

Season Three
Episode Sixteen: One Way Ticket
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New York Connecting Railroad
North Bound Train
April 30th 1955

The sound of the diesel engine's roar was drowned out by the constant clattering of the carriages as they sped over the tracks. Metal on metal, pounding until every now and then sparks flew from the rails.

The rattle was monotonous, almost sleep-inducing, and yet, to one onboard, it was like the sound of a choir beckoning.

Except this was no heavenly chorus.

This was the song of the Dark One, calling, wanting, *needing* more souls to feed upon.

And tonight, the Master would be given what he craved.

A fleeting silhouette moved from the walkway into the cramped confines of a sleeper car and was lost in further gloom. The figure was hidden, protected by the raven blackness that his god provided.

The shadows were his friends – his familiars.

On the wall, a set of markings was barely discernable in the muted light until the interloper struck up a match, savoring his earlier work. Moving the tiny flame across the inscriptions, he inhaled, taking down the sulfurous aroma it gave off, as if he was inhaling the scent of Hell itself.

Satisfied his work was of his usual standard, he moved further into the room, using the still-flickering match to light a set of black candles that each marked the spot of an elemental point.

The obsidian wax burned brightly, illuminating the impromptu altar the worshipper had erected so brightly even the words on the walls could now be seen clearly.

Heathen words.

Words written in *his own* blood, but offering up another's.

Something moved outside and the stranger slipped back into the shadows, tempted to snuff out the candles, but not daring to remain on view long enough.

The sliding door to the room jammed for a second, and then a patient hand teased it back allowing a figure to enter with a feminine sigh of frustration.

The intruder smiled as the young woman pulled away a light green scarf from her neck, and only too late noticed the flaming candles that now adorned her room.

He guessed in another life he may have thought her pretty, but beauty was unimportant now his new path had been defined.

Lithely stepping up behind the brunette, he slid a gloved hand around her waist, pulling her into him until he could smell the shampoo on her hair, the perfume on her skin...the *fear* in her scent.

As she tried to scream, he moved the hand calmly upwards until the glove that adorned it was stifling the young woman's pleas.

She bit into the leather of his gauntlet, her teeth sinking until he could feel his flesh bruising – and he drank in the pain, relishing it like a goblet of fine wine.

Through the window, the stranger noted the train was approaching a bridge.

His bridge.

It was time.

Using his free hand, he pulled an ornamental dagger from his waistband, letting its tip waft through the smoke of each candle. As he made the almost serene moves

with the blade, he began to chant something so quietly to the ordinary ear it would have been nothing but an inaudible mumble.

And yet it was so much more.

The gate was always here, waiting, but the gate didn't open for just *anyone*.

The train hit the bridge line on schedule, pounding onwards relentlessly, and as it passed under the huge metal archways its lights began to waver as if their flow of electricity had been halved.

The main engine light cracked as sparks of electricity danced off the metal plates forming the driver's cab.

And within a second, the locomotive had been engulfed in an unearthly darkness.

From within the gloom, one solitary scream cut through the blanket of death that had fallen, and then there was silence – silence, save for the familiar clatter of the loco's motion.

Five minutes later, the north bound roared under the last arch of Hell Gate Bridge and continued on its way, the dampened lighting suddenly rejuvenated as if more fuel had been added to the imaginary fire.

In the sleeper car, the interloper still worked, placing his newly retrieved items carefully upon the altar. The heart was such a beautiful organ, and he handled its soft form with far more care than he had its previous owner's life.

Placing the oozing heart between two of the candles, he turned back to the slumped form on the floor, needing yet more for his offering. Every sacrifice made to the master must be of both heart and *soul*.

Kneeling, the man almost slipped in the slimy trail of blood that pooled around the body and had begun leaking under the sliding door. He traced a gloved hand through the gloop, rubbing the fluid between thumb and forefinger like a child trying to resist the wonders of finger painting.

What wonderful inscriptions he could make with such perfect dye. But first, the offering must be completed.

Retrieving the dagger from the girl's chest, he took the tip and deftly stuck the blade in just under the left eye socket of her skull. The staring orb popped from its home like a newly tapped golf ball and the killer shuddered with satisfaction.

Heart and soul.

Slicing through the optic nerve, he let the left eyeball drop into his awaiting hand and then repeated the procedure with the right.

Such pretty green eyes. The Master would enjoy this one.

The man pushed up from his crouched position and wiped the dripping blade on the scarf the girl had earlier discarded.

Green, just like her eyes...

He looked down at the two spheres in his hand and considered crushing them in his palm. There could be no greater sensation of pleasure than to feel the victim's soul crushed into a pulp.

But not this time, this one was for the Master.

Turning, the killer returned to his altar and dutifully placed the piercing dead orbs next to their owner's heart.

Heart and soul...

He began to chant anew, this time louder as he watched the candles flicker, their flames billowing unnaturally as he began to rock back and forth on his heels.

And behind him, the room's door slid open with the same creak that had almost stopped it moving for the girl.

The man spun, all thoughts of his work forgotten. What good was he to the Dark One if he were to be caught?

In the doorway, a young porter stared at him blankly. Perhaps the railroad worker was in shock, perhaps he was a coward, or perhaps, it had been the girl's one forlorn scream that had brought him here.

Not a coward then...

The killer reaffirmed his grip on the dagger's hilt and took a step forward. There was always room to make two offerings – he would just need a little more time.

Expecting the porter to retreat, he frowned when the young man instead moved closer, his face flushing as adrenalin urged him onwards.

The porter held out both arms, effectively blocking the killer's exit. "I'm sorry, sir, but I'm afraid the game is up. Wouldn't it be better to go quietly? Other people on this train heard the girl yell...you won't get far..."

The clattering of the train on the tracks seemed to grow louder, intensifying until it filled the killer's brain. It was the Master's chorus, and it wanted him to finish the game.

With a feral growl, he dived at the porter, swinging the dagger in the hopes of damaging flesh. Throats were always a favorite, but the chest or even an arm would do for starters.

The blade bit into something soft and he leered.

And then, just as they had before, the lights shimmered and were gone, plunging both men into a never-ending gloom that only one would survive.

Present Day

The Dive Bar, Roanoke VA

Dean twirled the beer bottle around with his fingertips, wondering just how many of its brethren he could sink without getting drunk. Usually, it was an unknown total that would probably put the bar owner out of business for the night, but today, Dean was considering staying just that little bit sober.

The ordinary little bar he was sitting in had turned out to hold an extraordinary amount of talent when it came down to beings of the female persuasion, and right now, Dean was feeling the need for some of that talent to work its magic on him.

Not that he wasn't still wary of anything in a skirt – especially after Mia and the cat-woman in Philadelphia, but they couldn't all be the same, could they? *Knowing my friggin' luck...*

Dean twisted the empty Coors bottle in his hand just a little bit more and let his eyes stray to a blonde in the corner. She seemed to notice his wayward gaze and smiled back, eventually offering a small wave.

Whoa, is that an invitation? Dude, so gotta get out more... Dean pushed up from the bar, leaving the bottle behind as he began to saunter across the room. Now all he had to do was think of a suitable lie to impress the chick in the next forty seconds and he was home and dry.

Although whose home he'd actually be home and dry in remained to be seen. *Jeez, you don't even know her name and you're figuring out if it's my room or hers...*

"Dean!"

The voice was evil, it was beckoning, and worst still it was about to stop him getting laid.

Dean whirled to see Sam flipping his cellphone closed, the distinctive arch of his brother's brow telling him that Sam was more than just a little worried about something he'd just heard. *Dammit, Sammy, not now...*

Dean took another look at the blonde, desire giving in to commonsense, and he sighed painfully before changing direction to make a beeline for his brother.

"Sammy, I'm telling you, this better be good. Me and miss May Queen were about to find a nice quiet place and..."

"Ugh," Sam interrupted, face scrunching into an even deeper scowl. "Spare me the details..."

"I was gonna say have a drink," Dean retorted, attempting more of an innocent expression than he truly felt. *Or go bump uglies, depending on which she preferred,* he admitted silently, his face contorting into a grin at the thought.

"Yeah, well, maybe this will put you off the idea of flirting with just anybody. We need to watch our backs, dude." Sam took a swig of his own beer, swallowing hard before continuing. "Bobby has heard someone killed a couple of hunters out West. He can't be sure, but he thinks it might be Mia, Dean."

Dean took in the news with a small grunt of disapproval. Mia was bad news – just the thought of her brought bile up into his throat, the hatred he felt for her welling in the pit of his stomach almost as much as it once had for the demon Haris. He gestured for the bartender to hit him with another beer and then slumped down onto the stool next to his brother dejectedly.

"Maybe it was something else," he suggested, wanting to stifle any further talk of the girl who had stolen his heart – and ultimately nearly his life.

"What about Anderson?" Sam offered, his idea getting another scowl from his brother.

"The guy's a Guardian, Sam. Why would *he* be killing hunters?"

Sam shrugged, but let the subject die. "Bobby has a friend e-mailing us some information on a possible gig," he redirected, opening his backpack and pulling out their laptop a little too eagerly.

"Dude, we just finished putting all that amulet hoodoo to bed. Can't we just hang out and have some fun for a few days?" Dean let his eyes stray back to the blonde, despite Sam's earlier warning.

Sam didn't appear impressed, and as the Windows Vista logo appeared on the laptop he shook his head in frustration. "If you wanted a little fun, Dean, why the hell'd you drag us half way across the country to this place? There isn't even a gig here!"

Dean blinked as if his feelings were hurt and he chugged down a mouthful of beer. *Damn, this stuff is warm!* "Are you kidding me?" He grouched. "Lost colony of Roanoke, dude! I thought you'd appreciate the town's historical value..."

"You mean you thought you'd appreciate the town's apparent abundance of girls," Sam countered as he began to read the information in the message he'd received. "Now will you at least just listen?"

"Yes, Mommy..." Dean rolled his eyes and threw a note on the counter for his last *warm* drink.

"It says here there has been a spate of killings on a Boston-bound long haul train. The killings are despicably gruesome – possibly involving rituals of a satanic nature."

Dean huffed as if the information was less-than-intriguing. *Now the girl, I bet me and her could unravel a mystery or two...* "Sounds like a serial killer, dude. Much as I hate to suggest it, it's a job for the cops, not a couple of hunters."

"Maybe, but get this – the killings are carbon copies of ones that went down in the fifties."

"Great, an octogenarian serial killer." Dean smiled just a little too roguishly, knowing his brother was getting irked at his lack of interest. If he couldn't have the girl, then why the heck should Sammy have all the fun of a new hunt without getting ribbed first?

"Dean, will you let me finish?" Sam turned the laptop on the bar and pointed to the Word document he had open. "The original murderer was caught in the act back in 1955 by a train attendant and was arrested. He was sent to the electric chair the following year. *And*, get this – the details of the killings were considered too gruesome to ever make public. I know it's possible someone could have gotten the information, but we could also have a serial-killing spook on our hands..."

Dean shrugged, wondering whether it was worth risking another Coors considering it tasted like it had been boiled rather than chilled. "Okay, so it's possible," he conceded. "But why now? Why wait all these years to manifest again? This freak been waiting on a cheap return ticket or somethin'?"

Sam's shoulders slouched and he took on a defeated look that suggested he didn't have the answers. "I don't know," he admitted. "But given the original dates of

the murders, and the two new ones, there could be another killing within forty-eight hours if we don't find out. The next train leaves from Richmond at 3.55pm tomorrow. Service 66..."

Dean's brow arched. "Service 66? You're kidding me, right?"

"Well, it's not quite the number of the Beast, but they're already calling the killer the Service 66 Slayer..."

Dean looked longingly at the blonde, then at the plethora of alcoholic beverages behind the bar, knowing both were going to be denied him. He grimaced, contorting face muscles he didn't know he had in an attempt to gain his brother's empathy.

"You're so not suggesting we get on that friggin' train, right?"

Sam's boyish smirk in response told him all he needed to know.

Amtrak 66 Staples Mill Station Richmond VA

Sam watched in surprise as throngs of passengers pushed past him, filing across the busy platform as if they'd already reached New York. While he'd expected Staples Mill to be active, he hadn't been prepared for hectic.

As yet another speeding commuter bumped into him in their haste to board the nearest train, Sam sighed, happy that he wasn't part of the business world most of these people belonged to.

"They're like freakin' ants, dude." Dean noted as more and more of the black-attired company men appeared for their ride, gripping briefcases as if they contained a national secret. "I didn't expect this many monkey suits here..."

Sam shrugged. Rail travel was definitely on the decline, but he guessed there were still enough out of town workers who needed rides to make it worth running the line, or why else would Amtrak keep it going? *So the killer can make another hit*, he reflected glumly as a train began to chug sluggishly from the platform.

"So, Sasquatch, tell me again why we're mixing with the pen pushers?" Dean continued to walk, but he set his attention on his brother as if he definitely wanted to be somewhere else.

"I did some more digging and this is looking more and more like our kind of gig, Dean. I managed to get into some locked files about the original court case and get this, the killer's name was Elliot Butcher." Sam rubbed at the top of his leg absently as he followed his brother, his still-healing thigh beginning to twinge as the walking pulled at his stitches.

Dean paused, frowning. If he'd noticed Sam's pain, he didn't mention it – probably because he still felt to blame for his brother's injury. "Seriously?" He asked.

"Butcher?"

"They even gave him one of those cute serial killer nicknames – The Hell Gate Butcher. Not exactly original but..."

Dean's brow furrowed even more and he huffed as if the name had started ringing unpleasant bells in his subconscious. "Hell Gate..?"

Sam stuffed his hands in the pockets of his tan jacket and began walking again. "Yeah, Butcher would board a long haul train and spend several hours choosing his victim and setting up an altar. Only when he was over New York's Hell Gate Bridge would he finally carry out the murder. The freak believed the bridge was a conduit to the dark side."

"Why am I getting the feeling this whackjob knew his urban legends a little too well?"

"Because he did," Sam agreed, impatiently restarting his interrupted diatribe.

"Local legends say if someone stops on the bridge and then turns around, the road behind them will look like the fiery gates of Hell. Another myth says a couple were

killed on the bridge years ago, and on a dark night, if you stop on the bridge and turn out your lights, one of the lost lovers will get into your car and leave a wet spot on the seat.”

“Dude, no spook is leaving any kind of wet spot on my baby’s seats.” Dean’s eyes sparked with mirth, and just for a second Sam expected a suitably lewd comment to follow.

When none came, he continued his story before they ran out of platform. “Other reports say ghost trains haunt the tracks filled with the lost souls of Spanish and Dutch explorers whose boats sank in the turbulent currents under the bridge.” He took a breath. “Then there’s the story of a child molesting rapist who would grab kids and drag them into some kind of hidden chamber in the base of the bridge. Reports say when the police finally figured out where he was they stormed the place and found wall to wall photos of his victims...”

Dean dragged down air as if it hurt to even think about the implications. “Man, if even half this crap is true we could be dealing with some seriously pissed off spirits. With this much activity no wonder our dead guy picked this spot.”

“It gets worse, Dean. The place has also been a dumping ground for victims of the Mafia over the decades – which, given the place’s implied connections to Hell...” Sam sighed. He hated having to bring up an old nemesis, but the evidence was just too hard to ignore. “And our bad guy *did* think he was serving Lucifer...”

“You think maybe Butcher was working for our old friend Ferinacci?” The displeasure in Dean’s voice told Sam he’d hit the nerve he’d been hoping to avoid.

They’d almost made a house call to Lucifer’s pit once, and it wasn’t an experience either of the brothers would care to repeat.

Still, just because a madman had believed he was working for Lucifer didn’t mean he actually had been. At least, Sam hoped it didn’t. “Butcher believed he was sending his Master the souls of those who most deserved to go to Hell.”

Dean ran a hand through his hair in frustration. “Yeah, but was the guy a full-on whackjob or really a servant of Ferinacci? Given our past experiences in New York and New Jersey we know that fiery-eyed bastard kind of has a thing for the area.” He stopped again, remembering Sam wanted them to take a trip on the loco to Hell. “And you think we should take a friggin’ train right back into Lucifer’s pit? Are you nuts?”

“Dean, Butcher was probably just another freak hoping to get a name for himself. Our biggest worry will be finding why he’s come back after all this time.” Sam watched his brother’s expression, knowing the next challenge would reel him in. “And of course destroying him won’t be a picnic. It’s not like we’re likely to find the guy’s bones on Amtrak 66.”

Dean considered it, his face changing from uncertainty, to annoyance, to cogitation in the blink of an eye. “You *hope* Butcher is a nutjob,” he eventually concluded. “But I’m telling you, mess with Ferinacci and any more poisoned bullets and I’ll end you myself.”

Sam could tell his brother wasn’t joking. The time Ferinacci had had one of his hitmen shoot Sam with a poisoned round had been almost unbearable for Dean. In fact, Sam often suspected that if Gudrun hadn’t healed him, Dean would himself have eaten a bullet within a couple of months and joined him on the other side.

Gudrun – another one of Ferinacci’s victims.

Sam felt a cold pain like an ice pick digging into his spine, and only his brother’s voice brought him away from the moment.

“So you think this Butcher boy will kill again tonight, huh?”

“Today is April 30th – to devil worshippers its Walpurgis Night – a traditional day of celebration and sacrifice. It’s perfect for a killing, Dean.” Sam tried to forget about Lucifer and the deaths and destruction they’d already seen perpetrated by his hands. This had to be just another gig. It *had* to be. “Today is also the day Butcher was caught back in ’55 after murdering his final victim. All the other murder dates, both

past and present, have been in March and December. I'm figuring because the Solstice and Equinox are important satanic dates."

"So we gotta ride the Hell train and look for a spook we don't even have a description of? I mean, this thing is either gonna be a spirit we might not be able to even see half the freakin' time, or it's gonna have possessed some poor schmuck. Either way we're pretty screwed, Smartboy."

Sam shook his head and pointed a short distance ahead to the waiting Amtrak 66. Beside the train, wearing a pristine uniform and cap, stood a tall black man whose features looked like he'd been etched from stone by a harsh winter wind.

To the young hunter, the conductor could easily have passed as a double for Morgan Freeman, right down to his graying hair and infectious smile.

Striding towards the elder man, Sam slid a hand from his pocket and flashed one of the infamous Winchester IDs. "Levi Warwick?" Sam asked, checking over his shoulder to make sure Dean was still in tow. "I'm Detective Henley and this is my partner Detective Frey. We're here to ask a few questions about the recent murders..."

Warwick let his eyes stray over the brothers as if he were appraising them, but his warm smile never faltered. "We've had a lot of cops around the past few days. How can I help you gentlemen?"

"You were onboard when the most recent deaths occurred?" Sam questioned, eyes locking with the conductor as he flipped open a small notebook and began to recite. "And you were also a porter back in the fifties when the original murders happened. In fact, you knew the attendant Ed Fraser, who finally caught Butcher?"

Warwick bobbed his head, his eyes abruptly dropping to the platform as he recalled earlier, unhappy events in his life. "I knew Ed, yes." He finally admitted. "He was a very good friend. Everyone was so proud of the way he tackled that guy Butcher. Of course, Butcher had cut up a fair few victims before that happened."

"Did you see the earlier victims?" Dean raised a brow.

"Some," Warwick answered, his nose wrinkling at the grotesque memory. "Their eyes – he always gouged out the eyes and placed them on the altar. I remember the first time I saw them. It was like they were still alive, watching me, mocking me." The conductor shuddered. "I went to church that Sunday, I can tell you."

"And now?" Sam pressed. "The victims are all cut up in the same way? The *exact* same way?"

Warwick nodded. "Exactly," he agreed. "But then shouldn't you boys know that from the autopsy reports?"

Dean coughed. "Just checking the facts," he lied, redirecting the conversation before the conductor became more suspicious. "Did you ever see Butcher? I mean, could you describe him?"

"Sure I saw him. I'll never forget the wild look in his eyes as they strapped him into the electric chair that day." Warwick shuddered in distaste at the memory.

Dean blinked, surprised that the elder man had been at the execution. "What, you were actually there?" he asked, voice raising slightly.

"I was there." Warwick answered, a tinge of sadness seeping into his voice. "Butcher was one crazy sonofabitch, and he requested Ed Fraser be present at his execution. Ed and I were close enough friends that I wasn't about to let him face that alone. Maybe in retrospect it was a mistake."

"Death is never pleasant," Sam agreed, his voice softening as he recalled some of the wanton deaths he'd witnessed.

"Oh, but you don't understand. It wasn't seeing that creep fry that bothered me. It was the look on his face as they strapped him into the chair. He was wild, like a creature gone mad more than a man. He knew we were watching through the glass, and all he kept saying was that he'd come back from the dead to get his revenge on Fraser if he had to..." Warwick shook his head. "Of course, Butcher was cheated even of that because Ed died not six months later with rapid cancer."

Sam scribbled down everything the conductor was saying, making careful note not to miss even the tiniest detail that might be relevant. In the end, his pencil tip snapped with the rapid movement and increasing pressure that was being put upon it. He sighed, looking at Warwick as if time, like the pencil, was about out for them. "Is there anyone else who knew Butcher or Ed Fraser that might know more?"

