

Season Three
Episode Nine: The Great Gig In The Sky
By Sojourner
Part One

Cole Residence,
Butte County, CA

There were certain moments in his tangled life when Nathan Cole felt things would be all right. Moments graced with simplicity, and hints of the way things used to be, in a time he couldn't get back. Working on the truck, listening to his little sister chatter, the sweat of hard work soaking in the heat of the sun on his back and neck, were all things that seemed to settle peacefully against the turmoil within. Muting it for a while.

Filling his lungs with a hearty breath of fresh spring air, Nathan destroyed the moisture collecting at his hairline with the back of his hand, slow gaze moving from the truck's engine over to his sister, Chelsea, who'd set up a picnic for herself in the front yard. Blankets and dolls spread out before her, the seven-year-old's imagination moved between song and dialog flawlessly as she poured out imaginary tea and straightened the sun bonnet that had belonged to their grandmother. The obnoxiously large rimmed hat covered her copious amount of golden blonde curls and kept falling into her eyes.

Nathan smiled at the sight, especially when she turned, realizing he could see her struggle with the hat, and smiled bashfully before returning to her "guests." She was gonna break hearts. That was for damn sure.

He looked out over the rolling hills, the overgrown fields, and the rust-colored mountains in the distance. While people outside of Northern California found the sight to be breathtaking, Nathan was ready for a change of scenery. To him, the way the landscape rolled on visibly for miles, only to be halted at the mountains, gave the feeling they were alone, confined. Then again, Nathan wasn't just ready for a change of scenery; he was ready for a change of any magnitude.

"Nathan," Chelsea chirped, freckled face turned in his direction, nose scrunched. "What are the chances those tornados will come here?"

For a beat, Nathan didn't register where the question had come from, thinking at first it was all part of the game she was playing. But in the background, only serving as noise until now, he could hear the radio he'd set up in the garage, the DJ blathering on about the storms that had hit south of them.

"...but that's beside the point. California hasn't seen deaths by tornado in what? Fifty or more years? This is unnatural. This many tornados in just a few weeks. This is Cali-friggin-fornigh-ay...not Kansas. I mean maybe there's something to this Global Warming nonsense. Al Gore's probably..."

Nathan flicked the *off* switch, shaking his head.

"Slim, Chels," he replied, smiling thinly. He nodded toward the sky. "Just look at it."

Chelsea tilted back her head, bonnet slipping onto her back, looking up into sky as brilliantly blue and clear as her own eyes. There wasn't a cloud there, and that seemed to satiate her curiosity.

Nathan dropped the hood of the truck back into place, finished giving it a look over. Having backed it into the garage and lowered the door, he stopped by the edge of his sister's picnic to get her attention.

"Jay's coming over tonight," he said.

That afforded him a wrinkled expression of disgust from Chelsea.

"What?" Nathan intoned, warily.

"He's changed," Chelsea shrugged. "Not sure I like him anymore."

"Chels, it's Jay. I thought you liked him. And hey, people change..." He knew that all too well.

Chelsea smiled weakly and handed Nathan a piece of candy she'd probably been pretending was a tea cake. "Whatever, dude. If he comes over he better stay out of our food."

Nathan took the candy, cracking a smile. "Dude?"

"Kristen says that at school."

"Mmmhmm," Nathan pondered that statement, rolling the tangy candy over his tongue. "Why am I not surprised? You gonna be okay out here?"

Chelsea rolled her eyes. "I'm not two."

"Sorry, I forgot," Nathan replied tapping down her bonnet over her eyes. "Seven going on twenty-seven."

It was a sad truth though. Forced maturity through circumstances beyond what any seven-year-old should have to go through. There were days when she'd say things that would blow him away with her profound wisdom. Things that made him question who really needed whom in this family.

Leaving Chelsea to enjoy the day, Nathan stepped inside their house, ignoring the creaking of the screen door begging to be fixed. The old frame sometimes jammed, and the hinges were only a few slams away from breaking apart. It was a sad reflection on the rest of the house. Nathan couldn't keep up with the repairs that needed to be done.

He passed the pictures of their mother in the hall, lingering. In the photos she was healthy, full of life, beautiful. It was how he wanted to remember her. Not sickly, with translucent skin loosely pulled over bones, eyes dead. Chelsea, in her vibrancy, looked a lot like their mother before the sickness had taken her, and even though Nathan hadn't seen his father since he was a kid, both he and Chelsea supposedly shared his likeness as well.

One more testament to how screwed up their little family was.

There was nothing screwed up about Chelsea, however. Chelsea was all Nathan had left; probably the only good to come out of their broken home.

Catching his reflection in the picture's glass, Nathan scoffed at memories of being told he looked like his father. Sweat-soaked dark bangs clung to his forehead above tired, hazel eyes. If it was true that he looked like his father, then it wasn't any mystery why lately he couldn't stand his own reflection.

Chelsea had brought in the mail and Nathan picked it up off the hall table, sorting through it quickly. Bills he couldn't pay, letters of sympathy, advertisements. He tossed them all back onto the table save one letter from Wayne State he eyed wearily. He knew the contents would be a letter asking him to come for interviews. He ran a hand across his lips as he studied the envelope, pulling at the corners of his mouth pensively with his fingertips. Graduate school was a dream—a dream belonging to someone else, not him. Not anymore.

He tossed the letter in the garbage in the kitchen and paused at the sink, suddenly dizzy, a heat and pressure building and radiating behind his eyes. Bracing against the counter's edge, he started to run water, moving his hands beneath the cold stream to bring overflowing handfuls to his cheeks and neck.

Palpitating his eye sockets in an attempt to alleviate the pain, sending sparks of white skittering across his vision, Nathan opened the cupboard above the sink, pulling out some prescription pain meds.

Popping a few pills into his mouth, he made his way to the living room, collapsing on one of the couches. Too much sun, or stress, he wasn't sure, but the relentless pounding within his skull made him sure his blood vessels had mercilessly tightened in an attempt to strangle his brain.

Closing his eyes helped, and after a few minutes he'd slipped effortlessly into the painless quiet of sleep, oblivious to the sound of the wind chimes in their kitchen window spinning and dancing with increasing dissonance.

“You are my sunshine, my only sunshine. You make me happy when skies are gray...” Chelsea sang as she cleaned up her picnic, making sure the small plastic cups and plates were all arranged neatly in her mother’s basket.

Her hat kept falling off as the breeze would hit the large brim and send it back. She’d given up adjusting it, and let it rise and fall along with her curls like a kite, attached only by the ribbons tied loosely around her neck.

The wind had become stronger and she was hurrying to pick up her things before the entire party was blown away. She was unaware that the clouds had been gathering in the sky, that the wind had become colder. She’d welcomed the new breezes at first, as they cooled her hot cheeks, but as they intensified, she found herself annoyed with them for blowing around her blankets and cups.

“You’ll never know deeeeear, how much I love you...So please don’t take, my sunshine...”

Dark shadows spread across the ground, enveloping her and the surrounding area, directing her gaze to the sun above—or rather where the sun was supposed to be. Black, ominous clouds rolled and swelled above like whitecaps on the ocean, moving with a life of their own, covering as far as she could see, swallowing up her blue skies.

“...away...”

Looking over her shoulder at the house, she called for her brother hesitantly.

The slick silk ribbons around her neck slipped from their knot, and the hat was pulled from her back and ripped up into the sky on a strong gust of wind. She tried to catch it, stumbling to her feet after the bonnet.

The chimes dangling from the front porch bobbed and swung, creating a deafening cacophony of noise as they slammed repeatedly into each other and the nearby support beams. Leaves from the trees in the front yard were tearing free and cutting through the air, pulled by a wind that was snapping through the flag by their driveway and pitilessly knocking over the pinwheels Chelsea had placed in the garden.

The hat landed and rolled, Chelsea grabbing one of the ribbons before it could take flight again, pulling it into her chest and clutching it there. The overpowering electric snap of lightning and thunder caused her to duck, unprepared for the sudden splitting of the skies.

Curls whipping around her face, she ran back to her blanket, gathering up what she could carry, looking back toward the screen door as her heart pounded a hollow into her chest.

“Nathan!”

Comfortably unaware in the dark of sleep, Nathan only became vaguely tuned into something amiss when a dull and distant roar entered his dreams, clawing at the back of his mind in persistent and nagging dives aimed at gaining his attention. It was joined by a high-pitched wail that twisted within the sound, grating against every innate survival instinct until his heart beat rapidly at almost the same tonal frequency.

Something was wrong. Something was undeniably *wrong*.

There was an almost human quality to the howl, and when his synapses finally flared to life against the painkiller-induced fog that settled into his mind, his eyes snapped open. Chelsea’s frantic screams finally wrapped around his heart and snapped him back into adrenaline-fueled clarity.

Lightning gave definition to the dark in a hot and stuttered burst outside the window and Nathan swore as he fell from the couch, the room plunging once again back into black. He didn’t know how it had gotten so dark so fast, or how long he’d been out, but he didn’t care as he twisted around to his stomach, digging his toes into the carpet in an attempt to stand.

Chelsea. He could hear her screaming his name.

He looked from the living room toward the front of the house and could see her at the screen door—the damn thing jammed again—pounding the living hell out of the metal mesh, trying to reach through the ornate design of the frame to get to the lock.

Still slightly disoriented, he tripped in his sprint through the kitchen to get to her, falling just as the old ash tree came through the kitchen window, narrowly missing him. Covering his head as branches and glass rained down on him from above, Nathan only paused a beat, bowing his back, curling knees against his chest, tearing up from under the debris toward his red-faced and terrified sister.

Practically breaking the handle off the door, he lifted up and pulled the warped metal back. Chelsea fell into him, knocking him off his center, her small hands fisted, face buried quickly in his shirt.

Beyond her the sky crackled with life, and in the distance he could see the clouds churning through the fields; a pillar of lightning and dust and debris greedily devouring the earth and sky.

“Jesus...”

“Nathan!” Chelsea bellowed into his shirt, commanding him back from his shock, her cries holding panicked supplication. *Save me! Save us!*

He gathered her up into his arms, making his way toward the basement, ducking around the fallen tree in their kitchen, heart in his throat as more windows broke, more glass flew. Shielding her the best he could with his own body, he made it to the basement stairs taking them two at a time until his feet hit concrete.

“I couldn’t get in,” she was crying as he felt in the dark for the pull chain for the light. His hand kept coming up empty, grasping at the air.

“I’m so sorry, Chels. I’m so sorry,” Nathan repeated over and over as he found the string and turned on what light they had, the bare bulb flickering in and out.

Grabbing a blanket from one of the trunks he wrapped it around her and knelt with her on the floor, trying to calm her, covering her with his body as the storm raged on restlessly. Above he heard something break and snap, the shed out back if he had to guess. More glass was raucously raked away by branches, dust falling from the rafters above them.

The banshee-like cry of the wind became so thunderous and all-consuming that Chelsea’s screams were drowned, lost in the sound. He closed his eyes, rocking her, praying the floor above didn’t come down on them as the house shook. He could feel Chelsea’s heart beating in spurts against his chest.

“Not here...please...Not here. Not us.”

The house gave one last shudder, moaning, and he thought for sure they were done.

“Not us!” he screamed, terrified, but above all else, angry. *Not here! Not like this!* And it stopped.

Like someone had covered his ears, the silence that fell upon them suddenly cast him into confusion and disbelief. He unfolded from his protective cocoon around Chelsea and looked up at the light swinging above their heads. It browned-out a few more times before coming back, illuminating air thick with dust.

Chelsea, still sobbing, refused to let go of his neck, and he had to take her with him as he cautiously went back upstairs. Making his way to the front door, stepping carefully over glass and splintered wood, he assessed the damage.

Their roof was still in place, and minus the tree through the kitchen, they still had a relatively untouched house. In awe, he stepped into sunlight, sirens filling the air, their warning sounding too late. Barely able to regain his breath as Chelsea wrapped her arms tighter around his throat, he saw some of the farms in the distance, some leveled and others undamaged.

He felt Chelsea turn her head and look up. He followed her gaze to the bonnet snagged in the branches, ribbons lifting weakly with residual zephyr. Nathan looked past them, into clear skies, unblemished azure.

Not a cloud in sight.

Next Day...

Butte County, Early Afternoon

"...Made up my mind to make a new start, going to California with an aching in my heart..."

With both windows down in the Impala, the sun warming his face, and Zeppelin's *Going to California* delivering soothing acoustic guitar that flowed with ease from the speakers, Sam found himself getting sleepy. Leaning against the doorframe, wind moving through spread fingers, ruffling the hairs on his arm and lifting the bangs from his forehead, he was lost in a moment of contentedness that was both rare and coveted.

Dean and he had been through a lot lately, and at times it seemed that solace was only attainable through the simplicity of moments like these. The only way to keep from falling over was to keep moving. The only way to quiet the restless noise in their heads was to drown it out with the road and music. The only way to rest was sprawled out in the front seat of the Impala.

They had to take what they could when they could, and for Sam, a little bit of peace had been bestowed on him the last hundred miles.

He stretched out a little, letting muscles pop and lengthen in his legs, then cast a look at his brother, picking up on a few of his subtle mannerisms. The way his jaw was set, eyes fixed on the road ahead, shoulders squared and tense, fingers lacing and unlacing around the wheel, it didn't take a lot for Sam to know the lyrics of the song probably hit too close to home as they filled the silence between them.

Dean always thought that he was good at hiding things on his mind, but Sam had somehow mastered the ability to render Dean's walls as opaque as cellophane. Two things, among many others, had to be clawing around that head of his: a distant father and a girl Dean had distanced himself from.

Passing ranches and seemingly endless hills, Sam knew the countryside of Northern California was a far cry from the California he had been used to. He preferred what he was seeing, however. Trips to this state always proved bittersweet, and the less this felt like the California he knew, the better.

The distinct scent of fire intermingled with the rain-thick air and drew Sam's attention toward the farm they were approaching. At least that was Sam's best guess at what it had once been.

Workers were piling debris from what looked like a barn in the open fields, while nearby burn piles sent up thick plumes of black smoke. A house in the distance was missing one half, the three levels openly exposed, revealing disheveled and destroyed contents of what looked like a dining room and a few bedrooms. Wires and splintered beams hung down from one level to the next like frayed ends of cloth.

Dean whistled and slowed down the Impala to take in the destruction, shaking his head.

"That is the definition of 'sucks out loud'..."

Sam could see Dean's eyes flood with concern, looking at the workers. Maybe he was hoping to see the survivors clearly labeled among them.

"Yeah..." Sam huffed, pretty sure the closest he'd ever gotten to something like this was from the comfortable distance a television screen provided. "They said it came out of nowhere."

The car picked up speed, Dean's eyes back to the road. "Don't most tornadoes?"

They passed a few TV vans alongside the road as they headed into town. The reporters were using the backdrop of the partially mauled *Welcome to Butte County* sign as they told their stories.

"Well, uh," Sam started, distractedly. "Yes and no. To most people, how fast these things show up, it feels like they came out of nowhere. This one, Dean, *literally did* come out of nowhere."

Dean's brow lifted in confused interest, but something else was tugging at his attention. Vans and SUVs with what looked like communication equipment strapped to their roofs lined the main road into Oroville. It looked like a tailgate party between the lawn chairs and the grills, intermixed with cameras and equipment Sam couldn't identify.

"They can't all be the local news..." Sam observed.

The tape in the deck switched sides and Zeppelin's *Misty Mountain Hop* replaced the melancholy folk of the previous song. With the flip seemed to go Dean's mood as he stared, almost wide-eyed, at the number of people setting up equipment alongside the road.

"Storm chasers," Dean snorted, slow grin spreading.

"No way," Sam replied, doing a double take.

The TV crews for local news were in clearly marked vans, but the other vehicles...

"What variety? Thrill seekers? Scientists?" Sam asked.

"Probably both. Think we'll run into that Hunt chick and Billy boy?"

"Are all these people nuts?" Sam ignored his brother's question. "You're supposed to run away from tornadoes."

"Dude," Dean lifted a brow. "What the hell does that say about us?" He waved a hand from one side of the road to the other as if Sam couldn't already see the turn out for Butte County's freak natural phenomenon show. "Why are we here, again? I mean, granted, you said you found a gig in California, I agreed on your word that it had something to do with us...but, uh...last I checked, you can't rock-salt a twister."

"True or false, we deal in supernatural occurrences?"

"True," Dean huffed out a short laugh.

"California ranks thirty-two out of fifty states for frequency of tornadoes, the risk of them occurring is...well, forty-five out of fifty. No one has died from these things in Cali in, oh, over fifty years."

"Global warming."

"What?"

"Sorry. Blanket argument."

"Dean. Focus. Ten tornadoes in increasing severity, all in one week, even more numbers of violent storms, all claiming twenty or more people across the touch down radius, limited to Northern California..."

"Okay, that is freaky...Doesn't mean..."

"No Doppler activity before they strike, Dean. They literally materialize out of thin air. Out of blue skies."

"So, you're telling me, people are enjoying a Bing Crosby-esque day, then *BAM*, their homes are off to Oz?"

Sam nodded.

"Okay, so you have a theory?"

"Uh, well, I'm banking on demonic activity."

Dean's eyes slid to the right. "Blanket argument."

"Look, there was a lot of mythology and belief back in the day that some natural phenomena were caused by demons or demi-gods. Adad and Ishkur, Lilith the wind demon, Shedu from Chaldean mythos," Sam replied, counting on his fingers the demons he could remember from his research. "Uh, many cultures believed that tornadoes were demons themselves or were controlled by them."

"M'kay," Dean replied pushing out his lips for a beat and nodding. "So why now? Which demon, if it is a demon, is pissed at Northern California?"

"That's what I hope we can find out before the next one strikes. And maybe I'm wrong. Maybe it isn't a demon. I mean, with the former angel of light having way too much fun topside, this could be his doing too, Dean."

"Friggin' Satan," Dean growled.

"I hear you, brother. It could be anything, but whatever it is, it has scientists baffled and the behavior of the storms feels..."

"Selective?" Dean asked.

"Yeah..."

"*Unnatural selection*," Dean mused. They passed a truck where a group of people were tapping a keg on the back. He nodded toward the sight. "Survival of the fittest at its finest, Sammy."

Sam's jaw worked with concern. "They shouldn't be here..." The Impala was slowing down and Sam furrowed his brow. "What are you doing?"

Pulling the Impala alongside a row of black vans, Dean threw her into park and nodded toward the paint job on the side of one of them. "These people look friendly enough."

Metallica's *Ride the Lightning* album cover art was on the side of the van in all its electric blue glory. Lightning crackling around an electric chair, beneath the silver metallic insignia of the band, screamed at Sam to run, and run fast.

"No," Sam mouthed.

Dean's response was simple, eyes crinkling in youthful glee as he laughed and pushed open his door before further protest could be voiced.

Sam stumbled out of the car after him.

"No, Dean. No."

"No?"

"No."

Sam practically tripped over his own feet and Dean's heels as he twisted around his brother to stand in his path.

"Sam, sorry, but what's the harm in asking a few questions?"

What's the harm? Sam blinked a little, mouth working but only managing a scoff at first. For starters, Sam knew how Dean's convoluted mind worked.

"Because I know you, and a few questions is going to turn into...Dean!"

His brother ducked around him and started to knock on the cab window. Sam could see a man behind the wheel, hitting the steering column like his hands held drum sticks, then switching to air guitar, head bobbing to music. Music that Sam could hear clearly outside of closed windows, the electric guitar vibrating through the entire vehicle.

Dean looked back over his shoulder, the corners of his eyes creased back with his grin. Sam just returned the smile with a glare before the guy suddenly noticed they were there, rolling down his window. Van Halen's *Eruption* almost knocked the two of them over as it rocketed out of the speakers.

The guy turned it down, laughing his apologies. "I just get in the *zone* sometimes and it's like *gaaahhh!*" He said, shaking his hands in front of his face for emphasis like a stream of electric current was going right through him. "You know?"

Sam could tell right away, between the long hair pulled back beneath the trucker hat, the goatee, the AC/DC shirt, and the hemp wristlets, not to mention the smell of something closely related to hemp, Dean and this guy were going to be best friends. Sam smiled thinly.

