"Dude, just use the credit card. It's what you always do."

"They'll probably figure out that it's a fake eventually, and I don't want to have to show up with a different card with a different name."

"Not in a week or two, they won't."

"Sam, I'm coming back in a month. And probably the month after that, and after that. He'll be born in October."

Sam blinked, and made a noise halfway between a laugh and a loud exhalation. "Dean, are you crazy? How are we going to go around hunting and fighting if you're as big as a Winnebago? And then toting an infant around?"

"I don't know yet, so give me a little time. I'll come up with a plan."

Sam climbed into the car and strapped himself in. "Dean?"

"What?"

"I'm glad you're going to see this through," he said. "And I'm here for you. Whatever you need, man. He's my son, too."

"Thanks. Let's go get breakfast, all right? I'm starving, and there have been some strange disappearances down in Oklahoma. I want to get some food and start looking up information on the missing hikers."

[Back to index](#)

Chapter 10 by Eleventh Guard Coruscant Exil

10 miles from Arkadelphia, Arkansas
Monday, July 17, 2007

The house was really a double-wide mobile home, sitting alone about a half-mile from the dirt road. The only sign of life was the beat-up car parked on the lawn in front of the trailer, on a rare patch of grassless ground. Most of the yard had been grown over with tall grass and weeds, as if it hadn't seen a lawn mower since the year before.

"148 Frontier Street," said Sam. "This is it."

"I hope they're home," Dean complained. "I really have to take a leak."

"If they're gone, I don't think the lawn will be any worse for it if you borrowed it," Sam pointed out.

They had been able to narrow down their search for Eugene Townsend to six people. The first three had proved to be the wrong ones, and they were starting to get impatient. Sure, there were only three people left to go, but even if they did find the man they were looking for, there was no guarantee that he would have the information they needed. And this was assuming that he was one of the six living men that they'd researched.

Sam knocked on the door and waited for a long minute. He heard some rustling from the other side, and then a female voice called out: "Who's there?"

"I'm Sam, and, uh, I'm from Arkansas State University," he said.

The door opened, and an older woman, about John's age, stood there, holding a dishrag. She wore a knee-length cotton dress with a small but busy floral pattern, and her gray and brown hair was tied back into a bun. "What can I do for you today, boys?" She looked quizzically at Dean and frowned, but made no further comment.

"You must be Susan Moser," Dean said, and she nodded. "We were hoping your father Eugene was home."

"Well, yeah, he's home. Don't get out much these days. But he's resting in the living room and don't need to be bothered right now. He's been sick."


"For chrissakes, Sue," a croaking voice called out, "let them in. I'm not a damned invalid."

"All right, Dad!" she shouted to him. "Boys, you heard him. Right this way. Can I get you anything to drink?"

"No, thank you," said Dean, "but if you could point me in the direction of the bathroom, I'd really appreciate that. We've been driving for awhile." He winced as he was kicked from the inside. His son was usually still when they were driving, but wouldn't stop moving if they weren't in the car. Dean's sleeping patterns had gotten almost as bad as Sam's, and at times he had to turn over the wheel to Sam and take a nap in the passenger seat.

Sam went on into the living room alone. It smelled of cigarette smoke, bacon, and dust, and the room was dark, lit only by the sunlight streaming through the orange-curtained window, and a single lamp with one lightbulb. An elderly man sat on a rocking chair in front of a 13-inch television set; he was thin and drawn, and wrapped in an afghan. He looked up at Sam with crinkled eyes, without lifting his head. "Um, hi," said Sam. "I don't know if you heard me talking to your daughter. I'm from Arkansas State University, and I'm taking a history class this term. Summer classes. I'm supposed to interview four people about World War Two, and thought I'd come to visit and ask you a few questions. If that's okay."

Eugene made a creaky sound in his throat, and Sam thought he was coughing, but then Eugene tipped his head back and his laugh was clearer. "Boy, I've seen your kind before. You're not here to talk about the war."

"You know  you're right. The focus is really more on returning to life in America after the end of the war. Now, as far as I could tell, you served in the Army from 1941 to—"

"Quit pulling my leg." Eugene looked him in the eye and scowled. "You're here for a school report and I'm Elizabeth Taylor."

"Why do you think I'm here?"

"Because you've been messing with the dark arts and you want my help. And I'll tell you what I told everybody else. I don't touch it. I can't help you."

Dean came in and sat down next to Sam on the old couch. "Sorry. Call of nature. I had a Sprite on the way over, and, well, it went through me fast."

"And just who the hell are you?" Eugene asked.

"Dean Summers?"

"You sure about that or are you just spinning me a yarn?"

"Look, if this is a bad time, we could come back tomorrow."

"I don't think it matters if it's a bad time or not. Because you're going to have a bad time and there's not a damned thing you can do about it."

Dean and Sam looked at each other and then back to Eugene. "So, wait a second," said Sam. "You know what we're talking about, then? About the well?"

"Son, if you've been near that thing, then you're in a world of trouble."

"Why? We've stopped it."

"Stopped it? How?"

"Pretty simple, really. He wished for it to stop granting wishes. And then I did the same, so I got what he asked for, and as far as I know, nobody is going to be in any danger in the future."

Eugene shook his head and started to rock the chair. "Now you've really done it. You've done gone and pissed her off."

"Who?" asked Dean. "Laura?"

"Now that's enough," said Susan, from the kitchen doorway. "We let you in here to talk, so now don't go bringing up nothin' about that old witch."

"Sue, shut your yap and go bake a pie," Eugene snapped. He took a deep breath and folded his seamed hands in his lap. "Yeah, Laura Keirney. Married her when I got home from Japan. Worst goddamned mistake of my life."

"Eugene, we've been... studying evil spirits and things in the night for most of our lives," said Sam. "We might be able to help if we know what we're dealing with."

“You don’t know what you’re dealing with and you ain’t gonna know even after I tell you. She was a witch, that’s what she was. Not just candles and crystals and healing superstition shit, either. That’s what I thought it was at first and I looked the other way. During the war I saw so much evil ♦♦“ so many buildings getting destroyed, dead bodies on the streets, hell, we dropped at atomic bomb. I couldn’t get all in a huff about a bag of herbs hanging in the kitchen.” He rocked harder. “Maybe I done wrong, too. I went and had my fun with Shirley, and that, that I shouldn’t have done. Paid for it, though. Found her dead on the back porch not long after, and I never seen nothing like that. Blood all drained, body already starting to rot out and it wasn’t even hot out. A few hours and the flies were all over.”

“Laura killed Shirley?”

“I didn’t know it at the time. I knew it later. It was a sacrifice. Now they came to me, the preacher and the deacons, and told me I had to do something, make her stop calling on Satan. I threw ‘em off my property and told ‘em to get, and stay out. They already ran old Doris out of town, because she said she could heal with magic, and she wasn’t doing any harm. Maybe made a couple of people feel better that weren’t sick in the first place. I don’t know. I thought this was the same thing and I didn’t care. Didn’t want to live alone. Had no idea that Laura was the real thing, and a worker of dark magic, not just parlor tricks and newfangled energy stuff.”

“What finally tipped you off?” asked Sam.

Eugene frowned and rocked silently for a long time before he spoke. “Had a lady come to us once. Real nice lady. Ruth, I think her name was. Well, now, she had something growing in her leg, and the doctor couldn’t do a damned thing, so she went to Laura. And you know, she healed her all up ♦♦“ had to kill a cow to do it, and I was none too pleased about that. Cattle ain’t cheap. But Ruth paid her and went on her way. And Laura says to me that she wasn’t worthy to live and that she would die. I ignored it, ravings, nothing more. Then I picked up the newspaper and what did I see, but Ruthie was gone. Went out on a walk and got hit by a train. So I go into the basement and Laura’s there with a picture of Ruth and a model train, arms bleeding, this wild look in her eyes. And I saw a man with yellow eyes, glowing. He said ‘you grow stronger, child.’ And I ran like hell, boys.”

“Yeah, you don’t want to stick around that,” said Dean. “Who was it with her? Do you know? A demon?”

“Maybe. Might’ve been Satan himself. I don’t know and I didn’t stay long enough to find out. I didn’t come back till that Tuesday. This was a Saturday. And I went to grab her stuff and toss it out on the lawn, and tell her to get, and then you know what I saw on her altar? My picture. She was going to sacrifice me. But she didn’t get me, no. I ain’t that stupid. I waited until she went out to the well, the day I was supposed to die. Halloween. Sixty years ago.”

“Nineteen forty-seven?”

“Yeah. I said it was sixty years ago, didn’t I? Don’t they teach you kids math anymore?”

“Sorry. I was just making sure. What happened on that day?”

“I threw her in and closed up the lid,” said Eugene. “I don’t care if you go to the cops with this. What are they going to do, sentence me to life in jail? I’m eighty-nine years old and I’m sick. I might not even live long enough to have the trial the way they drag things out for years nowadays. Yeah, I killed her. Thought that was the end. Sold the farm, moved out of state, found myself a nice little woman. Barbara. God rest her soul. Died of a heart attack in ninety-five.”

“When did you know that it wasn’t really over?”

“When you kids started pestering me. Started in the sixties. Thought it was a bunch of hippie nonsense and sent them about their business, but then people started dying. Mostly on Halloween. Somebody thought it would be fun to go to this creaky old well they found and throw pennies in it. And Laura got mad. She never liked being bothered when she was sleeping, I guess. And she did whatever she was asked, to the wrong people, and then took ‘em all out on the anniversary of her death. I don’t know how to stop her. And it’s getting worse. Lately she’s been in my dreams. Can’t sleep, and that’s not good for an old man. Doctor told me to take naps. Damned doctor. Can’t take no naps when she’s there every time I shut my eyes.”

“She was blonde, right?” asked Sam. “I think I’ve seen her before.”

“Little blonde wench,” Eugene affirmed. “No offense, son, but if you’re seeing her, then make up your will. You’ve got about three months to live. Me, too. I’m glad to be done with this. I just hope I don’t go to the bad place with her.”

“I don’t think that’ll happen,” said Dean, although he really wasn’t sure. “We might still be able to stop her. Did you ever take her body out of the well?”

“No. I didn’t. Do I look like I can climb down that hole? I had Henry do it. Henry is Sue’s husband, my son-in-law. Told him to hide the bones so I couldn’t tell nobody where they are ‘cause I don’t know. If you think you can work some kind of magic that isn’t like hers, then you’ll have to talk to him.”

“We’ll do that.” Sam stood up, then held out his hand to help Dean. Dean shot him a dirty look and struggled as he climbed out of the low, sinking cushion. “Thank you very much for your time, sir. We’ll work on this right away. Do you know where Henry is?”

“Tennessee, last I talked to him. Near Nashville. Go ask Sue where he’s working this week.” Eugene paused thoughtfully and stopped the chair in its backwards position. “And Dean. You take care of yourself, you hear?”

Sam and Dean went into the kitchen where Susan was hunched over a cookbook. It was opened to a page about chicken, though, not pies. “You’ll have to forgive my dad,” she said. “He’s old and cranky, and his memory has been failing lately. Oh, he could tell you all about a trip he went on when he was forty, but you ask him what he had for breakfast and he’ll tell you it was oatmeal even if he had eggs. Don’t remember nothin’ but his dreams and sometimes numbers.”

“I’m sorry,” said Sam. “Actually, he told us a lot that we think we can use. We might be able to help your family. But I need to know how to get in touch with Henry.”

“Boys...” Susan looked sadly at each of them in turn. “Henry has been dead for three months. He was killed in an explosion at the grain silo.” She shook her head. “My dad don’t remember. He thinks Henry and I still live in Nashville and I’m just here to visit.”

Sam squeezed her shoulder. “Is there anybody else who might know where he... um... look, your father said that he sent Henry to hide something for him. Do you know where it might have been hidden?”

“No, and if you’re wanting to find my mother’s jewelry, you can put that idea right out of your head. Ain’t nobody stealing my momma’s earrings.”

“We don’t want her earrings,” Sam assured her.

“Ain’t nothing else of any value around here.”

“Okay. We really don’t mean to bother you, but we have some trouble and your father pointed us

in the right direction. Thank you, and we're sorry for interrupting your afternoon."

"Oh, you didn't interrupt nothing. Same old, same old. Here, Sam, you take a sandwich with you for the road."

Dean stared at her expectantly, but she only said, "What? You sure as hell don't need one. You've got a beer gut bigger than my Henry's and he was probably twice your age."