"Sonny, Amtrak didn't even exist back then. It's too long ago for anyone much to be left." Warwick paused, his aging facial skin creasing as he seemed to consider something.

Behind them, another Amtrak employee shouted, distracting the conductor, and Warwick turned, his last thought forgotten. Checking his watch, he sighed. "Sorry fellas, but it's departure time for the 66. Time I got to working instead of chatting."

Sam nodded, holding out a hand and shaking the conductor's. "Thank you for your time, sir. We'll most likely see you on the train."

"You're taking the 66?" Warwick looked surprised, his eyes widening just a touch as he warned, "Better watch your backs over Hell Gate..." He turned then, straightening his cap before ushering an aging couple aboard their car.

"Jeez, ain't he the life and soul of the party," Dean snarked, eyeing the nearby loco with as much enthusiasm as a Boeing 747. "I mean, fat lot of good that got us."

Sam tucked his notepad and badge back in his pocket, pulling out two white tickets in their place. "That," he replied with a little too much fervor, "is why we have these..."

Amtrak 66 Outside Fredericksburg, VA

Dean wasn't sure he liked the motion of the train one damn bit. In fact, if he hadn't had too much on his mind to think about it, the constant clattering would probably have made him feel nauseous. *So need some Metallica to drown out the freakin' noise...*

Not that the current passengers on view looked like the kind of people that would enjoy hard rock. No, they were more Sammy's kind of people. *Probably listening to wuss ass music on their iPods right this minute...*

As the hunter deliberated on other people's bizarre musical tastes, his brother scanned over the people in the snack car as if he were viewing a group of suspects through a one-way mirror. "I think we'll reach Hell Gate Bridge around 3.30am – that gives us a nine hour window until someone dies..."

Dean grunted. "Dude, someone is gonna die way sooner than that if I have to spend nine hours on this tin cigar with wheels." He looked at the abundance of snacks he'd collected in front of him, but even the wonders of chocolate weren't luring him in. "So, tell me, Miss Marple, which one of these bozos do you think is our killer?"

Sam cringed. "Dude, Miss *Marple*? Since when did you read Christie? In fact, since when did you read, period?"

Dean tore off the end of a Twinkie wrapper and then thought better of it, tossing it back down in favor of his staple M&M diet. "*What*?" He answered innocently. "I saw that *Oriental Express* movie when I was a kid. So sue me..."

Sam smirked. "It's *The Orient Express*," he corrected. "And that was Poirot not Marple."

Dean huffed. "Yeah, well only someone who liked chick movies would know *that* crap." He slipped another handful of chocolate into his mouth and carefully pointed to a young blonde that had taken a seat by the nearest window.

The girl looked to be about twenty-five and was very pretty. In fact, Dean suddenly felt his attention drawn away from food and across to her insanely alluring figure. And what was more, she was alone.

“Dean, can you keep your mind on the gig, not the gutter...”

“I was actually thinking she could be the one we’re looking for,” the elder hunter suggested, eyes still glued to the girl as she took a drink from her recently opened can of Coke.

“Yeah, right, you were thinking she could be the one *you’re* after,” Sam teased. “There goes that downstairs brain again. Gonna have to get an elevator installed that goes all the way to the bottom just to talk to you soon...”

Dean finally glanced away from the blonde, clear annoyance splattered across his features. “I’m serious here, Sammy.” He leaned over the table interlocking his fingers in front of him as he became almost staid. “Think about it, every pretty girl we meet lately is a whackjob. Why not add one more to the growing pile of skanks? Mia, Selfi...”

“Do you realize just how *paranoid* you sound? Not to mention none of this seemed to be bothering you back at that bar in Roanoke.”

“Yeah, well, I was looking to get laid back there, not looking for a killer who rips out hearts and uses eyeballs as Satan bait.”

Sam let his gaze fall to the girl and then back around the snack car. “I’ll add her to the list and we can check out her room later, okay?” He paused his scan of the car as his eyes fell on an overweight man devouring a sandwich. “What about him, he’s alone too, does that make him a killer?”

Dean huffed, looking over his shoulder to see the man ramming in the foot long B.L.T. as if his life depended on it. “Dude, that guy is too fat to move his ass fast enough to kill anyone...”

Sam’s face crinkled until each cheek was one huge dimple and he looked down at the mountain of food in front of his brother. “Wait till you’re his age...you’ll be twice his size at this rate...”

“Hey! I work this crap off with my extra nocturnal activities!”

“Yeah, and you don’t mean hunting.” Sam’s eyes shot back to the blonde from earlier and Dean was about to protest when a shadow from above suggested they had company.

Dean looked up first to see a young, and obviously very inexperienced, attendant hovering over them. The youngster’s nametag announced they were being tended by “Luke”, but by the looks of his skinny arms and thinning hair, Dean was pretty sure this was no Skywalker.

“Excuse me, but is everything all right?” The attendant looked almost scared as he glanced from brother to brother.

“We’re fine thanks,” Sam pointed to the empty confectionary wrappers and then Dean. “Although we may need a trash can for the wrappers the size of a house.”

The young man laughed, but his voice said he was still nervous to the point of stammering. He blinked, clearing his throat before finally admitting he had another motive for approaching them. “I...I don’t mean to be rude, but I...well, I couldn’t help but notice you two were kinda checking people out...”

Sam’s expression softened and he pulled out his fake police badge. “My partner and I are investigating the recent murders. We could have a suspect onboard.”

“I’m Luke,” the attendant offered, his edginess vanishing somewhat. “Maybe I can help you out? I know some of the passengers. Some are pretty regular on this route.”

“Regulars huh?” Dean’s brow arched and unspoken words told Sam he was thinking that their bad guy could be a “regular.” *The killer returning to the scene of the crime certainly fits this freak’s M.O....*

Luke nodded helpfully, not even noticing the interaction between the brothers. Sliding onto the seat next to Sam, he carefully pointed out the blonde. “That lady over there? Her name is Kim Robinson and she works for some big city corporation. She uses the 66 all the time, but she’s a bit of a loner. Fact is, I’ve never heard her speak to other passengers or staff unless she had to. Except this one guy...” His attention drifted for a second, before he suddenly shivered. “Kinda creepy if you ask me...”

“Do you know her room number?” Dean kept his voice low, but it was still audible enough to earn him a look from Sam that said he was using that big ol’ elevator downstairs again. “For *research* purposes, dude! You wanna check out their rooms, right?”

Sam didn’t bother to reply and focused back on Luke. “What about the overweight guy in the corner? Is he a regular too?”

Luke shrugged, showing little interest in the man. “I don’t think I’ve ever seen him before. Of course, I don’t get to see every passenger. It’s a busy job after all...”

Dean considered saying it couldn’t be that busy if he had time to sit around and chat, but bit back the words. The kid wanted to play cop – and if that helped them, then maybe they’d have to put up with him a little while longer. “Are there any more...?”

The hunter didn’t get chance to finish his question.

From somewhere in the next car, someone screamed – the yell promptly followed by the carriage door bursting open and a throng of passengers pushing through as if they’d been in line for the Thanksgiving sale all night.

The sudden mass of activity seemed to center around one huge black man, although he was so totally smothered by the crowd that it was hard to see why.

“What the He...” Dean moved to jump into the fray, only realizing at the last moment that the man wasn’t actually being attacked – he was being *worshipped*.

“Oh, that’s Jay Stringer. He travels with us a lot because he’s afraid to fly,” Luke offered up helpfully.

“Yeah, well I can relate to that,” Dean mouthed, only taking in the man’s name after several seconds of deliberation. “Jay Stringer who plays defense for the NY Giants?” He asked incredulously.

Luke nodded knowingly, a smile spreading across his face so wide Dean had to stifle the urge to be a smartass. “Mr. Stringer uses Amtrak a lot. He’s a very friendly guy, chats with all the passengers, signs autographs, that kinda thing.”

Sam took in the information. “Dean, a guy like Stringer – people would approach him, they wouldn’t be scared if he was around. I mean, someone with his build could snap a neck in seconds, and there’s no real proof he’s really scared of flying...”

Dean leaned back in his seat, appraising the footballer. He was a fan of Stringer’s. Hell, if they weren’t working a gig, he’d probably be getting the guy’s autograph with the rest of the crowd. The man was a legend, for sure.

But was he, could he be a killer?

“I still think the killer is a woman, Sammy.”

“Are you *serious*?” Sam asked in disbelief. “Have you one shred of evidence?”

“Because it’s just what you never expect!” Dean countered half-heartedly. “C’mon, Mia, Selfi...” he warned just a little obsessively.

“They’re gone, Dean.” Sam pushed up from the table and nodded to Luke.

“Thanks for your help, but we need to go interview a few other staff members now, don’t we, Dean?”

“We do?” Dean shook away latent mental images of the two women who had almost killed him and stood to join his brother. “Yeah, right. We do.” Stuffing the remaining foodstuffs in the pockets of his leather jacket, he waited until Luke took the hint and sidled away before raising a brow. “So now what, Marple?”

Sam jerked a thumb to the corridor and began to make a beeline for it across the snack car. “We each take a list and search the rooms,” he suggested, keeping his voice low as they moved by other passengers.

“Dude, I so get the girl...”

“You so don’t,” Sam asserted both brows dipping. “The mood you’re in, you’d probably rock salt her first, ask questions later.”

“If she’s innocent, I can think of something much better than questions for later...”

“Yeah, well, my money is still on the overweight guy. I think we need to check him out first.” Sam tapped the paper he’d noted room numbers on.

"What little fat guy..?" The voice was deeper than either Winchester's and seemed almost amused as their bickering.

Sam and Dean looked up to see Warwick standing in front of them. He was smiling, arms behind his back like some strange sentinel who had crept up on them without making one single sound.

Dean took a second to take in the conductor's almost magical appearance and then turned back towards the snack car, pointing towards where their quarry was still sitting, gorging on junk food. "Little fat guy, likes his food a lot. Been sitting in the corner of the snack car feeding his face since he got on, I'm betting."

Warwick's face changed from a smile to a wary frown and he moved his shoulders just enough to give the impression the fat man made his spine tingle. "I know who he is. He's a cop, and not the best kind." The conductor's left brow ticked up until he reminded Dean of a very curious Spock. "Funny, if you're cops and you don't know the man..."

"What, 'cause we're cops, we're all supposed to know each other?" Dean countered without even thinking.

Warwick's stern gaze bored into the hunter until the elder man detected a slight glint in Dean's hazel eyes. A glint that brought the wry smile back to the conductor's grizzled facade. "I like you. You're a funny guy."

"Yes I am."

Sam cleared his throat, clearly growing tired of the game. "So – err – the fat guy?"

"Sherman Wozniak," Warwick responded without missing a beat. "He has friends in low places..."

Dean licked his lips, the skin on them becoming suddenly dry as he realized he might be in a tighter spot than he'd ever imagined. Being in the confines of a train was one thing, but being cooped up with a bad cop when he was a wanted man wasn't the best way to spend the evening in his book. "How low?" he eventually dared to ask.

"You heard of a New Jersey mobster named Ferinacci?" Warwick's nose wrinkled in disgust as he said the name, and Dean suspected had the conductor been alone and outside, he may have spat on the floor for good measure.

Dean bobbed his head, his own face matching the Amtrak worker's. "Can't get much lower than that..." he agreed, his mind racing at the possibility that there really might be a Devil's disciple onboard.

"So, bad cop aside, we still have a suspect to find," Sam interrupted, hoping to deflect any more questions about why they didn't know Wozniak was on the train. He looked to his notepad and then Warwick. "We're going to need the sleeper car room numbers for Kim Robinson and Jay Stringer."

Warwick eased back on his heels, eyes once again examining the brothers before he responded. Eventually, he silently took Sam's pad and jotted down two sets of numbers. Without speaking further he turned tail and headed towards the snack car.

As he moved away, he wagged his forefinger in the air and both Winchesters heard his familiar deep tones mutter, "Don't let me find out you boys have been up to no good on my train..."

And with that, the indefinable conductor was gone.

"I'm not sure who is creepier, our bad guy or Warwick," Dean grumbled, craning his neck to see if the conductor was really out of earshot.

"Ah c'mon, he's just been around so long he's like the wise old owl of the line." Sam defended. "And besides, he's not the one we need to worry about."

"Yeah, well, like we know who is?" Dean countered, beginning to make his way along the corridor again. "I mean, we have no freakin' idea what's going on here, Sammy. All we got is a bad cop, and he may only be onboard this time to support the real bad guy now there's some heat comin' down."

"And that's *if* we really are dealing with Lucifer again rather than just some whacko," Sam pointed out. "For all we know, Wozniak might just be scoping out the

real killer, either for work or for Ferinacci. Killing in the Devil's name like that is bound to get Lucifer's attention eventually."

"Well, we need to find out and fast, dude, before some poor schmuck ends up minus a few body parts." Dean glanced at the pad still open in his brother's hand. "I'll take the cornerback's room, you can take the girl's...just to show you how serious I am." He winked.

Sam opened his mouth to comment, but then clamped it shut again.

Sometimes, there was just no fathoming the inner workings of Dean Winchester's mind.

* * * *

Dean felt the train juddering beneath his feet again and wanted to curse – except cursing while he was picking the door lock to a passenger's room wasn't exactly acting covertly. *Sonofabitch*, he mouthed silently as the door to Jay Stringer's room finally slid open.

Looking first to the left, then the right, he scooted inside and closed the door behind him.

The room was tiny, even by his standards. How anyone the size of Stringer managed to get a good night's sleep in the bunk defied belief. *Unless he doesn't actually sleep here. Maybe he's busy someplace else tearing out eyeballs...*

The hunter tried to push the images of ragged fleshy orbs from his head, but they lingered, taunting him as if the killer was already in his mind, playing tricks with his emotions.

Dean didn't like emotions anymore. Not after Mia.

Kneeling beside the football player's bunk he pulled out a small canvas travel bag and unzipped the top. At first, the contents seemed innocent enough.

Running shoes, a sweater, jeans.

But then something like photo paper caught his attention.

Dean slid his hand into the bag and tugged at the image until it came free. Turning it over, he realized that the image had once been that of a young brunette. Now though, the girl's picture had been defaced – two holes removing the places where her eyes should have been.

Just like the killer's M.O.

Crap! I could be looking at the next target and I don't even have a clue who she freakin' is!

Dropping the photo onto Stringer's bunk, Dean turned to the player's larger case that had been stowed overhead. Roughly pulling it free, the hunter let the heavy baggage drop to the floor and then began to awkwardly rifle through its contents.

Like everything else in the tiny space, it was hard to maneuver around.

This time, Dean discovered Stringer's football garb, but like before, it was not alone in the case. Beneath the colors of the NY Giants was another shade – a shade formed by the scarlet taint of human blood.

Careful not to touch the bloodied dagger with his hands, Dean used one of Stringer's socks to pick up the sullied blade. It wasn't exactly the kind of thing a mugger from the Big Apple would use to assault their next victim. No, this thing was ornate, almost beautiful in design.

This was the kind of tool used in satanic rituals.

Sacrifices, even.

Under the dagger were more items to add to the satanic tally, including black candles, spray paint, and a small human skull that could only have ever belonged to a child.

Forgetting the dagger, he picked up the yellowing cranium and examined it. This was no prop, it was real bone, from a real kid.

And what was more, there was a crack and jagged puncture hole just above the right eye socket that could only mean one thing.

This person had been a murder victim too.

Maybe one of the kids from under the bridge Sammy talked about...

Dean's face contorted in disgust and anger. It didn't matter who was behind this now, some whacko, or Lucifer himself.

They were going to pay.

Placing the skull down, he picked up a second sock and began rummaging further into Stringer's case, his mind so distracted that he didn't hear the door click behind him until it was too late.

"What the *hell* are you doing in my room, boy?"

Dean spun toward the door at the sound of the very deep – and very pissed – voice, Jay Stringer's massive frame completely filling the doorway like some really angry man-mountain. He burst into the tiny compartment, almost seeming to fill the entire space with his bulk, dark eyes flashing as he loomed over Dean in a way even Sammy had never managed to perfect.

Dean took a precautionary step back, calves hitting the narrow cot behind him – which no way was this guy ever going to fit into – hands raised in a gesture of surrender. "Hold on there, pal –" he managed to bark, even as Stringer got even more into his personal space. "This ain't what it looks like." Jeez, if Sam made Dean look small, this guy made him look like a freakin' midget.

"Oh, and what does it look like?" Stringer demanded. "Cause it looks to me like you're a goddamn trophy hunter. Or a goddamn thief. Or both. Either way, I'm calling the cops."

The big cornerback managed to loom in an even more menacing fashion until Dean figured getting the crap beaten out of him by a guy the size of Giants Stadium probably wasn't in anyone's best interests – most especially his own – and finally yanked out his .45, pointing it right between the massive athlete's eyes.

"Back up there, Kong," Dean insisted, Stringer's eyes widening in alarm as he mirrored Dean's earlier defensive pose, hands raised as he retreated a step.

"Whoa –"

"Too late to call five-oh, dude," Dean advised a little breathlessly, finally thinking to pull out his fake NYPD badge. "We're already here."

The look of fearful surprise on the cornerback's face immediately morphed right back to outraged anger. "Then let me rephrase my earlier question," he snarled. "What the hell are you doing in my room *Detective?*"

Dean hesitated before stepping aside to reveal the open baggage he'd been searching through – and the mound of ritualistic paraphernalia he'd so far uncovered. "You wanna tell me what you're doing with this stuff first?" He carefully picked up the bloodied knife between thumb and forefinger, still holding it using Stringer's sock, showing the big football player the mutilated photograph before nudging the skull with the toe of his boot. "This don't look like your everyday vacation wear to me."

Stringer blanched, taking another step back and thudding into the little compartment's thin wall. He soundlessly opened and closed his mouth a couple of times before shaking his head in disbelief. "I swear to God, I've never seen any of that weird-ass crap before in my life!" he protested. "Somebody must have put it here –"

"Uh-huh," Dean returned skeptically. "Must've been the Easter Bunny."

"I swear!" Stringer again protested his innocence.

"And I suppose you have no idea who this chick is, either?" Dean waved the cut-up photograph under Stringer's nose. "You're just really into handicrafts, right?"

Stringer shook his head hopelessly. "Man, I've no idea! I've no idea who that girl is – or who put this – this *stuff* in here..."

Suddenly Stringer didn't seem quite so super-sized, and Dean raised a challenging eyebrow. "Why should I believe you?"

The cornerback seemed to wilt all of a sudden, crumpling in on himself like wadded paper as he sank heavily down onto the cot, springs protesting plaintively.

Dean skidded out of his way, anxious not to be crushed by a couple of hundred pounds of collapsing football player.

"Yeah, why *should* you believe me?" Stringer muttered, mostly, Dean figured, to himself. He ran weary fingers over his scalp, finally scratching at the back of his neck and sighing heavily. "It's not like every damn thing in my life hasn't been screwed all to hell lately."

His head drooped down between his massive shoulders, which started to shake ever-so-slightly.

You gotta be kiddin' me, Dean silently despaired. *Man tears...? Maybe I should go get Sammy...*

"Look, I'm sorry," Stringer managed to splutter out between hitched breaths, wiping a massive hand over the saltwater leaking down his cheeks. "I'm sorry to be such a – a bitch about all this. It's been a bad couple of weeks."

Dean glanced out into the corridor beyond the little compartment, silently willing Sam to appear as if by magic out of thin air. He was so much better at this emo crap than Dean. He shifted from foot to foot uncomfortably. "We all get weeks like that, man," he agreed, suddenly thinking about poisoned bullets and fire demons and heartless bitches with black eyes.

"Yeah," Stringer agreed, voice trembling slightly. "Guess I'm just feeling my age. Lost a sweet endorsement deal last week – I been the face of AirLite Sports Shoes for five years, then along comes Calvin Townsend, the NFL's latest young 'rising star' –" he made a disgusted face, "– and suddenly they don't want to know me."

"That's – harsh." Dean actually surprised himself by the level of genuine sympathy in his voice. "I guess things happen for a reason..."

"Like the coach just now telling me I'm more than not gonna need surgery on my busted knee?" Stringer finally looked back up at Dean through teary eyes. "Or my girl deciding we should maybe 'take a break' for a while?"

Dean blew out a breath. "Jeez, you weren't kiddin' were you?"

Stringer shrugged. "And now some sick freak's trying to frame me as a devil worshipper. Just perfect. Well bring it on, man, bring it on. I got broad shoulders, right?"

Dean considered the width of Stringer's still-shaking shoulders before slowly putting away the .45. Yeah okay. Maybe Stringer just slipped down the suspect list. "You have any idea who'd want to frame you?"

Stringer looked back up at him, a tiny flicker of hope in his dark eyes. "None," he admitted. "You – you believe me?"

Dean sighed. "I think maybe you're not that good of an actor," he admitted. "Who knew you were travelling tonight?"