They just stared at each other for an awkward moment, Dean nodding a little, then looked back and forth between Sam and the man. Dean eventually dipped his chin, scratching at the back of his head.

"Totally, man. So uh..."

"Oh, dude, sorry. I'm Russ," the man introduced himself, sticking a hand out the window to shake both Sam's and Dean's. "You two must be those college students Professor...oh hell, what was his name? Rachel set it up. Didn't catch the names, bros. From California State University, right? Chico?"

"Yeah," Dean replied, getting an immediate elbow in the soft tissue of his back from Sam. "This is Sam..." He groaned, wincing, but managing to continue undaunted. "I'm Dean."

"Rock on," Russ nodded. "And welcome." He ducked back into the window and returned shortly with a clipboard. "Need you two to sign a waiver."

Sam shot Dean a *you've got to be kidding me* look as his brother took the waiver and signed one of his usual pseudonyms in indistinct scrawl, then passed the board to Sam.

Russ must have taken Sam's lemon-sucking face as a sign that he had something against waivers, because he tried to prod him along. "I know, dude. Hate them too. Like, waiver, *psf*...what? It's just so you don't, you know, trip on some equipment and sue us, man. Seriously. We're professionals. Been chasing storm skirt since I was at your kneecaps."

Sam reluctantly wrote his name, or more like scribbled a line where the signature would go, eyes burning into Dean the whole time, then passed the clipboard back through the window.

"Cool. I'll show you around," Russ said, dropping down to the ground and motioning for them to follow.

He opened the back of his van and pointed to two guys who were looking over what appeared to be sound and video equipment.

"Guys, this is Sam and Dean, the brains from Chico. Sam and Dean this is Greg and Jacks. They're trying to assess these mothers by sound, see if they can't catch the wraiths on camera."

The one named Jacks, looked back warily, eyes darting between the two of them. "Don't touch my equipment."

Dean nodded. "Okaaaay. Gotcha."

"Wraiths?" Sam asked.

Russ laughed. "Yeah, dude, what we're calling these tornados. Damn things just appear and disappear. Pretty effed up stuff..."

Russ saluted the two and shut the doors, waving a hand again for them to follow. Next to the van was a Chevy Avalanche with a small moving trailer attached. Two more people were working on removing something from the back.

Russ leaned into both of them. "That fine rumpus right there," he said, nodding toward the woman who'd just set an open trunk of wires and power cords on the ground.

"Russ! Stop talking about Wes like that," she shouted back without even turning a head in their direction.

The guy with her pushed thick-rimmed glasses up on his nose and shrugged.

"That's Rachel, and Wes," Russ finally introduced, bowing low in apology when Rachel turned and shook a hand held radio at him.

"I told you I needed these live, Russ!"

Russ pushed Sam and Dean toward her. "Your grunts have arrived."

Both Sam and Dean shot him a confused look and he grinned, still backing away. "Rachel will fill you bros in on the rest."

Great... Sam thought with a sigh. He turned into an armful of communication equipment that was dumped from Rachel's into his own.

Rachel's bright green eyes studied his reaction. "You're Professor Jinn's students?"

"Uh...y-yeah," Sam stammered, looking to Dean for a little help. This was *his* idea after all...

"Loved his classes," Rachel said, tucking a loose strand of auburn hair behind her ear. "When he found out what I do, he wanted to know if I'd take on some of his students. Guess you two are top of his class?"

"Oh, yeah," Dean replied, the bull oozing naturally from his persona. "I'm Dean and this is Sam. Professor Jinn is amazing. Real...visionary."

Rachel beamed. "What did you think about his paper on common modes of mesoscale convective organization?"

Dean's face...God, Sam wished he had a camera. It was a moment worth documenting.

Sam watched Dean's brain claw for purchase, smiling at his brother and Rachel. There was no way Sam was stepping into this one.

"Great work. Awesome look into the theory of..." Dean coughed, mumbling something incoherent into his closed fist.

Rachel's brow ticked up. "Sorry, didn't catch that..."

"Rache," Wes called from the trailer, causing the young woman to hold up a finger at Dean and Sam.

"Hold that thought. We'll talk later. Why don't you guys get acquainted with some of the equipment and the rest of the team, huh?"

She jogged off, and Sam looked over at Dean, smiling thin. "The theory of... what was that again, Dean?"

"The theory of you're a major pain in my ass. A little help would have been nice," Dean replied, returning to the Impala.

Sam followed, realizing when he'd reached the car that he was still carrying the communication equipment. He sighed, sliding the equipment to the ground, and then swung in front of his brother once more.

"Dean, listen to me, we can't do this."

"Why?"

"They expect us to be knowledgeable in this field. This isn't a good idea."

"And how else did you want to get to the bottom of this, Dorothy?"

Sam shrugged, trying not to raise his voice. "I. Don't. Know. But I'm not exactly brushed up on my mesoscales, Dean. And what happens when the students they *are* expecting..."

Another car pulled up alongside the Impala from the road, its occupants pointing to Russ' van.

Sam tipped his chin in their direction. "Think the students from Chico are here."

Dean adjusted his collar, before striding up to the car, his expression asking Sam to trust him as he leaned coolly against the students' car door. The passenger window was rolled down and Dean flashed them a confident grin. Sam joined Dean reluctantly, if only to be witness to how bad things could get.

"Hey, you guys Professor Jinn's students?" Dean asked.

"Yes sir," one answered. Both looked like they'd crawled out of an Abercrombie catalog.

"Well, guys, I hate to be the bearer of bad news, but uh, we're gonna have to ask you to turn back around and go home."

"What? Why?" The one behind the wheel asked indignantly. "We were told..."

"Look, I know you both were looking forward to this, but these storms are unstable. We can't risk you guys getting caught in the suck zone."

Sam, along with the two in the car all scrunched up brows. The two college students were confused, Sam disbelieving that Dean had actually just said "suck zone."

"Whatever, man," the driver sighed, disgust evident as he started to back up. "Prof's going to love this."

They made a wide turn, almost taking out another team's equipment as they whipped the vehicle around. Dean dug his hands into his pockets as he watched them go, rocking a little on his feet.

"There. One problem solved."

"The suck zone, Dean?" Sam asked, incensed.

His brother shrugged. "I've seen *Twister*. We so can do this, Sam."

"First of all, Dean, tornadoes don't suck, they..."

Sam stopped himself as Dean's grin started to grow mischievous, making him look innocuously twelve. "They what, Sam?"

Sam waved a hand through the air dismissively, deciding that in situations such as these, walking away when he'd set himself up for Dean's humor was the best way to preserve his dignity.

"Guys," Rachel called out to them, as she approached at a slow run. "I almost forgot." She held out two room key cards to Sam. "As soon as you two get done with those radios, maybe you should get settled in town. Professor Jinn paid for your room in advance."

Sam felt it coming before Dean's hand clapped down on his shoulder from behind. His brother's way of saying *I told you so*.

"Thanks, Rachel," Dean said, plucking the cards from Sam's hands, looking at the name of the motel before tapping them against Sam's forehead. As soon as she was out of earshot he laughed a little. "Come on. Let's hear it. This was a good idea."

Sam shook his head, unable to resist smiling at his brother's enthusiasm over a few key cards. "Wow, Dean. A free room. You are the man."

"Damn straight," Dean responded, pocketing the cards.

Determined to do some research, Sam remembered a detail in the last report that he hoped Rachel could help him with.

"Hey, Rachel," Sam called out after her.

She lifted her eyes from the computer she was looking at out of the back of the van and tucked another rogue strand of hair behind her ear. "Yeah?"

"The last touch down happened around here, right?"

She nodded emphatically. "Yeah. A funnel touched down and then disappeared over a farm off of Oakland. Few miles up the road from town."

Cole Residence, Mid Afternoon

The Cole residence was one of the few properties on their way out of town that wasn't completely torn apart. While debris littered the yard, and the shed out back looked like it had been reduced to a pile of toothpicks, the two-story white farmhouse still stood.

As Sam and Dean parked the Impala behind a truck in the driveway, they could see one of the residents working on the roof, replacing shingles. Moving in unconscious sync, they stepped from the car and approached the house, just beneath where the guy was working. *Life of my Own* by 3 Doors Down was playing from the truck cab, giving the sweat covered, bare-backed worker something to labor to.

"...Kiss me while I'm still alive. Kill me while I kiss the sky. Let me die on my own terms, let me live and let me learn..."

Sam coughed as they stood beneath him, hoping to get his attention over the music and the determination clearly set into the young man's face. Sam didn't think the guy could be much older than Dean, much older than him for that matter.

"Hey," Dean eventually called out, grabbing the guy's attention, accompanied by distrustful narrowed eyes.

"Can I help you?" The guy asked, squatting close to the edge of the roof, passing the hammer back and forth between his hands in an attempt to intimidate. "I've already talked to everyone I care to talk to, gentlemen. So if this is about the storms, you're wasting your time. Can't you collaborate with the other news teams?"

"It would just take a minute," Sam pressed. "We'll be out of your hair in no time. We just heard that the last tornado disappeared here, and wondered if you could answer a few questions..." He opened his hands in peace. "It would really help us out, man."

"Yeah, I bet it would," the guy sighed. "Please, just go. I have a lot of work to get done. Or didn't you see the tree sitting in my kitchen?"

Sam heard him mumble something about opportunistic parasites before returning to work. The front door slammed and both Sam and Dean turned to look at the girl who'd come to sit on the front porch. She folded herself onto the stairs, elbows on knees, head in hands, staring at them,

"You with the news?" she asked.

"Yes," Sam nodded.

"Trust me, mister, you want to get in your car and go," the little girl said.

"Chelsea," the girl called down from the roof. "Go back inside."

She didn't move, and Sam approached her. "Were you here when the storm hit?"

He heard a laugh from above, and looked up to see the resident shaking his head.

"You guys are unbelievable," he said, shoving the hammer back into his belt. "I'll give you a statement, just wait right there."

Sam watched him crawl back through one of the open windows and shrugged at Dean who shrugged back.

"Is that your brother?" Sam asked Chelsea.

She bobbed her head once. "Nathan."

"Seems like a good guy," Sam said, unaware he was about to retract that statement.

Nathan came barreling through the front door, swinging the shotgun in his hand up to eye level, steadying it on Sam. Dean had somehow shifted completely in front of Sam at that moment, hands up in momentary submission. If Sam could have seen his eyes, he knew they'd hold a different story; one that promised retaliation if Nathan even thought about pulling that trigger. He could hear it in Dean's voice.

"Hey, hey, just calm down!" Dean barked. "You want us gone? We're gone. Not worth getting shot over."

Sam heard tires spinning up the gravel driveway, the heavy back beat of punk rock, and then Rise Against's *Chamber the Cartridge* suddenly overpowering all other noise, as a jeep skidded to a stop next to the Impala. The driver barely took the time to shift into park before falling out into a run and jogging toward them.

From his expression, Sam guessed he'd seen Nathan with the shotgun and was going to try to run damage control.

"Nate! Dude, chill! Put the friggin' gun away. No sense shooting people," the new party said as he hopped up the porch steps, ruffling Chelsea's hair as he went.

Nathan lowered the shotgun. "Just trying to get them to leave, Jay. It's not even loaded," he sighed as the guy took it from his hands and set it down on the porch swing.

"Reporters?" Jay asked Sam and Dean, who'd since relaxed into side by side formation, Dean still keeping one shoulder tucked protectively in front of Sam's body.

"We were just trying to figure out what happened," Sam replied honestly. "Didn't mean any harm."

"Well, damn, what's the harm in telling the story one more time, Arashi?" Jay asked Nathan, eyes dancing.

Sam raised a brow at the unusual nickname. "Was that Japanese?"

Jay laughed, "Yeah, little inside joke between the two of us. Come on, Nate, just tell them and we'll get to work on removing that tree from the kitchen. Unless you think it makes a sweet new table?"

Sam could tell that Jay was trying to soften Nathan up, make sure that he didn't get in trouble, but Nathan wasn't going to give them much of anything. He'd dropped his shoulder into the porch post, crossed his arms, and was looking anywhere but at Sam and Dean.

"Fine," Jay said with a dismissive wave of his hands. "I'll tell them. So it was friggin' sweet. I, of course, wasn't here, but I've heard the story from Nate, and I saw it touch down. Seriously, I didn't think those things could just drop down like that. Beautiful day, then *WHAM*, there was a twister kicking its way for Nate's house. So I was like in my jeep, pronto, trying to get here, right? The thing just vanishes as soon

as it hit Nathan's property...I mean, how freaking awesome is that? It couldn't touch my boy Nate."

Jay cast out a hand, knocking Nathan's shoulder. "Couldn't touch you, man."

Nathan shook his friend's hand and turned, grabbing up the shotgun and stalked back into the house. Jay sighed as he watched his friend leave, the screen door slam making him wince. Chelsea hit Jay in the calf before standing up.

"Way to go, Jay," she reprimanded.

"Chels? What?" Jay whined, watching her retreat before shrugging. "Don't mind him. He's had a rough run recently. Just take my advice, and don't come back out here. Next time he might actually load the thing."

"Noted," Dean replied dully.

"You need anything else?" Jay asked. "Oh, name's Jaime Alden. When you quote me."

"Thanks," Sam returned with a half nod, then watched Jay head inside, dropping his shoulders. "That was weird."

"Totally," Dean sighed. "I need a drink."

Charlie's Bar, Night

They'd spent the past couple of hours with the "Ride the Lightning" storm chasers, drinking beer and listening to their stories. Sam had remained silent for the most part, taking in the stories that were flying across the table rapid fire. Each one of the storm chasers had their own version of the most dangerous chase, and through the smoky haze and florescent lights, Sam could see Dean eating up every word.

Dean had been flirting with Rachel, and Sam had been somewhat glad to see that Dean was able to get his mind off of things that had been plaguing him for weeks, but when he saw his brother pull back and withdraw within himself, taking on a careful, guarded persona with the beautiful storm chaser, Sam knew he was padding those walls of his.

Someday, Dean... Sam thought, *You'll get your shot at having someone.*

He deserved that at least. Sam had always thought Dean deserved that.

Sam could see Dean's attraction to the team. The team's driver, Russ, was an adrenaline junkie, and even Rachel, with her knowledge of what these storms could do, had some of her own close calls that she described with excited eyes and laughter.

The whole bar was crowded with the other storm chasers and reporters, and Sam could hear similar stories floating around the room. Personally, Sam felt these people were crazy, but who was he to make commentary on the lives of storm chasers when he was a demon hunter?

There'd been a small fight at the bar earlier, taking Sam's attention away from the team's conversation and directing it to the side door where a group of people were being shoved outside. Sam thought he recognized Jay, but couldn't tell before the doors slammed shut.

The crowd tonight was loud and hyped up on adrenaline, and Sam wanted to get going before more fights broke out. He wasn't exactly sure what kind of fights drunken researchers could get into, but he didn't want to stay around and find out. He'd grabbed Dean's shoulder, pulling him in close so he could hear him over the noise.

"I think we should go," Sam said.

"Aw, come on, Sammy. I want to stay. If I wasn't a hunter I'd be running around with Russ and the gang. I've kinda always wanted to be a storm chaser."

And there it was again, that look that Sam noticed for a while now had been void from Dean's face. There was nothing forced about his smile, that light in his eyes, and Sam knew it was more than just the beers Dean had slammed back. Dean needed this distraction.

"I thought you wanted to be a firefighter," Sam returned.

Dean laughed, taking another swig of beer. "You forgot a mechanic, an astronaut, a bounty hunter..."

Sam huffed, returning the cool beer bottle's rim to his lips and letting the dry flavor of the liquid swath his tongue. Sam had no idea where to even start their research, and so he was giving in to Dean's methods slowly. They would have to wait and see one of these freak unnatural occurrences themselves, and it was probably best to stay with the people that knew what they were doing.

"Well, Dean, I hate to say it...but I think you were..."

Sam didn't get to finish, as the entire building shuddered violently, the TVs throughout the bar switching to static snow-white screens, the pub lights swinging above the tables, flickering in and out. Everyone went silent, the only noise in the bar coming from the jukebox, and with the sudden quiet came the awareness of how loud the wind was tearing around the building outside.

Dean looked at Sam, then up at the nearest dancing light. "Spirits, tornadoes, they both at least have something in common. Both screw with the electricity..."

Sam was transfixed by the beer bottle he'd set down on the table as it started to shake, joined by the other glasses surrounding it as they started to vibrate and clank into one another.

"Yeah, but one sure makes one hell of a bigger bump in the night."

The liquor bottles on the shelf behind the bar had started to rattle against each other riotously, before another tremor through the building sent them crashing in a shower of glass and amber liquid to the ground. A woman screamed, and the entire bar plunged into dark as storm sirens kicked to life in the distance.

It was never easy.

Those words were laced through Dean's adrenaline jumbled thoughts, along with a plethora of other colorful choice words as he fisted his hands in Sam's shirt, dragging them both to the ground and under one of the bar's tables. Darkness, thick without the garish florescence of the bar lights, had enveloped them, adding to the disorienting nature of the deafening reverberation of relentless wind and glass against glass, glass ripping across metal, metal mauling wood.

Something dropped down onto the table above their heads, thudding loudly accompanied by the skittering and whine of more breaking glass, which he felt pinging off his leather jacket, pelting down on him.

Sam, beside him on the ground, hopefully with head tucked against his chest, hands over his face like Dean's, was shouting something. But Dean lost all of Sam's words in the white noise that had consumed everything, melting it together.

Reaching out in the dark, he found Sam's shirt again and pulled him forward, fearing they were exposed after he'd felt something else, light but sharp, drop against his arched back.

Thrown into survival mode against temporary blindness and the loss of his ability to filter through the noise, Dean gave up hoping the table was sufficient protection. The roof would come crashing down on them, or any number of sharp objects flying through the air would fillet them from the sides. The leather of his jacket could take more damage than Sam's clothing, or at least he depended on that to be true now as he covered Sam partially with his body.

The white noise took on a low groan, the building around them echoing the noise before everything went jarringly silent and still.

Dean unfolded from Sam, back onto his knees, eyes stinging as he strained them to see something in the dark, ears ringing, imprinted with the horrific sound still *whooshing* restlessly around him.

"Sam," he ground out, fingers once again seeking out the material of his brother's shirt.

"I'm okay." The reply Dean had hoped to hear from Sam rasped back in tangible disbelief.

Dean registered a hand on his shoulder, and almost instantly felt his heart rate slow with reassurance and confirmation that they were both okay.

"That was..." Sam breathed.

"Friggin' sweet," Russ' voice cut through Dean's ears, drawing his attention to the storm chaser's presence.

Flashlights were clicking to life throughout the bar, the strident beams dulling in the wake of dust. The bar tender had pulled a couple from behind the bar and had handed them out, but most were coming from key chains, like the one Russ was now shining first in Dean's face, then Sam's, causing them to squint and wince away.

"You mind there, Russ," Dean asked, holding a hand in front of the beam.

"Just making sure everything's copasetic, bros," he turned the beam on Sam. "Was that you screaming like a girl?"

Sam's eyes narrowed, "No."

"Everyone okay?" The bartender asked, visibly shaken as he passed the beam of light with unsteady hands over the floor of the bar.

Crawling out from under booths and around overturned tables, the patrons stumbled out of hiding, wearing shell-shocked expressions. Dean was confident the only one who had enjoyed the experience was Russ. In the light of surviving though, Dean did have to admit it *was* pretty friggin' sweet.

"Anyone hurt?" The query of concern was repeated, answered only by the whispers of "Oh my God" and the occasional thin, dry cough as people's lungs couldn't take the abundance of debris in the air.

Windows blown in, broken glass scattered dangerously across every inch of floor, a few hanging lights now on the ground, created an odd, battle-ravaged feeling, completely transforming what had once been a lively pub. All of the destruction left Dean wondering how the hell the walls were still all in place, especially after his gaze fell along the car that had pierced one of the walls at the front of the building, front tires hooked through what had been a window.

No one appeared to be severely hurt, and many were already heading for the exit, helping others who were having trouble, all shuffling like the undead in stunned silence from the building. Extending his hand to Rachel, Dean helped her to her feet, receiving a weak smile as thanks. Perplexity, not fear, took up residence in the creases of her face. Her eyes were filled with questions he knew he couldn't even begin to answer.