Sam grabbed Dean's jacket and pulled him towards the front door. "We'll be on our way now. Thanks for the sandwich." He lowered his voice. "Dean, don't say anything."

He caught Dean making a rude gesture behind his back anyway. They were out on the porch before they could hear any more of Susan's resultant tirade than, "Well, I never! Christ almighty, if I did that to my elders...!"

"Beer gut?" Dean growled.

"Let it go, Dean. We need to get to Nashville and start looking for people who might have known Henry Moser. We're on Laura's trail now, and if we can find her bones, we can destroy her completely. And then everybody's safe."

"I don't think she wants to be found."

"I don't, either, but that's not the point."

"Sam, she's still out there and if she doesn't want us to get to her, she can go on a killing spree. Do you really think Henry died in an accident? He's probably the only one who knows where she's buried. If we can't find her bones, we can't dispel her."

"I'd bet Henry also doesn't know anything about hunting spirits. What do you want to do? Just roll over and die?"

"I want to hunt her down in October."

"Oh, that's a great idea. You'll be all stitched up and we'll have a two-week-old baby in the car, and that'll all really help us out. Besides, she knows what we know."

"How do you know that? She's a spirit, not some god."

"I don't know how I know, but I do. She can find me in my dreams no matter where I am. I think we need to get this done as fast as we can."

"And what if everything she gave goes away? That's all fine and good for Joshua, but not for the girls in New York."

"Oh." Sam idly traced a few circles on the window with his fingers. "And Ryan."

"It's Anthony, Sam."

"Ryan Anthony," Sam said firmly. Then he sighed and leaned back in the seat. "I don't know. Maybe change his delivery date?"

"He's not ready yet. Now, I'll drive us up to Nashville, but if there are any changes to your dreams you'd better tell me. Because this time we're not just risking our own lives."

"I promise I'll tell you everything," said Sam. He watched the trailer shrink in the rear-view mirror,

and couldn't shake the feeling that the world was closing in on them, that time itself was shrinking around them and pushing them towards a tiny point on which everything else would balance.

[Back to index](#)

Chapter 11 by Eleventh Guard Coruscant Exil
Shawnee County, Kansas
Friday, October 12, 2007

"Dr. Hughes!" Sabrina waved a pink piece of paper around when she saw Lisa come into the office and open one of the file cabinets. "There was a message for you."

Dr. Hughes took the slip from Sabrina and looked at it. She pressed at her temples with her thumb and fourth finger and shook her head. "Did he leave a phone number?"

"Just the cell number. Said he had some car trouble in Washington and wasn't going to be able to make it back here by Monday morning. He has to reschedule for the twenty-second, the next Monday."

"What the hell is he doing that's so important?" Dr. Hughes wondered.

"If the voice in the background was any indication, he's doing some kind of local movie marathon, or maybe something with television." Sabrina shrugged helplessly. "Heard another man talking about werewolves. But they weren't in London; they were in Washington State."

"Mr. Summers is the most reckless man I have ever met in my life! Movies?"

"What about that guy Richie that you have all those college stories about?" Geraldine asked, looking up briefly her from the computer screen.

"Okay. Second most reckless man."

"That's two consecutive cancellations, though," Sabrina pointed out. "We can drop him from the clinic now, paid fees or not."

"I don't think so, Sabrina. Not this time. Make sure my schedule is free all day on Monday the twenty-second."

"Up through lunch?"

"Better make it the entire day, just to be safe. We'll stay open later the rest of the week to make up for it, so you can make appointments up through five o'clock instead of three-thirty. And I promise whichever one of you stays will get time and a half for the extra hours."

Sabrina nodded and started to type, but her fingers moved over only a few keys before she stopped. "You know... you can lose your license for this. Technically, you're working out of the stipulations of your current surgical certificates. Your general surgery certifications expired in 2005."

"No, they didn't. As of September twenty-eighth, they're good for another two years."

"How did you do that?" Sabrina gasped. "Did you take night classes? I couldn't do it. I hardly get any sleep taking two classes at night and working just forty hours a week."

"I, well, I had a little bit of help from a friend of the patient and a copy shop. Don't look at me like that, Sabrina. There isn't another doctor in the state who would take this case without plastering it all over the front page of the newspaper. If it would make you feel better, I did take two extra courses this summer. And those certificates didn't come from Kinko's." Dr. Hughes smiled flatly,

then nodded at the silence and turned her attention back to the file cabinet.

Sabrina quietly updated the appointment records.

10 miles from Arkadelphia, Arkansas

Friday, October 19, 2007

John ducked under the yellow crime scene tape that ringed the double-wide trailer. Normally, after hearing about a murder that might or might not have anything to do with the supernatural, he would have called one of his sons and had them handle it. But he hadn't spoken to either Dean or Sam since May, and he didn't plan on going back on what he said. Every now and then he wondered if maybe he'd reacted too strongly; maybe they had been affected by the power of the ghost-spirit-wraith-whatever that they'd found, and weren't entirely to blame.

But he said he wasn't going to talk to them again, and he wasn't about to change his mind. Now his only two choices were to pass up the job or pause for an hour or two and poke around.

It wasn't so much that there was no physical explanation for what happened as it was that the physical explanation didn't make any sense. There was no good reason for Angela Moser to suddenly snap and murder her husband, mother-in-law, and mother-in-law's father. Even if she did have some kind of undiagnosed psychosis, it didn't seem likely that a hundred-pound woman would be able to overpower all three of them the way she was alleged to have. The elderly man, maybe; her mother-in-law, less likely, but still possible, especially if caught alone. However, Steven Moser was more than twice her size, and, from the photos in the newspaper, quite fit. There was a strong possibility that something more was going on than an so-called ordinary triple murder.

The blinking lights on the EMF meter proved his suspicions. Something went into the trailer and killed everybody inside. And it either wasn't Angela or it was something possessing her.

The three bodies were gone, replaced by chalk outlines where they lay in death. Eugene Townsend, an 89-year-old man who had suffered two strokes in the last three years, had been drowned with his head submerged in a bucket of water. Susan Moser, his widowed daughter, died of knife wounds — the blood was still splattered all over the small dining room, over the floor, parts of the walls, and two of the chairs. It had pooled onto the old carpet and John stepped carefully around the nearly-dried stain.

The kitchen — the kitchen was worse. Steven and the iron that killed him were both gone, one at the coroner's and the other in police custody. But John still saw what looked like a gallon of rust-brown paint thrown haphazardly over the counters and floor, dried in drips and droplets. The smell of sour copper filled his nostrils and his eyes watered from the stench. At the place where the droplets were the most concentrated, he found tufts of brown hair and pulverized soft matter, which already quivered and writhed with fly larvae.

He looked up at the wall above the rotten flesh. There, the blood was smeared into a circle with an 18-pointed star drawn inside of it, the lines joining the points merged and stylized. The cult is back, he thought. John Winchester had seen that symbol before; it was the mark of the Sisterhood of the Night God, women who pledged themselves to what they thought was Satan, but was really only a demon claiming to be him, in return for a small measure of magical powers and, if they completed enough human sacrifices, power even in death. He knew enough about it to recognize the symbol and understand the basics, although he hadn't had time — or any reason — to investigate it more closely. If Angela had joined the cult, then it was very possible that she could have become strong enough to kill three adults, even one more physically capable than she was.

Except that the cult was only flourishing, if a dozen practitioners could be called flourishing, in the 1930s and 1940s before disappearing by 1955. Maybe someone did find information on it and revive it. Or maybe what was at work was something else entirely.

Arkadelphia, Arkansas
Saturday, October 20, 2007

"The suspect won't talk to us," said Officer Seymour. "I really don't think she'll talk to you, Detective."

"Give me five minutes and she'll be saying something," said John. "Won't even have to touch her."

Officer Seymour shrugged and took a sip from his Styrofoam coffee cup. "Be my guest."

Angela Moser looked like she hadn't slept or showered in a long time; she had dark circles under her eyes and her hair was greasy and limp. She wore plain powder blue pants and a shirt, and her bare feet were chained together with a chain just long enough to allow her to walk with tiny steps, inches by inches. She sat down across from John at a long, plain table in a room surrounded by reinforced glass while the officers waited outside.

"Angela," John said.

She gave no response.

"Look, I know that you know something about what happened at your husband's grandfather's house. The sooner we get to the bottom of it, the better. Now tell me what happened."

Now Angela shook her head and closed her eyes, then let her chin drop to her chest.

"All right. I'm going to show you a picture, and you tell me what you know about it. Okay?"

John opened his notebook and unlatched the rings that held the pages together. He pulled out one of the papers, the one with the 18-pointed-star on it, and placed it on the table between them, just out of her reach. "Tell me if you've seen this symbol before."

When she saw the picture, her brown eyes opened wide and she drew up her knees to her chest, shrinking back into the chair and folding herself up. She pressed her face against her legs and nodded.

"Who else showed it to you?"

Shaking head, rocking back and forth. Something whispered.

"What was that? I couldn't hear you."

"Her," was all Angela would say. But it was a word. It was a start.

"Susan would have been, at most, four years old when the last member of the cult died," said John. "You're not telling me that it was Susan, are you? Because I wouldn't believe that. And the police report strongly suggests that she was the second to die."

"I can't tell you," said Angela, quietly. "She said she'd kill me if I told anyone."

John, unfazed, leaned back in his chair and glanced down at another sheet of paper, an ink-smudged printout from his wireless printer. If his gut instinct was right, then the odds that the

woman was born in the second decade of the twentieth century ❖❖“ or possibly the third ❖❖“ were extremely high, and in that era, parents weren’t quite as creative with names of daughters as they might be nearly a century later. He’d printed off the hundred most popular names for girls born between 1910 and 1919 ❖❖“ most of them overlapping with 1920 to 1929 ❖❖“ from a site called Behind the Name. “I have a list of suspects other than you,” he said, “and I’m just going to read off their first names. You tell me when we get to one you recognize, okay?”

Angela shook her head and averted her eyes.

“Mary?” John asked, hoping that Angela wouldn’t react. There was virtually no chance that his late wife was involved, even in the tiniest way, but it was still a relief when Angela sat still and made no sound. “Or maybe you saw Helen.” Still nothing. “Of course, there has been a bit of trouble from Dorothy.”

Several minutes later, John was beginning to think his guess was wrong. That was a good thing; if the killer wasn’t part of the original cult, then she might be less dangerous and easier to find. “Nellie. You ever heard of Nellie?”

Angela was silent.

“What about Mabel?”

Nothing.

“Laura?”

Angela’s high-pitched squeak and instinctive glance over her shoulder told him what he needed to know. John was about to keep going down the list, so that Angela could think her secret was still a secret, when the timeline and the names clicked into place.

A man also named Eugene ❖❖“ Dean had never told John what Eugene’s last name was ❖❖“ had a wife named Laura, who disappeared sixty years ago. In ten and a half days, it would be exactly sixty years. If this was the same case as the one involving the wishing well, then Dean and Sam must have been getting close to finishing the job, and Laura-in-the-well was getting very agitated. Agitated enough to start killing to protect herself, instead of only killing those who came to her as sacrifices, or as required to fulfill the supplicants’ requests.

He continued with four more names before putting the paper away. “I’ll put Vera at the top of the suspect list,” he said. “I have another idea. Were there any visitors to the trailer? In the past, say, five months?”

“I don’t know,” Angela said slowly. She appeared to have relaxed a little when John mentioned investigating “Vera.” “Maybe a few. I was in Louisiana for awhile with... with Steven.”

“Did Susan or Eugene ever talk about any of them?”

“Talked about two boys,” said Angela. “But they were just college kids.”

“Really? Tell me what you heard about them.”

“That they were exchange students from Spain doin’ research of a kind. Real handsome-like, tanned, but my husband’s momma said they were short and they ought to have eaten more vegetables when they were little.”

“Those the only ones?” Dean and Sam could pull off a tan, and maybe enough broken textbook Spanish to fool a few people, but neither, and especially not Sam, could have been described as

short.

“There was the two that got Sue all upset, but I was out of the state,” said Angela. “I only got back at the end of July. Said the one was the rudest fellow who ever darkened the doorstep. Grandpa just told her to shut up. But he was always like that. Told everybody to shut up when he was watching Martin Kane.”

“That doesn’t give me much to go on, Angela.”

“Well, I don’t remember anything else. Grandpa said cut him some slack and then Sue started bitching about the youngins in the old car that looked just like Henry’s first car. ‘Cept Henry’s was gold and this one was black.”

“Do you remember what kind of car it was?”

“I told you, I wasn’t there.”