Stringer thought about that one. "My manager, my coach... My mom – that's where I'm going – to visit her. She lives in Boston..."

Wayyyy down the suspect list...

"...And that's about it. Although I'm pretty much up and down this route every couple of weeks. One of Amtrak's frequent flyers."

Dean nodded. "Okay," he said, trying to go for reassuring. "Well if you think of anything, give me a holler." He smirked lopsidedly. "And don't leave town, big guy."

Stringer smiled weakly at Dean's attempt to lighten the mood. "Count on it. And could you do something with this crap?" He gestured to the pile of Satanic garbage littering the floor. "It's freaking me the hell out..."

* * * *

Okay, so this was kinda weird, Sam decided, gingerly examining the contents of Kim Robinson's single meager suitcase; not the lingerie or the expensive perfume or

the ridiculously fashionable make-up nestled in the little vanity case. Sam supposed those things were all standard issue travelling accessories for many a successful businesswoman.

No, the weird part was the case itself. And the lack of any others. In Sam's admittedly limited experience, didn't women going away on a weekend trip usually take about twenty hefty suitcases with them?

As he stood with his hands on his hips surveying the young woman's tiny room, Sam couldn't seem to get past the sheer lack of luggage she wasn't travelling with. She didn't even seem to have a laptop. On a business trip. Sure, he'd seen her tapping away on a top-of-the-range Blackberry earlier, but still, no laptop on a business trip? And there was certainly nothing else in the room, not even an old-fashioned diary. If Kim Robinson was planning on getting some work done, then Sam couldn't see how.

He poked around the room some more, already knowing he wasn't going to be finding anything else. So if she wasn't really travelling on business, what was the *real* purpose of the woman's journey? Murder, maybe?

He laughed at himself, suddenly imagining himself as Angela Lansbury in a nice tweed two-piece. Yeah, that was one image he could have done without today.

It was all Dean's fault, of course. He'd gotten Sam so twisted up in his own recent misogyny and paranoia that his little brother was actually buying into the whole "all women are evil, demon-worshipping skanks" thing. Of course, he couldn't really blame Dean. Not after Mia. But that didn't mean Kim automatically had to be the bad guy in this scenario just because she was a girl.

Still... There was something not quite right about all this...

He turned to leave with a disgruntled sigh, no bloody knife or black candles to point the finger at an easy suspect. Figured this wasn't going to be a simple job...

Just as he began to push open the cabin door, he heard the sound of voices outside. Arguing. A man and a woman. And they were headed his way.

He quickly pulled the door toward him, keeping it open just a crack so he could see what was going on in the corridor.

"Get away from me you disgusting creep!"

Crap. That was Kim's voice. And she was headed this way. To her room. In which Sam was currently standing. *Crap.*

He peered out through the crack between the door and the doorjamb, trying to assess whether he had any hope of escaping undetected.

Kim was trying to make her way along the corridor, no doubt looking to escape into the privacy of her room, but the big fat guy Sam and Dean had seen earlier in the snack car was blocking her path. *Detective Wozniak*, Sam remembered, shuddering as the horrible gelatinous mass of a New Jersey police officer leaned right into Kim, trapping her against the wall of the train as he forced himself into her personal space, an evil leer on his flabby lips.

"Get away from me!" Kim repeated, pushing ineffectually at the cop's ample chest as she tried but failed to squeeze out from under him.

"I know what you've been up to," the cop breathed into her ear undaunted. "I know your dirty little secret. The reason you're on this train."

Kim paled visibly, looking for an instant completely stricken. Or was that completely guilty? Sam shook his head. *Shut up, Dean...* But then again, maybe the cop knew something? Maybe Kim Robinson really *was* the Service 66 Slayer. Maybe Dean had been right all along...

And maybe Paris Hilton was a natural blonde.

"Get away from me!" Kim was thumping at the police officer's chest now, kicking at his shins with her pointy stiletto shoes.

"Now now," Wozniak crooned, breathing into her face. "Don't get your panties in a knot. Maybe we can come to some kind of arrangement?" His eyebrows rose

suggestively. “Y’know – I scratch your back, you – uh – scratch something of mine...?”

Sam winced and felt a little sick to his stomach at the way Wozniak was slobbering all over the poor girl. He had one thick hand wrapped around one of her wrists while the other had slid behind her, touching parts of her Sam was pretty damn sure the girl didn’t want the disgusting old pervert touching.

“No,” she begged feebly. “Please...don’t...”

It was only when the cop’s thick fingers started to fumble with the buttons on Kim’s blouse that Sam realized just how far the disgusting tub of grease was intending to go.

Okay, enough, Sam decided, making to burst out into the corridor and deck Wozniak where he was standing, hell with the consequences of Kim finding out he’d been snooping around in her room.

He never even made it through the door; that eager young kid from the snack car was suddenly right there in the corridor, one skinny arm locked around the cop’s thick neck in a seemingly unbreakable choke hold, despite his only being half Wozniak’s size.

“Touch her again and I’ll be on the phone to your lieutenant before you can say ‘sexual harassment suit!’” the kid growled, tightening his grip mercilessly.

Wozniak raised his hands in supplication. “Okay, okay, ya got me, kid!” he burst out. The kid – Luke, Sam remembered – released him with a growl and the cop just turned and sneered at him. “You can’t prove a thing, son,” he goaded, the tone of his voice having altered drastically now he was free, his thumbs stuck in his belt as he rocked on his heels. “I’m goddamn fireproof.”

Luke sneered right on back, pulling out his camera phone and waving it lazily in Wozniak’s face. “Got it all on the phone, Detective,” he informed him. “You try anything else and it’ll be on YouTube before you even step foot off this train.”

Wozniak’s several chins shook, his cheeks turning an uncomfortable shade of scarlet. “You think you can blackmail *me*, you little runt...?” he demanded, taking a step toward the attendant.

“You think you can blackmail *her*?” Luke shot back.

Wozniak sent a glance in Kim’s direction before turning back to Luke, lip curling into a snarl. “You may think you’ve won something here, boy,” he growled, “but I got friends you don’t wanna be pissin’ off, you feel me?”

“Hopefully not,” Luke replied. “Ever.”

Wozniak gritted his teeth before averting his eyes away from the young attendant and sloping off back down the corridor, studiously not looking back.

Luke turned to Kim, gingerly reaching out to ghost a hand over her shoulder. “Are – are you okay?” he asked awkwardly, and Sam began to suspect the young man hadn’t been completely honest with them back in the snack car. From the way he was shyly looking up at her through lowered eyelashes, it seemed as if Luke might have something of a crush on Ms. Robinson.

Kim nodded slightly, rearranging the clothing Wozniak had rumbled. “I’m – yes. I’m fine. Thank you.” She took his hand and squeezed it slightly and Luke seemed reluctant to let her go.

“Would you like me to walk you back to your room?” he asked.

No! Sam screamed silently. *Dammit, you don’t want to go to your room!*

“No,” Kim said, almost as if she’d heard him. “To be honest, I think I could use a drink. A double. Maybe even a triple. And – and I really don’t want to be alone right now.”

Luke nodded. “I understand,” he said. “I’ll take you back to the lounge.”

That’s it, you keep on walking. Sam gulped in a relieved breath as the couple headed back in the direction from which Kim had approached. *Go on, be a gentleman, kid...*

He silently pushed the door closed and waited a couple more minutes before deciding it ought to be safe for him to make good his escape.

Sticking his head out into the corridor, he glanced briefly in the direction Kim and Luke had disappeared, out of the corner of his eye certain he caught a dark shape lingering at the far end of the sleeper car. But when he looked again there was no one there, and, shrugging, he made to head off in the opposite direction, hopefully to find Dean and some actual clues as to what the hell was going on on this train.

But instead of finding Dean, he found only Detective Wozniak, slamming straight into the bulky detective as he made to leave Kim's room.

Wozniak eyed him suspiciously, glancing beyond him into the room he had just vacated. "Better watch where you're stumblin', kid," he suggested. "You been actin' kinda suspicious this whole trip." He moved closer to Sam, trying to intimidate him by getting on eye level with him, but failing miserably. "I got my eye on you..."

Sam rolled his eyes. "You gonna try and feel *me* up now, too?" he asked innocently.

Wozniak's eyes flashed, heat creeping up into his cheeks. "You know who you're dealin' with, boy?" he demanded, lifting the edge of his jacket to reveal a New Jersey Police Department detective's badge hooked onto a belt that looked as if it was holding back an avalanche of blubber. "I heard you tell that conductor kid you and your friend are NYPD," he added, again getting up on his tiptoes to try and get in Sam's face. "Kid, if you're NYPD, I'm *Ugly Betty*..."

"Well you got the 'ugly' part right." Suddenly Dean was standing right behind the guy, and Wozniak turned slightly in surprise. "And what you like to call yourself when you're off duty is nobody's business but your own," the older brother added with a wolfish grin. "Betty."

Wozniak's lip curled up in affronted anger, but, realizing he was outnumbered, he backed off a little from Sam, retreating until he was at least an arm's length away from both of them.

"You boys got smart mouths," he told them. "Could get you into trouble one of these days."

Dean nodded. "Yeah, that's what my dad's always telling me."

Wozniak raised his chin slightly. "Should have a little more respect for your elders. You would think you'd have learned that over at the – er – what precinct did you boys say you were from again?"

"We didn't," Sam replied shortly.

"15th squad," Dean supplied helpfully, still grinning infuriatingly.

Wozniak raised a skeptical eyebrow. "15th, huh?" he echoed. "And what's your lieutenant's name?"

"Fancy," Dean replied instantly. "Lieutenant Fancy."

Sam tried to remember where he'd heard that name before as Dean continued to smile amiably at the New Jersey cop.

Wozniak frowned. "Wasn't that the name of the guy in *NYPD Blue*?" he asked.

Dean's grin never even faltered. "Yeah. How's that for a weirdo coincidence huh?"

Wozniak nodded, clearly not convinced. "You boys don't wanna mess with me," he ground out. "I'm not some hick just fell off the apple cart." Sam frowned at the odd metaphor. The cop took a step back toward them, one finger stabbing first in the direction of Sam's chest and then Dean's. "This is *my* case, you hear me? Anyone's gonna find this Satanist nutjob it's gonna be me! Are we clear on that?"

Sam glanced at Dean before nodding. "Crystal," he replied.

Wozniak puffed out his chest self-importantly. "Well all right then," he agreed. "Just so's we understand one another. 'Cause you boys really don't wanna be messin' with a man like me."

"Yeah, we get that," Dean observed.

"'Cause I got connections. *Big* connections. In Jersey and –" he glanced unaccountably down at his feet, "– down south. I got friends. I got friends who could

make you guys disappear so fast the boys at the 15th would think you'd been abducted by freakin' aliens..."

Dean nodded. "Luciano Ferinacci, right?" he hazarded. Wozniak looked somewhat taken aback, his mouth falling open slightly. "Yeah, we heard you're tight with that asswipe."

Wozniak raised himself up to his full, admittedly unimpressive, height. "Boy, you don't wanna go talkin' about Mr. Ferinacci like that! You need to learn some damn respect –"

"Betty," Dean said, patting Wozniak on the shoulder. "Your boss is about as scary as the Olsen twins. Put together."

Wozniak fairly growled. "There are things you don't know about him –" he began. "Yeah, like he's probably buried more bodies under Hell Gate Bridge than the Butcher and the Service 66 Slayer combined, right?"

"Don't mess with Ferinacci," Wozniak hissed through clenched teeth. "This Slayer asshole shouldn't be taking his name in vain –" He stopped suddenly, as if only then realizing he'd spoken out of turn.

Sam raised an eyebrow. "I guess that's the risk you take, killing in someone else's name," he said slowly. "If someone was killing in – say – Lucifer's name, it figures Lucifer might not be too thrilled about it if he'd not authorized it. Hypothetically speaking, or course."

Wozniak just stared at them, mouth hanging open a little. "Hypothetically speaking," he agreed, squinting a little uncertainly at Sam.

Sam nodded. "Like I said."

Wozniak straightened, raising his chin a little as he tried to regain his composure. He pointed at each of them again, narrowing his eyes. "I'm watching you two."

Dean smiled at him. "Oh, Betty, we're so very scared..."

Amtrak 66 Union Station, Washington DC

Dean was pretty sure he was annoying the hell out of Sam.

He'd been fidgety and unsettled ever since their run in with Wozniak, and although he hadn't been lying when he'd implied he wasn't afraid of the portly police officer, being in a confined space with no real means of escape and a dirty cop on the payroll of Lucifer himself wasn't doing anything for his sense of inner calm.

Sam heaved an annoyed grunt as he attempted to concentrate on his laptop as Dean accidentally elbowed him in the ribs for the third time in an hour.

"Dean, *will* you sit still?" the younger brother snapped, sounding like an annoyed soccer mom losing patience with a particularly squirmy rugrat. "Just relax for a second! Take a breath!"

"Sam, we're stuck on a train with the ghost of a serial killing devil worshipper and a cop working for Lucifer who – oh yeah – is out to tear us apart and drag our asses down into Hell. I think I'm allowed to be a little tense."

"Dean –"

"And why the hell are we still stuck in this station? We've been here *hours* –"

"We've been here forty-five minutes," Sam corrected him. "And we'll be here another fifty while they get the train ready for the electrified section of the track. So *chill*." He attempted to refocus his attention on the research displayed on his laptop. "If you want to make yourself useful, try and keep an eye on the people getting on the train here."

Dean's forehead crinkled into a frown. "I thought you said the Slayer most likely got on at the beginning of the journey?"

"Well right now I'm not ruling anything out," Sam replied, studiously not looking up from the laptop. "So concentrate. Keep an eye on the new passengers." He smirked lopsidedly. "And if you're a really good boy, maybe I'll buy you some M&Ms."

Dean grimaced at him. "Bite me, junior."

Despite his dismissive tone, Dean did, however, turn his attention to the passengers boarding at DC, spending the next fifty minutes either staring at them or occasionally following them to their seats or sleeping compartments. He stopped doing that after he bumped into Wozniak while following a petite redhead with a Chihuahua tucked under her arm down to the sleeper cars, exchanging a nod and a casual "Betty," with him, before heading right on back to Sam.

"Anything?" his brother asked, barely looking up from the laptop as Dean collapsed into the seat next to him.

"Nada," Dean confirmed, shaking his head in exasperation. "You?"

"Less," Sam returned. "I checked out Stringer's story and he seems to be on the up and up," he continued with a weary sigh. "Although Wozniak's got more reprimands in his jacket than you got in your whole high school experience –"

Dean grinned. "Impressive."

"Everything Warwick told us about Ed Fraser and Elliot Butcher would seem to be accurate. And there's not a whole lot else to tell about that part of the story, Warwick pretty much gave us everything." Sam sighed again. "And you know what? We're no closer to finding out the identity of the Service 66 Slayer than we were when we boarded this train."

Dean leaned his elbow on the table in front of him and cupped his chin in his palm. "Where's Hercule Poirot when you need him, huh?"

Sam blinked at him in disbelief. "*Hercule Poirot*?" he echoed. "You know the guy's first name too?" He grinned broadly, as if he'd just discovered Dean's dirtiest secret. "Something tells me you might have paid more attention to *Murder On The Orient Express* than you originally let on."

Dean scowled at him, affronted. "Believe it or not, Sam, I may have cracked a book once or twice that *wasn't* Playboy or Maxim-related."

Sam raised a skeptical eyebrow. "Oh yeah? I thought you said you saw the movie?"

Dean shrugged. "So what if I *did* read it?" he mumbled into his hand. "Was *supposed* to read it. In tenth grade."

Sam snorted. "I *knew* it! Miss Grainger! I *knew* there had to be a woman involved. She was that English teacher you had the hots for, right? That was tenth grade!"

"Shut up, Miss Marple," Dean returned. "I don't see you unmasking our culprit here, you're so smart."

Sam shook his head. "We still got –" he glanced at his wristwatch, "– just over five hours until we get to Hell Gate Bridge..."

"That makes me feel so much better, Sammy."

At the sound of a shrill whistle from the platform, Dean's attention was drawn back to the last straggle of passengers who had boarded the train before it began to move slowly out of the station.

Of particular note was a young man who was obviously trying really hard for the "incognito" look, dark glasses covering his eyes, ball cap pulled low over his forehead, collar of his expensive-looking leather jacket turned up to his chin. Unfortunately, his dress and demeanor just screamed "look at me!" as he squeezed his way into the car past an harassed-looking young woman whose toddler couldn't decide whether he needed to use the bathroom or not.

Dean watched the guy make his way down the aisle toward him, taking in his eight hundred dollar sneakers and his designer jeans with the designer rips in the knees before glancing down at the holes in his own jeans and reflecting that at least he got them doing an honest (ish) day's (night's) work. He doubted this guy had done an

honest day's work in his life, what with his boyish good looks, expensive-looking haircut and manicured hands.

The young man had no luggage and kept glancing around furtively, as if he expected to be pounced on at any minute. By whom, Dean had no idea. But he had to snigger at the guy.

"What kind of ass hat wears shades inside, huh?" he muttered, more to himself than Sam.

"Huh?" Sam only half looked up, before turning his attention back to his computer.

The kid lowered himself into a seat a few tables away as he caught sight of a couple of teenage girls approaching from the opposite direction. Hurriedly, he pulled his cap even lower over his eyes and his blond-highlighted hair and sank his chin deeper into his collar.

But the first girl obviously wasn't fooled, stopping dead in her tracks with her mouth hanging open.

"Jenna, what the hell...?" the girl behind her began to protest as she stumbled right into her, before noticing the look of abject shock on her friend's face and following the direction of her enthralled gaze. "Oh. My. God..."

"Carter?" the first girl – Jenna – breathed heavily. "Carter Craig Addison!" Her voice had turned into an ecstatic squeak in the space of three words. "Ohmygodohmygodohmygod!!"

The second girl virtually shoved her friend out of the way, almost tripping over her feet in her haste to make it to the young man's table. "Carter – oh my God! We're your biggest fans! Seriously. In the whole world. *Ever!*"

The young man smiled awkwardly, pulling his hat down a little further.

"Sasha and Brittany are *never* going to believe this!" Jenna squealed.

"Jenna, shut *up!*" the second girl stage whispered.

"You shut up, Kendra!" Jenna elbowed her friend out of the way again, producing a Sharpie as if from thin air and shoving it and her train ticket in the young man's face. "Can we get your autograph, Carter?"

"Uh, sure," the guy said, bronzed cheeks coloring a little. "You like the show, huh?"

Jenna collapsed into fits of high pitched almost hysterical giggles. "Oh my God, like yes, like wow, like yes, like you're sooooooo..." She trailed off, clutching her hands to her chest, and sighing deeply. "...wow!"

"Uh – thanks," the guy said, as Kendra produced her cellphone and snapped a picture while he signed her friend's ticket.

She then proceeded to unbutton her blouse and shamelessly lean over him so that her assets were on full display. "Can you sign these?" she asked, Dean's eyes nearly popping out on stalks as the young man smiled a little uncomfortably and signed the girl's lacy pink bra as if it was something he was asked to do every day.

"Thanks, Carter," Kendra whispered in a voice that was clearly a sixteen-year-old's idea of sultry, taking a second to straighten up and not even pretending to button up her blouse. "Any time you wanna see some more, we're just down the hall..."

Carter laughed a little hollowly. "That's – nice," he managed. "Well it was nice to meet you girls. Real – nice."

Jenna giggled, and Kendra elbowed her in the ribs. "Thanks again, Carter!"

The two girls reluctantly moved away from the young guy's table, Jenna breathing, "Oh my God, he's sooooooooooooo gorgeous!" as she passed where Dean was sitting, almost tripping over his feet as she did so.

"Hey," Dean said, managing to catch her eye as she almost fell into his lap.

"Who's that guy you two were just drooling over?"

Jenna frowned at him, while Kendra looked little short of scandalized. "You've never heard of Carter Craig Addison?" she scoffed. "Oh my God, what planet are you from?"

The girls stalked away without even a second glance at Dean, lovelorn gazes still turning back to linger longingly in the direction of the guy in the ball cap and shades.

Dean frowned. "Who the hell is Carter Craig Addison?"

Sam had already opened up a web browser and was busy typing the name into IMDb. "He's an actor in some teen show," he replied. "*One Creek High*. It's not exactly *CSI* – barely gets two million viewers." He snorted derisively. "Hardly surprising – it's shown on that crappy little network no one watches – you know, the one with the godawful green color scheme and the wall to wall reality shows and –"

"Uh. Superboy." Dean shuddered. "Jeez, they should get sued for misrepresentation or somethin' – that guy's older than I am!"

Dean's focus slid away from the moodily-lit headshot displayed on Sam's laptop as Kim Robinson casually wandered past his shoulder, sitting herself down two rows over from the actor kid and pulling out her pink Blackberry.

She certainly seemed a lot calmer than Dean would have expected her to be after getting groped by Wozniak earlier, Sam's description of the incident causing Dean to imagine all manner of untimely deaths befalling the oily little cop.