She rubbed her arms as she stepped around Dean, following Sam and Russ out through one of the side exits into the parking lot that had been turned into an auto wrecking yard. Dean's heart kicked up into his throat as he looked for the Impala, eyes widening at the sight of cars folded into one another, flipped and smashed.

"Where's my van?" Russ asked.

Rachel pointed to the street, "That it? Parked by the road?"

Russ squinted, only able to use the moonlight and what light there was down the street, where buildings stood miraculously unscathed. All the parking lot lamps had been twisted over into cars or each other.

"Yeah...that's it...but I—I, uh, I parked it over there," Russ said, indicating with a nod toward the opposite side of the parking lot.

"Dammit," Dean growled, unable to see the Impala from his current vantage point, sprinting to where he was certain he'd left her.

Swinging around a pick-up truck with a lamppost through the windshield, and sliding across the hood of a sedan, Dean found the Impala, boxed in on all sides by wreckage, but untouched. It was sitting there like nothing had happened. A P.T. Cruiser had taken the brunt of a street lamp that would have gone right through the middle of her roof.

Dean laughed, mostly from elation, but also from release from the fear that had torn through him in those painful few moments of not knowing if she was okay. Running his hand along her side, from hood to trunk, he couldn't find a scratch on her

beautiful black exterior. Another laugh bubbled up from within Dean as Sam joined him, Sam's own amazement huffed out in a breath of surprise.

"Nine friggin' lives," Dean beamed. "Can you believe this?"

Sam shook his head. "I can't believe any of this. Dean, it didn't touch anything else but this bar." Sam tilted his head down the street. "You've got to see this."

Dean stood from where he was crouched, and looked down toward the main street which was still intact and a severely stark contrast to the "scrap yard" they were standing in now.

"How the—?" Dean tilted his head back toward the clear sky, and saw only a few wisps of cloud pass over the haloed moon. Ambulance sirens echoed through the night and Dean dropped his head, running a hand through his hair, trying to sort through how impossible this all seemed.

"I wish I knew what was going on, man" Sam responded.

Nodding and dropping his shoulders, Dean turned to go back and check on the team, chest tightening as he wondered if they'd gotten in over their heads on this one. From the look on Sam's face, his brother was wondering the same thing.

The Sunny Days Motel, Late Morning

Sighing wearily, exhausted and unfocused, Sam started to close the open search windows on his computer. He couldn't focus long enough on the meteorology sites he'd pulled up to study, let alone devise a way to determine what was causing the storms from the information. After exhausting the lore on weather demons and demigods, he'd started to look into GEOS and the NSSL. He had had about enough of terms like "wind velocity," "flow," "asymmetries," and "back building," especially when it meant jack squat to him.

From what the team had said, he knew there was nothing natural about what had happened the night before. Wes had been the one to report, when he'd finally been able to get to the equipment in the trailer at the motel, that there was nothing recorded on radar. Not at least until right before the storm struck. The screen had lit up and flared out like a struck match over the span of just a few short minutes.

Minutes had seemed like hours to him while they were ducked under the table waiting for something to crash through the building and sweep them all away. "Terrifying" didn't exactly do the whole ordeal justice. How Dean was thrilled by the encounter was beyond Sam...somewhat. It was Dean after all.

They'd spent the night making sure everyone inside the bar was all right and had helped others where they could to turn over vehicles and look for the injured. Dean couldn't move the "impervious Impala" until the other cars were towed and removed. The Impala had been scrapped by a Peterbilt and survived a tornado. *Amazing*. Sam smirked at that thought.

It had been well into the morning before either of them had been able to crash into bed, neither sleeping very well with the thought of a repeat of what had happened at the bar happening to their motel room.

Thank God for coffee.

Speaking of which, Sam eyed his empty coffee cup wearily, tipping it over to look at the bottom just to make sure "the elixir of life," as Dean would call it, was really gone. Not even a stain circled the bottom and Sam tipped it back up, leaning back in his chair until he could see out the front window.

Dean wasn't back yet, and he'd gone in search of sustenance over an hour ago. Sustenance Sam needed if he was going to get anywhere in his research, regain any semblance of an attention span.

Setting the legs of his chair down, Sam stared at the empty coffee cup and tilted his head, studying it.

For months now, when Sam had a moment he wasn't engrossed in the hunt, he'd think about Leicester. The Devil had taunted him about his abilities, and they'd

manifested in a time when Dean was in trouble. It hadn't been the first occurrence either. There'd been other times in the past, where Dean was hurt, in trouble, and Sam could do things he'd never even dreamed possible to save him.

But the kinesis always changed. His abilities were as unpredictable and undefined as to what exactly they entailed. Death visions, telekinesis, and mind manipulation, just to name a few, weren't exactly synonymous, and rarely did they come together. With Max Miller, the death visions seemed to fuel the telekinesis, but that wasn't always the case.

There were times when Dean was in trouble, times when Sam would have loved for the abilities to kick in, and nothing happened. How they worked and when they worked seemed to have no real answer or explanation, at least none that stuck with a pattern.

The only common thread was Dean. For a while Sam had figured it was being around those like him, but that didn't explain Leicester.

Exhaling loudly, Sam pushed aside his laptop and positioned the cardboard cup at the center of the table. He could hear Dean in his head as he remembered Saginaw and the request to "bend this," his brother holding out a spoon. Like it was that easy...

Every time his abilities showed up, Sam felt more connected to them, more able to bend them toward a purpose. It was always short lived, however, but if he could learn to control them...

He'd start with telekinesis.

Sam stared down the coffee cup, brows pinched in concentration, mind going back through the previous times it had worked. He was rolling over all the memories where he'd almost lost Dean in his head. Images whirled through his mind like a movie reel. Things he wished he could forget. Almost fatal close calls. Dean bleeding, wounded, fighting for life. Dean's hands wrapped desperately around Sam's wrist, both hanging over Hell...

Nothing.

Sam took in a long, slow breath, rolling his head on his shoulders before shaking them out. Come on. *What good is being a freakin' Jedi if you can't use the Force?*

Closing his eyes, measuring his breaths into deep, concentrated lungfuls, Sam leaned forward, picturing the cup in his mind. He broke all seriousness for a brief moment as "there is no spoon" ran sideways through his brain, teasing him, making him feel ridiculous. He ignored it, trying to lose himself in the memories of earlier, pushing down all other thought and sound...

Don't let go, Sammy! Dean's voice, along with the nauseating smell of hot sulfur, the overwhelming heat of the pit, the grasping fingers of the damned, returned him to that moment. Heart racing once more, Sam tried to feel out some kind of power within.

Come on, Sam! Come on! This is your power! Yours! What the hell kind of good is it, huh?

More blood, fire, desperation.

Sam.

More Dean hurt, bleeding, dying...

Sammy!

Fear for their lives, for *Dean's* life. Fear of loss. All of it filled him up as he tried to create something tangible, tried to move the cup.

"Sam!"

Sam's eyes shot open, and he twisted in his chair to see Dean standing at the door. His brother's face was caught somewhere between perplexed amusement and worry. Sam coughed, straightening up and squaring his shoulders.

"You're a...you're back."

Dean raised a brow, keeping his eyes on his brother as he went to the counter and set down the bags of food and coffee.

“So, uh, what were you doing with your face all scrunched up like Hiro Nakamura?” Dean asked, leaning against the counter. “Might want to be careful, might pop your anus, straining like that.”

Sam sighed and listlessly knocked over the cup with a swat of his hand. “Yatta...” He mocked Dean’s reference.

Dean smirked, and grabbed up a coffee, crossing the room and handing it to Sam. “So, you were trying to *feel* the Force.”

“N-no, just...” Sam stopped when he saw Dean wasn’t buying it, sighing. “Yeah...” Dean’s laugh in response grated on him a little. “So what? I was trying to be a friggin’ Jedi. I have no idea how these powers work, Dean.”

His brother had taken out the usual provisions of a burger and onion rings, plopping down, thankfully not on Sam’s bed, to eat them. Sam wondered if Dean was stuffing his face to avoid further commentary on the issue Sam was more than ready to blow wide open.

It had been too long. There was too much that they didn’t speak about. Any time this topic arose it ended with speeches about Dean not being scared, about how he was looking out for Sam. Any time they even drew close to this subject, it ended in jokes, always some kind of levity to make Sam somehow feel less...small. And it worked. It always worked, coming with steady, unwavering reassurance from Dean’s mouth, but Sam wanted more than what felt like half truths and another fortification of their walls.

“They only seem to work when absolutely necessary, and honestly, I’m having trouble defining *necessary*, considering there were a lot of times they would have come in handy.”

He watched Dean masticate dead meat with more attention than his dear stoic brother was giving the conversation at that moment.

Undaunted, Sam kept going. “All I’ve managed to do, as you know, is narrow the pattern down to *you*.”

Dean lowered his burger, working his lips like he was cleaning his teeth, brows raised. “Me?” he eventually said. Then their conversation in Leicester seemed to dawn on him quickly. “Oh, right. Damsel in distress syndrome.”

“Look, they only seem to manifest or whatever, when I think you’re gonna die.”

“Shweet,” Dean said, taking another bite and continuing with his mouth full. “Want me to go lay down on some train tracks?”

Sam dropped his shoulders, dipping his chin in a nod. “Could you? I’ll just go get Lucifer to don a thick black mustache, and...come on! Dean, you have to stop joking and start being honest with me. This scares you.”

Dean’s eyes stayed steady, guarded, denying Sam any access past their steeled exterior. The silence, however, was telling enough, and Sam wished Dean would just come out and say it.

“No more joking about Super Sam or psychic boy,” Sam pleaded. “I already know you don’t think I’ll go...darkside...but just once I want to hear more truth than you’re completely fine kicking it with your freak brother who hasn’t a single clue when or where or how this stuff will work!”

Dean balled up the oily paper that had surrounded the burger he’d inhaled and tossed it into the trashcan with an effortless flick of his wrist before pushing to his feet.

“What can I say, I like hanging with freaks,” Dean tried, smile flashing, but it wasn’t going to work this time. As if Dean sensed that, he sobered, shrugging. “What do you want to hear, Sam? ’Cause...” Dean grabbed another burger and tossed it to Sam, “I’m fine with it...you...the powers.”

“Dean...” Sam knew in that moment, that they’d never get further than this.

“I’m done, Sam.” Dean warned.

“What if I’m not?”

"Tough." Dean snapped. "I don't care if you don't believe me, Sammy. Right now, I need that head of yours thinking over what the hell dropped down on that bar last night, not trying to flatten—"

"Move."

"—paper cups. Whatever."

Setting his jaw, staring down at the burger he wasn't hungry for anymore, Sam understood Dean's resolve was final. For now. "Fine."

"Good. I'm gonna grab a shower."

The shutting of the bathroom door ended any hope Sam had at getting Dean to open up, and he tried to forget that he cared so much as he choked down the grease-bathed burger Dean had tossed him. By the time Sam was halfway through his coffee, computer back up and search engines running, Dean had emerged again, grin reattached, signifying his own amazing ability to dodge conversational bullets.

He mussed a hand through his dampened hair to "dry off" and then turned around a chair next to Sam, leaning on the back as he looked at the multiple windows up on the computer.

"So, Sam 'Bill Nye' Winchester, can *science* explain our party crasher?"

Sam huffed at the name, knowing it was going to be close to impossible to wrangle in Dean's enthusiasm for these storms. He lifted a shoulder, unsure how to answer that.

"Meteorology isn't my strength, nor was it even a point of focus anywhere in my education."

"Too bad, you would have made a great weatherman," Dean teased.

"Well, I can tell you there's a lot of *hot air* coming out of the west," Sam returned, sliding his eyes to the left, and Dean's momentarily incensed features. "The best I got is some butterfly probably beat its wings in the wrong place, some Ian Malcolm chaos theory. Basically I've got nothing." Sam cracked his neck, pulling up some of the video Wes had given him.

It was clear to him Dean wasn't following, and Sam tried to make more sense. "*The Sound of Thunder? Jurassic Park?*"

"And I watch too many movies."

"Those are books, Dean."

"Oh. Of course."

"All I'm saying is that I don't think science can touch this one. That's all."

Sam took a moment to show Dean the radar feed that Wes was able to get his hands on, pointing to the timeline. The screen's activity flashed in and out above Butte County with uncanny speed. Something seemingly appearing out of nothing, which Sam was sure had to break a few scientific laws. "Now I know why they call them Wraiths."

"At least *those* we know how to deal with. So what do we have besides some radar and bupkis?"

Sam paused the video, tapping the screen. "I just need more time. We've been kind of distracted..." Sam said pointedly, getting a shrug from Dean. "If I can figure out through history, or testimony, what demon is behind this..."

"We can send it packing." Dean finished. "Just so long as another twister doesn't sweep us away."

Sam grinned. "Easy stuff."

Cole Residence, Afternoon

Nathan wasn't proud of the condition Jay found him in. He could feel his friend's eyes on him from the front door, knew that he probably smelled more rank than the fifth of vodka in his hands. He leaned against the table listlessly, one elbow dug into the table top as he cradled his head, stringy bangs hiding his unfocused eyes.

"Nate...what the hell? Where's Chels?"

He'd lifted a shoulder in response, taking a few minutes to digest the question before his brain could calculate an answer. "Went to see a friend."

Jay left the front door open, sliding into a chair beside him, but Nathan didn't once raise his eyes from the grain of the kitchen table.

"Last night wasn't enough?"

Nathan scoffed at his friend's reference to their time last night. They'd left Chelsea with a friend after Jay's prodding that Nathan needed something to loosen up, leading them to the only real bar in town. The same bar that had been dropped on by a tornado right after they'd left. There wasn't enough alcohol in his system by morning to miss that one on the news.

"You can't keep doing this," Jay continued, like some inspirational speaker. It wasn't the first time Nathan had heard this one. "You can't keep thinking your life is—"

"Is what?" Nate asked, finally bringing himself to take in his friend's sympathetic eyes, and concerned expression. Screw sympathy. He didn't want it. What he wanted was to finish the bottle in his hands and go to sleep, to drown out the proverbial demons wreaking havoc on his mind. "Is pretty much reduced to...well, this..." Nathan said, waving a hand toward the innards of the house.

It was already falling apart, and the plastic wrap over the kitchen window where the tree had decided to invite itself in was a really nice touch as well.

"Nate, seriously, man..."

"I think I'm responsible," he finally confided in his friend. He blamed the alcohol, and the guilt crushing in on him from every side, making it impossible to draw in a breath, to think, to live.

Jay blinked slow, thinking through what exactly that meant, and when he came up empty, he shook his head. "You mean for what happened to your mom? For having to leave school? What?"

"The storms...I'm responsible for the storms," Nathan continued with lazy speech giving him something of a drawl.

Jay blinked a beat. His hand moved slowly toward the vodka bottle, unsure, as if he feared Nathan would lash out, then drew the bottle back cautiously.

"That's enough of that," Jay sighed. "You're a lot of things, Nate, but you're not God. Sorry to disappoint there, man."

"You were there. Last night. At the bar," Nathan said, quickly losing his temper. He wasn't appreciating the look he was getting from Jay. He wasn't crazy. There was too much happening within the realm of coincidence and if anyone knew better, it was Jay.

"Yeah, I was. Jim was mouthing off like the stupid ass he always is, and the place was packed with too many freaking reporters and researchers. It was a waste of our time. I'm glad you took a swing at the guy."

Nathan shook his head, frustrated that he couldn't get the point across. Head pounding, he ground a finger into the table top. "I dreamed about the bar...I—I saw the damn thing in my head, the storm, and then..."

Jay thinned out his lips in thought, passing the bottle of vodka between his hands. "Both of us have known, since we were kids, that you've got some kind of pre-cog thing going on, Nate. You always used to call it. Severe storms here and there would come and go and you'd always dream about them beforehand..."

It was true. Since they were little he'd had dreams. Always about storms that would then happen. But they'd been so far and few between. Coincidence, Nathan had thought. Jay had always called him "storm god" as a joke, and when he'd finished his internship in Japan, the nickname had become "storm god" in Japanese: Arashi. Jay had always thought the "ability" was cool. Nathan never wanted to believe in anything more than luck as a correlation. But now...

"Or I dream about them and *cause* them," Nathan interjected.

Jay huffed a weak laugh, shaking his head. "Nate, you've been through a lot. Having to drop out of school, losing your mom, having to take care of Chelsea. You need a break, man, that's all."

Nathan wished that was all. Oh, God, how he wished that getting away was the answer to all that had happened to him. But it wasn't, he was trapped, and there was something *not right* about him...something he was only recently starting to understand.

Nathan knew Jay was trying to help, but he wasn't. The more Jay talked, the more Nathan's head started to pound. The thought that he was stuck, that Jay had given up a lot, dropped out of school as well, to come home and help him out, that Chelsea depended on him, culminated in painful spikes that came to rest at the base of his skull.

"What you need to do," Jay continued, tipping the bottle toward him, brows lifting mischievously. "Is to stop asking Marissa to look after Chels, and actually take that woman on a date. Leave Chels with me and just enjoy some time away. Then you'll see it's all in your head, Arashi."

That name. That damn nickname!

"Would you just shut the hell up?!" Nathan barked. "I'm serious!"

The door to the kitchen slammed shut, rattling the pictures on the wall as a gust of wind tore through the room. A few teetered then crashed to the floor, before leaving the two men in paralyzing quiet. Only the radio in the bedroom continued unbothered, keeping them from the awkwardness of complete silence.

Again, Jay blinked absently, then slid the vodka bottle back to Nathan. "Holy..." he breathed

"Yeah..."

"How long have you known?" Jay asked, deciding he wanted the bottle back, only to take a swig himself before returning it.

Nathan again ticked up his shoulder, wondering where to even start to explain this. He was somewhat relieved that Jay hadn't gone screaming from the room, somewhat disappointed that he hadn't. At least with the latter Nathan could confirm the feeling he was a freak.

"I've been...trying to get a hold of it. Understand it. Recently, I—I can do things that scare me. Small things," he said, nodding toward the fallen pictures. He ran his thumb over his fingers, tracing a small line of electricity from one to the next. He didn't miss the widening of Jay's eyes, or the sudden lightening of the pallor of his skin. "Nothing on scale with the storms...but..."

"It's impossible..."

"I wish it was," Nathan lamented, probing the sides of his temples with his fingers. After the outburst at Jay, he was starting to feel lightheaded, tired.

"Okay, even it is possible, it's a gift, right? You can...you can learn how to hone it, maybe even use it to help, or something," he said.

Nathan found his optimism more annoying than helpful, but he was grateful someone saw it as a gift. It was a wonder that Jay hadn't left yet, that he was staying calm. The first time Nathan had seen electricity crackle across his fingertips he'd practically fallen out of the chair he was sitting on. "Why aren't you freaking out?"

"Dude, because I've known you since we were kids. I'll, uh, admit, I just about soiled myself there with the whole...door thing...But I've always known you could predict the weather, man. Can't believe that you're the one causing it...not sure how to digest that one honestly. I've called you 'storm god' all these years and haven't once been freaked out..." Jay sighed. "Just give me a few minutes. I'll be freaking out, I'm sure."

Nathan closed his eyes, unable to even manage a weak smile. People were dying, because he didn't know what to do, or how to control this.

"I know you, Nate. You wouldn't hurt anyone. I can't believe that you're...you know, behind all this. There has to be some other explanation."

“Believe whatever you want,” Nathan said, voice saturated with the weight of everything he’d just confessed. “Hey, Jay...”

“Yeah,” Jay said, head bobbing toward Nathan as he snapped out of what Nathan could only imagine was a jumbled disarray of thoughts.

Nathan fumbled with the bottle in his hands, watching the liquid churn within as he turned it over repeatedly. “Think you could—Would you take care of Chels, if something happens to me?”

The shock on his friend’s face, mixed in with the palate of confusion that was already there, resembled something akin to anger. Nathan set his eyes, unwavering, on the one who’d stuck everything out with him, who understood him better than anyone, and begged in that moment for his friend’s understanding.

Nathan didn’t get it.