John frowned, the only outward sign of anxiety and frustration. “Not the visitors’ car. Your father-in-law’s.”

“Well, he drove a big old Ford truck. Got it when he started working at the silos ten years ago.”

“His first car, Angela, not the truck!”

“Oh.” She bit her lip and thought about that. “I don’t remember.”

“It wouldn’t be a 1967 Chevy Impala, by any chance, would it?”

“Yeah, that’s what they called it, but I don’t know if it was sixty-seven. He was only eighteen then. Might have been sixty-eight.”

“Thank you, Angela. You’ve been very helpful and I’ll try to get you out of here as soon as possible.” He motioned towards the officers outside, signaling that the interview was over, and the guards returned to take Angela back to her cell.

“I’m pretty sure she didn’t do it,” John said to Officer Seymour. He watched Angela leave, but before she turned the corner out of his line of sight, she put out two fingers. Then she retracted one, and bounced her hand to mean another one. 211. John filed the number away in his memory and turned back to the police officer. “There’s no way she could have bashed Steven’s head in. There are signs of a struggle, but he had no knife wounds ❖❖“ no bullet holes ❖❖“ no obvious signs of being drugged. She couldn’t overpower him without another weapon and her being able to surprise him with the iron after two murders in the same trailer stretches the limits of sense.”

“We’ll get with forensics and have them look over the evidence again,” said Officer Seymour.

“You do that. I’m going to call it a night, boys.”

*

“The Sisterhood of the Night God believed that they were granted special powers upon attainment of symbolic numbers of human sacrifices. Although the number of murders committed by Charlotte Goodman, for instance, was far above the third-tier limit, many of them were not deaths of those who had first asked her for assistance, and thus in the eyes of the Sisterhood were not fit for counting towards their totals. At six deaths, the acolyte reached the first tier became a full member of the Sisterhood. According to legend, at thirty-six ❖❖“ six times six

◆◆“ she ascended to the second tier and received the power to transcend the grave and continue her work even after her physical life ended, provided that her remains were not burned. It is for this reason that Goodman was cremated upon her death in 1942. At two hundred sixteen ◆◆“ six times six times six ◆◆“ the Sister would reach the third tier and become immortal, though bound to her Master in Hell and unable to leave that domain, ruling over her own minions on Earth from afar. She could then also claim a single soul of her choosing and take it with her, enslaving it and twisting it to her own will to unleash at any time she wished.”

John printed off the webpage and continued running searches while drinking a cup of strong black coffee. He wasn't going to get any sleep that night.

[Back to index](#)

Chapter 12 by Eleventh Guard Coruscant Exil

Topeka, Kansas

Sunday, October 21, 2007

Lisa wrapped a towel around herself and stepped out of the bathroom. It was only seven o'clock in the evening, but she had already set her alarm clock for four-thirty, and she wanted to get a full night's rest.

She had just finished squeezing the excess water from her hair when she heard the beep-beep-beep of her phone. "Hello?"

"Hey, Lisa. It's David." At the sound of her husband's voice, she let out a breath she hadn't realized she was holding. She was afraid that Mr. Summers was calling her at home to let her know that he was out of town again.

"How did the meeting go?" she asked.

"Like usual. Too many boring speeches, too many blowhards. But it was over early, so I'm already back at the hotel, and I got my flight changed from the afternoon to the first flight of the morning. I should be home by seven-thirty."

"Oh, honey, I have to work tomorrow," she said. "It's Monday. In fact, I'm leaving even earlier than on a regular workday. But I'll be back in time for dinner, God willing, and I'll pick up some of that artichoke salad that you like."

"All right. I'll see you then. Bye, sweetheart. Love you."

"I love you too, Dave. Have a safe flight. Bye."

*

Sam pushed his noodles around on his Chinet plate, spending a lot more time arranging them than he did eating them. He hardly tasted the red pepper flakes in the spicy tomato sauce; his mind was a million miles away than the slight burning on his tongue.

"You going to finish that?" Dean asked.

"Probably not. I'll save it for tomorrow. You're not supposed to have anything to eat today, remember?"

"Yeah, I remember. And I'm hungry as fuck right now. You know what I want? A T-bone steak."

Sam sighed and scraped the rest of his spaghetti into an aluminum container that came with a clear plastic lid. "You'll get one. Eventually. But you're having major surgery starting in twelve hours. No steaks. And while you're recovering you'll be on a limited diet."

"I'm fucking sick of orange Gatorade already." Dean scowled at the half-full bottle of orange drink on the lamp-lighted nightstand next to his bed.

"You could try lemon-lime or the fruit punch," Sam said.

"It's not about the flavor in the sugar water, Sam. I am going to be out of commission for at least two weeks. We don't have time for this! The 31st is in ten days and Mitch Parker won't be able to talk to us until Wednesday. That gives us one week to find the spot that he heard Henry talking about."

"One week is plenty of time. I'll go out to see Mitch myself and bring back the information. I can search the spot myself in seven days. Well, six, with one to drive back."

"I want to do it. I want to light that harpy on fire and watch her burn." Dean shifted around on the mattress, curled onto his side. "I've had a backache for two weeks. And we've been chasing her around the country since May. I'm ready for this to be over, Sam. All of it."

"All of it?" Sam wrestled with the ill-fitting plastic lid to the spaghetti container, careful not to look Dean in the eye.

"Running after Laura and feeling like I'm trying to smuggle the world's biggest bowling ball around in my shirt."

"Those won't be for much longer." Sam crossed the room and climbed up on the bed behind Dean. "I have the portable crib folded up in the trunk, and before you're out of the hospital, Laura Townsend is going to be ashes and a memory. A really bad one, maybe, but we've had our share of those. And we'll get some good ones."

"Shit, Sam, why am I the one that's pregnant, instead of you? You're the girl here."

Sam smiled. Hormone shifts and weeks of stress didn't change Dean. "Probably because you're tougher than I am."


"Huh. You really think that?"


"Yes, I do."

"Okay."

Sam put his hands on either side of Dean's spine, just below his shoulder blades, and ran his fingers in firm but careful circles. "You need to sleep, all right? Tomorrow's the big day. Ryan's coming."

"His name is Anthony."

"I thought we  you know what? It's not that important right now. We can talk about it in the morning." He slid his hands lower, where Dean's muscles were even tighter, and Dean grunted. "Is this helping at all?"

"Yeah, a little. Thanks, Sammy." He reached around and took one of Sam's hands, then brought it to his own navel. Sam's stretch was rewarded with a light thump  their son's hello. "There, you got your chick flick moment for the year."

Sam laughed and kissed Dean's neck.

*

Weekend television is garbage. Lisa lifted a piece of reheated chicken parmigiana to her mouth with the fork in her left hand and clicked the TV remote with her right.

"One man was killed and five more injured in the second accident this year at Terrence Farms near Nashville, Tennessee. Mitchell Roland Parker, forty-nine, died in the explosion that rocked the south-" Click. The news is all bad, too.

She was reaching for her bottle of vitamin water when she heard a knock at the door. She debated for a moment whether she should answer it or pretend she wasn't home. But she still hadn't gotten her gate fixed ❖❖" the repairman wouldn't be there until Tuesday ❖❖" and there was a possibility that her cat got into the neighbor's yard again.

"Who's there?"

"My name is Ruth Watson, and I'm with Avon. Do you have a minute?"

Lisa threw a kimono-style robe over her pajamas and opened the door. A woman stood there with a small bag of free samples and a stack of catalogues; she had shoulder-length blonde hair and wore a gown that reminded Lisa a little bit of the one that her mother had worn in her senior class picture. "I'm sorry, but I really don't have time today. I'm eating dinner and then I'm going to go to bed."

"I'm sorry to bother you then, Mrs...."

"Hughes. And that's Doctor Hughes."

"Oh. I'm dreadfully sorry. Good day."

Lisa closed the door and turned the deadbolt tumbler, then went back to her dinner. When she was done, with no further interruptions, she took her plate to the kitchen to rinse it and put it in the dishwasher.

She saw a figure standing by the back door, halfway hiding behind the white curtain, and thought for a moment that it was David, but then she realized that it was impossible for him to get home from Omaha so quickly. "Jason, you get on home before I call your mother," she snapped. "What did I tell you last week? It's not a prank to sneak into people's houses. It's called trespassing and it's a crime."

"I'm not Jason," Ruth said, and stepped out from under the curtain.

"What the hell is this? I told you I am not looking at your catalogues tonight. And trespassing is trespassing whether you're in high school or not."

"You're interfering with my plans," Ruth snarled.

"That's it. I'm calling the police." Lisa grabbed the rolling pin from her kitchen counter and backed toward the wall. She tried to look annoyed, and not let on that her heart was beating wildly in her chest. Who was this woman, really?

"Laura Townsend."

"What?" Lisa's free hand touched the smooth plastic of the wall-mounted phone. It didn't occur to her for several seconds that the question that was answered was one that she hadn't spoken out loud.

A rope was thrown over her head before she could begin to press the buttons. Lisa grabbed at it while it tightened around her neck. She tried to scream ♦♦ "maybe those neighbor boys lighting firecrackers in their backyard would hear her. However, the only sound that came out was a thin wail; the rope was too tight to let more than the slightest breath escape. Lisa pulled at the rope with one hand and tried to grab onto something, anything, with the other as she was dragged across the floor.

Survival instinct took over, but she was already feeling dizzy. Lisa tried to breathe, but couldn't get any air. Her lungs burned, and the blackened edges of her vision crept toward the center.

Topeka, Kansas
Monday, October 22, 2007

"One hundred forty over eighty," said Julie. "It's a little up from the last time I saw you, but that's normal, especially in the circumstances. The bottom number is the one we're more concerned with, anyway."

"The cuffs don't lie," Sam said, mock-chidingly. "You told me you weren't worried at all."

"Shut up, Sam. I wasn't lying on this inch-thick mattress with a needle in my arm at the time, either," said Dean.

"It's not really a needle," Julie explained. "It's a small plastic tube and it doesn't have a point on it. And, Mr. Summers, there's nothing to worry about. Dr. Hughes will be in shortly, and can answer any questions you have."

"Where is she?" Sam asked. "She was supposed to meet us here a half-hour ago. It's already six-thirty."

"Probably looking over a few files."

"She hasn't even gotten here yet, has she?"

"Um... I haven't seen her, but I've been here for the last ten minutes and checking supplies for ten before that. I'm sure she'll be here in a little while."

At seven o'clock, Julie excused herself - to escape Sam's death-glare and Dean's grouching, and to call Dr. Hughes. She borrowed the phone from triage to call Dr. Hughes' cell. It routed to voice mail. Julie tried the home phone next, and got a busy signal.

At seven-ten, she still got a busy signal.

At seven-twenty, she was calling Sabrina and Geraldine at their homes to check for messages.

At seven-thirty, she was calling the police station.

At seven-forty-five, she was taking an extended break in the ladies' room because it was one of the few places where Sam wouldn't follow her and demand answers that she didn't have.

*

David's first thought upon reaching his house was that he hated it ♦♦ "really, really hated it ♦♦" when Lisa parked her Buick Regal in the middle of the driveway. His second thought was that the Regal shouldn't even be there.

Maybe the patient went into labor on Sunday night, and ended up going to the emergency room instead of calling Lisa at home. It wouldn't be the first time, and he looked forward to a lazy weekday at home with Lisa, even though she would probably be stressed out about her patient's welfare.

He parked on the street and went inside. He dropped his briefcase just inside the front door. "Lisa?"

No answer. He shrugged and went upstairs to get a change of clothes and step into the shower. He found their bed made, and Lisa's scrubs still draped in plastic over the back of the vanity chair. Odd. She usually put them back in her closet if she wasn't going to be wearing them, and if she was working, she'd have them on instead of over the chair.

He called out her name again, and then a little louder; there was still no response.

She doesn't like it when you baby her, David, he told himself, but something felt just a little off. He went back down the stairs, glanced through the living room, the dining room, went into the kitchen...

His blood froze.

Lisa was sitting in one of the kitchen chairs, wearing her white and yellow pajamas. She had duct tape around her mouth and her eyes, and her arms were tied behind the chair. Each ankle was fastened to one of the chair legs with more pieces of rope. He saw fresh bruises and shallow cuts on her face and arms.

A woman of about twenty-five stood behind her with a gun pointed at Lisa's head. Lisa pulled weakly at the bonds and wailed something that he couldn't understand through the tape.

"David. You're home," the intruder said coldly. "Don't move."