Sam elbowed him in the ribs suddenly, before nodding in the direction of the far end of the car, where Luke, the attendant who had saved Ms. Robinson from Detective Wozniak's unwelcome attentions earlier, stood watching her earnestly.

A tiny smile flickered on the young woman's lips as she prodded at her Blackberry, no one else seeming to exist in the car right then as Kim continued typing something into her cell. She never once looked up, never made eye contact with anyone, but her smile widened as the actor kid's phone suddenly started to belt out some rock song Dean wasn't familiar with.

"*You can see we should be together now...*"

Sam nodded his approval, attention returning to the research on his computer. "Powderfinger," he muttered. "Awesome."

Dean glanced sideways at him before returning his attention to Carter, who had pulled out his cellphone and was eagerly reading something displayed there. A tiny grin flickered on his perfect lips as he began tapping something into the little phone. When he was done, he glanced up, eyes for a second seeming to skitter in Kim's direction before returning to his cell.

Kim barely stifled a giggle as Stevie Wonder's unmistakable voice emanated from her Blackberry. "*Here I am baby – signed, sealed, delivered, I'm yours...*"

Carter stood, barely concealing the grin plastered across his face, still not removing his shades or his ball cap as he made his way back down the aisle and into the restroom at the opposite end of the car.

Kim barely waited five seconds before following him.

Dean's grin almost matched Carter's, although he had to admit, he kinda felt bad for Luke, whose shoulders slumped as he looked down at his feet with a sigh before turning around and exiting the car.

"Solved the mystery of Career Girl," Dean announced smugly, Sam for a second diverting his attention away from his laptop to look at his brother.

"Oh yeah?"

Dean nodded. "She's banging Pretty Boy in the restrooms, dude."

Sam's focus shot to the empty seat where Carter had just been sitting, taking in Kim's now vacant position before lighting on the "engaged" sign above the toilet at the end of the car. "No. Way."

Dean's grin widened. "Yes way. Maybe we ought to go – y'know – warn them about Amtrak safety code violations..."

Sam rolled his eyes. "You are *such* a pervert."

"Takes one to know one, man. I'm not the one with the addiction to the Skin Channel."

Sam grimaced. "Shut up." He sighed. "We ought to talk to them though."

Dean nodded. "See? And you call *me* a pervert..."

"Let's just give 'em a – a couple of minutes..."

Dean glanced at his watch. "Think we should time them?"

"Dean!"

"All right, Doris, keep your pantyhose on!" He sniggered. "Which is more than *she's* doing..."

They waited patiently for a few minutes until the "engaged" light winked out above the restroom and Kim emerged, her hair a little mussed up and her lipstick slightly smeared.

She seemed a little surprised to see them both standing right outside the door, but smiled up at them, if a little nervously, cheeks flushed and her blouse askew.

"Excuse me," she mumbled, head down as neither of them moved aside to let her pass.

Carter emerged right behind Kim, at first startled, then annoyed, then finally chagrined as the boys pulled out their fake NYPD badges.

Kim moaned despondently. "Not *again*..."

"You're not in any trouble," Sam assured the couple hurriedly. "But we *do* need to speak with you –" he cast his gaze around the fairly busy train car. "Maybe we could go somewhere a little more private?"

Kim's nod was reluctant. "Sure, I guess. My room's this way."

Dean had to bite his lip to avoid blurting out, "Yeah, we know," instead going for the equally unsubtle, "You got a room but you go for a quickie in the bathroom?"

Sam flashed him a "Shut *up!*" glare over his shoulder and Dean merely shrugged, stepping into line behind his brother and following him through a few sleeper cars until they reached Kim's room.

The young woman ushered them inside, glancing about herself warily. Probably keeping an eye out for Wozniak, Dean figured.

"So if we're not in trouble...?" Carter finally removed his shades and ball cap as he turned, and Dean couldn't help wondering whether he'd kept them on the whole time he'd been in the bathroom with Kim. Rearranging his insanely expensive haircut, the actor blinked incredibly blue eyes at them expectantly.

Sam smiled reassuringly. "We're just speaking to everyone riding the train tonight, Mr. Addison," he said.

The kid barely smothered a smug grin. "You know who I am?"

Sam glanced briefly at Dean. "Yes sir."

Addison nodded. "Then this has to do with the Service 66 Slayer?" he sounded hopeful. "Not with –" he exchanged a glance with Kim, "– us?"

"No sir," Sam confirmed, again going for reassuring.

"Unless either one of you is the Slayer," Dean added, expression so mock-serious they both paled visibly. He grinned awkwardly. "I'm kidding," he assured them, before his face sobered considerably. "You're not, are you?"

"No!" Carter and Kim both burst out at the same time, shaking their heads vigorously.

"Then..." Sam began slowly. "This is a pre-arranged – uh – meeting?"

Kim sighed. "We have to be careful. You know, of the press?"

Sam nodded. "So how do you two know each other?"

"We met at a network party in LA," Carter explained. "Kim works for one of the network affiliates in New York –"

"Advertizing," Kim put in. "I have a client in Richmond who insists on a 'face to face' every couple of weeks. If Carter's not filming, I arrange my meeting for a Friday, catch the Service 66 back home, and he flies out from LA where his show's filmed to meet up with me in DC."

"We meet on the train and we..." Carter trailed off.

"Liaise?" Dean offered, carefully schooling his features.

Carter nodded. "Yeah. Exactly."

"So why all the secrecy?" Sam asked.

Carter shrugged. "I'm kind of an international face, y'know? The network makes a fortune in overseas sales and merchandizing, and our main focus is the fourteen to eighteen-year-old female demographic – and I kinda have this clean-cut image to live up to..."

"Sucks to be you," Dean muttered.

"Plus," Carter continued as if he hadn't heard him, "I make a lot of money out of sponsorship and endorsements, and if the truth were to come out, I could lose a whole slew of advertizing contracts."

"The truth that you're dating an advertizing executive?" Sam queried.

Carter shook his head. "The truth that I'm dating a *married* advertizing executive."

"Oh," Sam muttered.

"Awkward," Dean agreed.

"I've been separated from my husband for over a year," Kim explained. "We're in the middle of a big messy divorce. Y'know, Barry's quite a bit older than me, and he's kind of a studio bigshot back in LA. If he found out..." She glanced at Carter, threading her fingers through his and squeezing his hand. "Well, he could hurt Carter's career. He's a little on the vindictive side."

"Not to mention Kim would get ripped to shreds in the tabloids – y'know, gold-digging child bride or whatever," Carter added.

"Mr. Addison, Ms. Robinson," Sam said seriously. "Let me assure you we're here to investigate the Slayer, not to indulge tabloid gossip."

"Then you'll be discreet?" Carter asked hesitantly.

"Oh, totally," Dean agreed, smiling broadly. "Discreet's our middle name."

Kim seemed to take her first breath in several minutes. "That's a relief," she said, glancing over Dean's shoulder out into the corridor. "One of your colleagues earlier... He didn't seem so sympathetic –"

"Detective Wozniak?" Dean hazarded. "Guy's a sleazeball. Don't you worry, ma'am, we'll take care of him."

Sam raised a questioning eyebrow. "We will?" he whispered under his breath.

"Sure we will," Dean insisted. He flashed a big smile in Carter's direction, reaching behind Sam to pull his laptop out of the messenger bag his brother had slung over his shoulder.

"Hey –" Sam started to protest.

"Mr. Addison, I just bought my niece this new laptop," Dean continued to smile brightly at Carter, holding Sam's laptop out toward him. "And she just loves your show. Think I could get your autograph on this baby? She'd just be so thrilled..."

Sam positively glared at him, jaw clenched.

Carter seemed a little taken aback, but smiled indulgently. "Uh – sure," he said, fishing in his jeans pocket and pulling out the Sharpie one of the groupies had handed him earlier. "What's your niece's name?"

Dean's grin widened. "Sammy..."

Amtrak 66 Baltimore Penn Station

A whole lot more passengers boarded the train at Baltimore than either Dean or Sam had been expecting, the two of them wandering up and down the aisles of each car, trying to scope out the new faces and run a quick threat assessment on each.

So far, no one was really giving off that "possessed serial killer" vibe, and Dean met back up with Sam near the door to the lounge car, shoulders slumped in frustration.

"Dude, this is ridiculous," he hissed. "Unless we catch the guy hip-deep in blood or actually trying to toss someone off the bridge, there's no way we're gonna be able to make him before he ganks his next victim."

"He's got to be somewhere on this train, Dean," Sam assured him. "The Butcher always got on the train at the beginning of the route to give him time to scope out his next victim. The Slayer doesn't show any signs of having broken that pattern."

"So we're checking out the people getting on here for – what – kicks?"

Sam seemed about to answer when his attention shifted to the open doorway. Dean followed his line of sight to where an attractive guy in his late twenties, maybe early thirties was boarding the train.

He obviously took pride in his appearance, dark hair cut neatly around his ears, smooth olive skin recently shaved, seriously rocking the "smart casual" vibe in jeans and a leather jacket that even Dean couldn't help but admire. He was around Dean's height, body lean and muscular, although Dean was pretty sure he could take him in a fair fight.

As he moved on into the train, Dean noticed a bulge in the line of his jacket right where a shoulder holster would fit, and he figured the fight might not be quite so fair if the guy was packing concealed heat.

"What about Secret Agent guy over there?" Dean nodded toward the man before glancing back at Sam who shrugged.

"Yeah, maybe," the younger brother commented. "Although, like I said, Dean, I really think the Slayer's been onboard this train at least as long as we have."

Dean shrugged. "Beats sitting watching you typing on your laptop for another four hours, dude."

Dean soon came to regret that pronouncement after five minutes spent following the guy around and another thirty sat watching him lounging in his seat listening to his iPod. So maybe the guy wasn't a secret agent; didn't mean he wasn't the Slayer. But Dean had to admit that Sam – as usual – was probably right when he said the psycho serial killer had most likely been on the train at least since Richmond.

Dean sighed heavily, figuring maybe he'd watch the guy for another five minutes. However, he was so bored out of his mind that after less than sixty seconds he gave up and headed off to find Sam again.

Even watching Sam researching was more interesting than watching Secret Agent iPod Guy nodding his head in time to music Dean couldn't even hear.

Of course, he was wrong about that too.

When he finally found Sam again he was leaning against the bar of the snack car, enthusiastically indulging Warwick, who was regaling him with copious anecdotes about the "good old days" when Service 66 went by the far more glamorous name of "The Night Owl." Of course, even the good old days had the odd bump in the tracks – like the crash near Chester, Pennsylvania back in January 1988, and another at Boston Back Bay station in December 1990. Then the route became known as "The Twilight Shoreliner," which even Dean had to admit had a certain something, although that name didn't last long, the route again changing its moniker to "The Federal" in 2003.

"Rebranding," Warwick commented with a huff and a shrug of his shoulders. "Now we're plain old Service 66...difficult to capture the imagination with a name like that."

"It obviously captured the Slayer's imagination," Sam commented.

"That kind of imagination we could do without," Warwick sighed.

As riveting as the conversation was, Dean's attention soon began to drift. Glancing up, he caught sight of Wozniak skulking in the shadows between cars, but the slimy detective quickly dodged out of Dean's line of sight the second they made eye contact.

Dean heaved a heavy sigh. This was turning into one hell of a long night, especially when the most exciting thing he could think of to occupy his time was trailing a middle-aged cop who looked like the last time he'd exercised was on the monkey bars in kindergarten. Not exactly a challenge to a seasoned hunter like Dean Winchester.

Still. Anything was better than another half hour of *Trainspotting With Sammy...*

Amtrak 66 Leaving 30th Street Station, Philadelphia, PA

God, I must be bored to be trailing this old duffer around the train, Dean figured, actually having considered returning to his mind-numbing stakeout of Secret Agent iPod Guy at one point during the thirty minutes Wozniak just spent in the bathroom.

But then, Dean also figured, if Wozniak really *was* one of Lucifer's minions, it stood to reason he might have a little insider info on this Slayer creep, what with him murdering in the Devil's name and everything. Okay, so Sam had been wrong about the crooked cop having anything useful on Career Girl and Pretty Boy, but that didn't mean he might not have the goods on someone who actually *mattered* to their investigation.

Of course, a whole mess of people just got on at Philly – even if it was the middle of the night – and even though Sam was sure none of them was likely to be the Slayer, their presence did make it a hell of a lot harder for Dean to keep track of his quarry; it was almost as if Wozniak was *trying* to give him the slip.

"Hey."

Dean nearly jumped out of his skin as a large heavy hand landed with a thump on his shoulder, spinning around as his fingers automatically reached for the .45 at the small of his back.

"Jeez, Sammy!" he burst out, his heart just about pounding out of his chest. "Sneak up on a guy why don'tcha?"

Sam grinned broadly at him. "You're getting rusty in your old age, big brother," he said.

"It's not rust and it's not old age, junior," Dean scowled. "It's boredom. Mind-numbing, brain-melting *boredom*. Please tell me you got something more exciting for me to do than following this creep of a cop around the train?"

Sam frowned. "What creep of a cop?"

"Wozniak," Dean returned, glancing back in the direction he'd just seen the flabby detective headed, only to be confronted by a woman with three unruly toddlers, an Asian guy with a suitcase almost as big as he was, and an inexplicable nun blocking the aisle in front of him. "*Aw, man!*" he burst out, realizing the cop was nowhere to be seen. "Now look what you did!"

"What?" Sam burst out defensively. "I didn't do anything!"

Dean slapped him on the arm anyway. "Well stop screwing around doing nothin' and help me find Wozniak!"

"What for? I don't think he's our Slayer, Dean."

"Maybe not," Dean agreed, "but the guy's up to something. I don't know what. I just –"

"Feel a tremor in the Force?" Sam offered. "Spidey-Senses tingling?"

"Shut up, Chewie," Dean snapped. "The guy knows something. Or he's involved somehow."

Sam shrugged. "Then why'd you lose sight of him?"

Dean clenched his jaw. "You know you were born a smartass, right? Second you popped out, Dad said, 'He's gonna be a real smartass. Let's call him Smartass,' but for some reason Mom wanted to call you Sammy. Go figure."

Sam actually grinned at that. "Boy, you're really grumpy when you don't get your beauty sleep."

Dean shook his head and began to stride away from his brother. "Help me find Wozniak, Smartass," he growled, trying to ignore the guttering overhead lights as he made his way down the aisle, which had miraculously cleared of nuns, rugrats and giant suitcases.

"Looks like maybe there's a problem with the power," Sam muttered from behind him. "The lights have been all over the place since DC."

"What's so special about DC?"

"The train switches to the electrified section of the track. I told you that."

"That makes a difference?"

"Shouldn't do, no."

"Man," Dean blew out a breath. "I hate that. Makes me think a demon's about to jump out on our asses."

They were headed down through the sleeper cars toward the rear of the train, the number of passengers beginning to thin out until the corridors were mercifully empty. But as they neared the luggage car, which was one of the last compartments on the train, there was still no sign of Wozniak.

The lights began to flicker wildly, Dean swearing as they were suddenly plunged into complete darkness and his foot hit something big and immobile on the floor in front of him.

"What in freakin' hell –"

Sam ran into the back of him just as the lights came back up, both boys suddenly finding themselves gazing down at the motionless body of Detective Sherman Wozniak, sightless eyes staring up out of a slightly surprised-looking face, his throat cut from ear to ear, blood oozing down the front of his hideous sports coat and pooling in a crimson puddle on the floor of the luggage car.

"Aw, maaaaan! Betty!" Dean moaned. "I take my eyes off the big slug for ten freakin' seconds and the Slayer comes out and salts his ass!"

Sam turned his head sideways slightly, bending to examine the wound a little more closely. "I dunno, Dean," he said. "Maybe this wasn't the Slayer; it doesn't look so satanic to me."

Dean frowned. "Just another everyday human whackjob?"

"Maybe," Sam agreed. "So far the Slayer's stuck to the Butcher's original pattern – and he only killed in New York once he was over Hell Gate Bridge, right?" He scratched his head thoughtfully, eyes not straying from the dead cop at their feet. "Why change his M.O. now?"

"Like I said, man, maybe there's nothing supernatural about this gig at all," Dean offered. "Maybe it's just your garden variety whacko copycat who gets his jollies reading true crime magazines and don't give a rat's ass about pattern..."

"Or maybe the Slayer was *forced* to break pattern," Sam theorized. "Maybe Wozniak found out something he shouldn't have and the Slayer needed to shut him up..."

"And maybe you two need to hold it right there."

Dean tensed at the unmistakable sensation of a gun barrel jamming into the back of his neck. Hard. "Dude, I know what this looks like –" *Twice in one night...*

"Oh, I don't think you do," a flinty voice barked, cold steel pressing harder into Dean's flesh. "Because you know what? This looks to me like being caught red-handed. This looks to me like it's time to make that appointment with the needle. This looks to me like Dean and Sam Winchester – you're under arrest..."

* * * *

There was nothing like having a gun jammed to the back of your head to relieve the tedium, Dean reflected, attempting to twist around a little in order to identify the man currently sticking the .38 in his neck.

"Get your hands on your head!" the guy ordered in response. "On your knees! Both of you!"

"Can we at least talk about this?" Dean asked, eyes locking with Sam's as both of them sank to their knees, fingers laced to the rear of their heads.

“Save it for your attorney,” the voice snapped, wrenching one of Dean’s wrists backwards and slapping on the cold hard steel of handcuffs.

Dean grimaced as the guy grabbed his other wrist, twisted it behind him and secured his hands a little too tightly at his back. “Sure hope you got another set o’ those –” he began, grinning in Sam’s direction.

“Shut up,” his brother and his captor barked in unison, Dean blinking in affronted surprise at Sam, whose face softened slightly in response.

“Listen – sir?” Sam was looking over Dean’s head at the guy standing behind him, eyes going all dewy and earnest in the time it had taken Dean to shut his mouth. “I swear to you, we didn’t do this – Detective Wozniak – we found him like this –”

“Uh-huh,” the guy huffed in a monotone. He proceeded to frisk Dean methodically, yanking the silver Colt out of his waistband, much to Dean’s irritation. “Like you just ‘found’ Emily Channing in St. Louis?”

Dean’s eyes widened as they locked with Sam’s.

“This isn’t your usual style, Dean,” the guy continued. “Thought you were all about torturing helpless girls? Never figured you for the Devil’s Disciple type. Certainly never had you down as the Service 66 Slayer –”

“That’s because I’m not –” Dean began to protest.

“Can it,” the nameless assailant barked. “I know who – *what* – you are, Dean Winchester.”

Dean managed to shift slightly, angling his body just enough to catch a glimpse of Secret Agent iPod Guy reading something on his iPhone. “Oh yeah, and what’s that, Mr. Jobs?” he asked sarcastically.

One side of the guy’s mouth ticked up. “Funny,” he grit out. “They said you were a real charmer.”

“Who said?”

The guy didn’t reply. “So let’s see...” he was looking at his iPhone again. “You’re still wanted for murder in St. Louis.” He glanced up. “Although – y’know – you’re technically dead and everything –”

“It’s a miracle,” Dean commented dryly.

“Suspected of several murders in the St. Louis area, including the aforementioned Emily Channing. Then there’s an assault on an Alex and a Lindsay Akita; another assault on a Rebecca Warren. You and your little brother Sam here are wanted for a whole slew of felonies and misdemeanors – credit card fraud, deception, B and E, arson –” his eyebrows rose, “– grave desecration, that’s a new one on me. Oh and let’s not forget impersonating a police officer, a federal agent, a government official...need I go on?”

Dean glanced at Sam again. “Please do,” he said. “You’re just getting to the good part – where we’re *freakin’ innocent!*”

The guy raised an unimpressed brow. “I wouldn’t say either of you were *innocent*, Dean,” he said. “I saw you trailing Wozniak. And one of the attendants tells me you had some kind of run in with him earlier.”

Dean’s expression telegraphed *Someone saw that?* to Sam, who muttered, “I *knew* I saw someone in that corridor.”

“Then you admit it?”

“I admit we spoke to him. He was hassling one of the female passengers.”

“Ask her. She’ll tell you,” Dean added. “Her name’s Robinson. R-o-b...”

“You know, I figured I recognized you the minute I made you following me around the train,” the guy continued.

Maybe need some extra surveillance training there, Bucko, Dean chastised himself.

“Just couldn’t think where I’d seen your face before,” the guy continued, straightening. “What was I? You’re next victim?”

Dean snorted. “Don’t flatter yourself, pal –”

“Dean –” Sam tried to interject.

“– You’re not exactly my type,” Dean continued regardless.

“No,” the guy agreed. “Helpless young women tied to chairs are more your type, right?”

Dean scowled at him. “I didn’t murder that girl.”

“Just someone who looked incredibly like you, huh?”

Dean bristled. “As a matter of fact, yes.”

“Well, whatever,” the guy with the gun continued dismissively, keeping his eye on Dean while he patted Sam down and took away his Glock. “Y’know, modern technology is just awesome in the battle against scumbags like you.” He waved his phone smugly. “Got a guy back at the precinct to e-mail me a few mugshots – the FBI’s Most Wanted list. You know you’re on that, right?”