“What the—Are you saying that—What? No! Don’t you start talking like that, Nate. Dammit! You need help, man. Help I don’t think I can provide.” Jay was pushing up from the table, fisting hands in his hair, before dropping them to his side. “You’re not thinking...”

“Just go, Jay,” Nathan growled, shoving to his feet, swaying a little.

Jay had stepped in to steady him. “And leave you like this? Talking about...creating natural disasters and asking me t-to take care of Chels...”

Nathan shook off Jay’s hold. “Go! I’ll friggin’ sleep it off.”

“Nate...”

“I’ll call you later,” Nathan dismissed him, moving into the living room.

Crumpling into a pile of weary flesh and bone on the sofa, Nathan listened to the front door slam. He realized he’d left the radio on in the bedroom. Too tired to turn it off, he allowed The Doors’ *Riders On The Storm* to slip through his ears as he drifted, the alcohol and desire to escape once more taking him under.

Unknown Location

The dark churned and billowed out before him, moving with purpose, tearing away life and breath and any vestige of hope it could be outrun.

Sam watched from the hills of an unknown field, unaware of how he’d come to be there, and uncaring, rooted to the spot where he stood by fear and awe. Unable to comprehend what was real, if anything, from the surreal terror folding out in front of him, he was compelled to watch as the dark pillar of cloud and debris divided and multiplied, producing its twin.

They bounded off one another, weaved together in their destructive dance, then came at him, growing stronger and faster, filling his ears with a consuming, almost animalistic growl.

Bracing himself for their descent upon him, feeling the tug and pull at his clothes as the wind hammered without mercy or prejudice into him, Sam closed his eyes and waited to be taken away, to be thrown so hard and fast he knew he’d die on impact with whatever broke his flight.

But it never came.

Gradually opening his eyes, tilting his head back to the sky above, Sam found himself inexplicably and impossibly at the center of the storm. He was staring up at unblemished blue through the blurring chaos all around him, and he was unharmed, and bizarrely calm. Steady, despite the cyclone all around him that should have ripped him apart.

He could hear something within the wail of the winds, something that was familiar... Music? A song he knew...

It was then he realized he wasn’t alone, he could sense that, could feel a presence move behind him. Before he could react, a hand clamped down on his shoulder, and Sam was turned to confront a face obscured by darkness, blurred like

the winds whipping about them both. Without warning, and before a startled gasp could leave his lips, Sam was violently shoved back into the black.

The Sunny Days Motel, Late Afternoon, Early Evening

Sam startled awake, laying on his side, his research scattered across the ugly paisley comforter of his bed, one arm tucked underneath his pillow. He was confused for a brief moment as the images in his head lost their veracity, bleeding into the background of his mind as the dreams they were, letting him comprehend where he was.

The radio on his bed stand was live, the alarm he'd set earlier having kicked it on. The same song from his dreams was playing: *Riders on the Storm*. He knew he'd recognized it as The Doors. Shooting out an arm, he hit the snooze button, momentarily silencing Morrison's crooning about killers.

Weird... Sam thought, pressing the base of his palms into his eye sockets, trying to clear the pressure, to stop what felt like a headache building or ebbing out.

It was then he could hear something else: the constant drumming of rain against the roof and sirens.

The room was darker than it should be at four in the afternoon. Sam eyed the clock warily, then looked around the room for Dean. He wasn't there.

Before true panic could take hold, the front door swung open, banging against the wall loudly as Dean bounded inside. The scream of the tornado sirens flooded the room before Dean shut the door, going to his bag without saying anything or even acknowledging Sam's presence.

"What's going on?" Sam asked.

"Put two and two together, Sam. Meet me outside," Dean ordered, while he shrugged on another layer of clothing, grabbing his jacket from the back of a chair.

"Air raid?" Sam asked.

Dean shot him a look. "Are you being difficult because I wouldn't *share* my feelings with you earlier?"

"No," Sam said, pulling on his boots and tying up the laces as fast as his fingers could go. "Just like to be difficult."

"Good. 'Cause if you want to share feelings now, I've got a few choice words to describe them."

Sam shook his head, unable to hold down a laugh. "Go on jerk. I'll meet you outside."

"Better make it snappy, bitch."

Sam took Dean's example and pulled on a hoody before his jacket, then stepped outside under the awning and into torrential downpour. The rain cascaded off the edge in thick sheets of water, making Sam feel encased along the sidewalk.

Dean was a few doors down, talking with Rachel, who seemed excited. It was then that Sam saw Russ and the others at the vehicles, and he knew, regrettably, what was about to happen.

Sam jogged up to the two of them, just as Russ and Wes ducked back under the awning, carrying tarps over their heads.

"We've got us a location," Wes announced. "Touchdown on the northwest side of Oroville. I've got the maps ready."

"Then what are we waiting for, huh?" Rachel asked, slapping both their arms. She nodded to Sam. "You go with Russ."

Sam blinked, startled. Russ? The guy whose idea of a good time was running right at tornadoes? That Russ? Where was Dean...

"Dean, you're with me," Rachel announced, pulling up the hood on her jacket, ducking back under the awning, and taking off for the Avalanche.

Figured.

Before Dean could follow her Sam grabbed Dean's arm. "What are we doing?"

"Going to see one of these things in action," Dean replied.

"Dean, this isn't a good idea. Let them go after it. They can show us what they find when they get back."

"No way I'm missing out on this," Dean said, shrugging off Sam's hold on his arm. "Just relax, Sam. They know what they're doing. *Ride the lightning*," he added, like tagging Russ' catch phrase on the end of that statement somehow justified it.

If anything it made Sam all the more nervous that a Metallica song, one about an electric chair, was the inspiration for the team name. What exactly was he thinking when he agreed to do this?

Russ came out of his room, where he'd retreated for a second, and slammed a black camera bag into Sam's chest. "Rock on, bros. Better catch up with Rache, she does not take kindly to tardiness on her hunts, my man."

Dean feigned worry, and took that as his permission to leave. Sam stared down at the black bag. Apparently he'd be filming this suicidal mission from the van.

"Wait, doesn't this belong to Jacks and Greg? They told us not to..."

"They're not here. Were in town running some errands for our queen bee. Look, rules around here are you don't show up to the dinner table, you don't get to eat, bro. So you're our man."

"I'm not qualified..." Sam tried again while Russ shoved him toward the van.

"Point and shoot. How hard is that?" Russ came back as Sam stumbled up into the passenger seat beside Wes, who was looking over the maps.

We're gonna die... Sam thought when Russ turned over the engine, *Humans Being* by Van Halen puncturing his ears. *And my last moments are going to be with... Philip Seymour Hoffman.*

They'd swung out onto one of the main roads, Rachel leading them. The cars passing by, heading in the opposite direction, were flashing their lights and honking, trying to warn them to turn around.

"Gee...wonder what they're running from?" Sam commented cynically.

"What was that?" Russ shouted over the music.

"Nothing," Sam returned, then muttered, "Not like common sense will save us now."

Running toward, not away from the tornado was on Sam's list of crazy situations he'd never pictured himself in. Right behind seeing a sinkhole to Hell, so he knew he'd have to update the list a little.

Sam started to pull the digital camcorder out of the bag that Russ had given him. In a last ditch effort, he tried to hand it off to Wes, who shook his head. Sighing, Sam hit record and turned the camera onto the road ahead.

"I was there for the F5 that hit Manitoba," Rachel announced, flipping off the windshield wipers. The rain had let up not five minutes after they'd been on the road, and had ceased completely now. "Freak chance. Didn't have a damn camera," she continued with an air of sadness laced in her voice.

Dean pulled his attention away from the road and the sky roiling above, blackened like the smoke from fire. As the winds grew stronger, rocking the car, Dean was glad he'd left the Impala behind, especially after last night.

On top of that he couldn't shake the feeling that there was something Sam knew and wasn't telling him. Out of the blue, after months of leaving what had happened in Leicester back in Massachusetts, his brother had dropped his abilities back on the table, demanding to know how Dean felt about them. It didn't seem to matter how many times Dean told him it didn't scare him, that answer never seemed to satiate Sam.

The more Dean rolled the sudden re-opening of old wounds over in his mind, the more he started to wonder if Sam had seen something, if something had happened to him, or if this had been rubbing Sam raw since their encounter with Hell. Neither

way sat well with him, and he found Rachel's voice a decent and welcome distraction as any from the direction his thoughts had started to go.

"F5," Dean said, arching a brow. "That's like the mother of all tornados, right?"

Rachel nodded, green eyes sparkling. "One way of putting it."

"So, this one we're after's a..."

"Won't know until we study the damage, radar, cycloidal marks," Rachel said, then teased, "But you knew that about Fujita scales."

"What respectable student wouldn't, just...wanted to know your best guess," Dean replied with his best attempt at recovery.

"They've been so...different. All of them definitely hitting at all points along the scale. Last night's was...odd..." she said with a grimace.

"Define odd," Dean asked.

"Well, you know, there've been no supercells, no cold fronts, no conditions for them. Especially last night's. This is the first time since we got here that an actual storm preceded it. This one...kinda makes sense..."

"And the others?" Dean asked.

Rachel opened her mouth to answer, working her tongue as she appeared to be trying to give voice to what it was that had her bothered about them, but she never did. Dean knew that look, had seen it repeatedly in those they'd talked to on hunts. Things were happening that Rachel couldn't explain, and he knew she didn't like that. Probably downright hated it.

The CB radio on the dash crackled, bringing with it Russ' voice and Metallica's *Ride the Lightning*, the teams "theme song", in the background. Dean smirked, thinking about Sam sitting there, enduring that.

"...Rache, we're gonna turn, next right. Mile or so down, and you'll be staring into the face of one of these mothers..."

Dean watched the corner of her mouth tick up, the thrill of that statement moving through her as she gripped the wheel tighter.

Reaching forward, Dean snapped up the radio. "Sam, you all right?"

There was nothing for a while, until Sam's frustration oozed through in a wave of static and guitar.

"Peachy."

"Think we'll see anything weird?" Dean asked.

"You mean besides a tornado? Oh, I don't know, Dean, maybe a house will drop out of the sky right in the road."

"You think?" Dean continued to poke fun, glad they were in separate cars.

"No."

"Pessimist. Whoa!"

"What?" Sam exclaimed, and Dean could see him looking around the van windows from the rearview mirrors.

"We've got cows," Dean said, biting down a laugh.

"Ha, friggin' ha, Dean. Are you gonna quote that movie the whole time? 'Cause I'm gonna shut this off..."

"In that field we passed. Cows. Didn't you see them? Hey, why don't we have one of these for the Impala?"

He could hear his brother's eyes rolling. *"And talk to who, Dean? I sit in the seat right next to you."*

"I could always make you travel in the trunk."

"Yep," Rachel was laughing lightly, clearly amused by them. "You two fit right in with us crazies."

"... I could always make you travel in the trunk..."

Sam would find his brother's lighthearted attempts at loosening him up helpful if it wasn't for the feeling of dread that had taken up residence in his chest. The closer they came to their destination, the stronger the winds had become, rocking the van around the road. Their visibility was becoming more and more obscured. Sam was about to tell Dean he was going to ignore him now, when the van made it to the crest of the hills, giving them a view of the fields and valleys below...and the same swirling black from his dreams tearing through them.

"No way..." Sam breathed, familiarity flaring up and hitting him hard.

"Way, bro!" Russ chimed in, reaching over Wes to smack Sam in the arm. "Get the camera up, dude!"

As before, one twister broke off from another, splitting and creating its twin. Tearing up vegetation and dirt, farmland, equipment, anything that was in their path, and tossing it in every direction, the twins crisscrossed around one another, heading away from the team.

"*We want to stay just southeast of it,*" Rachel's voice came over the radio. "*What do our road options look like, Wes?*"

Wes had taken the radio from Sam. "Let's split up ahead. You stay on your current path, we'll go west, 'case it changes directions."

"No," Sam spoke up, knowing what he was about to say was going to sound nuts. "They're going to double back. Both of them."

Sam grabbed the radio back from Wes. "Dean? Dean, you have to listen to me, take the turn up ahead with us, they'll come right back at us. If we stay on this road, they'll come crashing right down on us."

"*How do you know that?*" Dean's voice came back.

Sam closed his eyes, drawing in a deep breath. "How do I know anything like this, man?" He was well aware that by this point Wes and Russ were staring at him. "Call it...my storm *intuition*. Whatever. They're gonna come back."

Sam waited, re-gripping the radio, eyes darting between the twisters and the vehicle in front of them. Rachel wasn't slowing down to make the turn. The Avalanche pressed forward, while Russ slowed the van down suddenly, almost taking out the street sign as he swung westbound.

"What are they doing? No, no, no. Where are they going? Where are we going?" Sam asked, turning to Wes and Russ.

"Rache has a mind of her own, bro. If she wants to go north..."

"Did you hear a word I just said?" Sam asked.

"Relax, man," Russ reassured him. "She's got a sense too."

Sam looked back across the field to the Avalanche's retreating form, hoping hers was better than his.

"What was that about?" Rachel asked.

Dean returned the receiver to the dash, wondering that very thing himself. "Sam's just uh...like he said, got a real sense for these things."

"Yeah, well, I've got a sense for these things too," Rachel returned, sharply, and it became real obvious, fast, the reason she hadn't listened was an issue of personal pride.

The way Sam had said *intuition*, Dean wasn't sure he wanted to be heading in this direction. He knew his brother couldn't have come right out and said it over the radio, but a part of Dean wished he had told him how he really knew. Had he had a death vision? Since Dean was the one in the vehicle still heading north, he sure as hell hoped not.

Dean watched the twisters, which seemed to be getting larger, the storm around them getting worse, denser and darker by the minute.

"I think it shifted this way," Dean observed out loud when there wasn't much left to see outside of a three foot radius on either side of the vehicle. The shaking of the Avalanche was unnerving as well.

"I know," Rachel said, "but if we keep going this speed, we'll make it to the other side of it."

The woman was nuts. Not that Dean could really talk, but after what Sam had said before they'd parted ways...

Needing something to keep his mind calm, Dean reached for the CD player, turning it on to see what kind of music Rachel was into. Credence Clearwater Revival's *Lodi* started to leak from the speakers.

"Figures..." Dean muttered. "Friggin' CCR."

"What?" Rachel asked. "Don't like this song?" She punched the next button. "Or CCR?"

Dean knew it just wasn't his day when *Bad Moon Rising* followed like a death omen. *Christ...*

"What's wrong?" Rachel asked, when Dean didn't answer her, just stared ahead like he'd been punched in the gut. "I'm gonna get us out of the storm, Dean. You're the one making me nervous. Now *what's wrong?*"

"Nothing," Dean responded. "Just hate this song...Bad shit always seems to happen when I hear this song."

Rachel turned to look at him, her large green eyes confused, at the same instant Dean saw lights break the dark ahead. Rachel caught them in her periphery, head snapping back to the road as the strongest wind gust yet rolled an oncoming semi into the road. With a startled yelp, Rachel swerved to avoid the truck skidding toward them and the Avalanche lost the road. There was the earsplitting sound of metal clawing pavement, the scream of glass shattering into a million razor sharp shards and then nothing but the howl of the wind through the broken SUV's frame.

* * * *

Wet warmth rolled along Dean's forehead, spreading with every heartbeat that pounded like tympani through his throbbing skull. Head heavy, disoriented, and aching with pain radiating along his midsection, Dean slowly took in a shaky breath and attempted to wipe at the sticky substance collecting at his hairline. Arms like lead and positioned abnormally above his head, Dean suddenly understood why it was his head felt so grotesquely large. He was upside down, the seatbelt digging into his side and stomach, surrounded by the gnarled frame of the Avalanche and broken glass.

The semi, Rachel swerving, the crash, all slammed into him along with the understanding that they didn't have time to be hanging there, out in the open, trapped in the wreck. Sam had told them the twisters would be back, and evidence to that fact was becoming apparent with the increased ferocity of the wind ripping through the shattered windows.

The CB was snapping with static, drawing his attention as he thought he heard something faint through the fuzz. While trying to figure out the best way to get right side up without dropping on his already bruised skull, Dean heard something again, stronger this time.

"...ean...Dean...hear me?..."

It was Sam, and he sounded freaked. Dean couldn't blame him. There was no telling how close the demon-like whirlwinds were now, or how much time Rachel and he had before they were carried away by them.

"Aw, screw it," Dean muttered, unable to do much of anything in his current position but release the belt keeping him suspended. The second the belt snapped away, Dean was in a heap at the ceiling of the vehicle, swearing as he twisted uncooperative limbs around to straighten himself.

"Rachel?" he called, reaching for her as he folded around into a crouch. "Rachel, we gotta move."

She stirred, groaning through a split lip, eyes working open above her bruised cheek. She gasped as too much sudden movement jostled something that hurt, causing her to breathe fast, eyes clamped shut.

"Oh God..." she whispered, taking hold of Dean's outstretched arm, squeezing down on it as she shook.

The lyrics to Bad Moon Rising echoed through Dean's subconscious, residual and mocking. *I hear hurricanes a blowing...I know the end is coming soon...*

Cursing the damn song and promising himself the next time he heard it he'd make sure he wasn't in a moving vehicle, Dean tried to prod Rachel along faster. The weather was getting worse and he could hear the two ravenous beasts of nature churning near them, the sound they made droning on deeper and faster.

"Can you move?" he asked, positioning himself so he could get a better look at her.

Blood glistened along her lips and a small cut along her cheek, but she seemed to be all right. If anything, she was more in shock from flipping her vehicle.

"I-I'm okay," she finally exhaled, opening her eyes. "Help me down."

Dean couldn't get to her very easily, wedged between the gearshift and steering column.

"Oh, God," Rachel bellowed, as she started to yank at her seatbelt. "It's...It's jammed! Dammit!" She pulled faster, trying to click it loose at the same time, panic saturating her voice, making her actions impetuous. "Dean!"

"Hold on, hold on," Dean tried to calm her, his own system flooding with adrenaline as he tried to get to the belt. She was fighting him for it, and he had to grab her wrist. "Rachel, look at me!"

She stopped struggling, wide eyes barely softening, "Don't leave me here," she pleaded.

"Rachel, I'm not gonna leave you."

The vehicle started to rock, grinding against glass, moaning as it was pushed by the wind, causing Rachel to whimper.

"We'll never outrun it..."

Dean couldn't get the latch on the belt to release, and when he moved away for a moment, Rachel latched onto his sleeve like she feared he'd go back on his word. Dean freed the knife from his boot and came back toward her, flicking out the blade.

"I'm not gonna leave you. And we're gonna outrun the bitches, you hear me?"

She nodded quickly, releasing his shirt, her rapid breaths betraying the fear he knew she was trying so hard to push down. Sliding one arm in front of her, the knife between her body and the belt, Dean tried to keep her steady as he ripped the blade back and sent Rachel spilling forward into him.

"Come on," Dean encouraged, having to shout now above the gale force winds, half carrying, half dragging the nerve-wrecked researcher backward through the shattered passenger window.

Lights poured over the trashed SUV, and Dean could hear tires squealing to a halt as he shielded his eyes against the approaching headlights' intensity and the debris tearing through the air. He was halfway through hauling Rachel to her feet, the wind wreaking havoc on their ability to see and whipping Rachel's hair around her bloodied face, before Dean saw Sam leap from Russ' van and push into a sprint.

"Dean!" Sam bellowed.

Dean pulled Rachel up, holding her tightly under her arms, lending the support of his chest as she stumbled. There was something wrong with her leg. He knew the second she tried to put weight on it and couldn't find strength there. She was shivering against his chest. The strong, smart, proud, adrenaline junkie Rachel was shivering.

"I'm sorry," he heard her say.

So that was what this was about. She knew her call to stubbornly stay the course was going to cost them.

"Hey," Dean said sternly, twisting around to the side on which he'd felt her leg buckle, letting her lean into him that way. "What part of anything I just said did you not get?"

Sam practically barreled into them on his dead run, tripping to a stop, before grabbing hold of Dean's shoulder. "You two okay?"

"We can't drive out of this!" Russ was shouting as he and Wes approached, faces flooded with concern and something they'd never admit was akin to terror. "Damn, girl, you toasted your ride."

"I know. I know. Leave the dead friggin' lie. We have to take cover," she instructed, the stronger side of her seeming to take hold in front of her team.