He moved. He didn't think; he just reached for the knife block. He was usually able to win a plushie toy at the fair at the knife-throwing and star-throwing booths, and now his target was the gun in the woman's hand. One knife knocked into it and the gun went sailing away. However, she didn't look surprised at all. She stood with her arms folded, challengingly, mockingly.

David picked up the butcher knife and ran at her. Until the last fraction of a second, he thought he would hit her. He didn't understand why she wasn't at least trying to get out of the way, and it heightened his feeling of dread.

She stepped aside, a snap motion that looked almost as if she blinked out of existence and reappeared in the next moment three feet away. He stumbled from the unexpected lack of impact, from not striking anything when he was expecting to, and cold hands closed around his left arm.

He felt the floor fall away from him and he crashed into something. It was only when he felt a sticky substance on his wrist and hair tangled on his ring that he realized he had been thrown into Lisa.

The knife in his hand was buried to the handle in her back.

Over his screaming, "Lisa! Lisa! Ohgod, baby, no!" he thought he heard a second voice:

"She was in my way. She won't keep me from Sam now."

The door swung open, and Dean snapped his head up. They'd kept him waiting two hours longer than he was supposed to have been waiting, and while he could understand that sometimes there were delays in the hospital, it would require a massive pile-up on the highway, or a fire in a public building, to take up all the operating rooms.

It was only Julie, ashen-faced and holding a blue plastic clipboard. She hugged it to her chest and looked at Sam and then Dean without speaking.

"It's nine o'clock," Dean said. "What is going on?"

"I need you to sign this form," Julie said quietly. She handed him the clipboard and a pen.

"What is this? Authorization for a change of doctor? No way. I'm not going to have my picture pasted all over the country and called a freak. I have work to do, important work. I don't want to be recognized and I don't want anybody else in my business!"

"Dr. Hughes is not coming."

"Why not?"

"Because she passed away an hour ago."

"What? What happened?" Sam's heart sank. Why would an apparently healthy woman in early middle age drop dead? And did that mean that he wouldn't be holding his son that evening?

"I don't know. The police aren't answering any questions about it right now."

"The police? Oh, shit. She didn't just die. She was murdered."

"I don't know that either. I just need Mr. Summers to sign the form and give it back to me."

"And I told you I'm not signing it," said Dean. "Hey, Sam. Hand me my clothes. We're going back out to Tennessee."

Julie frowned. "What's in Tennessee?"

"Friend of ours, out near Nashville."

"You're going out to see a friend now? Can't it wait? You're due in five days, Mr. Summers, and that date could have been a little bit off. You're on borrowed time right now. Your son could be born any day."

"Firstborns are usually late, especially in this family," Dean said.

"You'll be AMA," Julie warned.

"Oh, big, scary letters, there." Dean pulled his IV out and got out of bed, then proceeded to pull on his sweatpants.

Julie sighed, accepting defeat. "Drive slowly. And stay away from the grain silos."

"What's wrong with the grain silos?"


"Another one blew up last night. Saw it on the news. It happened in April, too. The anchorman said it had something to do with weather change. Corn starch all over the place, and one guy died."

"You don't happen to remember his name, do you?" asked Sam.

"Um, something-or-other Parker. I wasn't paying very close attention. Well, you know where the front desk is. Please be careful, Mr. Summers." Julie slipped back out of the room.

Dean sat on the edge of the bed and strained to tie his shoelaces. "You know something, Sam? That bitch is really pissing me off now."

"Julie means well. I don't think she had anything in training that prepared her for... our situation."

"Not Julie. Laura. Come on, Sam! Lisa's dead, Mitch is probably dead  she knows we're getting close."

"Close?! He was our last contact!" Sam shouted. "Got any other ideas?"

For the first time in months, he saw real fear, unhidden, in Dean's green eyes. "No, I don't. And we only have nine days to find her."

"And what about you, Dean? What about Ryan?"

"No offense, Sam, but you can't work without me on this one. The stakes were high to begin with and she just raised them. We just have to hope he waits."

Dean signed himself out of the hospital and walked two steps in front of a silent and brooding Sam. He saw a man standing by the curb, three paces away from the ambulance driveway, in a long brown coat.

"Dean." Sam caught up with his (much) longer strides and nodded towards the man. "Look."

"I saw him."

John Winchester walked briskly over to his sons. "Boys, I know I said I was leaving. And that I wasn't going to talk to you again, but... but you're both in trouble. It's a little worse than I thought."

"We kind of know that, Dad," Sam said. Dean stepped on his foot. "Ouch!"

"I followed your credit card trail and this morning it ended here." He nodded up at the hospital sign. "Are you all right, Dean?"

"I'm fine, sir. False alarm, that's all."

"Good. We're going to Texas. I'm still missing a few of the pieces, but I've got part of the picture of what you're up against. What we're up against. Do you remember the Sisterhood of the Night God?"

"A little bit," Dean said. "You showed me their symbol and how it was different from the Zenker sign."

"Laura Townsend is a Sister who ascended to Tier Two before her death," said John. "If my recent contact's information is correct, she needs to sacrifice five more people to reach Tier Three. Which is exactly what we don't want to happen."

"Four," Sam said. "Maybe even three. She took another one out this morning, I think."

"No. She can only draw in the harvest, the lives of those who called on her, on the anniversary of

her death. If she gets all the way through to you, Sam, she'll have taken two hundred sixteen lives. And what she's doing now will be child's play compared to the future. We have to stop her before she gets that far. If we can save all five of you, then all the better. But that might not be possible. I don't know. We have a lot to do in the next week, and I need both of you to help."

"We'll do whatever we can," said Dean. "And, um, thanks for coming back."

John nodded. "We have to work together or she wins."

[Back to index](#)

Chapter 13 by Eleventh Guard Coruscant Exil

Lewisville, Texas

Tuesday, October 30, 2007

John finished drawing the last curving black line on a large sheet of paper, one made up of four pages photocopied from a Mapsco and Scotch-taped together. "This is the area we'll be searching," he said. "Everything inside the black line."

"How do you know?" asked Sam.

"Because Henry Moser had a credit card issued from Terrence Farms that required him to enter the exact odometer reading every time he stopped for gas, and with the odometer readings and places on the map where he used either that credit card or his personal card, we can restrict his final location to a pretty small area. Almost a circle, about a mile in diameter."



"That's three-quarters of a square mile!"

"We'll split up and search it. The EMF meters will help, and it shouldn't take more than a few hours to search the entire area. It's like the warmer-colder game you used to play when you were six. The harder part is first, and that will be encircling the area with the banishing mixture. It's a line about three miles long. And Laura's spirit won't be able to cross over the line, even if it's a sparse line, to bother us."

Sam looked up from the five-gallon bucket on the floor in front of him. He and Dean were mixing salt, pulverized angelica root, and crushed elecampane leaves, a simple concoction that seemed to be a bit too simple to work. "Are you sure?"

"Yes, I'm sure. The problem is that spirits are all it will keep out. Not things they throw, wounds they've inflicted outside the safe area, or other things they can do from outside."

"Sounded too good to be true," said Dean. "How much time do you think we'll have before she pitches a tent on the other side of the line?"

"That depends on your friends. Joshua is probably an easy mark, and I don't really know what she'll do   stalk him at midnight? Wait awhile? But if I was on a schedule that was tight, I'd spring into action right away, and I think she'll move close to midnight. The best thing we can do would be to call those singers and tell them how to hold her off."

"I don't have their number. It's not exactly public information. Hey... wait a second." Sam stopped stirring the powder and looked up at John. "We're using them as a buffer zone? We're supposed to be trying to save them!"

"Sam, don't start with me right now. This has gone beyond rescuing a few people. Laura will have most of the powers of a demon if she isn't stopped, and this is the only way!"

"We don't know that. We don't even know how she managed to get to the second tier with only thirty-five murders. Either we overlooked one when we went through the obituaries, or there's

another piece missing.”

John went quiet and filled the blender with more angelica root.

“What? There’s something you’re not telling us.”

John set his mouth hard and looked at each of them. “You’re right. I wasn’t going to say anything, because it wouldn’t make a difference, but if you’re going to be difficult, then I should tell you.” He glared at Sam and continued, “Laura doesn’t need you. I believe that you’re the one she’s after to take to the underworld. The greater demons are using her, and through her, they can all claim and use you.”

“I don’t understand,” said Sam. “She needs five lives. She only has five available.”

“Six,” John corrected. “She killed Beverly Mullins in 1946. Beverly was carrying a child, and in sacrificing Beverly, she claimed both mother and child. After the point that the baby is fully formed and would live apart from its mother, but hasn’t yet been separated ♦♦“ they are two lives, but both accepted as sacrifices. Once born, the infant can die, but it will do the Sister no good.”

“Dad?” Dean prompted. “What are you saying?”

“Laura doesn’t want to waste Sam. She wants to ascend to the Third Tier with him alive. That’s why she killed Lisa, Dean. Your son’s birth would force Laura to kill Sam, like any other victim, instead of taking him to Hell whole, body and spirit.”

None of them spoke for several minutes. Sam shivered as he filled bucket after bucket with their protective powders and carried them, one by one, to the truck John had rented.

Finally, after dark, they’d packed in as much as they could into the truck bed and also loaded up the back seat of the Impala. John locked up the hotel room and pocketed the key cards. “Boys, it’s going to be all right,” he said. “We know what to do, and we know how to do it. And the faster we start, the easier it will be. After she’s gone, we’ll go to Sherman. There’s a surgeon up there who owes me a favor.”

Denton, Texas

Wednesday, October 31, 2007

He felt dizzy, and closing his eyes offered no respite. He could feel the bed under his back, the plastic-fabric cuffs around his wrists and ankles; as far as he could see, though, he was suspended, floating, and the disparity between tactile sensations and sight made him feel woozy.

He had lost track of the days. It was all the same to him; he couldn’t remember how long it had been since he’d been allowed to go outside, and feel the warmth of the sun. Months. He was eighteen years old ♦♦“ probably nineteen, now ♦♦“ and couldn’t even remember what was real in his memory and what he was just imagining. Chained to a hospital bed for days; thrashing out for freedom whenever he could, earning another hour, another day, another week in solitary confinement.

Tears pooled in his eyes and slid down his temples into his hair. They couldn’t blur the images above him; thick bars, crossing each other in cell patterns; skeletons prancing about on floors unseen, sometimes hovering inches above an iron I-beam, sometimes floating directly above him. He screamed. No one was there to hear him. No one could make it stop.

Shh, shh.

He turned his head, the only part of his body that he could move, in the direction of the sound. A

nurse was standing next to him, dressed in white, watching him with sad blue eyes. He could see her, as she was, not as she would have looked to a machine.

He sobbed again, and her hand brushed against his cheek. "Help me," he rasped, and nuzzled her palm.

"Shh." She pushed her fingers against his eyelids. He let them close, and the jerking skeletons disappeared, blocked by her hand. "I release you from this."

He felt her other hand move underneath his neck, and then there was a cracking sound, a brief blaze of pain at the base of his skull. Then he felt nothing, saw nothing, heard nothing, and it was sleep, rest at last.

Dallas, Texas



Wednesday, October 31, 2007

"You've been in there for twenty minutes. Hurry up! We're going to be late!"

"I'm not going."

"Then open up the door and start explaining why you're taking up the bathroom, hmm?"

Melissa creaked the bathroom door open just enough to stick her head out. "It's one in the morning."

"Right. And we're supposed to be meeting Mia and Desiree in room 404 at one-thirty   " phew, what's that smell?"

"Powdered frankincense and benzoin resin."

Amanda blinked. "Why?"

"Because it keeps evil spirits away, that's why. Have you forgotten what day it is?"

"No, I haven't. It's Halloween. And that means that today is the day where the veil between the dead and the living is the thinnest, and ghosts come out and play. You know the best stuff to get rid of them fast? Hershey bars and Reese's cups. With a few bags of M and M's."

"Fuck you, Amanda. It's coming!"

Amanda retreated to the nearest bed in the hotel room and sat down on top of the jacquard quilt. "I can't believe this shit. This is about what those two little stalker creeps in Denver said, isn't it? It's a good thing I still have their phone number somewhere with all the other loser numbers. Because I really ought to call the police and report them, and that cell number might be enough to track them down."

"You just don't get it, do you? Our record contract! Brandon! It's all because of that well, the one that was all your idea. And whatever is in it granting wishes is taking them back now. We're only famous for as long as we live. And we are going to die if we don't find some way to keep it out!"