“Nice to be famous,” Dean snarked. “One of my ambitions in life.”

“So you’re a cop?” Sam put in. “Might have helped if you’d introduced yourself earlier.”

“Detective Rafael Guevara,” the cop said with a nod of his head. “Baltimore PD. Consider me introduced.”

“You’re a little out of your jurisdiction, Detective,” Sam pointed out.

Guevara’s expression faltered just a little. “Slayer’s last victim was my cousin,” he said flatly. “That *makes* this my jurisdiction.” The corner of his mouth twitched up a little. “Never expected the Slayer to be Dean Winchester though.”

He tugged roughly on Dean’s cuffs just because he could, and Dean grunted as he struggled to maintain his balance.

“Dude, you got the wrong guy!” he protested. “Frisk me some more if you want – you ain’t gonna find no murder weapon –”

“Cause you already tossed the knife?”

“No, ’cause I –” Dean stopped short, grimacing angrily. “Cause I hid it in here with the rest of the crap the Slayer planted in Stringer’s room.” He shook his head as he locked eyes with Sam. “I am *such* an idiot – the Slayer must have found it – or worse, saw me put it here – and used it to slice n’ dice Wozniak...”

Guevara frowned. “What ‘crap?’”

Dean jerked his head toward a dark corner of the car, between two stacks of luggage. “Someone planted a load of demonic stuff – including this scary-ass dagger – in Jay Stringer’s room to make us think he was the Slayer.”

Guevara paused mid-stride. “New York Giants Jay Stringer?”

Dean nodded. “You want me to get you his autograph? We’re tight since he cried all over my shoulder.”

Guevara ignored him. “Why would the Slayer want you to suspect Stringer?” he asked, crouching down to examine the items Dean had removed from the cornerback’s room.

Dean glanced at Sam, who stammered, “Cause – uh – whoever it was may have been under the impression we were cops...”

Guevara raised an eyebrow as he examined the photograph of the girl with her eyes cut out. “I wonder what gave him that idea?” he asked sardonically.

“Look, man,” Dean renewed his protests. “We’re not who you think we are – we’re here to catch this evil sonofabitch just like you are, but while we’re standing here – uh – chatting, the real murderer’s still out there lining up his next victim –”

“Yeah, ’cause you’re so very innocent –”

“Hey, wait.” Sam suddenly tilted his head to one side as he caught sight of the photograph clutched in Guevara’s hand. “That’s Veronica Sayers.”

“Who the hell is Veronica Sayers?” Dean and Guevara managed to chorus in unison.

“Veronica Sayers!” Sam repeated, as if they both ought to know who he was talking about. “The Butcher’s last victim?”

Guevara glanced down at the picture and Dean frowned over at his brother. “Why leave that for us to find?” he asked.

“Homage to his Master,” Guevara muttered distractedly.

“We don’t think the Slayer’s a copycat,” Sam countered.

“What the hell do I care what you think?” Guevara snapped, coming back to himself.

Dean rolled his eyes. “Dude, how many times we gotta tell you? We’re the *good* guys!”

Guevara snorted derisively. “And I’m Shirley Temple.”

“Look,” Sam continued, before Dean could make some comment they might both regret. “The Slayer’s clearly trying to prove that the Butcher is back to continue his ‘mission’ – offering up his victims’ hearts and souls to his perceived Satanic Master – that’s gotta be why he left us the photograph of the Butcher’s final victim.”

Guevara shifted slightly. “How can you claim the Slayer’s not a copycat when you just said he’s trying to prove he’s continuing the Butcher’s work?”

The brothers exchanged a weary glance.

“Man, if you don’t believe I’m not the Slayer, you’re never gonna believe the rest of what we have to say.”

Guevara had returned to Wozniak’s prone form, inspecting the area around the body for evidence. Dean doubted he’d find any. The detective looked up at him coolly. “Try me,” he challenged.

Sam took a breath. “We don’t think the Slayer is a copycat of the Butcher,” he explained slowly. “We think he is the Butcher.”

Guevara just stared at him for a second, expression completely neutral. “Elliot Butcher? The guy who was executed in 1956? *That* Elliot Butcher? You think he’s – what? – come back from the dead as – as a ghost or something? To continue his reign of terror?” He actually laughed out loud in amused disbelief.

Sam shrugged. “In a manner of speaking –”

“– Yes,” Dean finished for him. Reading Guevara’s obvious skepticism in the sudden tight set of his shoulders, he added, “Look, this is what we do, man. We know what we’re talking about. And we know it sounds crazy.” He shook his head. “Man, we do. But that’s what’s going on here, I swear to God.”

An incongruous grin crept across Guevara’s face, as if suddenly it all made some kind of ridiculous sense to him. “You’re Ghost Busters?” He snorted. “So you’re going for the insanity plea, right?”

“Dude,” Dean’s voice was oddly controlled. “That guy who killed the girl in St. Louis? That wasn’t me. It was a creature who could look like anyone it wanted and, obviously, being a creature of taste and discernment it chose to look like me.”

Guevara was nodding. “Of course,” he agreed sarcastically. “If you can look like anyone, why look like a bum when you can look like a catalog model?”

Dean scowled at him. “Listen, man, this is *serious* –”

“Damn right it’s serious!” Guevara’s eyes flashed, and he was suddenly crouching down in front of Dean, almost nose to nose with him. “You think I’m an idiot, Dean Winchester? You think I’m gonna fall for this whack-a-day ghost B.S.? *Huh?* You guys already killed at least five people. Including my cousin Javier. You’re *not* killing any more. Not if *I* have anything to say about it!”

“Sir –” Sam tried to intercede, but Guevara was having none of it.

“Save it,” he snapped, cutting him off with a wave of his hand, rising to his feet and circling behind Dean until he was standing in his earlier position, just inside the doorway. “This train doesn’t get any further than Trenton tonight. When we get there, the whole train – including everyone onboard – gets locked down while I sort this whole mess out once and for all. *Nobody* gets off.” He cast a glance down at Wozniak. “This guy might have been dirty – believe me, I know whose payroll he was on – and he might have been an asshole, but he was still one of New Jersey’s –” he stopped himself abruptly, obviously reconsidering what he’d been about to say. “He was still a police officer.”

"If you lock this train down, the real killer's gonna get away," Dean insisted. "He's obviously real familiar with the 66, man – he knew exactly the most out-of-the-way location to off Wozniak without witnesses or interruptions – and you can bet your shiny gold badge he'll be off this train before it even hits the platform at Trenton."

"And if that doesn't work for him," Sam added, "he can just carry on doing what he's been doing up until this point; like you said, he's already gotten away with five murders. Not only does he know this train inside out, but he's obviously really good at blending into the crowd, not drawing attention to himself. And if he goes to ground we won't get another crack at him until he kills again. You want that? Another murder on your conscience?"

"Don't tell me what I do or do not want, pal," Guevara snarled. "You didn't lose family to this creep."

"But I *will* lose family if you haul Dean in to the precinct and blame *him* for all of this!"

"And more people will die," Dean added. "Dude, it's not worth letting someone lose their life just to try and prove a point you're never gonna prove: I'm *not* the Slayer, man!"

Guevara just stared levelly at them for a moment, jaw clenched, as if he was actually considering what they were saying to him. Then he shook his head and pulled out his cellphone, laughing mirthlessly as he began to punch in a number. "I can't believe I almost fell for that," he muttered. He looked up at them, straightening. "How stupid do you two think I am? I already caught the Slayer. No one else is gonna die. Not once I've got Dean Winchester locked up. And that's why I'm calling ahead to Trenton – get you boys a nice comfy jail cell."

"Dude, you gotta believe us!" Dean protested.

"I don't 'gotta' anything –"

Guevara broke off mid-sentence, suddenly collapsing to the floor in a boneless heap as his iPhone skittered across the luggage car floor, coming to rest in the pool of Wozniak's congealing blood.

Dean twisted his head to get a better look at what the hell just happened, only to find himself gazing up at Warwick, who was standing in the doorway brandishing a fire extinguisher.

"*Dude!*" Dean burst out in rapt admiration.

Warwick shrugged a little sheepishly. "If anyone stands a chance of catching this Slayer creep, my money's on you two," he pronounced. "The cops can't end this. I think you two can."

The brothers just stared at him for a second, before Sam finally managed to string a sentence together. "Sir, that's – we appreciate your faith in us."

Warwick nodded. "I heard what you said – about this being some kind of spirit – Elliot Butcher's spirit." He raised his head and stared at them levelly. "You really believe that?"

Dean nodded. "Yes sir, we do," he said. "And believe me, we know how crazy it sounds."

Warwick shrugged. "I seen some crazy stuff in my time," he said. "Not least, Elliot Butcher. If anyone can rise up from the dead to carry on killing people, it's him. He said he'd be back. The man's obviously true to his word."

"That still leaves us with a problem," Sam pointed out, hauling himself to his feet and heading over to check Guevara.

"Only one?" Dean asked.

"Well –" Sam paused to re-think that assessment. "Okay, two problems." He began to pat down the cop's body, pulling out first Dean's Colt, then his own Glock and finally Guevara's .38 before finally locating the keys to Dean's cuffs. "We got ourselves one dead cop and one unconscious cop who's convinced you're the Slayer."

Dean snorted. "Is that all? I thought we had a demon-worshipping serial killer on the loose too."

Sam snagged hold of Dean's cuffs, jamming in the key a little less than gently and yanking them open. "Okay, there's that. Make it three problems."

Dean rubbed at his wrists to restore some semblance of circulation. "Well," he said, gesturing for his Colt and the cuffs still clutched in Sam's hands, "unconscious cop we can deal with. At least temporarily."

Sam handed him the .45 and the cuffs, Dean securing his handgun at the small of his back before crouching down next to Guevara, snapping one of the cuffs snugly around his right wrist before pulling him over to the side of the car and securing the other to a metal rail running along the bottom of the wall.

Reaching into his jeans pocket, he produced a handkerchief which he then used to gag the insensible police officer, Sam just blinking at him for a second.

"Dude – you carry around a *handkerchief*?" he burst out in disbelief.

Dean looked up at him, shrugging dismissively. "Never know when you're gonna need to gag someone, Sammy," he replied with a devilish grin.

"Bet that's not something they teach at Boy Scouts," Sam muttered, surveying the job his brother had done securing the cop. "Okay, one down –"

"We could put the dead one in the freezer," Warwick suddenly suggested, gesturing to Wozniak. "It'll be pretty empty by this stage of the journey. At least it'll keep him from being found until you boys – do whatever it is you're going to do."

"Now there's the sixty-four thousand dollar question," Dean sighed.

Sam ignored him. "Okay, Warwick, I'll help you with that," he said instead, turning back to Dean with a lopsided grin. "You okay cleaning up here?"

Dean grimaced. "Gee thanks, Sammy. How come I always get stuck with mop detail?" He turned mournful eyes down onto the pool of blood congealing about the dead cop as he scooped up Guevara's cell.

"At least you scored an iPhone," Sam informed him, smiling brightly.

"Yeah, covered in a dead cop's blood," Dean pointed out, examining the phone in distaste.

"Supply closet down the hall," Warwick put in helpfully, nodding his head toward the far doorway as he maneuvered a luggage cart over to the mountain of flesh that was the former Detective Wozniak.

* * * *

It took Warwick and Sam a good few minutes to wrangle the heavy form of the dead cop up onto the luggage cart, Warwick dragging a plastic sheet from off a stack of wooden cartons and draping it unceremoniously over the body.

Sam followed Warwick's lead as he maneuvered the cart out into the next car, glancing behind him briefly as he was again assaulted by the odd impression he was being watched.

But all he saw as he looked back over his shoulder was Dean scowling at the supply closet as he pulled out a mop and bucket.

He smiled slightly before following Warwick down through several sleeper cars until they reached the tiny kitchen to the rear of the snack car where Warwick opened a mercifully almost empty freezer and gestured for Sam to help him lift the heavy cop inside.

Sam dutifully obliged; he and Warwick somehow managing to manhandle the mass of New Jersey policeman into the freezer and push the lid down over his bulky form.

Warwick then rummaged in a locker to the side of the small sink, pulling out a laminated sign reading "out of order" which he proceeded to stick on the freezer door.

"That ought to keep anybody from looking in there," the porter said. "With a little luck." He smiled in satisfaction at a task accomplished, seemingly unfazed by having just stashed a dead body in the kitchen freezer.

Sam raised an eyebrow. "And if it doesn't?"

Warwick inclined his head to one side. "Then the Slayer's suddenly become a little more conscientious about clearing up after himself."

"Warwick, you could get in trouble –"

"Look, son," Warwick put a firm hand on Sam's shoulder. "I couldn't help catch the Butcher back in the fifties. This is the least I can do."

Sam was about to reply when a blood-chilling scream suddenly rent the air. He turned sharply, darting back out into the snack car, where whey-faced passengers were glancing around themselves in fear, seeking out the source of the terrible sound.

"Everyone remain calm." Warwick was suddenly in front of Sam, his voice exuding authority and reassurance. "There are police officers on this train. No one is in any danger."

Sam sure hoped that was true as he headed off in the direction of the scream, running down past the sleeper cars, toward the luggage compartment where he'd last seen Dean.

Crashing through a doorway into one of the last sleeper cars, Sam skidded to a halt as the guttering overhead light revealed a shadowy figure not far in front of him, a knife glinting in his hand which was pressed to the throat of a second, smaller figure – a young woman – who was being dragged down the narrow hallway despite her violent protestations. "Get off me you creep!"

The lights flickered on full brightness for a second, and only then could Sam discern Kim Robinson's ashen face, terror plain in her eyes as she kicked and struggled hopelessly.

"Hey!" Sam yelled, Kim suddenly yanked around in his direction, her assailant positioning her in front of him like a human shield. "Let her go!"

"Help me!" Kim croaked desperately. "Please! Please help!"

Her attacker yanked on the door at the far end of the sleeper car, even as Sam pulled out his cell and hurriedly hit the speed dial.

"Dean?" he barked into the phone. "Dean, it's the Slayer! He's headed in your direction – and he's got Kim!"

* * * *

The lights flickered wildly as Dean glanced up from the now-spotless floor of the luggage car, phone pressed tightly to his ear.

"He's *what*?" he burst out, eyes darting to the doorway even as he dashed toward it. "If we can trap him between us –" He let the idea hang as he shoved through the doorway and sprinted down the adjoining sleeper car, even as the door at the far end of the carriage flew open.

Drawing his Colt, he skidded to a halt and held his ground, Kim Robinson suddenly shoved through the door in front of him.

"Kim!" he yelled, as an arm came into view wrapped around the girl's neck and holding the ceremonial dagger Dean had earlier removed from Jay Stringer's room. "Let her go you sadistic psycho bastard!"

Kim let out a whimper as her forward motion was abruptly halted, the arm tugging on her neck and yanking her backwards, back through the doorway, which slammed hard in front of her.

"No!"

Dean threw himself down the carriage, fingers scrabbling at the door handle even as he heard a lock clunk into place on the other side, Kim's terrified visage the only thing visible through the dingy glass panel set into the door.

“Sonofa –”

He began kicking and pounding at the door, briefly considering shooting at the lock before dismissing the idea, Kim too close on the other side to risk any stray metal or wood fragments – or God forbid a stray bullet – plowing into her.

“Dammit! Sam!”

* * * *

Sam drew his Glock as the dark figure of the Slayer re-emerged into the sleeper car, slamming and locking the door as Dean’s angry face appeared at the glass beyond, the sound of his brother kicking and pounding at the wood echoing along the carriage.

“Let the girl go!” Sam repeated, inching toward them, fingers curling firmly around his handgun. “There’s no escape! Nowhere for you to go! Just give it up now and I won’t hurt you!”

“Please!” Kim repeated, eyes wild and imploring. “Don’t let him kill me!”

The lights chose that moment to flicker, and it was almost as if Sam was watching a really old movie, Kim letting out another petrified scream as she was suddenly launched toward him.

A cold blast of night air funneled down the hallway as Sam caught Kim in his arms and pulled her to him, feeling her sag as he tightened his grip on her.

“It’s okay,” he soothed her. “I got you. It’s okay, you’re okay.”

As the lights spluttered back on, Sam’s gaze shot to the car’s outer door, which was hanging open, the wind catching hold of it and repeatedly slamming into the side of the train.

The Slayer was nowhere to be seen.

He shivered as he maneuvered Kim forward, frowning as he double and triple checked the Slayer wasn’t hiding somewhere inside the train.

Satisfied that the killer was nowhere inside, he unlocked the car’s inner door, wrenching it open so that Dean could get through.

“What the hell, Sammy?” Dean demanded breathlessly. “Where the hell did the bastard go?”

Sam shook his head. “I don’t know how he did it,” he said, indicating the open outer door. “Those doors can’t be opened while the train’s moving – not without an override key, and only Amtrak staff carry those.”

Dean peered out through the open car door, blinking in the cold air which immediately bit at his face. “He must have gotten out onto the roof,” he mused. “And to have gotten this door open...”

“He’d have to have access,” Sam finished for him. “And knowledge.” He glanced around him. “Just like he did with Wozniak – he was bringing Kim to the quietest part of the train.”

Kim, still clinging to Sam like a giant life preserver, suddenly let out a small cry as her eyes fell on the compartment outside of which they were standing. “That’s my room!” she burst out. “He was bringing me back to my room!”

Sam glanced meaningfully over her head at Dean before carefully asking, “Where’s Carter?”

Kim seemed momentarily confused. “We were getting drinks...” she stammered. “I said I’d meet him back here after I – y’know – slipped into something more comfortable.”

Dean raised an eyebrow but didn’t comment, instead asking, “And this freak snatched you up before you made it back?”

Kim nodded.

“He was watching,” Sam said slowly.

“Watching?” Kim whispered, grip tightening on Sam.

Dean took a breath. "Better see what's behind door number one," he said with a shrug, pushing at Kim's door as if he expected it to be locked.

It wasn't.

The door swung open easily, and Kim let out a pitiful whimper when she caught sight of the interior of her room.

"She was going to be the next victim," Sam breathed softly, eyes raking over the reorganized contents of the room – the black altar, the candles, the bloody markings on the walls – all laid out exactly as he'd seen them in the crime scene photos from the Butcher's earlier "works" in the fifties.

Dean's eyes flickered back to the still-open car door. "Sam we need to catch this weirdo," he said. "Right now. If he slips back into the train we're gonna lose him."

Sam nodded in reluctant agreement. "I hope that doesn't mean what I think it means."

Dean grinned at him. "Where's your sense of adventure, Sammy?" he asked, before turning back to Kim. "You know what happened to Carter when you left him?"

As if on cue, the actor appeared at the far end of the car, a confused grimace on his face as he rubbed at the back of his head.

Warwick emerged behind him in the hallway, Jay Stringer in tow.

The porter looked over at Sam and Dean. "Found him in the bathroom," he said, jerking his thumb in Carter's direction. "Out cold."

"Someone hit me!" Carter whined, almost as if he couldn't believe such a thing was possible, fingers coming away from his immaculate hair still sticky with his own blood.

"Baby!" Kim abruptly released her hold on Sam, running for Carter and throwing herself into his arms. "It was that sicko – the Slayer!" she burst out. "He dragged me back here – he was going to – to –" She finally broke down in tears as she gestured to her room, Carter paling when he glimpsed the new interior décor.

"Oh my God," he breathed, looking up at Dean and Sam. "You guys stopped him?"

Sam shrugged. "For now," he said. "We think he might have escaped up onto the roof..."

"Then we need to get up there after him!" Stringer stepped forward, all muscle, anger, and need for bloody revenge.

"Hold you horses there, Hoss." Dean put the flat of his hand against Stringer's chest – which had disturbingly little effect on the football player's forward momentum. "We need you down here," Dean continued, planting his feet in an attempt to stop the big cornerback pushing him right over. "We need you to keep an eye on these two, huh?" He indicated Kim and Carter with a nod of his head. "Just in case."

Stringer paused, nodding slightly as he backed off. "I can do that."

"Then you're going up on the roof?" Warwick asked. "He could be back inside by now –"

"Maybe," Dean shrugged. "Maybe not." He glanced sideways at Sam a little sheepishly. "I kinda got a theory..."

Sam frowned. "You do?"

"It sounds kinda whacked."

"And a dead serial killer possessing one of the living and forcing him to commit ritualistic murder doesn't?"

"Okay, you got me there," Dean admitted, before continuing. "I – I think maybe it's electricity," he said. "How he's drawing the power to stay here, to stay in control of his host. It's not like spooks can usually possess people, right?"

Sam had to give Dean that. "Not generally."

"And Butcher went to the electric chair," Dean added, eyes bright. "And the electrics have been on the fritz ever since we got on the electrified part of the line."

"Ye-ah..."

“So what if Butcher’s somehow channeling the train’s power – whether he realizes it or not – to keep control of his host?”

Sam shrugged. “How does that help us?”

“Look,” Dean explained. “If this really is the ghost of Elliot Butcher possessing some ordinary random guy, then we’re not gonna just be able to exorcise him like we would a demon –”

“Demon?” Warwick echoed.