Dean tipped his chin toward Sam to let him know they'd live; that is, if they could find cover.

"Come on!" Sam prodded, taking Rachel's other side. "There were houses..."

"My van!" Russ started.

"Leave it!" Rachel snapped.

Russ shook his head, shrugging up the bag he had on his shoulder, the equipment he'd been able to salvage. "Suck," he breathed. "Be strong, Baby!" He called back to the van, and Dean felt an odd twinge of sadness for Russ and his vehicle.

All that changed as the rampaging wraiths kicked up enough wind to blow Dean forward, knocking both him and Sam off their center.

"Now would be a really good time to run, dammit!" Dean shouted at the others, wondering why the hell they needed a charge order to get their asses in gear. Two tornadoes coming to claim your life seemed like enough incentive to him. "Russ, move your ass. She can take care of herself!"

Shifting Rachel's weight between Sam and him, they started forward into the best run the three of them strung together could manage. Russ said his goodbyes with a salute to his van and the middle finger to the two twisters, then grabbed Wes by the shirt and tore them both back around to follow.

Plowing forward through the nearby woods, tripping, dragging, and stumbling their way toward lights in the distance, Dean felt that outrunning the Devil himself probably would have been more plausible. Shouts to "keep moving" and to "not look back," kept the wounded, weary party on their feet as the trees snapped and broke in the most terrifying combination of raucous, nerve-grating cracking and howling Dean had ever heard the wind produce. It left no doubt that something big and terrible was coming, and one more slip up, one more uneven step and they wouldn't make it.

We'll never outrun it...

They would. They had to. There was no way Dean was going to go out this way, and there was no way he would ever not make good on his promises. ?

Breaking out of the path and onto a driveway, the house they needed to get inside was only a few feet away when Rachel collapsed, both Sam and Dean going down with her. Russ and Wes had alighted the steps and were pounding on the doors, the windows, making their way around back. Dean grunted, swearing, as he recovered from the fall, fingers digging into dirt and flesh as he and Sam both ungracefully grabbed an arm each and wrenched Rachel back up.

Russ and Wes had grabbed a baseball bat from the yard and were taking it to the glass doors around back. A couple of good swings and Russ cleared the door frame completely, ignoring the horrified look from Rachel.

"No one's home, dude! And I don't think they're gonna care about a window, Rache! Not in the next few minutes!"

"No one's gonna care about our bodies ending up in the next county either!" Dean barked, having to agree wholeheartedly about the window, but failing to see the point in justifying it now. They could debate morality over coffee in some nice warm diner

later...if there were any diners left later. He waved Russ and Wes through the door, letting them take Rachel's arms and help her toward cover. "Come on, come on! Move!"

Once inside, they quickly found the door to the basement, barreling down the steps just as the large picture window in the living room burst inward, sending razor-like shards of glass flying toward them. Dean was the last one to go down, ducking behind the door and using it as a shield as glass embedded itself on the other side. Slamming the door shut behind him, Dean grabbed the railing, taking the stairs as many as he could before he made it to the safety of concrete walls and floors.

The team hunkered down in the center of the basement, listening as everything above them was scattered, ravaged, and torn apart. Dean and Sam were leaning against storage bins, both with their eyes on the ceiling. So little stood between them and whatever was left of the house, and Dean found himself wishing that this hunt hadn't become so much bigger than they were. There was no way to fight this without knowing what was controlling it, no way to defend himself and Sam against something this strong or powerful.

They couldn't keep running and hiding. He knew he should have listened to Sam. How long until the thing dropped on them at the hotel, or before the F5s Rachel had mentioned decided to level the town? Dean slid his eyes over toward Sam who was sitting with his shoulder touching his, Sam's throat working, muscles bouncing in his jaw, as he listened to the storm.

Sam caught Dean looking at him and dropped his head, face taut with worry. Dean apologized with a knowing glance, but Sam shook his head. There was something else weighing down on him. Something that had to do with how Sam knew the twisters would change directions, something that was scaring both of them right now.

The storm seemed to have passed over, the overwhelming noises and shaking lessening until it was a retreating rumble. No one moved though. No one even ventured to exhale.

Russ whistled eventually, which turned into a laugh. It drew out the tension a little from the air, grabbing weak smiles from Wes and Rachel. "That was another close call, bros. You're both either lucky bastards or really bad luck..."

Dean shrugged up a shoulder, grin pulling at one corner of his mouth. "Little of both I s'pose."

"Bad luck," Sam sighed, only audible to Dean as Russ continued on, talking to Rachel about the video Sam was able to capture.

Dean tilted his head toward his brother, feeling Sam's shoulders sag against his. He kept his voice low, guarded, chin tipped down. "What happened back there?"

Sam shook his head, before rubbing a hand across his lips. "It's not a demon," he whispered tacking on a halfhearted laugh. "I was wrong."

Dean wasn't sure he understood. "What do you mean? How do you know that?"

"How do I know anything like this, Dean?" Sam came back. "Trust me," he said with a certain nod, eyes filled with that scared, small look Sam only got when he was questioning everything. "It's not a demon. It's someone like me."

The Sunny Days Motel, Evening

"So, let me get this straight..." Dean's voice vied for Sam's attention, drawing it back from the computer screen and his jarred thoughts.

Dean was pacing. Sam hated it when Dean paced. Sam's mind was scattered enough at the moment without having to track Dean's trapped animal-like movements around the very small, very enclosed space.

When the storm had ceased, they'd been able to dig themselves out of what had once been a house and make their way back to the road. After revealing what he knew to Dean, Sam had remained quiet, ignoring the worried looks he kept getting

from his brother, focusing on helping Dean and the others get Rachel back to Russ' van. The van was amazingly, much to Russ' unabashed glee, and despite once again being misplaced, dented, and missing windows, still in one piece.

Rachel's ankle was going to be okay. She was keeping it iced in her room, and Sam had helped Dean tend to the cut above his brow. Sam was relieved it hadn't been worse. It could have been a lot worse...

Now, in the security of their motel room, even away from the team, Sam found it hard to voice what was going through his mind; found it hard to believe and grasp. Analytics needed more time to digest things and Dean, with his incessant trudging and wearing down of the carpet fibers, wasn't helping.

"Some *psychic* is behind these storms," Dean finished, head swinging back over his shoulder to look at Sam.

"Yeah. That's what I said. Someone like me," Sam sighed, fingers flying over the keyboard as a theory brewed in his mind.

"I wish you wouldn't say it like that," Dean returned.

"That's the only way I know how to describe it, Dean. Could you—would you stop moving for two seconds and just...stand there?" Sam beseeched, holding out a hand. "Please."

Dean stopped, holding up both hands at his sides like he was afraid to touch anything. "Better?"

"Yes," Sam replied, "Thanks...Now, I can think."

"So, you had a dream...a vision?" Dean continued to pry, and Sam knew he wouldn't be satisfied until he knew exactly what had happened.

"Yes, Dean." It was the only answer he could give while running the searches online, skimming articles and finding what he was looking for.

"And?"

"And, I had a dream." Sam responded without giving much thought to the answer, realizing once it left his lips that he'd have to go into more detail on that one.

"Wow, clarity!" Dean exclaimed.

Sam finished his search and turned slightly in his chair to look at his brother square on. "I had a dream where I was there, Dean. Saw the tornadoes...there was someone else there and I felt..."

"What?" Dean pressed, eyes eager.

"That familiarity. That connection I have with whatever this is inside of me. Similar to when I tap into my abilities."

"And you're just now telling me this? Just now saying something?" Dean asked, coming closer, resting his hands on the back of one of the chairs.

"I thought you didn't want to talk about it," Sam returned, somewhat angry. The look he got from Dean—hurt, bewildered—made Sam regret saying that. "Truth is, at first it felt like just a dream. I didn't know until..."

"You saw it with your own eyes."

"Exactly..." Sam breathed. "Everything that was happening...what we'd discussed earlier...I—I guess I figured that this was just me processing."

"Processing?" Dean raised a brow. "Sam you're the only one I know who dreams in friggin' Technicolor. Something like that happens, you tell me."

"I know. What do you want from me, Dean?"

Dean swiveled the chair around, pulled it up to the table and sat down. It was getting too hard for him to stand still, Sam observed, as Dean's knees bounced and he ran his fingers across his lips. "Let's start with how you know it's a psychic. I mean, we're talking the Max, Matthew, Alyssa camp of psychics, right?"

"Sure as hell ain't Miss Cleo, dude," Sam shot back.

"Okay, okay," Dean took the defensive.

"Asking the same question over and over isn't going to get you a different answer, Dean," Sam exhaled.

"Alright. I'm sorry. Processing," Dean said, waving a hand for Sam to continue. "A tornado threw a friggin' truck at me. I'm just a little on edge here."

Sam sighed, eyes finding the search engine screen less imposing than his brother's fervent eyes. He felt exposed, more like the word "freak" should be tattooed to his forehead, when Dean was like this. It made Sam realize that maybe he didn't want to know flat out exactly what it was that Dean thought about these abilities. He really needed Dean's centering reassurance right now. It worried him that the one person who was his center, his anchor, was making him want to fall into some crack in the floor.

"Anyway, like I said, there was another presence, in my dream. Like we...like we were sharing the same vision. I couldn't see their face though. Again, that *connection* was present...and we both know my abilities have a way of showing up when there are other psychics around."

"That doesn't explain Leicester. And, oh by the way, what exactly *are* your abilities anyway? This doesn't sound like a death vision..."

Sam studied the dust between the keys on his keyboard, ticking up his shoulder, replying tiredly. "I don't know. I honestly don't know, Dean."

Dean bobbed his head a few times, jaw set in thought. "Okay, so do you have any theories on who it could be? Where to even start looking?"

Relieved that the attention was off of him, head clearing in the brevity of relief that moment provided, Sam spun the computer around for Dean to see.

"These two look familiar?" he asked, nodding to the articles he'd pulled up. He could see Dean's eyes light up with recognition.

"We ran into those two yesterday. Uh...Jay something and his trigger-happy emo friend."

"Jaime Alden and Nathan Cole," Sam gave Dean the formal introduction. "A couple of things started to bother me about yesterday after the dream. One of them being Jay's nickname for Nathan."

"Yeah, what was that again?" Dean asked, leaning into the table to get a better look at the articles. "Ah-er-sake, or something."

"Arashi," Sam pointed to an article, a black and white picture of Jay, smiling, younger, the date several years prior. "Arashi means 'storm god' in Japanese. Jay had an internship in Japan, had his hometown proud and publishing about it in the papers, but, it looks like Jay came home about the same time Nathan's mother fell ill. There's a blurb written up about Jay and Nathan taking over the Cole family business."

"M'kay...so Jay's calling his friend 'storm god', and you're thinking...?" Dean hedged.

"There's obits for Nathan's mom, and Jay told us the other day that Nathan's had a bad run lately...guy's luck sucks, Dean. There's articles about Oroville's promising youth, Nathan listed among them...Does he look like he's putting his undergraduate degree to much use? And that little girl, Chelsea, I think Nathan's also her guardian."

"So...we've got one miserable bastard whose best friend has got to be calling him 'storm god' for a reason."

"Jay knows something, Dean. Has to. Before the bar was hit last night, there was some kind of fight that broke out. I didn't see what happened, but I could have sworn I saw Jay there. Right before everything went to pot."

"I don't know, Sam..."

"I know it's thin...but beyond this, I've got nothing, and it can't hurt to try to talk to him."

"You do remember the shotgun, right? I imagine loading it isn't the only thing he'll do when we start asking him if he's the male version of the X-men's Storm."

Sam huffed, closing his laptop. "And that *right there*, is the reason I'll be doing the talking."

Cole Residence, Night

“Nathan.” Chelsea’s voice, smaller than he remembered it, had reached out to him, tugging at his heart.

Sitting in the living room, head in his hands, the TV in the background relaying the news about the tornadoes that had struck earlier that afternoon, Nathan felt more tired and alone than he had in a long time. Her voice only added to the dull ache building in his chest.

More people had died, more of Butte County had been destroyed, and he knew it rested on his shoulders. God, he didn’t know how or why this was happening to him, but there was no denying the screwed up pattern he’d long since picked up on. If there was any way to stop it, he didn’t know how...

Lifting his gaze to Chelsea, he saw her hugging the wall, half hiding against it as her inquisitive eyes searched his, one small hand playing with a ripped piece of wallpaper.

“Um...I was wondering why I’m going to Marissa’s tonight?” Rocking on her feet, he knew she was nervous, scared even, and he couldn’t blame her. “Shouldn’t we leave, Nathan? Lotsa people are leaving.”

Swallowing hard, eyes stinging, Nathan knew the gravity of the decision he’d made would affect her deeply. “We’re not leaving, Chels.”

“But if we don’t leave—”

“I know you’re worried,” he cut her off, finding it hard to keep the shaky timbre from his voice. “I know you’re scared the storms will come here again, but—”

“Not that, Nathan. We need to go so no one else gets hurt.”

Her words halted him, settling against his heart with cold fingers. “What did you just say?” *She knew. Oh God, she knew...*

She shied away a little, sliding back along the wall. “I’m scared, Nathan.”

“Of me?” Nathan asked breathily, unable to hold much strength in his voice.

Especially after Chelsea nodded slow, dropping her eyes to the carpet, toeing at something there.

“I...I overheard you and Jay...when I came back for my bike,” she admitted.

She was looking at him like she wanted him to fix this, like she wanted him to tell her everything would be all right. But he couldn’t promise her that now. Especially when there was only one solution pressing at the back of his mind, a solution that he knew would hurt her.

“I understand, kiddo,” Nathan said, laughing weakly as he ran a hand through his hair. “You know I don’t want to hurt people, right?”

She nodded quickly. “I know, Nathan. You want to help people. It’s why you went to school. But then you came home to help mommy and me...”

Something about that statement, coming from her, pummeled his heart, pushing up bile. She trusted him to take care of her. “I’m sorry for all this, Chels,” Nathan came back, eyes threatening to spill, pressing the brim. “I wish...”

The sudden and quick bleat of a horn from outside stopped Nathan, and he looked toward the front door. Marissa. He’d asked her to wait outside, to honk and he’d send Chelsea. He thought about what Jay had said about taking her out on a date sometime, smiling sadly that he’d never taken the chance, never let himself get close. He was doing this for her as much as he was doing it for Chelsea, for Jay, for the town he’d grown up in.

“You better get going, Chels. Jay will pick you up later, okay?”

Her face scrunched up like she was going to cry, and she pushed away from the wall to hug his legs. “Don’t be sad, Nathan. Come with me.”

He couldn’t see her through the blurry haze setting over his eyes, blanketing his vision. “I’ll see you later, okay? Please, do this for me...Be good for Marissa.”

She pushed away from him as the horn blared again. Wiping at her eyes, her bottom lip trembled as she managed an obedient nod. She didn't say goodbye, just turned and ran for the door, a sob audible as the screen slammed behind her.

She knew...

This wasn't something that would just go away if they left town, though. He loved her for thinking they could run away, that they could just move and keep others safe. If only it was that simple. If only he knew what to do to control whatever this was that was brewing inside of him, then he wouldn't have to leave her like this.

There was only one way he could see to end the suffering, and he'd made the decision before he'd called Marissa. In order to save the ones he loved, to protect what was left of his family, he would have to stop the dreams...permanently.

Taking the revolver from where he'd kept it hidden underneath his shirt, in the back of his waistband, Nathan waited until he was sure that Marissa and Chelsea were long gone and had a seat back on the couch. He rolled the cold, heavy metal over in his hands. The weight of the gun nothing compared to the sudden heaviness encasing his heart.

He wouldn't hurt anyone anymore...

They'd parked at the end of the Cole's long gravel driveway, making sure they killed the headlights on the Impala before they got too close, and didn't attract any attention to the road. They didn't want to have Nathan already waiting for them with that shotgun as Jay had warned them. Using the stealth dark provided to their advantage, Sam and Dean made it onto the front porch, and found the door open, the screened door's latch unlocked.

Inviting themselves in, wincing at the creaking of the door, Sam moved ahead of Dean before he could take the lead, stepping into the kitchen where he had a clear shot at the back of the house. It was then he saw Nathan, gun in his hands, head lowered as he stared down at the weapon with a desperation Sam knew all too well. Clearly lost in what he was determined to do to himself, Sam knew Nathan had no idea they were even there, and held up a hand to stop Dean from coming forward.

Sam didn't want to startle Nathan, and he approached slowly, hands up, palms out. "Nathan..." He started, quiet, letting the message of understanding fill his voice, his stance, his movements.

But Nathan was unavoidably alarmed by their sudden presence, shooting to his feet, fingers wrapping around the grip tighter, one resting near the trigger as the revolver hung at his side.

"Wh-what are you—? How did you—?" Nathan started. "You're the—You're the guys from yesterday..."

"It's okay, it's okay. We just want to help," Dean said, ignoring Sam's earlier gesture and stepping around his brother.

"We're just here to talk," Sam assured him.

"You don't *get it*," Nathan seethed. "I want you off my property!"

"See that's just the thing, Nathan," Sam tried, eyes going between the gun and the scared man's face. How desperate was he to end this? How far would he go? Would he take them with him? Sam made sure he knew where the gun was as he continued, especially with what he was about to say. There was no telling how it would be received. "Nathan, I know why you've got that gun in your hands. I know that you've got a secret you don't think anyone will understand. But I do..."?

Nathan's lips pulled thin against his teeth, face scrunching in confusion and pain. "How could you possibly know? What could you possibly have to say to me?"

Sam felt Dean move closer to him, saw in his head without looking, the expression Dean was giving him now. His brother was starting to wonder if this was such a good

idea, and all Sam could do was ask him with a sideways glance to *please trust him on this*.

"I admit," Sam pressed, "we're not who we said earlier, but we know about the storms, Nathan."

Sam was throwing out generalities, seeing if the truth was in fact that Nathan was the one behind everything going on. If not...well then Sam knew the ground he had to stand on would be rapidly retreating. When Nathan paled a few visible shades, Sam felt it was suddenly easier to breathe. They were alike. He could help talk him down from this...

...Or end up with another Max Miller.

"You and I, Nathan. We're the same. You can do things you can't explain, right? I've been through this, still trying to figure it out myself."

"Do you kill people?" Nathan asked flatly. "Do you go to sleep and wake up among destruction? Do you bear that kind of cross?" Nathan opened his hand, and electricity sparked from finger to finger.

Atmoskinesis or something like it. That was all Sam could come up with. He didn't even know if that was a technical term, but on the micro and macro level, the psychic before them could manipulate more than Sam had imagined possible. *Do you go to sleep and wake up among destruction?* In his sleep. He was creating storms in his sleep.

Dean had shifted his weight back at the sight of the electricity, his muscles visibly bunching with anticipation of an attack. The memories of being electrocuted were no doubt careening through his mind.

Nathan closed his hand, tilting his head with curiosity, but there was nothing inviting about his eyes, darkened and dangerous, full of anger, matching the intonation of his voice. "What can you do...? Sorry...didn't catch your names..."

Sam was taken aback by the question for a beat, looking over at Dean, before remembering the gun, eyes darting to the front. "Sam...this is Dean. Dean doesn't...have...abilities."

He saw Dean shrug out of the corner of his eye.

"Lucky him," Nathan ground out, then tilted his chin toward Sam. "You? What is it that you can do?"

"Uh..." Sam started, knowing no visible proof was possible. Not like Nathan had just given them.

"Show me," Nathan demanded. Visibly nervous and scared that they were somehow trying to trick him, he backed up until his ankles were flush with the sofa.

"I, uh, I don't really know...what it is I can do..." Sam admitted. "Visions, telekinesis..." Given Nathan's state of mind, he left out what he'd been able to do to Alyssa.

"Visions..." Nathan said absently.

"Death visions," Sam corrected himself with a weak smile.

"That sucks," Nathan said.

"Tell me about it," Sam laughed nervously. In that breath of relief from the tension he thought he saw Nathan soften, thought he saw Nathan look ready to listen to reason.

"You never answered my question," Nathan reminded him. "Do you kill people?"

At that, what hope Sam held of talking Nathan down moved quickly and rapidly away from his grasp.