"Calm down, okay? Just calm down." Amanda got up and forced her way into the bathroom, then put her arms around her shaking friend. "Don't let them get to you. We can stay here if it makes you feel better, but you're really overreacting."

"We don't have enough." Melissa shook harder and started to sob. "We don't have enough incense to last twenty-three hours. It'll be burned in one even if we only use a little bit."

"I'll go get more. Where did you get it in the first place?"

"A little shop about five miles north of here. I don't think they're open now, but you could break the windows and steal the jars they keep behind the counter. If you go fast. Maybe you could do it before it gets to us... or carry a little with you and burn it on your way."

"Okay, no. I'm not going to burglarize a magic shop."

"Come on! You could hire a lawyer if you get caught. You might get probation or community service or something... it's that or we both die!"

Amanda sat on the seat of the ivory porcelain toilet and pulled Melissa onto her lap, firmly, to try to keep her from an all-out panic. "No, no, we're not going to die. Did you take anything earlier today? I mean, I know we were smoking pot with Mia, but that's not going to make you freak like this. Was there anything else?"

"No. Please just go, Amanda. You can leave money for repairs if you have to!"

Amanda sighed and tipped her head back, knocking it lightly on the carved mahogany cabinet above the toilet. "Fine. I'll go. But you owe me, big time. Stay right here and don't freak the fuck out."

She grabbed her keys and purse and strode out the hotel room door. She had no intention of actually breaking into a closed shop; she could just go to the nearest Wal-Mart or grocery store, buy some herbs, stick them in a cloth bag, and say that she found something 'better'.

This is fucking insane. She's on something. I know she is. And this is one hell of a bad trip. Amanda made it four paces down the hallway before she ran into a woman that she was sure wasn't there a few seconds ago. "Playing statue is so third-grade," she said, and looked up to glare at her.

Someone screamed. Amanda didn't realize for a few seconds that it was her own voice. The woman staring back at her was the one that she had dreamed of on four separate occasions... the life-giver, the inspiration for...

Amanda ran back to her room and struggled with the deadbolt. Her hands were shaking and she was already starting to hyperventilate. She eventually got the deadbolt into place and pushed a the small mahogany dresser in front of it.

"Amanda! I thought you were going to the magic shop!" Melissa cried.

Amanda sprinted to the bathroom and locked that door, too. "Too late. She's here."

"What?"

"The woman. The one that starts fires in our dreams. She's in the hallway."

"Oh, Amanda! What are we going to do?"

"We'll think of something. Um, um, we could call someone else. Maybe Mia would go and get what we need."

"No, she wouldn't, either! She's probably too wasted to know whether we're even there or not." There was a knock at the door, and Melissa burst into tears.

Amanda turned her purse upside down and emptied it onto the high-pile rug, spilling makeup compacts, coins, keys, and a few receipts and matchbooks. She pulled currency and more receipts out of her wallet and started frantically sorting through the receipts. "Waldorf... no good. Royal Gardens... no... Grand Hyatt... oh, if I threw it out I'm going to fucking kill myself... Ritz-Carlton... 7-11." She turned the receipt over and grabbed her cell phone, then dialed the number written on the back, with trembling fingers. "Pick up the phone... please pick it up... please..."

One mile north of Denton, Texas
Wednesday, October 31, 2007

"Do you need me to slow down?" Sam asked.

"No." Dean and Sam had laid a mile of herbs and salt, with three-quarters left to go before they met back up with John and started scanning the ground inside the lopsided circle.

"I know you're tired. I'm kind of tired. We can lay the salt slower, as long as we don't stop moving."

"I'm fine. Really, Sam. This is hardly the most strenuous thing I've done in my life."

"Yeah, but, uh, at least let me have a turn at pushing the wheelbarrow, and you drop the next half-mile of herbs."

Dean put down the wheelbarrow handles and wiped his forehead, where sweat was beginning to bead despite the fact that it was only about sixty degrees. "If you want to, go ahead."

Sam was trying to convince himself that this was just another job, that their father had everything under control and they were just there to make it go more smoothly. It was all too easy to remember, though, that he was a target. And Dean and their son were targets, too, of the Sister of the Night God. They weren't going to get out of it as simply as they thought they might.

Maybe if I agree to go with her, she'll leave them alone.

Sam didn't have to remind himself that the taste of pain that he had in his dreams, the drop in the ocean of agony that was waiting for him, was more than he could withstand. He only had to remind himself that she would do no such thing as leave Dean and.... Ryan?... alive.

"Sam?"

"What?"

"Your phone's ringing."

Sam opened the phone's cover and pressed the Talk button. The number was a New York area code, but could have come from anywhere if it was another cell. "Dad? What's with the weird area code?"

"Sam? Is that you?" A hysterical woman was on the line. "Please tell me that's you, Sam, please."

"Yeah, this is Sam. Who's calling?"

"Amanda. Amanda Kline. We met about... five or six months ago. In Denver."

Sam stumbled back against the wheelbarrow. "Oh, my god. What's going on?"

"She's here. The crazy woman with the eyes. They're blue and then they turn yellow. The life-

giver. The firestarter. Sam, how do I stop her?”

“Stay calm, okay? What’s she doing?”

“I don’t know. We blocked the door and we’re burning frankincense to keep her out but we’re about to run out of it.”

“Who’s we? Is Melissa with you?”

“Yeah. Yeah. She’s here.”

“Okay. Amanda, that’s Laura, and she’s nothing to fuck around with, and right now she’s after Melissa, not you.” He held the phone between his ear and shoulder and awkwardly pushed the wheelbarrow, while his heart pounded in his chest. Joshua was gone. “You’re going to need some dragon’s blood ink. Do you have any?”

“No! It’s not like I have my own personal magic supply cabinet in my suitcase!”

“Then you’ll have to use real blood, but just a little bit. And salt, enough to make a circle on the floor.”

“We have that. There’s a whole jar of coarse margarita salt at the mini-bar, and I have a few packets of salt and pepper somewhere.”

“Here’s what you do, and when you do it, work fast. Make a ring around yourselves with the salt, right on the floor. Make sure it’s big enough that you can sit in the middle of it and she can’t reach you even if she leans over. Then you take the blood and draw a ‘Y’ shape in the middle of the ring. Extend the middle stem of the ‘Y’ so that there are three lines that you could connect with a horizontal line, but don’t connect them. It’s a protective rune.”

“And we do that and stay in the middle and she can’t get us?”

“Well, not directly. You’ll have to make sure the door is bolted so nobody else can get in, because she can manipulate other people who can cross the line. In fact, if you can get some weapons and hold them with you, that’s better, and shoot at anything that comes too close. If not, sit and pray. You can try saying ‘Christo’ at her, but I don’t know if that’s going to help. She’s not possessed and she’s not exactly a demon. Worth a try if you run out of other tricks.”

“Run out?!”

“Just make the circle and focus on that. Call me back if you run into more trouble. A few more hours and Laura will be gone. Try to stick it out for that long.”

Sam ended the phone call and started pushing the wheelbarrow faster. “Uh, Dean, what I said about slowing down? Never mind. Joshua... Laura got him. She’s hunting Melissa, and I’m not sure how long she and Amanda can hold out. We need to get this circle closed.”

Dean, stiff-lipped and pale, only nodded.

“Dean? What’s wrong?”

Dean steadied himself against the wheelbarrow and then drew a deep breath. “Nothing. I’m... uh, a little concerned about the situation, that’s all.”

“Just concerned? You’re doing better than me, then. Let’s go.”

Dallas, Texas

Wednesday, October 31, 2007

The dresser slid across the floor and crashed into the closet when the door opened. Amanda had just finished pouring yellow margarita salt in a ten-foot circle, the largest that she could manage in the suite. Melissa smeared blood from her left wrist in the shape that Sam had told them.

The last wisp of smoke from the incense curled towards the ceiling.

"She can't cross the line. She can't cross the line." Amanda covered her face and curled up as small as she could. "There aren't any gaps in it. I checked. I checked twice."

The woman's voice came over them, speaking in some tongue that reminded her of Latin, but wasn't exactly the same; these words had an inflection that sent needles of fear all the way to her bones. Amanda clapped her hands over her ears and started to rock and hum, to blocking out the sounds. Old fears welled up with every syllable that broke through her staccato rendition of the Star-Spangled Banner. Terror at the Thing in the Closet which she hadn't really thought about in twenty years. C-3P0's glowing eyes. That the principal would send her home, and her mother, who never flinched at anything she had done, would be disappointed in her for breaking three of Kristen's ribs in the school parking lot. That she might be a freak, hopelessly sick and twisted, psychotic and waiting for the trigger that would send her over the edge. One of the damned. That she deserved everything that she got.

No! You're a fucking liar! We do not!

She glanced up at Melissa, who was staring at Laura, silent tears streaming down her face. "I'm sorry," Melissa whispered.

"Melissa, no! Snap out of it!" Amanda cried.

Melissa slowly climbed to her feet. "I killed him," she went on in a monotone, as though speaking in a trance. "I'm the one who wanted to be famous, Amanda. I'm the one who killed Brandon. Left his wife and daughter alone."

"No! It wasn't your fault, don't you see? It was hers! She killed him!"

Melissa jerked her arm away from Amanda's sweaty, slippery hand. "I deserve this," she said, and took her first step away from the center of the circle.

"No! Don't go! If not for you, then for me! Laura is going to come after me if she gets you!"

Melissa crossed the line.

Amanda screamed. The cut to Melissa's throat was a flash, so fast she only saw it in the chandelier's light glinting off the knife, and the blood spray across the floor. Melissa slumped silently to the floor and Amanda couldn't hear the devil-tongue anymore, not over her own voice.

She fumbled for her phone. She couldn't find the receipt now, couldn't see through tears to locate it, but her fingers tapped the buttons for "Recent Calls" and "Dial Number."

Something crashed behind her, and she jumped. Crystal shattered and sprayed over her back; light blazed. Amanda risked a glance over her shoulder and saw the fallen chandelier, dripping blazing oil on one of the beds and on the floor around it, at the edge of her circle. The carpet was on fire.

"Christo!" Amanda shrieked.

Laura didn't even flinch.

When the flames started lapping at the edge of the bright red rune, Amanda sprang to her feet. She didn't know what to do, couldn't think of a plan, couldn't think; her instinct was to take off running, and she flung a handful of salt at Laura and ran past her.

Down the hall, to the stairs. Elevator, confined space, bad. She raced down the steps two at a time, panting, trying not to slip. She could run for hours. She'd never done it before, never more than thirty minutes and not at a full sprint, but it didn't matter. It was do or die, literally, just fucking run, past the desk, around the guards, to the street.

Amanda darted between honking and swerving cars. She heard the sounds of crunching metal and glass somewhere behind her, but none of it really mattered. Just move. This way, that way, far away.

Blinking lights. Flashing lights. Red and blue and amber. "Hey, slow down!" somebody called out to her, and she didn't have the breath to shout back that she couldn't. That the hell-beast was somewhere behind her and she had to run. Keep ahead.

"That's an order! Stop!"

Can't stop can't stop she's coming can't stop can't...

Something jerked her and she felt her body being thrown to the ground. No no have to keep going have to keep have to...

Her head slammed into a hard surface, and her thought trailed off into soft black as unconsciousness pulled her under its surface.

Officer Smith knelt down next to the fallen woman. "Call 911, Ackley!" he shouted. "And don't move her - she has a head injury!"

Officer Ackley threw the taser through the open window of the squad car and grabbed their phone.

1 mile north of Denton, Texas
Wednesday, October 31, 2007

John took the north half of the circled area and Sam and Dean were trudging through the weedy overgrowth in the south half. "I know you're going to think I'm being an ass for saying this to you," said Sam, "but we really have to speed it up. A hundred meters a minute is not going to cut it."

"I'm going as fast as I can," Dean puffed.

"This might actually be faster if you went back to the Impala and waited for me. Amanda just called back but dropped the phone and the line went dead. I didn't hear what happened, but it can't be anything good if she's on the run already."

"You think you and Dad can dig her up without me?"

"Yeah. You're looking really worn-out, Dean. Hand me the jazzed-up Walkman and get back to the car."

Sam was expecting an argument, and when he didn't get one, that fact only added to his growing anxiety. He walked faster, pretending that he wasn't looking over his shoulder every ten seconds.

The EMF meter picked up nothing. Look. Nothing. Look. Nothing. He's falling.

"Dean!" Sam shouted. He sprinted to his brother's side, and found Dean kneeling on the ground, eyes squeezed shut, arms wrapped around his bulging belly. "What's the matter?"