Sam smiled apologetically. “Yeah – uh –”

“And it’s not like we can just salt n’ burn the guy’s remains before the train gets to Hell Gate Bridge,” Dean added.

“So...?”

“So we’re gonna need to get a little creative to off this sucker,” Dean explained. “Getting him out of his host ain’t gonna be enough – he could just possess someone else and carry on with his little slayer-fest.”

“So we gotta destroy Butcher’s spirit,” Sam agreed. “Permanently.”

“Uh-huh.”

“And we do that how?”

Dean rolled his eyes. “Sammy, always with the details. Look, Butcher went to the electric chair, right? Maybe if we electrocute him it’ll shock Butcher’s spirit out of the host, just like his spirit was shocked out of his own body at the moment of his death – to come back and hang out here fifty years later.”

Sam inclined his head and narrowed his eyes. “Sounds like a stretch to me,” he said. “And even if it worked, how the hell do we electrocute the Slayer without seriously injuring – or more likely burning to a crisp – Butcher’s host?”

Dean averted his eyes a little.

“You’re saying we sacrifice the host?” Sam sounded a little shocked himself.

“If that’s what has to happen to get rid of this sucker...” Dean let that hang and Sam sighed heavily.

“Yeah,” he agreed slowly. “In lieu of any other bright ideas. So how do we electrocute him?”

Dean grinned, eyes turning heavenward. “S what I’ve been trying to tell you, man! We got twenty-five thousand volts above our heads! That could be the whole reason he’s up there – maybe he’s drawn to the power somehow!”

Sam followed Dean’s upward gaze despite himself. “The power lines?” he asked. “Oh *man*... I so don’t like the sound of this...”

* * * *

“Dude, we’re like James Bond in *Octopussy!*” Dean burst out gleefully, legs dangling over nothing for a second before he managed to haul himself up onto the roof of the train.

He swayed a bit as he got slowly to his feet, trying to get his bearings as cold early morning air whipped passed him, tugging at his clothes and making his eyes water.

It was still pitch dark, middle of the night dark, and he peered into the blackness, squinting at a dark shape to the rear of them, steadily moving toward the far end of the train.

“Try to at least *pretend* you’re not enjoying this, Dean,” Sam’s voice groused up from beneath him, a hand reaching up toward his brother.

“And you should try to have more fun in your work, Sammy,” Dean commented as he reached down to help Sam pull himself up onto the roof.

Sam stayed on his knees for a second, one hand gripping Dean’s while the other held on to the side of the roof. “This is not my idea of fun, Dean,” he said, the wind whipping mercilessly at his shirt and his hair, so that he could barely see.

“It’s the girly haircut, man,” Dean commented, raising his voice to be heard over the wind and the noise of the engine and the metal on metal screech of the wheels

speeding over the train track. "If you didn't have that whole sheepdog thing going on, you might actually be able to see that our Slayer's still up here with us."

He hung on to Sam's hand for a second longer, the younger brother rising unsteadily to his feet and standing stock still as he tried to gain his balance.

"You're just too tall, man," Dean pointed out. "You're center of gravity's all wrong; you look like Bambi on that icy lake."

Sam scowled at him. "You've never even seen *Bambi*."

"Have too," Dean disagreed. "You cried till I snuck us into the movies, remember? It was – I dunno – your sixteenth birthday or something."

"Shut up," Sam said. "I was five."

"Uh-huh," Dean agreed.

Sam shrugged off his hand in annoyance, wobbling a little bit and almost grabbing it back. "Has he seen us?" He bent his knees a little in order to better stabilize himself.

Dean shrugged, taking a hesitant step forward, the cold and the wind pummeling him as the train sped on through the night, trees whipping past at a rate that seemed much faster out here than it had down below, in the comfort and relative safety of the sleeper car.

Maybe this hadn't been his brightest idea ever.

He took another step, putting his hands out as he swayed a little, acutely aware of the power lines carrying twenty-five thousand volts uncomfortably close to his face. "Why do they make this look so easy in the movies?" he demanded.

"Because they don't expect idiots like us to try it in real life," Sam returned.

Dean figured that was a fair comment.

He glanced up then, and the dark figure up ahead of them stopping, straightening and seeming to turn in their direction. "Uh –" he grunted. "I think he's seen us."

Sam pushed his hair out of his face. "If you tell me we have to run, I'm going to kill you."

"Sammy, we have to run."

Dean took a breath before launching himself forward, arms held out to the sides as if he was on some circus high wire, feet pounding on the metal roof as he put his head down and ran.

It was actually a lot easier at this speed, the wind at his back pushing him forward, feet nimbly jumping over obstacles, and he began to feel exhilarated, almost weightless, as he gained on the dark shadow trying to escape to the rear of the train.

He saw the figure stop suddenly and turn to look at him, feet teetering on the edge of the car before he turned back and jumped.

Dean caught his breath, the guy's feet pounding on metal as he landed perfectly on the car to their rear.

Dammit.

Still, if he fell, that could make things a whole lot more complicated, Butcher's spirit merely jumping on into the next poor schmuck before his current host even hit the rails beneath them.

Glancing behind him to make sure Sam was still following, he picked up the pace, trying to gain some momentum before having to make the jump to the next car himself.

When he got there he almost stopped dead, fear suddenly gripping him as he launched himself off the car and prayed he landed on the next one, not somewhere in between.

Relief flooded him as his boots landed with a clang on the next carriage, and he continued his pursuit, listening out for Sam behind him as he kept his eyes forward, trained on his quarry.

He hadn't been lying before when he'd said they made it look way too easy in the movies.

He quickened his pace as he closed in on the shadowy form of the Slayer, the guy only a few feet in front of him when he stopped abruptly and turned.

Dean skidded to a halt in response. "You've got nowhere to go, dude!" he yelled, Sam's heavy footsteps drawing up behind him. "No more train!"

They were standing on the roof of the rear engine, the Slayer teetering once more on the brink as he gazed behind him onto nothing but empty train track.

"C'mon, man, give it up!" Dean insisted, glancing over his shoulder at Sam as the train unaccountably began to slow. There were red lights ahead of them, and it took him a second to realize the 66 was stopping at signals.

He exchanged a glance with Sam, who nodded just slightly. This was their chance.

As if one person, both Winchesters launched themselves at the Slayer at exactly the same moment, Sam grabbing him around the middle while Dean caught his shoulders and both pushed sideways.

The dark figure swayed a little when they released him, as if trying to regain his balance before he fell.

But it was a futile gesture, their shadowy nemesis toppling backwards, straight onto the power lines which snagged across his shoulders, catching and holding him there, suspended and motionless as white sparks of electricity arced out all around him. He twitched and jerked hideously, his clothes smoking as the smell of seared flesh hung in the air and the Winchesters had to throw themselves down flat onto the roof to avoid being hit by the power dancing and sparking all around them.

The train had gradually ground to a halt as the lights flickered out in the cars beneath them, and the boys were plunged into darkness, the only illumination from the electricity still arcing over their heads.

Then there was nothing.

Just the sound of their own breathing.

Dean raised his head slowly, first to check Sam's wellbeing, second to check on the bad guy.

He was still hanging there, face shrouded in darkness, lifeless and unmoving.

"Is it over?" Sam asked breathlessly.

"He looks pretty crispy," Dean commented, pushing himself up to his knees as the lights flickered back on inside the 66, the signals flipping to green as if some circuit breaker had been thrown and the system had reset itself.

The train jerked forward, the sound of the wheels on the track accompanied by a low, maniacal laugh.

"You think that's going to hurt me?"

Dean glanced over at his brother, heart picking up the rhythm of the train tracks beneath him.

"Not crispy enough," Sam muttered, catching hold of Dean's arm and pulling him to his feet. "I think we need to go..."

Before either of them could move, there was a hiss and another explosion of sparks, the dark shape of the Slayer twitching and jerking before pulling himself away from the power lines altogether, electricity still arcing from his fingertips.

"Oh crap..." Dean mumbled.

"You think so?" Sam returned. "Dean, we need to go —"

But Dean didn't move. "Dude, I'm thinking maybe more *Shocker* than *Octopussy*..."

"Dean —"

"It's made him stronger, Sammy! The electricity's made him stronger!"

"Dean, *now!*"

Sam caught hold of Dean's collar, yanking him backwards just as the Slayer himself made a grab for the older Winchester, who managed to duck at the last second, rolling to one side and attempting to pull Sam with him.

Unfortunately, Sam didn't move fast enough and Dean didn't have the leverage he needed to throw his brother enough off balance to get him out of the Slayer's path, the shadowy assailant smacking the younger Winchester full force across the chest with one outstretched arm, propelling him backwards and knocking him clean off the roof.

"SAMMY!" Dean yelled, scrabbling over to the side of the train where his brother had disappeared, just as the Slayer made another grab for him, this time snagging his arm and yanking him to his feet.

Squinting into the darkness, Dean tried to make out the bastard's features, but still couldn't see who the hell he was. He was smaller than Dean – way smaller than Sam – but freakishly strong – strong enough to have knocked Dean's six foot four inch brother back so hard he apparently hadn't even managed to get a handhold before tumbling off the roof of the train.

"Son of a –" Dean grit his teeth and tried to twist out of the Slayer's iron grip, but the smaller man merely yanked him closer, grabbing hold of Dean's upper arms so tightly he had to bite back a yell of surprised pain. "Get off of me you freaky-assed bastard!" he snarled instead, not liking his current trajectory one bit as the Slayer spun him around, his back toward the power lines.

"Time for you to fry, boy," the menacing voice growled, pushing him further backwards.

The hairs stood up on the back of his neck at his proximity to the cables, the sound of the power humming through the lines way too close for comfort.

This was so not going how Dean had imagined it.

Suddenly the train lurched forward, knocking the Slayer off balance as the 66 gathered speed, Dean shoving him hard as his attacker's fingers scrabbled to maintain purchase on the smooth slickness of Dean's leather jacket.

The Slayer fell back, going down hard but not falling off the roof as Sam had, and Dean wrenched himself free, seizing the opportunity to make a tactical retreat.

With Sam, he might have stood a chance against this guy. On his own? He wasn't so sure. The guy was strong, maybe too strong even for Dean and his behemoth brother put together.

Figuring Sam had been right and he really needed to get the hell out of there, Dean turned, deciding to make a run for it while he still could, while the Slayer was still laid out on the deck and he had the element of surprise and speed on his side.

But this time, he was running *into* the wind as the train picked up speed, and that wasn't going to make his escape any easier.

Blood pounding in his ears in time with his feet, he sprinted back along the train, leaping onto the next car with barely a thought as he listened out for pursuing footsteps. When he heard none, he risked a glance back over his shoulder, seeing nothing in the darkness, but suddenly feeling as if he'd been plowed into by several thousand pounds of freight train.

Toppling forward, he landed hard, the Slayer's lithe body on top of him, a hand to his throat and another trying to wrestle control of one of his flailing arms.

Man this freak was strong....

But Dean was never one to give up that easily, ramming his elbow into the general area of his assailant's face and eliciting a satisfying grunt as he managed to squirm his way out from under him, dragging himself up onto his hands as knees as he tried to regain his footing.

"Not so fast, boy. You think you can get away from me? No one *ever* gets away from *me*..."

The Slayer caught his ankle just as he tried to stand, pulling him back down onto the roof of the train even as Dean kicked viciously at him, succeeding in landing one CAT to the dude's head.

He had no time to celebrate, however, because suddenly the world tipped sideways and he was falling, right over the side of the car, the ground coming up to meet him at a dizzying speed....

Railroad track Outside of Bristol, PA

Sam opened first one eye, moving it around a little bit in its socket, before daring to open the second, darkness all he could see for miles and miles, and for a moment he wondered if he'd hit his head and blinded himself somehow.

He took a breath. Then another. It hurt like hell, ribs screaming in pain with each inhale, with each exhale, with each tiny movement. He blinked, dark clouds coming into view in an even darker sky above him.

What the hell happened to him?

He tried to think, tried to remember where he was, what he'd been doing.

Dean. Slayer. Train.

Train. Ground.

Hard ground.

Oh crap....

Some rational part of his mind realized how lucky he'd been that the train was barely moving when he fell; but the rest of his body felt far from lucky, every single muscle, bone, joint, inch of skin crying out for mercy as he tried to move into a sitting position, clutching at his ribs as he took in the landscape around him.

He was sitting on a grassy verge at the side of the railroad, red lights in the distance indicating the 66 was still moving away from him, picking up speed as it continued along the tracks, heedless of the fact that it had lost a passenger.

"Dean?" he called out, glancing about himself into the darkness, trying to figure out where the hell his brother was at. He must have fallen with him, right? "Dean!"

There was no reply, and, somehow managing to pull himself shakily to his feet, he began to come to terms with the fact that he was alone out here. That his brother was still on the train.

On the roof.

With the Slayer.

"Dean!"

He took a jerky step forward, grimacing in agony as almost indescribable pain shot up his left leg.

"Dean?"

He squinted after the retreating train, the lights of a distant town silhouetting two shapes on the roof as the loco pulled slightly to the right, snaking around a long lazy bend as it headed further and further away from him.

The two figures appeared to be struggling, and one went down, then the other.

And then one of them fell.

"Dean!"

The train was accelerating, and even though he knew he could never catch it, and despite the agony in his leg, Sam began to run.

But before he could take more than a couple of steps, his ankle gave out beneath him and he fell in a heap to the dew-soaked grass, biting back a cry of anguished pain as all he could do was watch the train's rear lights dwindle into the distance.

Without him.

Dean was alone with the Slayer.

And Hell Gate Bridge was less than a hundred miles away....

* * * *

Dean could feel the blood pulsing in his head so hard he thought his eyeballs were about to explode and his ears were going to join them in some gory matrimony. It was like having Haris' kid inside him all over again, except this wasn't any kind of demon trying to get out.

He blinked, trying to figure out why his brain felt like Vesuvius before the great eruption.

Any why were the trees in his peripheral vision all upside down as the 66 flew past them? Surely trees weren't defying gravity these days?

Then it hit him – there was nothing wrong with his head, or his brain, save for the fact that he was hanging limply from the train in an inverted position like some skinned victim in a *Predator* movie.

Dean blinked again, trying to focus despite the amount of blood now being forced into his skull by Mother Nature. Managing to crane his neck slightly, he got a bird's eye view of the ground beneath him as the Amtrak loco sped along the rails.

The gravel that lined the tracks was nothing but a grey blur that made the hunter's stomach churn. If he were to fall at this speed onto the unwelcoming surface, it wouldn't be pretty.

Heart pounding, Dean moved his body cautiously until he could look upwards. Even in the darkness, he could see a silhouetted figure above him on the train roof, one blackened hand gripping his ankle as if the Slayer was actually considering letting him live.

The freak pushes me off the friggin' roof and then doesn't let me fall? What the hell?

Dean squirmed, the sudden urge to kick at the bastard holding his ankle only outweighed by the fact that it would guarantee his own death. Not that Dean feared the Other Side, but right now he'd like to know Sam and the rest of the train's passengers were safe before he got to making niceties with Ferinacci and his hellish throng.

Great, so what do you do when your ass is hanging off a train and there's nowhere to go but down...as in way down...?

Dean felt the fingers holding him begin to move, as if the killer's grip on him was loosening. *Maybe I should just kick the asshole anyway...*

"Dean! Over here!"

Dean twisted sideways, managing to follow the direction of the voice even though it meant risking falling. He felt cold air slamming into his face as he stretched forwards, the train's momentum and a slight breeze combining to almost take his breath.

The risk was worth it.

Warwick's wrinkled face was looking back at him from one of the windows, and he was beckoning the hunter to try and swing over to him. Behind Warwick, Stringer was latched onto the conductor like he was in a scrum with the old man. The look of determination on the football player's face said he had no intention of letting Warwick or Dean fall.

"C'mon!" Warwick's spindly fingers stretched outwards and he motioned for Dean to try and rock his body enough to reach them. It wasn't a great distance, but if the killer realized what was going on, he was sure to let go.

Dean weighed up his options and made a choice in two seconds flat. Using his arms as a lever he pushed his body backwards and then struck out for Warwick's position. *What the hell, I can't hang around here all night...*

The first swing fell short, and his back slammed into the car's metal side with a bone-jarring thud. Above, the killer moved and Dean felt his body bump downwards with a jolt.

Wasting no time, the hunter swung again, like a grandfather clock's pendulum gone wild.

This time, he felt hands grab at his arms and the firm grip of the Cornerback taking his weight. *Okay, so I'm never criticizing the NY Giants again...*

As the conductor and Stringer tugged at his arms, Dean lashed out with one last defiant kick at his tormentor above. He felt the tip of his CAT boot impact with something soft, and a warm satisfying glow filled the pit of his stomach. *Bet that's gonna bruise, bucko...*

The next minute, his legs were free and he was being dragged through the small window opening back inside a carriage. Hitting the floor with a grunt, the hunter realized he'd landed face to face with the cop Guevara.

Now that he was conscious, the cop didn't look one bit happier than he had earlier – his eyes searing into Dean as if he could make an arrest just by sheer willpower and train of thought.

Dean ignored the look and pushed up off his elbows breathlessly. There was no time to mess around with ticked off cops while Sam could be lying on the tracks bleeding. He glanced to Warwick first, a pleading, almost panicked expression invading his features. "We thought we had the bastard up there, but he pushed Sam off the train. We gotta stop this thing, go back. He could be hurt or..."

Warwick's stony features softened and he held up a hand, stopping Dean before he could ramble on any further. "Did you call him?" He pointed to the hunter's jacket pocket where he stowed his cell earlier.

The question was so obvious the panic seemed to drain from Dean's face, replaced by a sheepish expression he tended not to wear very often. Damn, Warwick was good.

Sticking a hand inside his jacket, he was surprised and relieved to find the cell right where he'd left it, despite his recent attempt at flying. Scrolling down to Sam's number, he was about to hit "Dial" when the phone began to warble and vibrate in his palm.

Reading the incoming caller ID, Dean let out a calming breath and jammed the cell to his ear. "Sam, you fell off the train! I hate to break this to you, but you're so not Gene Wilder, dude. You just don't have the hair..."

"Jeez, thanks for asking me if I'm still in one piece. Nice to know you care, bro," Sam shot back, a hint of relief in his tone at hearing the sound of his brother's voice. "What about the Slayer?"

Dean huffed. "Sonofabitch got away without me getting one good look at his face. I could sure use your sorry butt back on the train instead of out playing hitchhiker in the boonies."

The line grew silent and Dean guessed his brother was thinking. It was the one thing Sam did best, and he'd undoubtedly come up with a solution to their recent separation when Dean had not.

"The 66 stops in New York for over an hour." Sam eventually offered. "I'll find a way to catch up with you there..."

"What, you suddenly turned into Superboy when I wasn't looking? Dude, there's no way..."

"I'll *find* a way..."

Dean's scowl reshaped into a smirk. "Dude, if you're gonna steal something, at least don't steal a Honda this time. You're gonna need something with a little more than a clockwork engine to make that distance."

"I'll be there, Dean, you just be careful." Sam's voice changed, becoming tinged with uncertainty. "The killer is still on the train with you, and don't forget he could be after Kim..."

Kim, Dean's mind raced. *Somehow I'm thinking this freak isn't after Kim anymore. Why else wouldn't our boy let me fall?* He pushed away the unhappy thought. "I hear you, little brother. Just make sure I don't have to come bail your butt outta jail for grand theft auto, okay?"

"Deal," Sam agreed. "Just as long as you promise not to make any moves on the Slayer until I get back. If the roof is anything to go by, I don't think we should try tackling him one on one."

"Yes, Mom," Dean snarked back, hitting "End Call" before Sam could argue his case further.

"So what happens now?" Warwick's intelligent features creased in doubt. "We can't just stand around and wait for this man to try something else..."

Dean agreed. Looking at the towering Stringer as if he was the perfect demolition man, he jerked a thumb towards the other cars. "We tear this tub of metal apart until we find the bad guy."

"May I suggest we play this somewhat more subtly this time?" Warwick raised a brow. "We don't want to panic any more people than we have to."

Dean took down a breath, feeling the motion of the train beneath him again like a taunt from Ferinacci himself. Damned if he didn't hate trains and damned if he didn't hate subtle.

Sensing Guevara's eyes on him again, he whirled around. The cop *ought* to trust him by now. He ought to see through all the reports and realize the Winchesters were the good guys.

But since when did anything ever happen to the brothers that actually made sense?

Kneeling beside the trussed up cop, Dean looked into his face and wondered just what was going on behind the man's distrustful eyes. "You wanna help or you wanna sit there?"

Guevara didn't answer, but his scowl let the hunter know he was still public enemy number one in the cop's estimation.

Dean shrugged. *Oh, my feelings are so hurt...* "Fine, dude, you just sit there while everyone else saves the day..."