When Sam didn't answer right away, Nathan started to raise the weapon to his head. "I do. I kill people. In my sleep." He closed his eyes a beat, wetting his lips. "It's gotta stop, Sam. I know you mean well...but I'm not worth saving."

"What about Chelsea?" Sam asked, hoping to regain a foothold. "What's she gonna do, huh?"

Nathan winced, face contorting in sadness and grief over what he was doing, just at the mention of her name. "You think I *want* this?! You think I *want* to die?! I can't

control it, Sam! I can't make it stop! And I won't risk her life! She doesn't need a **freak** like me messing her up!"

Freak. Sam hated that word. The things he was saying were torn right from Sam's thoughts, making him wish there was something more he could do to stop Nathan's desire to end it all...

Sam had been so absorbed in what was being said, in the ground he was losing with Nathan, that he hadn't noticed Dean getting closer to the couch. They both had been. Subconsciously closing the distance on Nathan and the gun.

Nathan apparently hadn't noticed either, tear-filled eyes locked on Sam's, pleading with him to just let this be what it was. So when Dean spoke, when proximity, and stance and Nathan's rapidly disappearing space finally registered, the chain reaction of events that unfolded did so with breath-stealing speed. One blink and everything in front of Sam fell apart.

Dean asked Nathan to calm down, and Nathan turned the gun on him, the words "back up" barely past his lips before Sam overreacted. He'd stretched out his arm, shouting at Nathan to stop, his heart in his throat, mind misfiring, not understanding that Dean wasn't in danger. All Sam registered was Dean and the gun, and suddenly wind slammed into both Nathan and Dean, the gun discharging in Nathan's hand as it snapped back toward his temple.

The deafening report seemed to stop time, which sped up only when Sam saw the blood...

Dean was moving, pushing up from the ground, and clawing for the couch where Nathan was laying, arm dangling on the floor next to the revolver, head tilted into the sofa cushions, the white floral pattern rapidly filling with crimson.

Dean grabbed the blanket on the back of the couch to press against the wound, turning Nathan's head to assess the damage.

"Graze..." Dean breathed, eyes turning to Sam. "Call for help, Sam."

Sam couldn't make himself move, couldn't seem to find the strength or the ability to grab his phone and call 911. He was still trapped in that moment, mind grappling with what he'd just done. He'd commanded wind out of thin air...

"Sam!"

Dean's voice was like a shockwave through his brain, and suddenly Sam could move, fingers grasping for his cell phone. With shaky hands, Sam clumsily punched out the numbers, risking a glance at his brother. Dean was staring at him, eyes knowing.

"I didn't..." Sam started.

Dean nodded toward the cell. "'S okay, Sam. It will be okay.'?"

Sam wanted to believe that, and Dean saying it was enough for him. Enough, at least, to help him focus on the call. Turning away, Sam could still feel Dean's eyes on him, worried, scared, and ever-conscious of what had just happened.

Freak.

It was the one word, the one thing Sam didn't see in his brother's concerned irises or hear in his steadfast voice. Sam knew as he collected himself, that this one thing that was absent from how Dean saw him, was the reason some revolver had never made it into Sam's hands.

The Sunny Days Motel, Night

After the paramedics had picked Nathan up, Sam and Dean returned to the Impala, both wary of the thunder gathering and swelling in the distance. If when Nathan slept he dreamt of storms, then with him completely down both brothers knew they were in for one hell of a night.

The storm that followed not long after they'd returned to the motel beat into the windows, pelting them with hail to in almost hypnotic rhythm. Sam had come to rest on his bed, back against the headboard, boots still on and wet, soaking the comforter

with mud. It wasn't like he'd be sleeping tonight, not after what had happened earlier, and not with the weather like it was.

A part of Sam wondered if the dream he'd had earlier had been more than that, if there had been more than one tornado for a reason. The sudden gust of wind that had taken out Nathan had come from him, and there was no rationale that could explain to Sam any differently how that had happened.

There was one more dimension now to Sam's theory about himself. The reason he couldn't figure out what it was that he could do, was because, other than the visions, he couldn't do anything. Not on his own anyway. He needed circumstantial catalysts, and someone who was actually gifted nearby to draw from. If he was right about what had happened earlier, sleeping wouldn't be a good idea, not with everything already going on outside.

There was another crash of thunder, the room lighting up with a sputtering flare of lightning, and the lights browned out.

Dean was listening to the radio, having just emerged from the bathroom and changing into dry clothes. He was toweling off his hair, drying it after running back and forth from the Impala to get a few things from her trunk. In just a few seconds from the door to the car and back, Dean had returned soaked.

Pausing in the ruffling of his hair with a towel, Dean looked at Sam, mouth thinning out like he was trying to think of something to say to him. It was a rare and scary moment when Dean was at a loss for words. Sam saved him the trouble with a weak smile.

"Before you ask...we both know what happened back there, and no, I didn't know control of the *wind* was one of my abilities."

"When your powers combine..." Dean said, trying again to lighten the thick and suffocating quality the air had taken on. "That was... Captain Planet...nevermind. Wussy ass cartoon. I mean, what kind of power is *Heart* anyway?"

Sam smiled in spite of himself, briefly thinking if anyone had that ability, Sam was staring right at him. He swallowed against the constricting muscles in his throat, trying hard not to lose it.

"Dean, I don't know what to do..." Sam finally voiced, hating how small that made him sound.

There was a knock at the door before Dean could even venture a response and Sam watched Dean drape the towel around his neck before going to open it. Rachel was standing outside, drenched, arms crossed and Dean stepped aside to let her come in. She was favoring her ankle slightly, but Sam was glad to see her back up and moving around.

"Did you hear?" she asked, looking between them expectantly.

Dean nodded toward the radio. "Just caught the end of a report. I guess outside of Oroville got hit pretty hard."

Sam sat up, blinking. He'd been so lost in his thoughts he hadn't even heard what Dean was listening to when he'd gone over to the radio.

Rachel drew in her bottom lip, nodding. Sam noted how pale the researcher looked. He was about to get up and grab her a towel, but Dean was ahead of him, snagging one from the rack above the sink and offering it to her. She thanked him with a weak smile, before continuing.

"Not just pretty hard...Not much left out that way," she said, burying her face in the towel to wipe off the beads of rain dripping down her nose and lashes. "The team is heading out there to help...A lot of people left before this one hit, but...it's leveled. A whole town in just the blink of an eye. They think the worst is over and we're going to help try to get as many out as we can." She was twisting her fingers around one another, eyes losing the fervor they'd had the first time they met her. "Look, about earlier... About that stupid move I made..."

"Rachel," Dean started.

“No...no, I need you to know that I’m sorry. Manitoba...” She sighed. “My judgment was questioned there too...and it cost us. It was nothing against Sam, but when my decisions were being doubted again, I didn’t think. I just didn’t want another...” She laughed lightly, sadness seeping back into her features. “I made a bad call, almost got you two killed...so I’d understand if you turned around and went back to campus. Actually, I’d prefer you did.”

“We’re not leaving, Rachel,” Sam spoke up, on his feet now after the news about what had happened.

“I’m sorry, I know you’ve got nothing for any papers or reports you had to write up about this, but I don’t want you two to get hurt...and these things...well, there’s unpredictable and then there’s chaos. *This* is chaos. Science only takes you so far, and then there’s this huge, black space of unknown...” Her eyes got distant; all previous boldness had left her. She shrugged it off like she couldn’t believe she was saying what she was about to say. “I hate when I come up against it. This place...” Another sad laugh, and she had to look away. “I hate it because I doubt what I know.”

Before either of them could respond, she’d exhaled, throwing a thumb over her shoulder. “I should get going. You two take care of yourselves.”

Dean shot Sam a look that was asking if he was up for this. Sam nodded confirmation, grabbing his jacket while Dean stopped Rachel from leaving. Sam needed to do something other than sit there and wonder what the hell they were supposed to be doing. Nathan was causing these storms, and Sam had been the one to take him down. Short of pulling whatever plug was holding Nathan to this world, Sam didn’t think there was anything they could do, and right now that option bunched and coiled in his gut unpleasantly, along with everything else that had been revealed in just a few short hours.

Sam understood why Dean kept pacing earlier. He understood the self-fueled need to move, and right now, if they could help anyone at all, Sam would be able to stop his mind from crashing into the wall it was heading for fast.

“Rachel,” Dean spoke up after he’d returned Sam’s nod, reaching for her arm. “We get it. We do. We know you’re not in this just for the thrills. You want to make a difference, you want to save lives and understand the unexplained. It may not look like it, couple of college students like ourselves, but we get that. Going out there to help is part of the job, just as much as admitting you don’t know all the answers, just as much as going after these things. We’re coming with you.”

She looked to Sam like she wasn’t sure and Sam mustered the best understanding smile he could. “We know the risks, Rachel. Trust us. We didn’t come out here to play it safe.”

Rachel rubbed her arms, still looking unsure. “Okay, then. We’ll be outside.”

“We’ll be right behind you,” Sam assured her.

West Butte County, CA, Night

There was no sorting through the myriad of emotions, thoughts, or reactions that rose up within Dean as they walked among the rubble of what had been a small neighborhood. He’d seen pictures of the damage tornadoes could cause, but he’d never stood at ground zero, taking in the devastation of the aftermath. An odd, surreal emptiness wavered through him, and caused him to pause when he saw a mangled red tricycle before him in the street.

For a moment, he wondered if he was still in California, the landscape too foreign to be anything but some post-apocalyptic backdrop of a movie set.

Rachel was ahead of him with Russ, passing a flashlight beam into car windows, and over piles of debris. Sirens, which Dean had become more than accustomed to since their arrival there, bleated over and over, several ambulances and fire trucks peppering the remains. Their lights were supposed to be promising hope and help,

but to Dean, as he watched another body bag rolled out and laid down in the street beside the rescue vehicles, they were just colorful death markers.

Dean could hear Sam's thoughts through his brother's silence, could see them written out in Sam's tired eyes as they passed over everything, taking it in, *processing*.

"So many..." Sam finally voiced, but Dean heard *my fault* roll out within those words.

Dean made sure the others were well ahead of them before he grabbed Sam's arm, slowing him to a halt.

"Don't you even start, Sam," he said, knowing that if Sam's mind kept going toward shouldering the blame, it would break his brother down. "*This is not your fault.*"

Sam didn't appear to be listening to him fully, focus on some middle distance. "I don't even recognize the town, Dean..."

"Sam, look at me," Dean ordered. "Not out there. Look at me."

Sam's eyes reluctantly tore away from the ruin around him, coming to settle on Dean's.

"Stop. Just stop," Dean pleaded. "We'll figure this out, okay? We always do. But you didn't do this, Sam. Just because Nathan's abilities somehow transferred, doesn't mean you're to blame for what happened."

"I—I overreacted...I pushed him...the gun..." Sam continued.

"Sam," Dean sighed, starting to wonder if coming out there was the best idea. Especially when he knew after their encounter with Nathan, Sam was suffering. "Please don't..."

Before he could continue Rachel was calling for them both. Dean could see Russ digging through a pile of wreckage, trying to lift what looked like a support beam from the legs of a survivor. Dean jogged over to help, meeting Russ' gaze and nodding to his instructions to lift on count three. Grunting, straining every muscle he could, the three of them were able to remove the beam, revealing a very beaten and bloody man underneath.

The EMTs arrived, stepping between Dean and preventing a longer look at the man. Dean moved back for a moment, hands slick with blood, and suddenly it hit him that only three of them had lifted the beam. Russ, Rachel, himself...

"Sam?"

Dean turned back to an empty street, and his heart punched into his throat. He wasn't there. He wasn't anywhere that Dean could see, and dread filled him so fast he was running before he knew exactly where it was he was going.

"Sam!"

The electrical wires were hissing, coiling in and around themselves like the slick bodies of snakes, sparking, spitting in the street. Sam moved as carefully around them as he could, wary of the ground they danced on as he started to climb the wreckage that had once been the front of a house. Lacing his fingers through some lattice work, Sam climbed to the second story window, unable to get over the collapsed front of the house any other way.

Setting his feet down on unstable ground, Sam took a moment before he could let go of the window sill, arms out at his sides for balance on a floor that sloped down toward a nasty gaping hole. There was no telling if it went straight through to the basement from where he was, but he wasn't about to trip up and find out the hard way.

After Dean left, Sam had heard someone calling for help, and he was sure it was coming from this house. Doubt filtered through him, however, as the house was quiet, save the occasional groaning from its fresh wounds. It wasn't until the call for

help came again, that Sam was able to press forward without reservation, moving closer to the drop off.

It had been the voices of a young girl and a woman, and as Sam slid to the edge of the ragged hole punched through the floorboards, he could see them two floors down, looking back up at him

“Hey,” he shouted down to them. “Either of you hurt? Anyone else down there with you?”

The floor groaned again, this time accompanied by a snapping sound that sent every synapse in Sam’s brain firing. He had just about enough time to comprehend he was falling, that the floor was no longer there, before he was grabbing at anything he could to hold onto, sliding with the section of floor that had lost its support.

Something slowed his descent, seemed to push back on him lessening the impact as he landed in an unceremonious heap on the concrete basement floor. Moaning, muscles protesting his movements, Sam felt small hands encircle his wrist, helping him up. It was amazing that he hadn’t broken anything, even more so when he realized he would have broken bones if something hadn’t been pressing against him from below. It made him wonder if he’d freaked himself into another psychic form of protection.

“Oh my God, are you okay?” the woman he’d heard was down on her knees beside him.

“Marissa,” the girl, whose voice sounded familiar, was still tugging on Sam like her small frame was going to be able to budge him. “I know him.”

Sam blinked through the poor light of the woman’s flashlight, taking in the girl’s face. Curious blue eyes and blonde curls. “Chelsea, right?” he asked.

She nodded. “You’re a reporter.”

“Not quite,” Sam sighed. This was Nathan’s sister. He had no idea what she was doing here, but he had a feeling she had no idea what had happened to Nathan.

“Sam!”

Dean’s voice bellowed from outside and Sam got to his feet, looking up at how far he’d fallen. A rope would have definitely been a good idea. Sam called out for Dean, Marissa and Chelsea joining in until Dean and Rachel appeared at the edge of the hole. Dean, clearly upset, suddenly looked perplexed, raising a brow.

“Dude, how the hell did you—?”

Sam held out his hands, shrugging his shoulders “Slipped.”

“Graceful. What were you trying to do, one man rescue without even bringing a rope?”

“Like you thought to bring one,” Sam shot back. “Look, I wasn’t thinking, and talking our way out of here isn’t an option.”

“Ye of little faith, Sammy. You’re lucky some woman saw you trying to get in here and play hero,” Dean said, disappearing for moment, and returning with a coil of rope. He dropped it over the edge and Sam moved out of the way as it uncurled with a quick snap. “Not thinking. That’s a scary thought,” Dean continued as he swung one leg over the edge, Rachel encouraging him to be careful. “Lucky for you I’m the brains in this outfit.”

“And our hero,” Sam mused.

Dean slid down the rope, dropping the last few feet, and clapping Sam on the shoulder. “We’re both big damn heroes, Sammy. But you ever do this again, and I’ll have to kick your...”

“Dean!” Sam’s eyes darted to Chelsea.

“He’ll kick your ass,” Chelsea finished.

“Thank you,” Dean nodded at her. “What the little lady said.” Dean tilted his head, recognition dawning. “Don’t we know her?”

“Yeah, Dean, you remember Chelsea?”

Dean gave Sam an “oh man...” look, wincing. “Nathan’s sister...”

The house groaned again and something fell away in another part of the home. The place was waiting for them to give it an excuse to collapse in on itself.

"Think we should carry on introductions outside of the nice death trap," Dean suggested. "Come on Chelsea, I'm gonna need you to hold onto my shoulders."

She came toward him obediently, then remembered something. "My bag," she said, turning before Dean could grab her. The house groaned again, and this time they heard the floors above where Chelsea had run start to crumble, smashing down into one another before any warning could be given.

Dean was closest, and Sam saw him spring for Chelsea, not able to pull her back in time. Instead, Dean curled himself over her, pulling the girl into his chest as a last shot at keeping her from being crushed.

It came faster this time, near naturally, like Sam knew he could save them by simply willing it to be true. Sam saw the floor descending on them from above and everything slowed down, everything ceased to have significance or purpose, and the two huddled on the floor were the only things in Technicolor. Marissa screamed, turned her head, and Sam cast out a hand, heart screaming to a halt as wind plowed into the boards and debris, sending it scattering in all directions around them, keeping a single speck from landing on their heads.

Sam let out a stuttered breath, hand dropping to his side before he ran for Dean and Chelsea. Marissa was staring at them, wide-eyed, disbelieving that they'd been missed and not crushed beneath it all. Chelsea got up from the floor and ran to her, apologizing and telling her she was okay.

Grabbing Dean's forearm, helping him to his feet, Sam waited for a reaction, something to indicate that his brother was okay, and not just physically. Dean was out of breath, eyes everywhere but on Sam.

"It's getting easier for you, isn't it?" Dean finally asked.

Sam's throat bobbed, finding it hard to swallow, throat dry. "I think so..." Opening his hand out of eye shot from Marissa and Chelsea, he focused on what he'd seen Nathan do earlier. Sparks spun between the first few fingers. "A lot easier."

"You're like my brother," Chelsea said, looking right at Sam, startling him. She couldn't have seen that just now, but did she know he'd just saved them? She knew about what her brother had done? "I want to see Nathan, now..." she pleaded, face red. "Please."

Oroville Hospital, Butte County, CA

The pain in his head was maddening, mercilessly thudding through every plate and tissue in his skull, making it feel like it was prying apart at the fissures from the inside. Disoriented, aching for the pain to stop, Nathan found himself waking to the low humming and beeping of machinery.

It was dark in the room, for which he was grateful as his swollen eyes had trouble focusing on what lights were coming from the monitors. Turning his head, weak and trying to figure out his surroundings, Nathan saw someone sitting with him in the dark. Vision blurred, he tried to move his thick tongue to ask who they were.

"Nathan," Jay's voice came, saving him the trouble.

"What happened?" he asked. "Where am I?"

"Oroville," Jay answered, coming closer. "You tried to kill yourself, Nathan."

It was then he remembered, the two "reporters," being knocked back, the gun firing. The gunshot was painfully imprinted in his memory, making the cut along his head burn and pound. He couldn't look at his friend, closing his heavy eyes. He didn't want to know what Jay thought about what he'd tried to do.

"I think I understand why now," Jay continued coldly, all traces of compassion gone from his timbre.

Confused, Nathan tried to understand what it was his friend was saying.
“You...understand?”

“Nother one hit, Nate. This time it was bad. Really bad. Chelsea and Marissa are dead.”

Something hard and painful lodged deep in Nathan’s throat, heart shattering right there in his chest. “W-what?” he croaked out.

“You killed them, Nathan. You did this, *Arashi*.”

Hot tears pressed from Nathan’s eyes as his face contorted in grief, mouth working in incoherent supplication for release from the despair that had dug cruelly into him at those words. “I—oh, God...I never...I was supposed to die, not her...not them...I just wanted it to end...Jay...”

Nathan looked for some sign of forgiveness in Jay’s eyes, some kind of freedom from this nightmare, but Jay’s eyes weren’t Jay’s at all. All Nathan could see was cold, black pitch glaring back at him.

“I’ll help you end it, Nathan. I’ll make the pain go away.”

Oroville Hospital, Butte County, CA

Slipping past any notice at the hospital was easy, given the influx of injured being ushered in through every main entrance. Marissa, clutching Chelsea’s hand and practically dragging the poor girl to keep up, followed behind Sam and Dean as they plowed toward their destination through the sea of wounded and medical staff.

No one was occupying the unit desk and Dean leaned over it, grabbing up the census and flipping through it before nodding down the hall.

“Your brother’s on this floor,” he told Chelsea. “Room one forty-seven.”

They’d been able to get clear of the house before it collapsed, and Chelsea’s request to see her brother was impossible to ignore, especially when Sam had to explain to her and Marissa what happened; minus, of course, a few details about *how* Nathan had ended up in the hospital.