"Where's Dad?" Dean gasped.

"About a quarter mile north of us."

"Get him... tell him to finish... by himself. Need you... need you to drive. To Sherman."

The icy feeling in the pit of Sam's stomach crystallized and shattered.

[Back to index](#)

Chapter 14 by Eleventh Guard Coruscant Exil

Near Denton, Texas

Wednesday, October 31, 2007

The dark stains spreading down the insides of Dean's pants made Sam's breath catch in his throat, and he dropped his flashlight. Even when he realized that it wasn't blood ❖❖❖ "not yet ❖❖❖" he stood still for several seconds, unable to move, not unwilling. Dean started to sink further to the ground, and Sam broke out of his paralysis to catch him.

"How far apart are the contractions?" Sam asked.

"Nine, ten minutes," Dean said weakly. He took a a few rapid breaths. "That was the first bad one, though."

"When the hell did you get the first not-so-bad one?"

"While we were driving from the hotel," Dean admitted. "It's gone now. I can walk."

"Fuck that, Dean. You stay put and I'm driving over to you."

Sam raced down to the Impala, almost a quarter of a mile away, and drove it to the end of the dirt road and past, along bumpy ground. Shit. What are we going to do? We can't leave the circle. We can't fucking leave the circle. And we sure can't stay in it!

He parked the car and threw open the trunk. Guns, an extra bag of salt and herbs, the crib, two canisters of formula, their suitcase. Sam pulled a stolen hotel towel out of the suitcase and laid it across the passenger seat of the Impala.

Dean slowly took off his soaked pants and shorts, then put on a dry pair of undershorts from their suitcase and sat on the towel. "Oh, wait, hold on," he said. "She can't get in, and we can't get out."

"That's what I was going to tell you," said Sam. "Laura can't touch us right now - well, not very easily - but if we go past the salt ring, then we're in serious danger. I'll call Dad and get that doctor's number. I'll call him at home, or have Dad call, and he can come out here."

Dean rolled his head against the back of the headrest to face Sam. "You think he's going to get here alive?"

"Uh, maybe Laura is still chasing Amanda?" We're trapped, and she knows it. We drove right into it! Sam pulled out his phone. "I'm going to call Dad anyway. He'd know what we need to do."


Sam quickly pulled up the preset number, but nothing happened. He pulled the phone away from his ear and looked at the lighted display. No signal from carrier. "I ❖❖❖ I ❖❖❖" Dean, I'm not

getting a signal. I'll have to just find him myself. Are you going to be all right if I leave? I won't be long. Maybe ten minutes, at the most."

"Sure." Dean nodded and closed his eyes.

"I won't be long. I promise." Sam squeezed Dean's hand and kissed his cheek.

*

He could have sworn he heard a car, and that it wasn't very far away. He'd warned his sons about that  "they could cover more ground in a vehicle than they could on foot, but they'd have to go slow or risk passing over the target location. Laura's presence would light up their meters, but all that they had to go on here was the residual energy of her remains, and that would be only a faint trace.

"Dad! Dad! Where are you!"

John turned around and held out his flashlight. Sam was running towards him, all urgency and speed and frantic strides. "Sam! Did you find something? Where's Dean?"

"No, no, we didn't find anything." Sam stopped running only when he caught up to John, and he struggled to catch his breath. "It's Dean. He's in labor and we have to call your friend up in Sherman, get him to meet us here. I tried to call you but my phone can't find the carrier."

"He still has time," said John. "If this progresses anything like when you and your brother were born, it's going to be ten or twelve hours before the baby comes. Maybe longer."

"Minus four. He said the contractions are about nine minutes apart, and his water just broke. We have to get help."

John swallowed hard and looked at his own phone. "Wish he'd have said something sooner... and I can't find the carrier, either. Damn it. Sam, we're going to have to do this ourselves. Let him rest, and you and I will work faster out here."

"Oh, hell no. I'm not leaving Dean alone."

"Samuel Winchester, you listen to me. We have to find this girl's bones and we have to do it now, before something happens to your brother. Together we can search twice as fast as I can alone. Dean will be fine without you."

"You don't know that!"

"I do know that there isn't much you can do for him, and there is a lot that you can do to get rid of the danger that's facing both of you. Do you have any idea what is going to happen to you if we fail? Any idea?"

"My soul... I know, you told me!"

"You will be tortured by things that you can't even imagine yet, until you break, until you are a pawn in the hands of the one who made you that way. Who is a pawn in the hands of a demon. Is that what you want, Sam?"

"Of course I don't!" Sam fidgeted and rocked, afraid for Dean, afraid for himself, for their son, for everything.

"Get ahold of yourself, and don't shout at me. I'll say this one more time. We have to find where

Laura's bones were moved to. I hope we find them fast, and it will be faster with you looking through the south half of the field. Now go."

Marines, even ex-Marines, never let their fear show. It was bad for morale, especially when morale was this low to begin with. John walked faster as Sam took off south; when Sam was out of sight, his walk turned into a run. His sons were in trouble, and he didn't know how to help them, except to keep on doing what they were doing, and hope and pray that they didn't lose the gamble.

*

"Dean, we can't call anybody. Dad's phone isn't working, either. We can't drive anywhere until we find the bones, either. I'm sorry for all of this. I'm so sorry. It's my fault, if I hadn't..." Sam leaned over and put his arms around Dean.

"If we can't drive, then what are you doing here? Go on and look for Little Miss Bitchcakes."

"What are you talking about? I can't leave you."

"Yes, you can." Dean made a quick glance at his watch, which showed 3:43. He had a contraction at 3:37 and knew the next would come over him soon. He didn't want Sam to be there for it; he didn't want to scare his brother any more than he already had, and it was important that Sam focus on the task at hand. He wished he'd just walked back to the car by himself, and he chided himself for his weakness. Being the likely only man in the world who was going to have a baby 💎💎" and very soon 💎💎" wasn't a good enough excuse. Not for Dean Winchester.

"Damn it all, Dean! No, I'm not going anywhere!"

"Dad told you to go and keep searching. He gave you a fucking order, Sam!"

"What if everything happens fast? What if you need me?"

"We have some road flares in the trunk. I'll light one up if I need to call you back."

Dean leaned back, hard, against the seat. He was already feeling his muscles tighten, and tensing up and holding his breath would only make it worse. Sam jumped out of the car and slammed the door, leaving Dean by himself. He forced himself to breathe, as evenly as he could. 3:44. Ride it out, it's not as bad as getting hit with pellets of rock salt. Yet. It'll be over in a minute. A very long minute.

The door opened again and Sam placed something on the driver's seat. "Here are three flares. If I see one I'll come running right over. I swear. Dean, do you hear me? What's wrong?"

"Nothing's wrong." Dean reached over and closed his hand over the small sticks. He had been expecting the pattern of pain this time, and was better able to hide it. "You'd better get going."

Sam knelt over the seat for a few moments, as though he wanted to say something, but then he pulled himself back out of the Impala and ran in the direction that they had been headed before Sam stopped and sent Dean back. So long ago... it was only about thirty minutes, but it felt like longer. The pain faded away and Dean did his best to stay still on the seat, willing his body into stillness. He pulled up his shirt and looked down at his belly, skin stretched tight. "Do you mind slowing down a little?" he asked. "Because you really picked a bad time to join us, kid."

This time there was only a short warning of tension before he felt what seemed like every fiber inside him constrict and squeeze. Hurry, Sam. He vaguely remembered seeing Sherman on a map, about an hour's drive away, if they drove quickly. Did he even have an hour left? Probably.

But if they didn't make it...

The sensation of tissues stretching inside his body was uncomfortable, but not quite yet to a level that hurt. It was more like pressure... followed by a sharp constriction just to the left. Dean hissed his breath in and out through clenched teeth. To that moment, he thought there was no way for the baby to come out except through incisions. Out the same way his seed went in, he thought, and silently wished his son would stop, stay put, wait, your dad and grandpa won't be much longer, don't, don't, please.

*

4:19. No Sam, no John, and now the time between contractions was the about the same as the time they lasted. Dean was sure he had been stretched inside as much as his body could take before starting to tear, and every time pain ripped through him and the pressure blossomed into burning blunt force, he squeezed one of the flares in his left hand and the inside door handle with his right, waiting for the rending that would send him crawling out of the car and fumbling to send up the light that would call Sam back.

It didn't come, but the handle broke in Dean's hand. He dropped it, and when he felt he could move again, for maybe a minute or two, he touched his thin shorts. They were damp at back of the crotch area; he brought his hand back up and saw smears on his fingers, red darkened near to black in the moonlight.

Can't call Sam. Can't make him stop what he's doing. They have to find Laura. Dean inched over to the driver's side door and let himself out. The trunk, with more towels and a bottle of hydrogen peroxide, wasn't far away. He was halfway to it, moving slowly on his hands and knees, before he remembered that he didn't have the keys. Sam dropped them on the driver's seat.

Eyes watering, chest heaving, thighs shaking violently, Dean retrieved the keys and went for the trunk again. He couldn't see well enough to find the trunk's lock. Everything was a haze, and another cramp, stronger than any of the ones before, gripped him. He felt like he was trying to pass something as big as he was, and imagined his body splitting around it. Something warm and liquid ran down his thighs, and as his back arched and a cry burst from his throat, his head hit the bumper hard enough to briefly see lights explode.

You're a warrior. You don't just give up. They need you, the whole world does, and your son needs you. He struggled to form his thoughts, and forgot them almost soon as they came through his mind, but he sank to the ground and laid down on his back.

His trembling legs wouldn't move. He grabbed his shorts and sliced at them with his knife to get them off; the gash he accidentally cut into his hip registered as a scratch, a whisper against his flesh. He wanted Sam. He wanted Sam at his side, but even if he wanted to light the flare "💎💎" which he didn't, he swore he didn't (where's the flare, god where is it, need it, need Sam now, fuck, I can't, Sammy, Sammy) "💎💎" he couldn't get to it.

*

Sam's thoughts were flying even faster than his feet, and he almost didn't notice when the meter in his hand started to blink. Stop! He stopped in his tracks and looked around wildly, and then he remembered that the command was to him, from himself, and the device was picking up something from the ground he was standing on.

The weeds were shorter and sparser under his feet than they were a few meters beyond. "Dad!" he screamed. "Dad! Over here!"

He ripped weeds with his hands and marked the perimeter around the space where the signal

was the strongest. He heard his father echo something back, and ten minutes later the headlights of John's rented truck blazed a few meters from Sam's head.

John tossed a shovel to Sam and the two of them flung piles of freshly dug dirt over their shoulders. Sam's arms and legs ached, but he kept on shoveling, one heaved clump of soil and roots after another. His lungs burned. He had to get the bones, light them up, burn them down, get back to Dean.

Clink.

John's shovel struck something metal, and a minute later the boxlike case was liberated from the ground. It must have weighed a hundred pounds, but Sam hauled it up by himself and set it on the ground just above the shallow pit that they'd dug out.

John wiped caked dirt off the top of the case and shined his flashlight over it. It looked like an oversized metal toolbox, fastened with a thick padlock through a half-inch of iron. "Property of Amos Terrence, Nashville, Tennessee," John panted. "This was Moser's box."

"Cut the lock!" cried Sam.

John jumped onto the truck's bumper to sort through his tools and retrieve the bolt cutter.. "I've got it from here, Sam," he said. "Go get Dean and as soon as you see the fire, drive! Meet me at the corner of highways 11 and 56 in Sherman. I'll catch up."

*

"Dean!"

Sam saw Dean writhing on the ground, right behind the Impala, about thirty seconds before he could get to his side, and every one of the thirty pumped more adrenaline into his blood until he thought that every throbbing vein was about to explode.

"Dean, we dug her up." Sam said. "We can go now."

Dean grabbed Sam's arm and looked up at him, green eyes wide and bloodshot, dripping tears. "Help me up, Sam," he gasped.

"Dad will be here in a few minutes. We'll get him to help. Okay?"



A spasm jolted Dean's body and twisted his back. He came up off the ground, breathing in ragged gasps, speaking only in a tortured whimper: "Sam... Sammy... aaa-aah!"

Sam saw how much blood Dean was losing, dark stains on his legs and on the grass. "Fuck," Sam breathed. What now? He wasn't going to lose Dean, especially not now that it was all coming to an end. They had her. Their father was probably caressing the bones of Laura Townsend with the gentle warmth of a blowtorch at that very moment. Dean and the baby, they depended on Sam, couldn't wait...