Bristol, PA

Sam glanced around the gloomy streets of Bristol and wondered if he would ever find a suitable mode of transport to catch up with his brother. So far, all he'd come across was a beat up pickup that's gas needle said it had been running on fumes for the past several miles. Add to that the thing was so old and decrepit, Sam could hobble faster, and things weren't looking so good.

Dammit, there has to be someone around here with a set of wheels that actually move. Where is everyone, in church?

The thought was a comical one at this time of night, but Sam was just plain antsy and he didn't mind admitting it. He hated stealing, period. He also hated the fact that Dean was out in the night somewhere with no one to watch his back because Sam had gotten careless.

Sam felt the muscles in his injured ankle twinge and he winced, not at the pain, but at the fact that time was running out. He glanced at his watch as he limped under the illumination of a street light. He needed to make it back to New York before the 66 departed at 3.15am or he wouldn't be getting back onboard.

And if he didn't, that meant someone was going to die minutes later when the train reached Hell Gate Bridge.

And what if that someone happens to be Dean? His mind nagged.

Sam scowled, he *wasn't* going to let that happen. He was going to find a car and soon.

Across the main street he spotted a small convenience store, and decided that maybe, just maybe, there might be customers' cars parked in the adjoining alley.

Picking up his pace, his ankle stung as he stretched the burning sinew when it needed rest. Still, a simple sprain from falling off a train? Wasn't that more than lucky?

Sam wanted to deliberate further, to know for sure that all it had been was dumb luck rather than his freakish gifts that had saved him. But tonight, there was no time for thinking about his own selfish problems. He had fallen, the train hadn't been going all that fast, he'd hit the ground at just the right angle – that's all there could be to it.

After all, there had been no one around to leech any healing gifts from this time – not like with Mia.

No, for once, he'd been lucky, just *really* lucky.

Sam hit the other side of the sidewalk and headed for the alley hidden in shadows.

He hoped that luck was still with him now.

Turning the corner, he audibly sighed and closed his eyes in disappointment, letting his back lean against the brickwork of the store as he cursed inside. Not one car, not even one *Honda*...

Sam turned to leave the gloom when something glinted in at the edges of his field of vision. It looked like chromework – the kind you found on the more expensive Harleys.

Hobbling back, Sam blinked twice to make sure he wasn't hallucinating, running his hand over the Harley's pristine bodywork before checking out the big bike's gas gauge.

It was too good to be true. The big old bird was almost full.

Climbing onto the mean machine, Sam suddenly felt like Arnold Schwarzenegger stealing his Harley from the biker bar in T2. And just like Arnie, he was doing this to save lives.

Sam tried to justify his actions by telling himself that over and over as he hotwired some poor schmuck's pride and joy.

As the Harley roared to life and he sped from the alley, all that Sam could think of was that he hadn't expected to take up a career in auto-theft when he'd signed up for Stanford.

Jeez, thanks, Dean...

Amtrak 66 Approaching Newark, NJ

Dean looked from the window of the train and actually *sensed* where he was.

This was Lucifer's domain, and the air, the whole atmosphere, seemed to resonate with his presence. New Jersey was the freak's home from home, and even though it wasn't exactly a fiery pit, to Dean, it felt like one.

The hunter felt the tiny hairs on his skin begin to stand to attention as if they too were acknowledging Satan's presence.

Freakin' Ferinacci and his damn hoards probably all over this sardine can on rails already...

Dean continued to cuss under his breath as he trudged down the sleeper car's corridor. He was trying his best to concentrate on the search for the Slayer, trying his hardest to prevent another needless death, but things just weren't going his way.

Sam was AWOL, and even though he knew his little brother was on his way, it just felt "off" – especially now they were in Lucifer's territory. If he wanted to, Ferinacci could easily make sure Sammy never made it back onboard the 66.

And that was just one of their problems. They had Guevara all tied up and pissed off just waiting to cream their asses if and when he got free, they had a dead cop stashed in the train's freezer, and oh yeah, they had no freakin' clue who the bad guy was.

Oh, and did I mention I think this Slayer freak has me on his ten most wanted list...? the hunter grumbled under his breath. Freak knows good white meat when he sees it, I'll give him that...

The only upside to the current predicament was that Kim and Carter were still in one piece. Well, Dean wasn't sure saving someone who made such really bad TV was actually an upside, but it was definitely good not to have any more bodies at this point.

He'd been checking in on the two lovebirds most of the night, and although they were obviously scared, they seemed safe enough.

Warwick had managed to quietly have the occult symbols cleaned from Kim's room, and the towering Stringer was playing bodyguard rather than Cornerback for the rest of the evening.

Now all Dean had to do was scope out the real killer and they were home and dry.

Yeah, right, why don't I just whip out my magic ouija board and ask the spirits which one of their Serial Killers Anonymous club has gone AWOL?

Of course, the ever-helpful Warwick was proving invaluable as a partner in crime, but even with the conductor's assistance they weren't getting anymore answers than before.

For a night train, the 66 was packed – and packed meant more possible suspects – and worse still, more possible victims.

Dean unknowingly mimicked his brother's early action and glanced at his watch. Time was running out, and he would be damned if he was going to let another innocent die when the 66 hit Devil Gate Bridge.

"C'mon, Sammy, haul ass..."

I-95 approaching East Brunswick, NJ

Sam felt the wind burning at his face and his shaggy hair billowing out behind him as he gunned the gas on the Harley. Bikes weren't his thing, never had been, but luckily he'd gotten around enough to know how to ride one this size half-decently.

On any other day, he might have thought the sensation was exhilarating, almost like he'd been freed from the confines of the Impala and let run wild.

Some part of him finally understood why Joe Bearwalker chose a classic Indian over a car, but that didn't matter right now.

Nothing did, only reaching New York before the 66 departed.

Sam twisted his wrist just enough to see the time without letting go of the handlebars.

Dean's already in Newark if the train is running to schedule...

Sam blinked as his eyes began to stream from the breeze in his face, pouring on more gas even though he'd hit a patch of hairpin bends that warranted less, not more speed.

"Hang on, Dean, I'll be there. I swear, I'll be there..."

Amtrak 66 Penn Station New York, NY

Dean had decided some twenty minutes previous that the corridor just wasn't big enough. It was like being in a sardine can with a thousand other stinkin' sardines, and he hated it.

Still, that hadn't stopped him pacing back and forth until he'd almost worn a hole through the flooring.

It was 3.05am and he needed coffee – no, he needed a beer, and he needed Sam here to share it with him. But Sammy had yet to show, and the train would be leaving the station in just ten more minutes.

The fact that he and Warwick had narrowed down their list of suspects to – well, most of the people who got on at Penn, along with about twenty-five of the original passengers – well that was helping no end.

Why didn't they just invite the rest of New York to the gig and be done with it? *Roll up and join the Satanic Mystery Tour, one body a night guaranteed...* Dean slapped a hand against the car's wall in frustration and only calmed when a small wiry looking passenger began to stare at him.

Suddenly, Dean wished he was fighting Haris again, or Mia, or any damn demon he could at least identify. It was one thing to know your enemy, but to not know, well, that was fighting blind, and it wasn't something he was good at.

Was the Slayer a pure spirit? Was the freak possessing an innocent? Hell, was he even jumping bodies? Maybe that was why he was so elusive? And then there was the whole electrical vibe the killer had going on.

Dean shuddered as he recalled what had gone down on the roof.

Way to go Winchesters, you really screwed that little barbecue royally...

He let a hand stray inside his pocket and could feel the cold steel of his Colt through the material. Leaving the gun behind, he pulled out his cell and hovered over the quick dial number for Sam.

But then, calling might slow Sam down more. *If Ferinacci hasn't already gotten to him...*

Doubts and fears welled in Dean's mind like invading predators sent by the Dark One. He tried to push them out, unsure if it was his imagination or something more.

"C'mon, Sammy, you're the punctual one, remember? Don't make me have to add tardiness to your wuss ass resume..."

Approaching Penn Station New York, NY

Sam watched as the Harley's speedo needle crept over the legal limit for what must have been the tenth time, some part of him admitting he got a buzz out of feeling the air rushing past his face, even if he did expect the blue lights of a police cruiser at every turn.

It was times like these that he understood his brother's love of the fast lane.

Dean...

Sam hated being separated like this.

Hated the not knowing.

Every time the Winchesters ended up apart, they ended up in trouble.

He glanced at the speedo again, wishing he could urge just a little more from the bike, but knowing he was pushing his luck – especially when the gas needle was heading dangerously into the red right along with the engine's revs.

Five minutes – that's all he had left if the 66 was on time, but at least the Harley was easier to navigate down the narrow New York backstreets than their usual mode of transport.

Dean had always hated that about the Big Apple, as did their father. It was just too damn narrow for a big old bird like the Impala to park. And more recently, there was the Ferinacci connection haunting them here too.

Sam tried not to think about Lucifer, or what his connection to this gig might be. *Just think about getting back on the train...one thing at a time...*

The bike beneath him began to sputter and Sam heaved a sigh of relief when it finally succumbed to lack of gasoline just a few short strides from the station entrance.

He clambered off quickly, leaving the Harley in a no parking zone that would surely have earned him a serious talking to had there been any security present. Not that the station was devoid of cameras.

In fact, as Sam barreled inside, he felt sure he caught one of the higher security units angle his way.

It was usual Winchester practice to evade such close scrutiny at all costs, but tonight, Sam just didn't care. The only priority was the 66...and Dean.

Slowing to a more reasonable "hobble," Sam scanned the boards above his head until he spotted the right train.

The 66 was on time. *Trains are never on time in New York, what is this, some conspiracy against the good guys or what?!*

Suddenly hating trains, Sam darted across the station, his recent thigh injury abruptly joining the profusion of pain from his twisted ankle.

He used it, letting the burning in the still-healing knife wound spur him on until he reached the escalators. Leaping down the moving steps three, sometimes four at a time, Sam pushed through the crowds with all the finesse of a Sumo wrestler gone wild, but still he managed to avoid security's attention.

No wonder terrorists just love the US, he noted as he knocked a bumbling vagrant sideways to get onto the right platform. *I could be some lunatic rampaging down here.* He thought about his job description and smiled as he saw the 66 still stationary. *Okay, so maybe I am some lunatic, but I'm a **needed** lunatic right now...*

A whistle sounded from some unseen Amtrak worker and Sam's heart sank. The 66 was leaving and he wasn't on it.

Giving an extra burst of speed he didn't know he had in him, Sam forced his legs to go faster even though it made his heart want to explode in his chest.

He reached out with one hand just as the train began to pull away from the platform.

It was do or die time – no second chances.

Sam jumped, wanting to close his eyes, but knowing he couldn't. His hand caught on something solid and he locked his fingers around it, hauling his lanky body aboard just as the 66 began to pick up speed.

The instant he felt solid train beneath his boots, Sam almost doubled over in an attempt to gain his breath and slow his rampant heart.

"Bout time you showed up, you slacker!"

Sam looked up to see his brother smirking at him. He was tempted to shoot Dean the bird and save his heaving chest the effort of talking, but he just couldn't manage it. "Bite me, jerk," he panted, scowling.

"Bite yourself, bitch," Dean countered happily. "Or should I say *Gene*? Dude, we so gotta get you a perm. A *ginger* perm...it's so you..."

Sam didn't grace that little idea with an answer. "Dean, did you find the Slayer while I was gone? Any clues even?"

His brother's sheepish, somewhat disgruntled expression told him the answer. "Nada," Dean conceded. "Not one friggin' clue."

Sam shook his head and patted his brother on the shoulder with just enough of a smile to let Dean know he was about to be ribbed. "Don't worry, I'm here now. I'm sure it won't take 'geekboy' long to find our bad guy. I mean, I couldn't expect you to find our man all by yourself...might have strained your brain cell...Oh, or broken a nail maybe..."

Dean's returning grunt told Sam his little feather ruffling session had hit the mark and they were now equal in their little snark war. Now it was time to get down to business.

Time was wasting, and the bridge was looming fast.

Dean obviously shared his sibling's concerns. "Kim and our soap boy are pretty much being guarded by Stringer. Unless our guy feels like tackling a pretty pissed off gorilla I think they're safe. Our cop buddy is all tied up and no place to go, but he's

creeping me out. He stares at me like I'm some kinda monster." He rolled his eyes at the thought. "Warwick is still checking on a couple of the cars, but we haven't found squat since we were up on the roof. You don't think our guy is toast after his little grilling session up there?" He thumbed towards the ceiling.

Sam shook his head. "He's still out there, and we both know it. We should fan out and search again. If Guevara freaks you so much, wuss, I'll head in his direction. You can take the front. Sound good?"

Dean grunted again but didn't argue.

There was no time left for that.

* * * *

Sam padded down the sleeper car corridor, all too aware that there was probably less than ten minutes left before they reached the infamous bridge. It was quiet here, perhaps too quiet save for a stray giggle from Kim and Carter's room.

At least they're okay, he thought as he pressed further to the rear of the train. *Which is more than someone will be anytime now...*

It was harsh to keep having to think it, but the truth was, the Winchesters had never been so clueless – and in their game, that was more than bad news.

Pressing onwards, he realized the ache in his thigh had dulled to a mild cramp. He hoped it would stay that way if he had to do any more running. Ducking his tall frame, he passed from the sleeper car into the luggage car just as the lights began to sputter again.

Sam guessed something was interfering with the electrical supply, or rather someone was interfering with the electrical supply, as the car plummeted into darkness.

With the black void came an inexplicable chill, like he had stepped into a freezer compartment or meat locker. Sam supposed if he could see, his breath would have been clearly visible as pure white vapor.

Instinctively, he rubbed his hands together, trying to resist the urge to reach inside his jacket for his Glock.

As the darkness remained, the desire for the weapon intensified and Sam's hands began to itch towards the concealed automatic.

At the last moment, the fluorescent tubes in the car's ceiling seemed to vibrate with released energy and they sputtered back into life.

Sam glanced quickly around, regaining his bearings in the confined space.

Guevara was tied where they had left him, and just as Dean had described, the fettered officer was staring wildly at his captor. The cop's eyes were wide like dinner plates, a strange, almost terrified expression splashed across his features.

Sam balked, realizing Guevara wasn't staring at him, but rather past him, to the walls, and to the makeshift altar that had been erected in the corner.

As he looked upon the dais, the black candles placed there abruptly sparked and burst into life, their flames burning with a bizarre afterglow that's life-force seemed almost electrical in origin rather than tallow-fuelled.

Butcher... Sam's mind echoed the name just as he whirled around, sensing a presence behind him.

Except it wasn't Butcher's ethereal form that had stalked him here to the luggage car – it was the very mortal body of Luke the Amtrak attendant.

"You should have left it alone," Luke hissed through clenched teeth. "Now you're in my way. I only need one, and while I'm sure my Master would welcome you into Hell, I've set my heart on your brother..."

Sam swallowed, his throat suddenly so dry the motion was almost impossible to complete. The Slayer couldn't be Luke, could it? He let his eyes cast downwards to the kid's hands, a wince of recognition marring his normally jovial features when he spotted the charred and blackened flesh of Fraser's palms.

He's the Service 66 Slayer? Sam's mind exploded with the agonizing realization. "Luke, I can help you...I'm sure we can work something out..."

Luke chuckled and the dry laughter stung the air like a venomous snakebite. "Oh, Luke's left the building. You're talking to Elliot now..."

Sam stepped forwards, his mind already changing up a gear as he tried to work out all the possible scenarios that could come next and plan for them. *So it's possession we're dealing with...* "Luke," he chose the kid's name over Butcher's carefully, hoping to appeal to some spark of the young attendant that might still be hanging on inside the conquered body. "Luke, listen to me..."

The side of the carriage grated open as if Sam's plea was some magical "Open Sesame," the wind howling through the opening like the scream of some nocturnal creature.

Sam swayed on his feet as the air rushed in, already understanding that this show of force was meant for him.

Luke looked pleased that the hunter recognized his plan, and cocked his head towards the doorway with a shrug. "Bye, Sam Winchester..."

Sam didn't see Luke move, he didn't see anything. All he knew was that he had suddenly joined in the blur that was the passing countryside, and he was falling, falling off the train.

Falling away from his brother and the Slayer.

Sam hit the track with a yelp as the wood and steel beneath him knocked the air from his lungs. He'd gotten away lucky last time, but right now he wasn't feeling so blessed. The train was moving faster, and he'd hit the track with all the force of a sledgehammer.

He coughed, probing the side where he'd landed to check for cracked ribs. It was difficult to be sure, but he didn't think anything was broken – he'd just have a string of purple-black bruises in the morning to show for his nighttime stunts.

Quickly glancing around, it looked like he'd been ejected at a junction of several different lines that converged on the bridge.

"This is getting so old," he grouched as he shakily clambered to his feet, only then realizing that his foot had become wedged between the track and the sleeper. "Old and painful..."

The abrupt sound of another train's engine behind him made Sam whirl just in time to be blinded by the lights set in the front of the loco. The ground under his feet began to vibrate with its oncoming motion.

It was a few feet away at best, its whistle screaming a high pitched wail that almost deafened the hunter with its resonance. *I'm going to die here...not even on the bridge...not even by the killer's hands...*

Sam tried to pull his foot free, but there was no time now to even jump clear. Closing his eyes, he waited for tons of iron and steel to slam into his body reducing it to pulp. *I've let Dean down...I've left him alone with Butcher...*

The noise from the train's engine and whistle changed, the eerie metallic song fading into the distance as if the loco had been eaten by a deep mountain tunnel.

Sam dared to open his eyes to find the mystery train had vanished.

The legends...It was a ghost train!!

Maybe there is such a thing as Winchester luck after all...

Sam tugged at his boot, instantly pushing aside his ghostly near miss in favor of the very real Amtrak 66. Yanking at the soft leather, the boot eventually gave way to his persuasions and he teetered for a second off balance.

Regaining his footing on the track, Sam launched into a lop-sided sprint after the train he'd just been tossed from. His ankle was throbbing, his thigh was screaming, and his ribs were pulsing better than an LA party's laser lighting, but they were small fry problems compared to what might be about to happen.

Dean could easily be the Slayer's next kill, and he wasn't there for his brother.

Sam felt the anger burn in his gut, the fury at himself for being so careless. In his mind, he began to see washed out images that *might* be a vision of things to come.

Images that might be his brother's last minutes on earth.

The Slayer, savoring the moment as he slit Dean's throat, stabbing him through the heart and tossing his lifeless shell from the bridge once the all-important organs had been harvested.

Hazel green eyes, their mirthful spark lost once they had been gouged from Dean's body and tossed upon the waiting altar...

"NO!" Sam screamed as the imagery overtook his mind. He couldn't let this happen, wouldn't let this happen.

But there was no way to catch the train.

His heart began to beat faster and faster as he sprinted across the sleepers, a familiar tingle beginning to creep into his fingertips.

Sam wasn't just angry – he was angry for Dean – and sometimes that gained him an unearthly advantage.

The sensation in his hands grew, like a million ants were crawling along his nerve endings, awakening some hidden ember – something hidden in his DNA that had been buried and lost to most mortals for centuries. *Or something placed there by Haris...*

Sam ignored his subconscious mind's taunt. He knew his gifts weren't demonic. He *knew* they had been bestowed by Mother Nature, not some would-be king of Hades.

And if those gifts were online now, then why not utilize them before it was too late?

Looking ahead, he realized the 66 was approaching a set of signals. It was now or never.

Setting his sights on the signals he began to concentrate on their controls. If he could change them just for a few seconds and stop the train, he had a chance.

In his mind, he let his memory float back to the rooftop fight. He focused on how the discharge of electricity had felt against his skin when he'd pushed the Slayer against the power line.

His heart beat even faster, adrenalin flooding his system as he recalled the Slayer's fingers crackling with current – the same way his fingers had sparked when Mia had held Dean prisoner.

Sam was drawing the Slayer's power, mirroring it into himself like he had become a human conductor. If the Slayer could control electricity, then Sam could leech it and use it too.

He focused again on the signals, finally feeling the power of his adversary flowing through his blood, his limbs, *his mind*.

Red, red...change to red...

Amtrak 66 Hell Gate Bridge, Astoria, NY

Dean looked up to see the overhead lights flare and then almost die. Then, just as he expected to be pitched into complete darkness, they sputtered back on in all their glory.

It had been happening this way for a couple of minutes, and no one on the train's staff had any explanation apart from the obvious half-truth that it was a momentary power fluctuation.

Power fluctuation my ass...it's a whack job spirit who likes to screw around with some seriously bad mojo...

Of course, right now, the only person the passengers thought was a whack job, was Dean. Asking weird questions all night had eventually meant half the people onboard thought he'd been hitting the bottle a little too early in the evening.

Oh, I so wish...

Still, there was no time to be thinking about beer yet. Unless Sam had found the killer they were about to be in serious trouble.

Dean hunkered over and peered from a side window as he saw the bridge looming head. They'd already begun to pass under the first huge metal arches that were part of the behemoth viaduct's construction. How long now before blood began to flow?

Dean turned, hurriedly making his way back towards the luggage car. He'd not heard from Sam in awhile, and absence definitely made his heart consider having a coronary. If anything bad could happen, it usually did to the Winchesters.