Chelsea’s comment about knowing that Sam was like Nathan didn’t change the fact Marissa hadn’t seen what had happened and was none the wiser to what was going on. They had to be careful around Marissa, but Dean could see the questions building in Sam’s mind, making him edgy, settling in him a need to ask Chelsea more.

It had been one of Sam’s hopes that Nathan was okay, that maybe Chelsea could talk to him, calm him down in whatever state he was in. Unconscious was Dean’s best bet, but with the evidence of the storms, Sam was hopeful that there was brain activity, that Nathan was going to pull out of this. How fast or how soon, Dean wasn’t even going to try to guess, and he didn’t want to think that by the time Nathan came around, ten, fifteen, or twenty more tornadoes could have wrecked their way though Butte County.

Rounding the corner to find room one forty-seven open, Dean halted in his lead when he saw inside. The bed was empty.

Chelsea peered around his legs then pushed past him into the room.

“Did they move him?” Marissa asked.

“Jay?” Chelsea’s timid voice drew their attentions as she stood on the other side of the hospital bed.

Sam had moved into the room, maneuvering around the curtain to see what Chelsea was looking at so pale-faced. Taking a few more steps into the room, craning his neck, Dean could see feet and legs on the ground between the window and the bed. All of them gathered there quickly, Sam moving Chelsea aside so he could get to Jay, sprawled out and unconscious on the linoleum.

Sam brought his hand back from Jay's neck, fingers having pressed at his carotid, glancing back at Marissa and Dean with relief. "He's alive," he announced. "Breathing..."

"Jay," Chelsea squatted beside Sam, tugging at the young man's shirt. "Come on. Wake up."

Jay groaned, stirring. He attempted to sit up, winced like his head had connected with an invisible wall, and then laid back down, hand going to his eyes. "Aw, God, what the hell?" he moaned, swearing into his hand as he dragged it over his mouth. "What happened?"

Sam offered him a hand, which Jay took, allowing Sam to haul him up and help him to a chair. "We were hoping you could tell us," Sam replied.

Jay blinked, shaking his head like he was clearing it, unsteady and obviously confused. "Hey...it's you two," he eventually said, eyes focusing on Sam and Dean. "You're those reporters."

Dean watched Sam tilt his head, shrugging a shoulder. Dean himself was debating getting into this again. It wasn't important right now. What was important was where the storm wielding, unconscious psychic had gone.

"Yes and no..." Sam started.

"Where's Nathan?" Chelsea asked, getting to the point. "What happened, Jay?"

Jay seemed to realize that Chelsea was there for the first time, and he looked between her and Marissa, even more perplexed now. "Chels, Marissa, how did—what are you—?"

"Is Nathan okay?" Chelsea continued.

"I—I don't know, Chels...honest. I don't even know what *I'm* doing here."

Dean watched Sam walk to the bed stand. He couldn't see what had his brother's attention, but observed Sam running two fingers along the surface like he was checking for dust.

Jay was starting to mildly freak out, his eyes darting between all of them. "God, this is just like Japan..."

Sam looked up from the bed stand, eyes narrowing. "What happened in Japan?"

"Dude, if I knew...I was in Kyoto, just hanging out, hopping clubs, blacked out and I woke up a few days later, just completely lost time. I'm telling you, last time I blacked out this bad was then...or was it last week after tequila?"

Marissa scoffed, shaking her head. "You're not helping, Jay."

If only she knew how wrong she was. Dean hadn't missed Sam's expression as he'd come to Dean's side, rubbing his index finger and thumb together, yellow dust flaking from their tips. Sulfur...

There was a damn good reason why Jay couldn't remember squat.

"I can remember Nathan was upset...there was a storm..." Jay continued, pausing to wet his lips and gather his thoughts. "That's all I can remember...honest to God. Is Nate in trouble?"

He lifted worried eyes to Dean, then Sam. Neither of them could give him an answer he'd want to hear. Dean didn't think it would be wise to tell him anything, no matter how much Jay probably knew, just like Chelsea; the best thing for them was to get out of town, to leave worrying about Nathan to Sam and him.

"He probably went home," Chelsea suggested, hopeful. "He probably went back to find me."

The sulfur was reason to worry. Nathan unconscious and uncontrolled was terrifying. Combine the two: Nathan possessed...their night just got a hell of a lot worse.

"Marissa," Dean said, turning to her, catching the worry in her eyes about her friends. "Could you take Chelsea in the hall for a minute?"

Puzzled and reluctant, she arched a brow, before reaching for Chelsea's hand. "Come on, sweetie. Let's go see if we can find something for you to drink."

When the door closed behind them, Dean and Sam simultaneously glanced back at Jay.

"What?" he asked, shifting nervously in his seat. "Who are you guys, anyway? Friends of Marissa's?"

"We know about Nathan and the storms," Sam said, ignoring the blank look he got in return from Jay. "We know why you call him Arashi."

Jay paled a little, looking away and down at the tiles. "I don't know what you're talking about."

"Come on, Jay," Dean prodded. "Think real hard and it will come to you. How long have you known about what Nathan can do?"

Jay's eyes turned up from the floor quickly, defensive, angry. "He'd never hurt anyone. Not intentionally. Not *ever*."

"We know that, Jay..." Sam said calmly. "We know that he's not a bad guy. We're not going to hurt him, but we can help him."

"What do you want from me?" Jay asked, exasperated. "I already told you I don't know where he is. I don't know what happened to him after I left the house..."

"We know you know what he can do...we know you know what he's capable of," Sam continued. "We want you to take Chelsea and Marissa, and get south of Butte County. You got any relatives nearby?"

"An aunt in Roseville...Wait, what are you two going to do?" Jay asked, worry plain on his ashen face.

"We're asking you to trust us, and get the hell out while you still can, Jay," Dean answered. "We're asking you to grab Chelsea and Marissa and make it out of here in case we don't get to your friend in time."

"W-what happened to Nate?" Jay asked. "You still haven't told me what I'm doing here...What do you mean if you don't make it to him in time?"

Sam sighed, getting closer. "He's not stable, Jay. You think any of the storms you've seen so far were bad, you haven't seen *bad*."

"We'll get him back, but you have to go, and you can't look back," Dean added. "And if you know anything, can remember anything at all that will help us find him, it will give us more of a chance of getting to him before all hell breaks loose."

Jay dropped his head onto his chest, eyes darting side to side as he wracked his brain for the time he'd lost. "I don't know...I honestly can't..."

"It's okay. We'll find Nathan," Sam tried to calm him. "Jay, you understand what you have to do, right?"

Pale, bewildered, and upset, Jay's hesitant nod was the best indication of his understanding. Dean tipped his head toward the door, indicating they needed to move, knowing Sam would stay longer if given the chance. Reluctantly, his brother turned away from Jay and followed Dean into the hall, both picking up their strides to get back to the Impala and back to the Cole residence.

"You think he'd go home?" Dean asked.

"Honestly? No...but I've got nothing else. Dean, you saw the sulfur..."

"Yeah, I did," Dean replied, cringing inwardly with the thought, as he ducked in and around hospital staff. "Does that mean what I think it means?"

"That we're in deep? Yes. Dean, if Nathan causes macro-level storms when he's asleep, what do you think will happen while he's possessed? A lot of people describe possession like Jay did, conking out and not remembering a thing later. If Nathan's in some kind of sleep state, held down by whatever demon has him..."

"Then we're *definitely* not in Kansas anymore. Theories?"

"Jay came back from Japan with a stowaway. Some black eyed freak riding piggy-back, waiting for Nathan to really go off the deep end."

"Then we need to find him," Dean said tightly. "Kick the opportunistic, sulfur-breathing punk back to Hell, and do it all before something even worse comes down on this county."

Stepping out into the parking lot, Dean knew they were already working within a small window of time. Wind tore through his open jacket with icy tendrils, while small flakes of snow filtered through the lamplight. Sam held out a hand and caught a few, before raising his eyes from the melted beads to Dean.

"This can't be good."

Cole Residence

The windshield wipers on the Impala were working overtime, clearing the sludge of snow and rain from their view. Dean gripped the wheel tighter as the wind checked itself into the side of the car, again and again, knocking the Chevy around its center.

"So, do we have a plan if he's there?" Dean asked as they neared the street the Cole residence was located on.

"Honestly?" Sam answered, distracted, trying not to think about how screwed they were at that moment. He'd banked originally on them having to face a demon, but he'd hoped they'd be able to lay the trap, use some sort of summoning sigil, fight the damn thing on their terms. He'd been remiss in thinking that it could be so simple. Now with a demon commandeering a psychic... "No. I don't have a plan. We have maybe one flask of holy water... Can't take in the written exorcism, he'll just rip it apart in some miniature storm. I've got the rite memorized...but how and when and where do we lure him into a trap?"

"That's a comforting pile of nothing," Dean came back.

"Yeah, pretty much..." Sam replied, setting his jaw, mind working through something he'd been thinking earlier. "Or I could..."

"What?" Dean asked, and Sam could tell from the flat tone of his brother's voice he wasn't going to like the answer.

"Dean, I think I figured out what I can do," he said quietly. "I can... *mirror* abilities. I don't really have many if any of my own, but if I'm near someone who has one, I can— well I can turn whatever they turn on me back onto them."

He didn't wait for Dean's reaction or even risk a look his way, just kept plowing on with his reasoning. "It explains a lot...and since Nathan's abilities cover all of Butte County with their attacks, I was able to start making his abilities my own the second he dropped a storm on me in that bar the first night. If I can just...focus on that..."

Dean was silent, and Sam slid his eyes to the side, watching him work his jaw, tighten his grip on the steering wheel until his knuckles looked like they'd split. "Sam, I swear if you're suggesting what I think you are..."

"I can fight him, Dean. As long as he's throwing punches, I can throw them back."

Sam knew that would go over about as well as it did, Dean's eyes flashed in protest almost instantly at the suggestion.

"Like hell," Dean growled. "I'm not going to let you go into this thinking you two are gonna have some all-out psychic battle."

"And what if that's our only option, Dean? What if this is the only way?"

"It's not."

"How do you know?"

"How do I know anything like this, Sam?" Dean turned his brother's words back around on him. "Got a bad feeling about it, all right? Now we go in and we set up a trap, lead him into it."

Sam scoffed. "*If* he doesn't see us coming."

"Sam, you don't have to fight him."

"And what if I want to?" Sam shot back.

The question struck Dean into a forced silence, and Sam could tell from the way every muscle seemed to coil in tension that Dean wanted to fight him on this with everything he had.

"What are you saying, Sam?" he finally ground out, gaze not risking leaving the road.

Sam was tired of the pattern, tired of waiting for his powers to pop up at their convenience. Sam was tired of watching Dean bleed, of these demons and psychics and whatever else there was out there putting them in situations where their backs were against the wall, literally.

Dangling over Hell, listening to the mockery about his abilities, scared to death that because of his inadequacies he'd be unable to save Dean, he knew *then* that he wouldn't be satisfied until he'd learned how to control these cursed abilities he'd never asked for. He wanted dominion over them, not the other way around. They didn't own him or control him, they were *his*, and this was the first time he'd felt close enough to take hold of that truth.

"It's something I have to do, Dean," Sam spoke softly, not wanting to fight with his brother, knowing that once again this had to be scaring him.

"Says who?" Dean returned, finally prying his gaze away from the road. Sam could see worry in the creases of his face, embedded in his eyes.

"Me," Sam said, unwavering in his resolve.

Dean huffed, dropping his head into a pensive nod. "Sam...please, just...We go in there with a plan, or I'm not taking you in. Got that? I will leave your ass in the car."

Sam blinked, throwing up his hands in frustration. "Like hell! I'm going in there, Dean. You're not going alone."

"And you're not going in with it in your mind to fight this thing head on!" Dean snapped.

The Impala skidded to a sudden stop, and for a moment, Sam thought his brother was considering not going until Sam agreed not to use his abilities.

"Why are we stopped?" Sam asked, intoned.

"Because we're here," Dean replied flatly.

The surroundings didn't look familiar at first, and Sam looked outside, trying to find a recognizable marker. The mail box at the end of the gravel drive had the Cole name along its side, but when he followed the path to where the home once stood...

"Where's the house?" Sam asked.

The lights off the side of the barn illuminated parts of the leveled farmhouse, reduced to the main floor, its contents littering the yard like they had been blown out from the inside.

"If he's not here now, he was," Dean said, opening his door and stepping out into the cold, shrugging up his jacket against the biting breeze.

Sam followed, grateful that the bizarre snowfall had ceased, but the wind still slashed through the exposed sides of his open jacket, causing him to pull it closer around his body. The winds had lost a little of their edge, but Sam couldn't imagine what screwing with the weather had done or was doing to their surroundings. He met Dean by the trunk, and their single flask of holy water was shoved into his chest.

"We're going in to trap it?" Dean asked. The question more of a statement. An order.

Sam knew Dean wanted to know that they were going in to this without Sam gunning for a fight. A nod was the only answer he could give, not able to express his true thoughts with risking Dean stuffing him in the trunk right then and there. He knew Dean would. There was no doubt in Sam's mind that his brother would leave him and take on Nathan alone. How fair was it that Dean got to be the reckless one?

Grabbing shotguns, the best they had at this point, they approached what was left of the Cole home warily. Stepping around debris, and onto what was left of the front porch, Dean entered the kitchen first, looking at remains of the entryway rug and nodding for Sam to cover him.

While Dean worked on laying the trap beneath the rug, Sam stepped around him, shotgun up, senses feeling out every creak and groan, every shadow. There was no roof left, no upper floor obstructing the view of the sky, or any walls standing completely to keep out the cold winds. Large ragged sections of plaster and wood served as place markers, reminders where walls had once been.

Amazingly enough, a few pieces of furniture remained. Through the dark he could see the couch where Nathan had fallen, the dark stain there a cruel reminder of the day, of destruction, pain and failure.

Sam swallowed hard as he approached it, watching the red grow increasingly brighter as the moon above cleared the clouds, illuminating the dark, sending shadows skittering back to the corners. It was then he felt the presence, saw the dark shift in his periphery, and he'd rounded on the figure in the corner of the living room, shotgun at point.

"I knew you'd be back," Nathan's voice slid from the dark. He was sitting in one of the easy chairs, face obscured in shadow, head bowed. "You're an abomination, Sam. You shouldn't exist."

"You're gonna hurt my feelings," Sam replied, lowering the shotgun. It wasn't going to do him any good in this fight. "Am I talking to Nathan, or Nathan's new best friend?"

Beneath dark bangs all Sam could see was the curvature of Nathan's lips, thinning back against his teeth in a pitiless smile. "Oh, I think you know, kid. I think you sensed I was here the second you walked through that door. Lucky for me you still walked in."

"Why's that?" Sam asked, the tension bunching through his muscles, setting him on alert, mind running over what he needed to do. *Get Nathan back to the hallway. Counter any attacks. Keep him away from Dean.*

"Because even though abominations like you and Nathan shouldn't be walking around, you *are*, fresh for the picking. Do you have any idea what you're capable of?" the demon inside Nathan asked pushing to his feet, straightening, and giving Sam a good look at his new oil-black lenses.

Sam unconsciously backed up, all warnings to get out, to run, having to be pushed back in his mind. He was hoping Dean didn't try to step in now, that his brother would stay in the hall. It would probably end up being wishful thinking...

"You're going to let him go," Sam promised the demon.

"Am I now?" The demon crooned. "You offering something better? You perhaps?"

Sam saw wrapped within the black of the demon's eyes was undeniable greed, hunger. "You're not leaving here with either of us, you parasitic son of a bitch. You're going *home*."

The demon held open his hand to Sam, electricity spreading, web-like, all along the forearm. "Figured you'd want a fight. And I think I'll stay with my current packaging. Truth is, you can't do jack unless someone with true talent is around. Am I right?"

"You're about to find out just what I'm capable of," Sam returned darkly. "Last chance. Let him go."

The demon paused, lips pressing together in mock thought. He cracked his neck, responding without a hint of fear. "No."

There was little time to breathe as white-hot light slammed into Sam, ripping back through his entire body, blinding him. He was thrown back into what was left of the wall, hard enough to leave an imprint and to have what breath he had left stolen from his lungs. Shaking, muscles twitching with the electricity still flaring through his synapses, Sam attempted to get to his feet, failing to do much more than roll onto his back groaning.

The shotgun blast tipped Sam off to Dean's arrival, opening his eyes just in time to see Nathan crumple to one knee, chest now full of rock-salt. Dean was by Sam's side quickly, taking hold of his jacket to get him to his feet.

"Come on, Sam," Dean was encouraging, practically lifting him with his strength alone.

Sam pulled tight the muscles in his abdomen, curling up, knowing they had only a few seconds to move before Nathan's demon came back around.

They didn't make it.

Dean was punched back, a slicing current of air catching him in the gut and hefting him without effort back into the china cabinet behind him.

"You have nothing to offer me," the demon told Dean, who'd fallen to the ground in a disheveled heap of cuts and glass. "Stay out of the conversation."

"I can offer my boot in your ass," Dean grunted, moving sluggishly onto hands and knees, trying to stand, visibly hurting.

Sam had staggered to his feet right before the demon attempted another attack on Dean. He saw the bluish-white sparks flare back in Nathan's hand and saw his interest resting on Dean. Sam's chest tightened with thoughts of Dean's body wracked with electric current screaming through his mind. *Not again...*

The demon's eyes seemed to flash with delight, turning back to Sam.

"You know I can read your thoughts, Sam." He laughed lightly. "Thanks for the suggestion. Let's see if his heart can survive this time, shall we?"

Sam watched the demon jut out an arm for Dean, and before "No!" could make it past Sam's lips, a punch of wind rocketed into Nathan, knocking him off balance, silencing the current sizzling around his arm.

The demon laughed, visibly amused. "That's more like it. Nice love tap. But you've got to put more of yourself into it!"

Sam was snapped back suddenly, gut-checked by an attack through the weak wall behind him, and sent spiraling, limbs pin-wheeling, world moving in one solid blur before his body came to rest on the sleet soaked grass.

The demon was there before Sam could utter a groan, shadow passing over Sam as he gasped, arm cradling his middle. Sam was quickly starting to come into the sad realization that he couldn't fight this thing, not even on a good day. There was only one other way he could think to fight back.

"Nathan," Sam breathed. "You have to fight it. It can't control you."

The demon tilted its head playfully. "Now, we're onto pleading? Already? Sad, Sammy, even for you." He kicked Sam in the stomach, watching him roll over onto his side. "What happened to me finding out just what you're capable of, huh?"

Sam rolled away from the demon, holding his stomach, hand moving along the inside of his jacket for the flask of holy water. His fingers found their mark and started to twist off the cap. He could feel Nathan getting closer, was anticipating the demon putting a boot into his vertebrae, but when he heard the familiar snap of electric current, he made his move faster, rolling onto his back and swinging out his arm and the flask.

Holy water pieced through the air and into Nathan's face, forcing him to back away, hands flying to his face, crying out. Sam, fighting off the pain in his back and abdomen, got to his feet, knowing he could only douse the demon once more before he was out of the holy water completely.

Nathan was laughing, after he'd recovered from the burning liquid, glaring into Sam. "That stung a little. Kinda pointless don't you think?"

Sam cast the last of it onto the demon, knowing weakening a demon would help Nathan fight his way to the front, would help him regain control...if he could. "Fight it, Nathan," Sam commanded.

Writhing, the demon had curled into itself, holding its midsection as it backed away, steam rising from its body and back like macabre wings. The demon hissed, lifting its eyes to Sam, the hiss turning into a growl as the wind started to accelerate. There was the sound of thunder in the distance, and the sky opened up, releasing relentless droves of rain in thick sheets.

"Are you done?" the demon asked through gritted teeth.

Again, without warning, Sam found himself flying backward through the air, until his back connected with a nearby tree, expelling air and almost dislodging what was left of his stomach's contents. Stunned, Sam slid down the trunk, back screaming, head fogging up with panic and confusion. He was pretty sure the audible crack

along his side had been the snapping of a rib. This wasn't how it was supposed to go. He was supposed to be able to fight back...

Nathan knelt down beside Sam, fisting his hand in Sam's shirt and bringing his face close to his. "Well, I've got to say, this has been disappointing, Sam."