Sam opened the back passenger-side door of their car and then lifted Dean. "You're going to be all right," he whispered, even though he was sure that Dean could hear his pounding heart, betraying his own terror. How were they going to do this, as close to a natural birth as possible in the situation, with only Sam to assist Dean?

They'd manage. They'd have to; there wasn't any other choice. He laid his brother on the back seat and put his hands under Dean's knees. "Try to breathe," he said. "You'll need it." He knelt on the ground and pushed Dean's thighs apart with his elbows. "Is he moving yet?"

“Uhh. Uh-huh.” Dean made a strangled sound deep in his throat and started to twist around.

“No, don’t move! Stay still, just stay there. When I get to three, push   as hard as you can. It’s going to hurt, but you can do it. I’m here, Dean. I’m with you.” He reached forward with one hand and clasped it around one of Dean’s. “One... two... three!”

*

John only stayed long enough to see the salt crystals sparkle with the light of the crackling fire, burning through bone and through sixty-four years of terror. Dean and Sam... his boys. He had to protect his boys.

The Impala wasn’t moving. He feared that he was too late, that he’d been able to destroy the spirit but not in time for Dean. “Sam!” he screamed.

“Dad!”

Sam ran over to meet him, and threw himself at John. He had blood all over his arms and his shirt, and his face was streaked with tears, cutting clean streaks through dirt and more red smears.

“Sam, where’s Dean?” John asked.

“Come here.” Sam pulled away from his father and motioned for him to follow.

John looked inside the back of the Impala. Dean was lying across the seats, in a shirt but no pants, with a stained red towel wrapped around his waist. His belly was still distended, but much less than earlier that morning. Another towel was wadded up on his chest. “Dean? Son, can you hear me?” Please say something...

Dean slowly lifted his head, weak, spent. “Dad?”

John shuddered with relief and put his hand out on the frame to steady himself. “How are you feeling?” he asked. It was a stupid question. He could smell the thick copper tang and see dark blotches all over the interior seats. He didn’t want to ask the real question, are you going to live?

“I’ll make it. Could use something to drink. Sam, c’mere, show him.”

Sam reached to the towel on Dean’s chest. When he picked it up, it started to wriggle and wail. “Hold out your arms,” Sam said to John.

John took the bundle and looked at the small pink face nestled in bunched-up terry cloth. “Shh,” he said. “Don’t cry.” He bounced the infant gently until his cry softened to quiet sobs, then reached inside the towel to find the baby’s arm. John pressed his finger into a little palm, and watched tiny fingers wrap around and squeeze his fingertip. “He’s a strong boy, Sam. ”

“Born at four thirty-eight,” Sam said proudly. “He’s twelve... uh, thirteen minutes old. Just had his first bath, too, but he could use a little bit of baby shampoo. All I had was rags and the bottled water.”





John nodded and watched a pair of little eyes open in the dim light. “What’s his name?” he asked.

“Ask Dean,” Sam said. “After what he went through, he gets the privilege of the announcement.”

“He’s John Ryan Winchester,” Dean called out.

“Very nice,” John said. “And both parents agreed on this?”

Sam grinned. “Yeah, Dad, we did.”

John clapped his hand on Sam’s shoulder, still balancing the youngest Winchester on his other arm. “I’m glad to see that both of you   all three of you   pulled through. Do you have the car seat with you?”

“It’s in the trunk,” Sam said.

“All right. Set it up in the front seat, and leave Dean where he is.” John looked at his cell phone. “Looks like we can make outgoing calls again. I’ll call Doctor Randall and tell him to meet us at his clinic.”

John nodded at Sam as he handed his grandson back, and then he helped Dean pull his legs up onto the seat so that John could shut the door. “You’re going to be fine,” he said. “You’ve come through this far, and now it’s just a short drive. There shouldn’t even be much traffic on the roads at this hour.”

“Yeah. Thanks, Dad. For everything, especially over these past few weeks.”

He could have said something about it being their job to hunt evil, to protect the innocent. He thought that he should say it, even though none of it was anything Dean didn’t already know. But all that came out was, “We’re family. I... I’m here for you. As for everything else, you and Sam, well, it’s not important right now. We’ve got to get you patched up.”

*

A silver Dodge Ram rolled down Highway 380, with a black Chevy Impala about ten car lengths behind it, heading east. Inside the Impala, a little baby boy looked around with his bright blue-gray eyes, eyes that would turn green before his first birthday. He didn’t yet have the thoughts to wonder about why the sounds he heard and motions he felt were different than he was used to, yet somehow similar. He just knew he liked them. And that he was tired. His eyes closed and he fell asleep.

“We’ve been driving for five minutes, and he’s out already,” said Sam. “Dean? You still with me here?”

“Yeah, I’m holding on. It’s a good thing Johnny’s sleeping,” Dean grumbled.

“Why?”

“Because when he wakes up, he’s grounded. For a year. He fucking ruined the seats.”

Sam adjusted the rear-view mirror and saw Dean scowling, doing his best to look pissed off. When Sam caught his eye and smiled, though, Dean smiled back. Dad was right - he’s going to be fine, Sam thought, and stepped on the accelerator to catch up with the elder John.

[Back to index](#)

Chapter 15 by Eleventh Guard Coruscant Exil

Sherman, Texas

Wednesday, October 31, 2007

Sam waited anxiously while Christina, one of the nurses at Dr. Randall’s office, nudged the tiny weights across the lined bar. Johnny’s face was red and he was screaming from the discomfort of the cold metal of the scale he lay on, and Sam had to curl his hands into fists to keep himself from

picking him up and cradling him.

Finally, the bar balanced, its pointer hovering between the plus and minus signs at the end, and Christina gathered Johnny up into a small blanket. "Go back to your daddy, now," she said, and placed the baby into Sam's arms.

"Well? How is he?" Sam asked.

"All of his tests show he's normal," Christina explained. "Your son is perfectly healthy. And he's a big boy. Twenty-one and three-quarters of an inch long; nine pounds, three ounces. Fourteen and a half inches in head circumference. All three measurements are a touch above the ninety-fifth percentile."

"He looks so tiny, though." Sam sat down on a cushioned chair in the exam room and rocked Johnny until he was quiet.


"Compared to you, yes, he is, but he's actually large for a newborn."

"Must have been the Cheetos," said Sam. "I told Dean to quit it and start eating fruit, but he wouldn't. Said it was hard enough to give up the beer and coffee. He—" Sam stopped when he felt something warm and wet touch his jeans and spread in a small circle on his thigh. "Dude, what the hell? Did you pee on me? I just changed my clothes a couple hours ago."

Johnny looked up innocently at Sam.

Christina wiped Johnny clean with a baby wipe and put a diaper on him. "He's going to go through a lot of diapers at first, and he'll need fed every few hours. Since he'll be fed formula, either you or Dean can feed him. Breastfeeding is not an option because Dean isn't producing any milk, and doesn't have enough breast tissue to make what your son needs even if he was. Unless his father helps out for a little while, though, you'll be doing most of the feedings yourself for the first week."

"What? Why?"





"Dean is in surgery right now. No, don't worry, he's going to live. But needs to have a few dozen stitches  there were a lot of small internal tears and extreme stretching of intestinal tissues, and those need repaired. Dr. Randall removed his... um, diverticulum? Otherwise, material could collect in it and decay, and by the time he felt ill he'd already be very sick and need emergency help."

"Isn't a diverticulum a small protrusion in the intestinal wall? This one was big enough to hold a nine-pound baby."

"Normally, yes, but there really isn't another word for what Dean had," said Christina. "He'll heal, but he'll be recovering for awhile. I suggest you take a few weeks off from work. If you've been at your workplace for a year or longer, you should have unpaid leave benefits under FMLA. I don't know if it would extend to someone who only lives with you, though... the law doesn't always protect you in situations like this. Still, your employer might be able to grant you the leave anyway."

"Uh, my job doesn't really come with that kind of benefits," Sam said. "It's a long story. I'm sort of a... an independent contractor. I travel all over and am usually only on a site for a few days."

"I see. Well, if you can get some time away, that would be for the best. I'll let you know when the doctor is finished."

Sam carried Johnny back out to the waiting room and they waited there alone. The emergency clinic was closed for the first half of the day, with post-op appointments rescheduled and new emergencies routed to other hospitals. He looked down at his son, and suddenly he understood that his life was going to be different. He'd known that already, intellectually, but only now did it feel real. Was this what it was like for Dad when Dean was born? he wondered. Probably the answer was both yes and no. The first baby   Johnny likely to be Sam's only one   did change everything, but at least back in 1979, the Winchesters had a permanent home. Dean and Sam hadn't been anywhere longer than a week since the year before; they lived in their car and in hotels. They were men in their twenties; it was a fine life for them. But the question that they'd nearly forgotten, in the frenetic rush from city to city, looking for clues and chasing down the Sister of the Night God, was how were they going to keep hunting evil beings while taking care of an infant?

Large compared to other babies or not, Johnny was very small in Sam's arms, small and fragile. Sam brought him up to his own chest and held him close. Daddy's going to protect you, somehow, he thought, and touched Johnny's wispy brown hair. Soft, thin hairs, soft skin. He just hasn't figured out how yet.



Sam reluctantly put Johnny back into his car seat when he started to cry, and carried the seat into the clinic office. There was a small microwave there, and he poured out two ounces of the high-grade baby formula that Christina had given him into a bottle and heated the bottle for a few seconds. He remembered seeing on television that people sometimes tested the temperature on their wrists to make sure it wasn't too hot or too cold. The thin stream of formula he squeezed out onto his wrist felt like it was around body temperature, so he sat down with Johnny and touched the bottle nipple to his mouth.

Johnny opened his mouth and started his meal right away. "Must be hungry, huh," Sam whispered. "I don't know how you drink that stuff. It smells awful. Maybe not to you? You're getting it down fast."

Sam leaned his head down and kissed Johnny's forehead. The baby finished the whole bottle and sat content and full in his father's embrace.

Sam sat there without moving for several minutes, with the warm bundle asleep in his lap. One day at a time, one hour at a time. They'd make it.

Lewisville, Texas
Wednesday, November 21, 2007

They had been at the hotel for three weeks and three days, minus the day and two nights they spent in Denton and Sherman. It was a nice, long vacation, and a badly needed rest time for all three of them   and even John, although he wouldn't admit it, and he left only after the first week, when Dean was allowed to start eating again, mostly eating soup and drinking fruit juice, and didn't need monitored as closely.

"I'm getting sick of this town," Dean said. He was devouring a small stack of saltine crackers. "We've been here doing nothing for three weeks."

"Doctor's orders were that you avoid strenuous activity for a month. You can hang on for one more week."

"We can't just stay here and play Susie Homemaker. You and Dad might have gotten rid of the well spirit but there's more shit out there going after innocent people. We have to stop it."

There was a knock at the door, and Sam swallowed his response and looked out of the peephole. There was a woman on the other side of the door, with dark hair tied into a single

braid. She wore jeans and a black sweater, and had a medical collar around her neck, preventing more than the slightest head motion. "Uh, Dean, I think we have a visitor."

He opened the door, and it took him another few seconds to recognize the woman. "Amanda?" he asked, puzzled. He hadn't missed the initial news reports, that Melissa Hall was murdered in Dallas on Halloween, and Amanda was in the hospital with a skull fracture following being stunned with a Taser and hitting her head on a concrete sidewalk. "I thought your skull was cracked 🎱🎱" what are you doing here?"

"It is cracked. Healing, but not all the way yet. I have to keep the collar on unless I'm in bed." She sighed. "Is it all right if I come in?"

"Yeah, yeah, sure." He stepped aside and let her through the door. "Do you want some coffee? If you can have it. I just made a pot."

"Sure. Black, please 🎱🎱" just half a cup." She eased herself into one of the two chairs at the small table and folded her hands in her lap. "Uh, Sam, Dean, I'm not going to stay long. I don't want to bother you, and I'm surprised you're still here. I thought you'd run off again now that the job is done. Anyway, I wanted to say thanks. For helping me out and all. If you hadn't told me how to draw the rune and everything else, I'd probably be dead. Almost was dead."

"Don't worry about it. That's what we do," Dean said. "We help people."

"Yeah. I know I was being a little shit last time we met. The only time we met, I guess. I'm sorry. I didn't know you weren't just trying to bother me, that you wanted to help. I wish-" She stopped and stared straight ahead, at an imaginary point somewhere over Dean's shoulder. Her voice went soft. "We were best friends for almost ten years. It would have been ten years next year. Met in college. And now she's gone, and I don't remember what happened. I don't remember anything after sitting down in the circle, from then until about two weeks ago. And the week after that is all in pieces."