Gah, he's probably feeling sorry for that wise-ass Guevara. I bet those two are having some freakin' emo chat while I'm worrying my butt off up here... He continued to cuss at Sam, but inside as he moved along the cars, a lump began to form in his throat.

They were on the bridge, and Sammy was distinctly missing...

* * *

The lights in the back of the train were just as erratic as those at the front and they were making Dean feel dizzy. He slammed a fist into a flickering emergency light and then grunted when it blinked out, shortly followed by all its sporadic brethren.

Stupid electricity.

Stupid freakin' train...

The cursing continued until a hand slammed over his mouth from behind, effectively gagging the hunter.

Dean kicked back with his right CAT boot, needing to feel it impact with his assailant's soft flesh, but instead he was rammed hard against the side of the carriage until the air was pressed from his lungs.

The sensation of cold steel against the flesh of his throat made his Adam's apple bob and he waited expectantly for the blade to dig deep into his carotid.

Instead, the dagger remained static, its owner murmuring a language not dissimilar to Latin under his breath.

A satanic incantation that had only one ending.

Dean pulled against the hands that held him until the tip of the blade at his neck nicked his flesh. He ignored the slow dribble of blood that ebbed down his throat and onto his t-shirt, still yanking at the impossibly strong grip that held him until something began to happen.

The same electrical activity that had been plaguing the train seemed to fill the air, like the carriage was thick with it.

The killer's body was alive with the energy, perhaps even creating it as well as conducting it. Whatever the electric chair had done to his spirit, it had remained with him in the afterlife.

Dean flinched from the stinging shocks that oozed from the Slayer's touch, but was mesmerized by the way the energy seemed to be building in the tips of his hair, like a perfect blue fiber optic display that grew and grew in intensity until for a moment the man's features were bathed in its light.

Dean almost gasped in disbelief. Of all the people he'd suspected, the young attendant had never been one of them.

Luke?

The carriage lights hissed and winked, a soft glow returning to them as the surge of electricity passed.

And with the new illumination, came a new revelation.

Dean's wide, disbelieving eyes scanned the carriage walls, taking in the symbols that had been daubed there. They were clearly satanic, just like from all the other kill sites.

On the floor, Guevara just stared at him and then back to the disheveled markings, his deep eyes intense, and so very terrified.

I friggin' told you so! Dean wanted to yell at the cop, to grab him by the neck and shake him, but Luke held the hunter fast, the ceremonial dagger still jammed against Dean's throat so hard it continued to draw a thin film of blood.

But blood wasn't going to satiate this killer.

Luke/Butcher was poised, his wild, manic eyes peering through the nearest window until they were at just the right spot on the bridge.

As the 66 passed under the wide central arc, the carriage door flew open with just a look from the young rail worker. Outside, metal hissed on metal as the train braked and slowed, finally grinding to a sudden and unexpected halt.

Dean couldn't help but look at the only doorway – the only way off the train – and it led to a sheer drop into the heady waters below.

He felt the contents of his stomach lurch. *I knew all that junk food was gonna come back and bite me in the ass...*

The whistling early morning wind seemed to rock the carriage slightly, and as the first gust was followed by a second, Dean felt its unholy breath across his skin.

This was the Slayer's place.

Maybe, it was Lucifer's too.

And right now, the only escape he had from either was out the carriage door and straight off of Hell Gate Bridge.

Hell Gate Bridge Astoria, NY

Sam couldn't take his gaze from the rear of the train as its screaming brakes ground it to a halt.

The signal had turned red.

The Amtrak 66 was at a dead stop.

And all because he'd *willed* it to happen using the Slayer's powers.

I did it. How the hell did I do it?

Hesitating only a second at his own handiwork, Sam launched into a sprint despite every muscle in his body yowling in protest. As the rear of the last carriage loomed, almost in the grasp of his outstretched hand, the signal light flickered, changing colors back and forth until finally it let the loco be on its way.

Sam screamed mentally as wheels slowly began to turn, carrying the 66 away from him again. *No! Wait! No! Dammit!*

Lunging forward with one last push of his tired, aching limbs, Sam made a grab for the car and exhaled in relief when his hand grabbed metal. Hauling himself aboard, there was no time to even take a breath before a thump from somewhere forward made him crane his neck for a clearer view.

The door to the car ahead had been slammed open and was rattling like a tin cacophony against the side of the train. In the opening, Sam could clearly see the silhouettes of two figures struggling to keep their balance as they fought.

"Sam!"

The sound of his brother's voice cut clear into the early morning gloom and Sam was galvanized into action. Dodging along the train's corridors, his heart began to pulse like a jackhammer.

Dean had been teetering on the edge of the doorframe, and Sam had seen the distinct gleam of metal in his attacker's hand as he'd watched them tussle for victory.

While Dean was a strong fighter, Sam knew the Slayer would always have the upper hand. He had an unearthly strength that no mortal could match thanks to the way he absorbed electricity.

Sam grabbed at the door to the luggage car and was surprised when it opened freely. Wrenching it back, he saw a brief glimmer of light, and then the carriage was plummeted into darkness.

It was if his presence was somehow the catalyst for the shadows – as if the killer wanted him to be uncertain just what he was seeing.

Sam blinked, his eyes adjusting to the dark just enough to make out the two figures fighting by the swinging outer door, their profiles backlit by the lights from the bridge and the city beyond.

“Dean!”

Sam’s cry was wasted – a pitiful whimper that neither his brother nor the killer could hear. The whistle from an approaching train drowned out the yelp, replacing it with the high-pitched scream and the blinding wash of oncoming lights.

It’s another ghost train, Sam concluded. But it didn’t matter where the loco had come from, or where it was going.

The phantom loco’s lights on the adjacent track washed over the open cabin like a tsunami of glowing radiance, illuminating the car in a bright strobing light.

What Sam saw in the afterglow of the ghost train made his aching legs turn numb and his pounding heart turn cold.

Luke had the ceremonial dagger pressed hard against Dean’s throat, his ridiculously strong forearms holding the hunter, legs dangling out of the open doorway.

Somehow, Dean’s hand had latched onto the metal rail at the side of the opening, but even as Sam watched, Luke was prizing it free, finger by finger.

Sam saw the dagger being slowly raised above Dean’s heart and there was nothing he could do about it. If he launched forwards now, all three of them would probably be pushed from the open doorway by his momentum alone.

The ghost train grew louder, the shriek from its whistle deafening Sam as it sped by, an inrush of air blasting through the car as if the loco really existed and was passing too close for comfort.

As the gust and the noise dissipated, so did the illumination from the phantom’s lights, leaving only a bizarre afterimage on Sam’s retinas.

The 66 was plunged back into a grim darkness that could hide a thousand sins, and probably would. To exacerbate the macabre reality of what was about to happen, Dean screamed.

And then, Sam flinched at the unmistakable sound of human flesh being torn into.

A flash of blue electricity erupted from the doorway and the stench of searing flesh burned its way up his nose and into his lungs.

“Dean!”

Sam’s breath caught in his throat as the luggage carriage lights gradually began to glow, dim at first, and then brighter as a full current surged back into the system.

By the doorway, he could make out the shape of two bodies slumped together, and he darted forwards, not caring if Luke decided to attack him next.

What had happened in that split second of darkness?

Blood pooled beneath the tangle of limbs, spreading wider and wider until Sam slipped in the edges of the scarlet gloop. He dropped to his knees as his feet slid from beneath him.

There was no sign of the dagger, but no sign that either man still drew breath, either.

Sam leaned closer, noting Dean’s closed eyes and ashen features. *No way, no way, man...*

“Dean?”

At the sound of his brother's shaking voice, Dean's eyelids snapped open. He stared for a minute, not believing what had just happened.

Sucking down a breath, the hunter began to push away the dead weight that pressed against his chest. With a little help from Sam, he finally managed the task, the Slayer's limp form lolling away from him and coming to rest precariously close to the still-open doorway.

Sam hunkered over the corpse, rolling it a little to see the blade sticking deep in Luke's heart, a crimson trickle ebbing down the hilt and onto the floor. The kid's face was blackened and marred as if he had just been hit by lightning or worse, and his piercing eyes stared sightlessly at nothing.

Dean closed his eyes for a moment, still panting from the exertion of the fight. "Sammy, the dude killed himself. He stabbed himself, Sam. I didn't do a thing..."

Sam nodded bleakly and let the body roll back, face down on the floor. It was better not to have to look at what remained of a once happy, innocent young man. "I think he fought it somehow," Sam guessed. "I don't know how, but he sacrificed himself to save you and everyone else on the train."

"And it finished off Butcher too?" Dean asked as he clambered to his feet and brushed at his jacket. "I mean, all that electricity didn't touch the freak, but the kid and the dagger could can his ass?"

Sam shrugged. "Maybe Luke's offering wasn't just himself. Maybe he sent Butcher's soul through the conduit to Hell, just as Butcher thought he had all his victims this whole time... Maybe Butcher got what he wanted – to join his Master."

Dean huffed and glanced at the unmoving body. For good measure, he tapped it with his boot toe. "Dude, did I ever mention how much I hate the word *maybe*?"

The outer door clattered on the train as if a stronger breeze had picked up at the very mention of the word "Master."

Perhaps it was just the brothers' imagination, but as Warwick scurried into the car as if from nowhere, Dean decided it was time to close up. Hanging precariously out on the edge, he grabbed the inner handle and tugged.

The door fought back, the wind and tide of air flowing over it making it hard to close. Eventually, the mechanism gave in to the hunter's persuasions and he rounded on the inside of the carriage just in time to face the distraught conductor.

Warwick was standing over Luke's body as if he was already in mourning. His hands were clasped tightly behind his back, and the glint of tears was already present in his fatherly eyes. "Not Luke too...he was such a good kid. So...so innocent."

Sam put a hand on the elder man's arm. "Levi, Luke was the Slayer..."

Warwick's gaze locked on the hunter with something akin to contempt. "Impossible!"

"Sir," Sam continued. "I know it's hard to accept, but the Slayer – Butcher – he possessed Luke. In the end Luke managed to get control back just for a few seconds and saved my brother. He was a hero Levi. He caught the Slayer."

Warwick's frame trembled, but he held back the rage, the hate for a man long since dead.

He held back the tears for a friend.

But most of all, he held back the urge to crumble in front of two strangers.

A sad smile crept across his features and he slowly nodded as if the brothers shared some strange secret with him. Eventually, he explained. "Like father, like grandson." He peered at Sam. "I bet you didn't know Luke's last name is... was Fraser? He's the grandson of Ed Fraser."

"The attendant who caught Butcher back in '55?" Dean realized, both eyebrows shooting up at the news.

"That's right," Warwick concluded. "Ironic, isn't it, two members of that family have tussled with that psycho, and both have lost their lives..."

“Luke was the reason Butcher waited. He returned at this point in time just so he could still have the revenge he promised all those years ago,” Sam concluded. “The opportunity was just too good to miss. Fraser’s grandson working on a train that took the very same route where Butcher had done his original killings...”

“And Kim was gonna be his first victim this trip until Butcher met us – I’m guessing he thought he needed to divert some attention ’cause he thought we were cops – that’s why he tried to set Stringer up with all that satanic crap.” Dean looked across to the body and then back to his brother. “Until the real cop, if you could ever call Wozniak that, showed.”

Warwick cleared his throat, eyes straying to the man still bound and gagged at their feet. “I think you boys are forgetting our other officer of the law here...”

Dean winced. Guevara had seen everything, but would he still be unwilling to believe?

The hunter kneeled, pulling away the handkerchief he’d used to gag the cop. “So, you still think I’m a whack job?”

Guevara opened his mouth but found he didn’t immediately have words to answer. He coughed, then looked to Sam first as if the younger hunter seemed more grounded in reality than his sibling.

“I saw it all – watched that lunatic daubing those symbols all over the walls, making his altar...” The cop’s eyes wandered to Luke’s still form. “He was talking, murmuring under his breath the whole time he worked on that crap. Said the girl wasn’t good enough anymore. He knew who it had to be instead and that the Master would approve...”

Dean glanced to Sam knowingly but didn’t make his usual wisecrack comment. Instead he remained silent, his mind painfully flashing back to a sinkhole, and the demon that had wanted to drag their asses down it.

Guevara didn’t see or understand the look that passed between the brothers and continued, as if he needed to talk, to get what he had seen out of his system before it consumed him. “Luke was the one who pointed me in your direction. He told me you two had been arguing with Wozniak, got my suspicions aroused. I guess I know why now...”

“And you know enough now not to want to can our asses, right?” Dean asked, raising one brow warily.

The cop let his chin fall so it was almost sitting on his chest. “I’ve seen enough,” he admitted. “But there’s no way I can sell it to my bosses back at the precinct. No way would they buy that Fraser was possessed by the spirit of a 1950’s serial killer.” Guevara looked apologetically at Dean. “Either you take the fall for this, or the dead kid does...”

Dean smirked, but not because he found the idea amusing – no, it was more ironic. “Story of my life,” he declared, tiredness seeping into his features. “I guess you may as well stick this one on me too. It’s not right the kid gets remembered as the villain when he was pretty much the hero at the end there.”

“Dean!”

Sam began to protest, but Guevara was already ahead of him. As Dean uncuffed the cop, he rubbed absently at his wrists as he spoke to both brothers. “I saw what you two do. You caught my cousin’s killer and you risked your own necks to do it. If I write this off as another Dean Winchester killing spree, you’ll have every Fed in the country on your tail. No. Better the kid takes the fall. You’re needed out there on the streets, not locked up in some jail cell.” He smiled at Dean. “Although I kind of get the impression you’d fit right on in, in that kinda place...”

Dean shook his head but smiled. “No thanks, orange jumpsuits are so not my color.” He offered a hand to Guevara and the cop took it, his grip as firm as his unwavering determination to do the right thing.

“See you around, *Shaft*,” Dean teased.

Guevara laughed for the first time since they'd met him. "Oh, somehow I think I can count on that. You two don't look for trouble, I think it hunts *you*..."

Forest Hills Cemetery, Boston, MS

Dean and Sam watched from a short distance as the priest said his final closing words over Luke Fraser's open grave.

It was a cold day, with just a light sprinkling of rain that had settled and formed into tiny globules on Luke's white casket.

Sam remembered the old proverb "Happy is the corpse that it rains on" and he wondered if there really was any truth to the maxim. If there was, it wasn't bringing any comfort to the kid's family.

Luke's mother was standing by her son's grave, her arm wrapped tightly around her husband's as tears flowed freely down her face.

Few other mourners had come to pay their respects – this was a lonely goodbye to the world. Sam guessed when his and Dean's time came, it would be that way for them too.

Who would be left to know what they'd done for the world, unseen and unnoticed?

At least it didn't have to be that way for Luke.

Someone had to know.

As the priest and the small gathering began to move away, Sam nodded to Dean and the pair moved forwards to approach Fraser's distraught parents.

Dean hated this side of their job – hated having to see the grieving that he'd never allow himself to do. But Sam was thankful his brother had agreed to come with him today. It was something they needed to do together.

"Mr. and Mrs. Fraser?" Sam took the lead. He was so much better at this kind of thing. He knew all the right words, the right comforting speeches. Or so Dean had convinced him, but right now, he didn't feel like he knew anything. "We're so sorry for your loss, so sorry for what happened to Luke..."

Sam expected the kid's mother to burst into more tears, but instead she simply looked at him for the longest time and then nodded as if she had been reading his mind. "You know what happened, the truth, I mean?"

Dean cleared his throat. "We know your son died a hero, not a killer Mrs. Fraser. He saved a lot of lives – no matter what the police or the newspapers say..." He swallowed hard, remembering the look on the dead kid's face after he'd sacrificed himself. "He saved *my* life..."

The grieving mother looked at the thick carpet of grass beneath her feet and closed her eyes, taking a long, bitter breath before exhaling. "I knew my boy could never have done those horrid things, not ever." She reached for her husband's hand and squeezed it so hard his flesh began to turn white.

He shook his head, a small nervous tick in his jaw suggesting he too was close to breaking point. "For Luke to die like that, on the train...it's just as if the Hell Gate Bridge Butcher made good on his promise to avenge himself on my father..."

Both Winchesters simply nodded.

There were no more words to give.

No comfort they could offer other than the truth.

Mrs. Fraser seemed to sense their unease and she smiled wanly. She tugged at her husband's almost numb hand, ushering him to head for their awaiting limousine. With one last glance at the brothers she mouthed the words "thank you" and then turned to leave.

"It's not fair." Sam watched as the small procession of cars exited the cemetery.

"It never is," Dean agreed. "But hey, death is the only certain thing in life, Sasquatch. Gonna come to us all one day..."

“Not yet I hope,” a gritty, knowing voice grumbled. “I kind of think you boys have too much work to do yet...”

Dean and Sam turned to see Warwick smiling at them expectantly as if he knew the day, month and year of their future demises. Both brothers shuddered simultaneously.

“Dude, are you sure you’re batting on our side? ’Cause for a man your age, you’ve sure got some creepy-assed stealth moves going on.” Dean peered at the conductor who peered right on back.

“I’m glad you two came here,” Warwick finally answered.

“Why, so you can thank us for our kick-ass ghostbusting?”

The conductor’s face creased into another more craggy smile, and he produced a small envelope like he was pulling a rabbit from a hat. “No, so I can give you the bill for the damages to loco 66...”

“You *gotta* be friggin’ kidding me, right?” Dean snatched the envelope anyway, inviting a small chuckle from Warwick.

“It’s a little thank you from some of the more...affluent passengers onboard that night. Stringer and your soap opera lovers seemed to think you deserved it.”

Dean tore off the edge of the envelope and discovered a folded check inside. He whistled as he read the amount it was made out for. “Whoa, Samantha, looks like we won’t need any more credit card scams for a few months...”

“Which is very good news,” another voice chimed in. “That means I won’t have to come and arrest your worthless butts for fraud...” Guevara stood at the edge of the cemetery driveway, leaning on the Impala’s roof, fingers interlocked.

“I’d say nice to see you, Detective, but...” Dean squirmed as Guevara actually “touched” his baby. Cop’s fingers all over his paintwork was like blasphemy. “Can’t say as I expected to see you again this soon. Thought you’d be out busting some other poor schmuck’s chops for something they didn’t do...”

Guevara smiled and walked around the car to join them, sliding his hands into his overcoat pockets as he parked himself next to Warwick. “Nah, I was too busy saving your butt. Let’s just say my superiors think I was the one Luke had chosen as his last victim, and that he got stabbed during the fight I had with him. Forensics confirmed the dagger was the blade that killed Wozniak and all the other victims of the Slayer.” He shrugged. “Open and shut case.”

“What about Luke?” Sam asked, thinking of the kid’s parents.

Guevara’s face saddened. “His reputation is pretty much the casualty in all of this. It’s gone down on file that Fraser was obsessed with the Hell Gate Butcher – the evil serial killer unmasked by his grandfather – and had pretty much become so enamored by the story that he’d decided to re-enact it.”

“But with himself in the Butcher’s role rather than the grandfather’s,” Sam concluded.

The cop nodded. “Pretty much. I’m sorry it had to go down that way, but I had to keep you boys out of the picture.” He winked. “Given your brother’s reputation and all.”

“Yeah, yeah, bite me.”

Guevara pulled a face that said he’d rather not. “Anyway, the way I see it, you two boys actually owe *me* a favor.”

Dean instantly squirmed. “Dude, we so don’t swing that way...”

The cop ignored him and looked at Sam. “If anything spooky happens in Baltimore, I expect payment in full. Deal?”

“If you can take another visit from my brother, yeah, deal,” Sam chuckled.

“And...thanks for covering for us. The kind of cops we usually meet aren’t always so...understanding.”

Guevara nodded and checked his watch. “Time I was elsewhere. See you around, guys.” He paused and his brow wrinkled in thought. “And if not, maybe see you on

the other side someday.” He cocked his head and continued walking back to his beat up Ford without turning again.

“I think we just made a new friend,” Sam noted.

“You made a new friend,” Dean corrected. “Sammy got Shaft in his back pocket.”

“Better than *Miss Marple*, dude.” Sam looked at Warwick as his brother scowled.

“Need a lift back to the station?”

Before Warwick could answer, Dean’s scowl had turned into an expression of full-blown facial torture. “*Station?* Man, I am so *not* going within half a mile of a friggin’ train. No sir, no more trains for this Winchester...ever!” He jangled the Impala’s keys and jumped behind the wheel.

As the engine cranked into life, Sam and Warwick could still hear Dean’s protests over the top of the Chevy’s mechanical growl.

“Trains are right on up there with planes...cramped and full of nutjobs...”

“...I’m telling you, they’re overgrown cans on wheels, dude...”

“And have you seen the news? They crash, a lot...”

“And let’s not forget, whacked out serial killing spooks with big knives and even bigger egos LOVE trains...”

Warwick put a hand on Sam’s shoulder from the backseat. “Son, maybe I should get a taxi...”

But Dean didn’t even hear the suggestion.

He was on a roll, and nothing short of a miracle was going to shut him up now.

The End