Sam twisted, looking away, but the demon grabbed hold of his face, forcing him to look at him. "Look at me, Sam. I want you to know I'll take real good care of Nathan. I wouldn't dream of destroying such a perfect vessel. You, on the other hand, useless trash without a clue, defective, should definitely be sent back to the manufacturer."

Sam swallowed, mind clawing for something, some kind of burst to get the demon away from him as Nathan stood up, both open palms flashing with destructive light, making the hairs on the back of Sam's neck stand on end with anticipation of the shock.

It never came, however, as Nathan was tackled to the ground by Dean, the two of them rolling over one another until they came to a disjointed stop. Dean clawed back toward Nathan's prone body, pinning him down with a rosary against his chest, the deluge of rain providing him with more than enough water.

Dean started to recite the Latin rite as the demon writhed and tried to throw him, the water around the rosary burning through his shirt and into his flesh. Sam stared at the two of them, wide-eyed, unbelieving and relieved at the same time that Dean was going to try to finish the rite before the demon could overcome the small holy object.

Sam tried to stand up, to help, but he was having trouble finding his legs, sinking back against the tree. In the next instant, though, Sam was able to find the strength, staring horrified as Nathan stopped fighting the effects of the rosary, grabbing hold of Dean's left shoulder.

"Stop!"

"Nice effort," the demon smirked, before Dean's body started to buck, electricity flooding through it.

Dean ceased moving, and Nathan pushed him away, rolling him to the side, as Sam quickly found his feet. Running to his brother's side, Sam could see him breathing, hurting but alive. Dean curled into himself groaning obscenities. "Weak..." Dean coughed. "You call that...an electric shock..."

Sam rolled him over, looking at the burnt flesh of his brother's shoulder, the holes where Nathan's fingertips had been. Dean's hand shot out and encircled Sam's wrist, stopping him from worrying over it.

"Son of a bitch," Dean gasped. "Almost...had him..."

Nathan looked down at his shirt, at the rosary outline burned there and sighed. "If you were feeling left out, Dean, all you had to do was tell me." His obsidian eyes moved between the two brothers. The moon was gone now, the sky coated with thick cloud cover, the rain ceased, lightning running between the clouds, snapping tirelessly. "No, I call this an electric shock," he said, bringing down a bolt on the tree Sam had been up against, splitting it clean in half, sending smoldering bits of wood splinters flying through the air. Sam covered Dean, protecting him from the explosion, Nathan's laughter filling his ears as the tree burned and blackened.

"Nathan!"

Sam uncurled from the protective shield he'd become, looking over his shoulder to see Chelsea running up to them with Jay in tow. She stopped next to Sam, putting a hand on his shoulder, not venturing any closer. She looked over them, worried, then up at her brother.

"I didn't mean it Nathan," she cried. "I didn't mean to be scared of you. You're my brother...I need you, Nathan."

Dean was sitting up with Sam's help, and both of them managed to get to bended knees, putting themselves between Chelsea and the demon.

"This isn't you, man," Jay spoke up. "You can control this, we know you can, and we're here to help you, Nate."

"You don't hurt people, Nathan. You don't..." Chelsea continued.

Nathan's features softened, eyes returning to their soft hazel light. Sam caught himself holding his breath, hoping that the two of them being there had somehow broken through. Sam knew he should have known better than to grab for optimism when in the firelight of the nearby burning tree, those softer, gentler eyes glossed over with black.

Dean and Sam were back on their feet, Sam having to lace his arm under Dean's to get him there. They were out of options, and now they had two more people to protect.

Chelsea pushed to the front between them, and both Sam and Dean reached out and grabbed hold of her shoulders, pulling her back against their legs. The girl was fearless, Sam would give her that, but she wouldn't stand a chance.

"That was touching," the demon nodded. "But Nathan's gone, Chelsea. He isn't coming back."

The demon held out a hand, and Sam anticipated his attack, but Nathan's face twisted in confusion, suddenly unable to make wind or lightning follow his command. Nathan was fighting back. He had to be, or they'd be looking a lot like the burning remains of the tree...

Frustration and rage accompanied the confusion in the demon's eyes, growling as it stretched out its hand again in an attempt to take them all out. Nothing.

"Fine..." the demon growled. "Let's just all go out together."

There was a deafening crack of thunder, pulling their faces to the sky where the clouds were churning, the sky itself giving off an unearthly moan as the clouds circled. A visible circumference, stretched well over the property's boundaries started to define itself, and began to drop down.

"That's not good," Dean breathed as the wind intensified.

"Go," Sam told him. "Take Chelsea and Jay and get in the cellar."

"I'm not leaving you here," Dean came back.

"Dean, you have to! I have to try to stop this."

"Are you friggin' insane?" Dean asked, grabbing hold of Sam's shirt and whipping him around to face him. "He's gonna bring it right down on us."

Stronger, picking up speed and ferocity, the wind started to move debris in the yard, and the demon wasn't taking kindly to being ignored. Some of the siding from the house was scooped up on a gust and hurled toward them. Jay pulled Chelsea back, as Sam stepped in front of all of them and deflected the shards with a counter.

"I am the only one who can keep him away from them, distract him, Dean, and you know it. You need to get them out of here!"

Dean swore as another burst of debris and wind side-swiped them and rendered him unable to argue the facts. Sam wasn't in complete control, had little to no idea how exactly to make these abilities work, but he was still the only one that could stand as interference between the demon and them.

Sam watched Dean scoop up Chelsea, yelling something over the wind to Jay about not listening to them in the friggin' first place, asking if he had to spell it out for them as he shoved the young man toward the remains of the house, both starting into a sprint.

"They won't survive, Sam!" Nathan shouted, as the wind took on an animalistic howl, any visibility past the edge of the property obscured by the wall of thick black cloud and debris roiling together, rising up from the earth and descending from the sky to enclose them within the whirlwind. "You won't survive."

Flying pieces of the house's remains were ripping past Sam, several nicking his cheeks, and limbs. He tried to focus on that connection he'd felt earlier when the abilities had been able to come to the front, but it felt like there was something blocking it, something keeping him from grasping it again. A plank of wood caught him on the outside of his knee, and it buckled, forcing him to kneel.

Nathan was laughing, "Glad to see you acknowledge your position."

Sam's eyes widened as he saw the demon lift the broken pile of wood from the obliterated shed, holding it back from the winds, cruel smile spreading before he released it to the sudden burst of gale heading right for Sam.

Again he tried to grab hold of something tangible at the back of his mind, create a counter windstorm, but nothing happened as he outstretched a hand toward the rapidly closing rubble, turning away to brace himself for the impact.

Sam was slammed into from the side, startled, as he landed with an *umpf* of ejected air, sinking into the wet earth as the splintered wood passed harmlessly overhead. Turning his head he saw Dean next to him, blood trailing along his brow from where he'd taken a hit while shoving Sam to the ground.

"Dean!" Sam bellowed, heart constricting as he crawled to his brother, ducking more wind-thrown objects, ignoring the ones that sliced at his shoulders and back.

Sam could see Dean's chest rising and falling, giving him proof of life even though Dean wasn't moving or responding to Sam's pleas for him to wake up.

The walls of the whirlwind seemed to have moved closer, their circumference lessening, constricting, closing in on their location. There was nowhere to go, nowhere to run to. They were trapped.

But so was the demon.

More debris flew in their direction, and Sam covered Dean, muffling a cry into his brother's shirt as something sharp raked along his exposed back.

Sam felt something within him punch back, adrenaline sluicing through every vein in his body. Sam could feel himself re-tapping into the abilities. He focused them on himself and Dean, fueling thoughts of shielding them both within the storm.

It only took a few seconds, Sam's heart slamming repeatedly into his throat, before he couldn't feel the wind coming at them, but surrounding them, before his body ceased to be ripped at by flying wreckage and rubble.

Sam hazarded a look, lifting his eyes to the demon who was seething, fists clenched at its sides. The massive whirlwind's walls were closing in rapidly, and anything coming Sam's way was sent bounding off to the sides before it could reach him.

Trapped, Sam knew that the demon would have to give up its host, would have to free Nathan, or stop the windstorm if it wanted to escape. Smirking, returning the demon's glare before starting into the exorcism, the Latin poured out of Sam's mouth with desperate speed.

The demon staggered back, making last attempts to silence Sam by kicking up more wreckage and hurling it toward him. But like the rest it was cast aside and Sam kept at the rite, unwavering, steady with the new sense of strength that had flooded his core.

The last words of the rite spilled forward, and Nathan's head shot back, the demon ripping up through the young man's throat in black cloud that intermixed with the violent squall until the demon was gone.

Sam watched with helpless dismay as Nathan fell to his knees, lost in the confusion of what had happened to him, unable to control the chaos around them. Nathan locked eyes with Sam for one stuttered heartbeat, pain and bewilderment written in his wide eyes before the outer wall of the whirlwind collided with him, pulling him away, leaving Sam with a smudge of his outline against the dark, and then nothing.

Any hope that expelling the demon from Nathan would save them was lost as Sam was dreadfully aware of the earth and sky around them disappearing rapidly.

Sam had to be the one to stop it.

Ducking again inside the protection of his own body, Dean pulled close to him, Sam found himself screaming internally. Heart so tightly wound that it hurt, his stomach pushing up bile as he thought for sure they would die there, unable to make it stop.

What good was this power, this ability, if he couldn't save them?

"Not here, not now," Sam whispered, his very core shaking. *Not like this!*

The storm groaned out to a breath-like sigh, dispelling its last dying gasps as stillness settled the chaos. Sam raised his head timidly, taking in the brush and destruction laid out around them, encircling them in a windswept pattern, coating the ground everywhere, but within the perfect circle where Sam and Dean were huddled in the middle.

Weak and tired, Sam couldn't move, sitting in stunned silence and awe, trying to keep the contents of his stomach right where they were.

God...

There was no sorting through the thoughts that filled him right then. Dread, fear, elation, grappled within him, and he knew things would now be irrevocably and undeniably different.

Next Day...

The Sunny Days Motel, Morning

Sprawled out in the front seat of the Impala, Dean kept the cold compress Sam had given him against the swollen bump at his temple, resting, letting Zeppelin's *The Rain Song* soothe him.

"Nine friggin' lives," Dean muttered as he shifted into a more comfortable position, thinking about how he'd honestly thought that he'd lost the Impala once again. She'd been down by the road, right where he'd left her, not a scratch, two trees and a power line fallen near her.

Dean had already said his goodbyes to most of the team after they'd met back up at the motel, and Sam and he were ready to get going, to put Butte County very far behind them. Morning had brought with it clear skies, and while they knew there weren't going to be anymore storms, at least of the psychic variety, the team was going to stay a few more days to see if the worst was over.

There was a rap at his window and Dean lowered the bag of ice, catching Rachel and Russ at the window. Dean sat up, sliding over to the driver's side window, and rolled it down.

"We've got video for you, bro," Russ beamed, handing a disc through the window.

Dean forced his best smile as he took it. "Great. Thanks. Will come in handy for...my report..."

Rachel shrugged. "We figured you'd like to have a copy of the footage Sam got."

Dean's smile became genuine in spite of never wanting to see another tornado as long as he lived. "Thanks, guys."

"So, back to Chico?" Rachel asked.

"Yeah," Dean sighed. *Or something like that...* They'd pass it by at least.

"Dude, we're gonna miss you and Sam," Russ added. "Not to go emo on you or anything."

"What? You, Russ? Naw," Dean teased, casting a hand through the window to grab Russ', shaking it. "You take care, man."

"You too, Dorothy," Russ ribbed. "Take care of that massive knot on your noggin."

Dean moved a hand to his head, touching the outer edge of the tender tissue.

"Yeah, yeah." Dean returned, mouth quirking up at the corners. He'd miss him too. "No more trips to Oz. Hey, you were there...and you..."

Russ laughed, "Tell Sam thanks for the wicked vid footage, man. Kid unwinds a little, relaxes, he'll be okay out here."

Dean nodded, trying not to be too amused by the advice. "Will do."

Russ tapped the open window a few times before turning away, taking his leave. Rachel had returned to her nervous rubbing of her arms, and looked like she was reluctant to follow.

"I threw out my CCR," she admitted with a wince

"Why'd you do that?" Dean ragged.

She exhaled sharply, shaking her head. "You ruined a perfectly good band for me."

"Aw, come on now," Dean started, bending forward and reaching under the seat. He pulled up his box of tapes and started to sort through them. "Let me make it up to you." He picked out a mixed tape and handed it to her.

"Random Zeppelin I, IV, and Houses of the Holy...some other good stuff too."

Rachel beamed, "Thanks."

Russ let Rachel know he was ready to get going, tapping the horn, and Rachel turned her head for a beat to let him know she was coming, then looked back at Dean. "Guess this is goodbye. Take care of yourself, Dean."

Dean smiled at that, finding himself wishing for different times and different circumstances. The feeling left with her retreating form, leaving him oddly content just from having the chance to know her and the others.

Sam appeared from the motel room not long after, bending down to Dean's eye level on the driver's side.

"You sure you're okay to drive?" he asked, brow creased in concerned furrows.

"Yeah," Dean said, giving his brother a reassuring smile.

Sam threw a duffel into the backseat and took his place on the passenger side, letting out a labored sigh. Dean nodded toward the disc Russ had given them.

"Something to remember another brush with death by," Dean said, not the least bit surprised when Sam took the disc and threw it into the back seat.

"Not really in the mood to remember anything about this place anytime soon." He slid his eyes over to Dean, worried. "How's your head?"

"Still attached," Dean said as he switched out the current tape for one he'd come across when searching for Rachel. Pink Floyd's *The Great Gig in the Sky* started to play, eliciting a huff and a weak smile from Sam.

"Figures," Sam sighed, nodding to the tape deck. "All of this kinda makes me want to watch *The Wizard of Oz* to *Dark Side of the Moon*."

"Oh yeah?" Dean asked.

"Not really," Sam said, eyes lightening for a moment before becoming burdened once again. "If I never see another tornado..."

"I hear you there," Dean said, pulling the Impala out onto the road, heading south, feeling a weight lift as The Sunny Days Motel disappeared in the rearview. It didn't stop the compounding burdens building in the seat next to him, however...

Dean sped up the Impala, passing Russ's van and exchanging a two fingered salute with him before pulling in front, watching them shrink into the distance as well.

"I wish we'd figured it out sooner," Sam said absently after a few minutes when just the sound of the road and Floyd had become almost impossibly too silent. "I wish there'd been something we could have done for Nathan..."

Dean wished that as well, but he was pretty sure there was nothing more they could have done. He wasn't there to see what had happened, coming around after the demon was gone and calm had been restored. It didn't take much to put together what had happened, however, and all Dean had to do was try to look Sam straight in the eyes to know his brother was wrecked after what had happened. Sam would always divert his gaze, bury it in the floor, and tell Dean that he was okay.

"Me too..." Dean sighed.

"I guess Jay's taking Chelsea to Roseville, gonna try to find family, try to put the pieces back together." Sam dropped his chin, eyes disappearing behind his bangs. "I feel sorry for both of them...losing someone that close..."

"Hey," Dean said, tapping Sam's arm to try to get him to look at him. "Again. Not your fault."

Dean knew that the conversation was about to turn back to where it had many times before, but Dean welcomed it this time. He wanted Sam to get it out of his system, because he knew it was killing him slowly right before his eyes.

"You gonna be okay?" Dean pried.

Sam laughed a little at that question, listing his head to the side, resting it against the window. "I'm okay. Injuries weren't too bad...just sore."

"You know that's not what I'm talking about. What's going on in that head of yours?"

Sam closed his eyes, taking in a deep breath. "The abilities are gone...for now. I can't help thinking that even with Haris gone, there could be others out there like the demon that took Nathan, just waiting to cash in on whatever this is...whatever I am."

Dean didn't want Sam talking like that, like he was something other than human. "You can't keep thinking that way, Sam."

Tiredly, Sam pulled away from the window, and Dean caught the desperate look in his eyes before he spoke.

"Please, Dean. Just once...tell me the truth, 'bout how you feel. Please...Scream, laugh, get angry, but don't act like I didn't...that what happened..."

"It'll be okay, Sam."

Sam slunk back into his seat. "You mean besides the fact I can kill you with my brain?" Sam scoffed, "God, I can't even get you to be honest, just this one time..."

Dean knew that if he didn't let this part of him go, if he let it stay hidden, he'd lose more than just his brother's trust.

"M Scared..." Dean admitted reluctantly. "Just a little though, and not of you, Sam. For you. Scared you'll let this thing get bigger than you, tear you apart, drive you into Nathan's shoes."

Sam had quieted, eyes on the floor of the car, shoulders folded down. Dean continued, hoping this hadn't done more damage than help. He knew Sam was frustrated with his answers, with his speeches, with his jokes. He knew his brother would give anything for the truth, which he wasn't realizing Dean had been giving him all along. Dean knew that the presentation had to be different, that the raw truth couldn't be buried under promises and speeches for Sam to believe him.

"I think Chelsea said it best. I'm not scared of you because I know you. You're my brother, Sam, and I..."

Need you. Need you to be all right...

Dean paused, not sure how much he was getting through, awkward with opening himself up for Sam to see right through. Sam lifted a corner of his mouth in a partial, weak smile.

"That wasn't so hard," he said.

"Says you," Dean returned, unable to look at Sam, his last glance at his brother's troubled eyes having torn him apart inside.

"Tell me again," Sam said quietly, and Dean could hear that plea for reassurance he always found impossible to ignore. "What you always do..."

"You'll be okay, Sam," Dean returned, making it truth within himself, refusing to believe anything else. "We'll figure it out like we always do. And I'm not going anywhere. As long as I'm around, nothing bad is gonna happen to you."

Alden Residence, Roseville, CA, Night

There were certain moments in her tangled life when Chelsea Cole felt things would be all right. Moments graced with reassurance and laughter, moments where she felt secure and safe as long as her big brother was with her. Moments unlike the ones she was lost in now. There was no more reassurance or laughter, no more big brother, and things would not be all right as long as he was gone.

She could hear her current caretakers talking through the walls, their voices muted, but clear in their meaning. She'd heard the discussions over what was to be done with her. No father, no mother...No Nathan. She had no one now, and she

didn't want to stay there. Not in Jay's aunt's house. Not with the creaking windows and the smell of moth balls.

She stared down at the pinwheel in her hand sadly, remembering when Nathan had helped her stick them in the garden. He'd liked the blue ones. So had she. She'd saved one to remember him.

Watching it closely, she made it spin, enjoying the colors, all different shades of blue, melt and blur together. She liked that she didn't have to use her breath, that she could make the colors dance without pursing her lips together like a fish. All she had to do was concentrate on the foiled edges and she could feel wind kiss her cheeks.

The chimes at her closed window started to move too, and she stopped looking at the multi-colored blues and listened to them ting against one another. The tree outside her window was tapping its branches against the glass, breaking her concentration, slowing the pinwheel and her chimes.

Pushing up from her bed, Chelsea went to the window, looking passed the branches and down into the yard. The branches had stopped their rapping at her window, asking for attention, the second she appeared at the sill. A smile spread, relief and confirmation of hopes filling her when she caught the shadow beneath the tree.

Making sure she had her pea coat and her shoes, Chelsea took up her small school bag filled with what was left of her home and stuck her head out into the hall, making sure no one was near. She could hear Jay talking to that aunt of his, could hear the worry and the sadness in his voice. He deserved to know the truth, but at the same time, Chelsea reasoned it was better this way.

Jay could be happy with no more Nathan, no more Chelsea.

Being as quiet as she could, Chelsea, padded her way down the steps and gently coaxed back the front door. She paused to make sure her flight was undetected, and closed it quietly behind her. Sprinting around the side of the house, she practically barreled over the arms that were there to greet her, laughing.

After burying her face in his shirt, holding onto him for fear that he wasn't real, Chelsea turned tear-filled eyes up into his face.

"I'm sorry it took me so long," Nathan told her, "Sorry I didn't realize a few things sooner..."

Chelsea hugged him again, shaking her head. She took his hand and they started walking away, down the street, knowing they had no home, no place to go, but she was finding that was okay. She wanted him to know that was okay too. Because there were moments in both of their tangled lives when things would be okay, if only because they had one another.

"I knew you'd come back for me."

The End