"It's probably for the best," said Sam. "That kind of stuff will give you nightmares, and it won't make you feel any better."

"You did kill her, right? The girl who was chasing us?"

"She's gone and won't ever bother anybody again. My father took care of her, burned her bones and sent her spirit back to where it belongs, and Dean and I helped." Sam gave her a plastic cup of plain coffee.

"Mostly Sam and Dad," said Dean. "I didn't do much."

"You stayed alive and you didn't call me," Sam told him. "That was enough. We wouldn't have found Laura's bones in time if I wasn't there, because it was in my half of the field. Dad wouldn't have gotten to it for at least another hour."

Amanda frowned and took a sip from her cup. "What are you two talking about?"

"It's complicated," Sam said.

"Oh. Never mind, I guess. Um... do you remember what time you found her?"

"Not exactly. A little bit after four o'clock. I'm pretty sure that my father set her on fire at four-thirty-six in the morning on the thirty-first, give or take a minute."

Now Amanda's face took on the pallor that she usually created artificially with cosmetics. "That

was when I turned around," she said. "They said at the hospital that I was dying and my heartbeat was all over the place, but a few minutes after four-thirty it evened out and they started picking up... ectro... elero... some kind of brain signals again that weren't there before. Like it was a miracle. I wasn't supposed to live."

"Yes, you were. All of us were supposed to live, but there's evil in the world, and it gets in the way and hurts people. This particular evil force was one of the bigger ones, and we weren't able to save everyone. Maybe it was for the best for Joshua, but I'm really sorry about your friend. We did everything we could do."

"I don't know how I'm going to make it without Melissa," Amanda said, and her face twisted as she struggled to keep from crying in front of them. "I really don't. I know I have to, because I could have died and I didn't and my life has to count for something now. But it's hard!"

"It gets easier," said Sam. "You never forget, but you move on."

There was a soft, whimpering cry, but it wasn't from Amanda. Dean got up and went over to the crib in the corner of the room and lifted Johnny out of it, then rested him against his shoulder and brought him over to the table.

"One of you has a kid?" Amanda asked. "I didn't think either of you even had girlfriends."

Dean raised one of his eyebrows at her. "Amanda, were you paying any attention when we met you out in Denver? About how the wishes work, passing off to the next person, and about how I went to the Townsend well right after you did?"

"Okay, now you're bullshitting again. Are you trying to tell me that you had a baby? Like, you actually physically were pregnant with him?"

"No, I've been lazing around in a shitty hotel for three weeks because the TV reception here is so good."

"Oh, my god, you really did have him." Amanda covered her mouth. "That's what that whole bit was about you being sick. Fuck, Dean, I'm sorry. I really am."

"Don't be. We like having John Ryan around. It wasn't like either of us was going to get any children the usual way."

"Why not? If it's any of my business."

"It's not," Sam started to say, but Dean held up his hand and cut him off.

"Because I'm with Sam," Dean said. "He's the father."

Sam's mouth dropped open. Dean had just admitted their relationship, and to someone who could barely be called an acquaintance. He finally picked up his jaw and stretched his mouth into a smile.

"I knew it!" Amanda said. "I knew you two were sleeping together. I could kinda just tell. The whole brothers story? Didn't fly. Hey... is it all right if I hold him?"

Dean hesitantly passed Johnny to Amanda. "Hold his head up," he instructed.





"I know. I used to baby-sit for my cousins when I was a teenager." She ticked Johnny under his chin. "Who's a cute little boy? Who's a little darlin'? Is it you? Yes, it is!"

Dean rolled his eyes, but he chuckled, and Sam hovered nearby, ready to catch Johnny if Amanda lost her hold on him. She returned him to Dean and stood up. "He's already curious, looking around at everything. You're going to have your hands full with him," she said. "Anyway, like I said, I can't stay. I'm flying out to Mexico and have to get to the airport. The doctor said to wait a few more weeks, but I'm bored and frustrated with strangers getting up in my face all the time, it's getting cold, and it'll be easier for me to escape the press for awhile there. Nice weather, too. I'll be staying with my grandmother for a couple of months, since she has a winter home about thirty miles from Puerto Vallarta."

"Isn't it going to be expensive?" Sam asked, before he realized how silly a question that was.

"Sam, the cost of living isn't as high there, and I'm worth forty million right now," she said. "Even if I don't ever put out another album, I'm set for life, as long as I don't do something stupid. Like buy an island or visit Mars. If you want to come out to the airport and see me off, though, that would be okay. I don't think anybody knows I'm going except the airline and my grandmother, so if they didn't say anything, then we won't be harassed."

"Did you need a ride?"

"No. The Super Shuttle is outside waiting for me. I paid the driver extra to take me here first and let me visit. I just... I fucking hate flying. It's the worst part of this whole gig, really. Usually we   I  

 could just travel with a van, but sometimes I have to get somewhere fast, and it sucks. And I can't even bring a forty on the plane with me because of the stupid security regulations. Like I'm going to hijack a plane with Bud Light."

Dean grinned at her. "I don't like flying much either," he said. "Tell you what. Tell the shuttle guy to leave, and we'll take you to the airport. We got the car back from the cleaners three days ago, and I'm dying to get out of here for a little while."

Amanda accepted the offer, and they reached the Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport twenty minutes later. She excused herself after checking in her luggage, to place a phone call and use her laptop, and then she sat just outside the airport, near the shuttle bus stop. Sam and Amanda traded stories about Jessica and Melissa, and Dean walked Johnny around and showed him the planes that were coming in and leaving.

A small green car pulled up to the curb and another girl, with bobbed red hair, came out. Amanda went up to her and said, "Thanks, Nikki. I'm sorry about the short notice."

"It's no problem," Nikki said. "The tips blow on Wednesday afternoons anyway." She gave Amanda a small envelope and drove off after they said their goodbyes.

"Nikki is another old friend of mine," Amanda explained to Sam and Dean, and handed Sam the envelope. "She's a server over at Carino's not far from where you were staying. I, uh, placed an order over the Internet for a Visa gift card for you guys, and had her bring it over. It's for thirty. That should help you out some. You just run it like a credit card anywhere that takes Visa or Mastercard."

Dean forced a smile. Thirty dollars was better than nothing, but it wouldn't get them very far. It might be one night in a sleazy hotel, or a few packages of diapers. And to Amanda, it had to be pocket change, or more like pocket lint. "Thanks," he said. "But we're fine. We have the money situation under control."

"Just fucking take it, okay? It's the least I could do for you all," she said.

"Pretty close to it."

Sam hit Dean in the side with his elbow. "Ignore him," he said. "Everything helps, especially now."

"Yeah. Just wait until I'm gone before you use it, okay? Look, my plane is boarding in an hour and it's going to take me awhile to get through security with my neck brace. I have to go." She shook Dean's hand and hugged Sam. "You be a good boy, now," she said to the baby. "And you two, take it easy. You can't go killing monsters all the time. Stop and have fun every now and then." She waved at them and walked through the sliding doors, and was gone.

Lewisville, Texas
Monday, November 26, 2007

Sam was exhausted, and hungry, by ten-thirty. Dean was gone, shooting pool at a local sports bar and trying to earn enough money for them to get a tank of gas and some food - even though it was Monday, and the bars weren't very full. Johnny only had four diapers left, and no more formula. Sam himself had skipped dinner because they only had ten dollars, and worse, Visa was declining all of the fictional Dean Summers' transactions. The Frank Johnson account had been sent to collections months earlier.

"Come on, we've got to go shopping," he said, and bundled Johnny up in a thick sleeper and a blanket, then took him across the street and down the road a half-mile, on foot, to get to Wal-Mart.

He picked up a package of diapers, another can of formula, and a ten-pack of ramen noodles for himself and Dean. The clerk rang everything up and said, "Okay, sir, your total is seventeen dollars and forty-two cents."

Fuck. Sam handed over the ten-dollar bill and pulled out the gift card. They'd planned to save it for an emergency, but being out of food and nearly out of everything else was an emergency.

The clerk swiped the card, completed the transaction, and then pulled off the receipt. However, he frowned at a line on the bottom of it and picked up the wall phone next to the register. "Manager to register nine," he called out.

Sam waited tensely, bouncing his crying son, while the manager and clerk whispered something about fraudulent cards, and the manager left with the receipt and his card. He wanted to explain that he didn't make it, that it was a gift from someone else and if it was fake then it wasn't his fault, but he kept his mouth shut and waited for the manager to come back.

"I'm sorry for the delay," she said. "We just had to verify something about your card. Everything is fine."

"Thanks. Someone else gave that card to me," Sam took the bag that the clerk held out to him.

"You've got a good friend," said the clerk. "Your remaining balance is twenty-nine thousand, nine hundred ninety-two dollars and fifty-eight cents."

"Huh? It should be twenty-two fifty-eight. She said it was thirty... oh." Sam started to laugh. "Can you hold the bag for me up here? I have to pick up a few more things."

*

Dean managed to bring home a hundred and fifty dollars that night, and he and Sam shared a six-pack after they put their very sleepy baby in his crib. Some of the pressure was off; Dean declared he felt better, back on his game, and they had something to fall back on if their usual methods of getting money didn't work. He kissed Sam, then stripped down to shorts to sleep and climbed into bed. Sam realized that Dean hadn't gone to bed without a shirt in months.

Sam had almost forgotten how much he liked to prop himself up on his elbow and watch Dean sleep. Almost. And any small gaps in his memory were quickly filled in when Dean closed his eyes and turned his head on the pillow, peaceful and quiet. For all of about a minute. Then Sam was next to him, and in another two minutes they were pressed together, surrendering to each other for the first time in four months.

Afterwards, Sam curled up, sated and a little bit sore, and he rested his head on Dean's shoulder. "Love you, Dean," he whispered.





"Oh, yeah?" Dean twisted his head around and looked right into Sam's eyes. "Love you too."

Those words were like a sweet lullaby to Sam.

Gainesville, Texas

Thursday, November 29, 2007

They were on their way north, towards a graveyard in Nebraska that had claimed the lives of two people wandering through it at night. The victims were found in the morning, heads torn open, brains crudely removed and gone. Zombies. A good, straightforward project to start out with as they got back to work.

Sam sat in the back seat and opened up a book of blank, lined pages, bound in blue-dyed leather. He turned to the second page   "the first one was full   " and started writing. He'd gotten midway through the third sentence when he felt that somebody was watching him, and he looked up into the mirror.

"What are you doing?" Dean asked.

"Writing."

"Thanks for clearing that up. I thought you were making a quilt. What are you writing?"

"Just some stuff about what we're doing, that's all."

Dean reached towards the book, and Sam reluctantly handed it over. Then Dean balanced the open book on his legs and steered with one hand. "Baby's First Road Trip? Sam, what the fuck is this?"

"It's a book for Johnny," Sam sheepishly explained. "Since we don't keep photo albums or anything like that. I thought it would be a good idea to write a little bit about his milestones."

"Don't those books usually have stuff more like 'first tooth' and 'first word'?"

"He's four weeks old. He doesn't have any teeth yet." Sam sighed. "Do you want me to stop?"

"Uh... no. Not if you want to do it." Dean shrugged and handed the book back. Sam pretended not to notice when Dean mussed Johnny's thin hair and made silly faces at the gurgling infant.

November 29, 2007 - Baby's First Road Trip

Dean is all better now, so we're leaving Texas and going to Hastings, Nebraska to find some zombies. I'm not big enough to help, but I get to go with Dean and Sam anyway and soon they'll start teaching me what to do. My car seat is heavy because they drilled out holes in the frame and packed it full of herbs and ground-up crystals that keep spirits away. I'll wear pendants in a few years, but now I just have symbols painted on my sleeper with t-shirt paint and special ink. Sam

is letting me ride shotgun until we stop for lunch, so I can have some time with Dean, and Sam can write for me, since I don't know how yet. Grandpa is out on a big project, looking for a demon. When I'm bigger, there will be three generations of us - saving people, hunting things, carrying on the family business. Right now, though, I just want to take a nap. They don't mind. I might have hunting in my blood but I still get to be a kid for awhile.

My daddies love me and they'll keep me safe, and some day I'll help them protect everybody like they protect me.

[Back to index](#)

All publicly recognizable characters and settings are the property of their respective owners. The original characters and plot are the property of the author. No money is being made from this work. No copyright infringement is intended.

This story archived at <http://www.squidge.org/mufa-mpreg/viewstory.php?sid=82>