

No Second Chances
Season Four
Episode Thirteen
By Kittsbud

RAF Sutton Hallam Aviation Museum,
Wiltshire, England
Present Day

Harry Sedgwick let his ancient bicycle freewheel as he headed down the slope toward the old airfield. It was a dry, perfectly clear morning that reminded the old soldier of days when the base was still operational.

As he sped down the rutted lane, bike bobbing over potholes, he remembered the drone of engines that had been replaced by the whoosh of jet turbines, which in turn had eventually be replaced by the simple sounds of the country.

Sutton Hallam had been a bustling base during World War II, but now time itself was the enemy, and the old place was nothing more than a defunct site turned out to pasture – much like Harry.

Of course, Harry knew that things could have been a lot worse, both for himself and the old airfield. Most places like this ended up overgrown with weeds or turned into some industrious farmer's next project for genetically modified crops.

At least Sutton Hallam was preserving the past. It was a museum now. A place dedicated to the airmen who had lived and died here over the years.

Harry felt his bike begin to slow and realized he'd been daydreaming again. He was almost at the main gate and would run into the wire fencing if he didn't hit the brakes.

Tapping the levers lightly on the handlebars he brought the bike to a halt and hopped from its rusty frame more lithely than his years should allow.

Still life in the old soldier yet, he inwardly chuckled to himself as he leaned his trusty steed against the airfield fence and mopped his brow with his cap.

Harry looked skywards at the rising sun, noting that he was sweating already. It was going to be a glorious morning, and he needed to get busy before the tourists arrived.

Walking along the edge of the field towards the visitors' center where he regularly volunteered to work, Harry began to ponder just what new adventures the day would bring.

Selling souvenirs to cheeky kids or less-than-understanding parents could sometimes be a tricky job – but someone had to do it to keep the museum going. The upkeep of the aircraft here cost thousands, after all.

As he approached the main hangar, Harry paused and took a breath, his chest wheezing. Perhaps all the cycling was a little too much for him after all. He took a moment to close his eyes and regain his composure, using the chirping of insects and abundance of birdsong to soothe him.

Eventually, his weary lungs calmed, and he opened his eyes again, expecting to see the

broken concrete of the airstrip in front of him.

Instead, just in front of the lone remaining hangar, was a shadow.

Harry blinked, assuming his aging eyes were seeing things.

But they weren't.

A figure in a USAAF uniform was walking across the runway, a figure that somehow looked faded, incomplete.

Harry's chest began to heave again, and his heart joined in the frantic motion, thundering against his ribcage as he suspected, nay realized, what he was seeing.

There had been rumors of late. A ghostly pilot that haunted the field.

And now, Harry, a none-believer, was witnessing it too.

The old man's hands began to shake, and it was all he could do not to drop the cap wedged between his left thumb and forefinger. And yet, he was still strangely compelled to watch the ghost.

As Harry stared, wide-eyed, the apparition began to run, and as the thing's gait increased, it was joined by the droning sound of four Boeing engines.

Taking his gaze from the spirit just long enough to look further down the cracked runway, Harry could see the outline of a Flying Fortress bomber fading in and out of existence.

The ghost seemed to run towards the olive drab aircraft, and eventually appeared to clamber on board via a hatch under the front of the plane.

The engine sounds grew louder, as if the pilot was increasing the throttles ready for takeoff.

Harry could feel the thinning hair on his scalp blowing backwards as the phantom engines grew closer, roaring, propellers spinning wildly as they dragged the metal behemoth skywards.

And then, as quickly as it had appeared, the plane and its ghostly cargo were gone.

Harry exhaled and leaned forward, hands pressing on his knees as he almost doubled over with fright.

Martha always said I shouldn't have that tot of brandy in my tea in the morning, he told himself. But I need a little Dutch courage from somewhere on those darn winding lanes. A man could get knocked off his ride as easy as...

As easy as he could see things that aren't there if he had a wee dram too many...
Harry straightened up.

Not because he had convinced himself he'd been delusional from the effects of alcohol, but because there was a new sound assaulting his tired ears.

More aircraft engines.

But this time, they weren't in multiples of fours, they were single.

Fighters!

Harry shielded his eyes from the morning sun and instinctively looked up. He'd heard the sound of these particular engines before at re-enactments – they belonged to German Messerschmitts used during the war.

The blue ether above him was empty and Harry couldn't help but blink, stretching his eyelids to convince himself what was happening.

Ghosts that appeared and disappeared, engine noises that had no source. None of it made any sense.

Harry was still trying to work it all out when the rebuilt con tower to his left suddenly exploded in a hail of invisible bullets. The brickwork was torn open, and the wooden door was splintered so badly that it teetered and then dropped from its groaning hinges.

With his old military training taking hold, Harry made a dive for the ground as more strafing ripped into the earth around him. He rolled and rolled, his aging body screaming as muscles he hadn't used in years were forced to work.

Tears streamed from the old soldier's eyes as he tried to comprehend how or why he was being targeted.

Above him, the Luftwaffe engines grew closer and closer, until eventually, Harry couldn't help but look up one last time.

And as his gaze locked on the diving aircraft, Harry realized he was looking directly into the eyes of the man who was going to kill him.

The German pilot fired one last time, the shells from his ME109's guns tearing into Harry Sedgwick until the old man's shredded body could sustain his life no longer.

Then, as quickly as it had come to pass, the phenomenon was gone, leaving a grieving Wiltshire countryside to mourn its dead as it once had before so many years ago....

Pacific Heights, California

Dean pressed the doorbell for the fourth time and wondered just why he was standing on the porch of such a nice house when he could be hunting.

This place oozed money, and no doubt the owner had enough of the stuff stuffed in his wallet to make him a prize dick to boot. Not that Dean wouldn't take some of that cash off the guy if he offered it up for spook-hunting services rendered, but that was unlikely to happen.

Rich dicks were usually also tightwads.

"Tell me again why we're here, Sammy?" Dean groaned, stealing a glance across the road to where he'd parked the Impala.

"We're here because the house's owner called us up and asked for help," Sam supplied. "And because said owner was a friend of Dad's."

Dean huffed. "Yeah, well I don't recall Dad ever mentioning any retired Airforce Colonels named Billy Woodward..." He poked his finger hard on the bell button again in annoyance.

"Right, because our dad is sooo talkative..."

The perfectly painted white door behind Sam finally moved and a gentle-looking old man, clearly in his eighties, greeted both brothers with a thin smile.

After taking a moment to appraise the pair before him, the graying Colonel offered up a hand obviously gnarled with arthritis. "John's boys," he visibly brightened. "I knew I could count on the Winchesters for this."

Before Dean could ask what they were being counted on for, the old-timer vanished back inside his lavish home, leaving them to follow him.

The main passageway led off into several side rooms, and Woodward made a beeline for the third on the right, which turned out to be a small library.

He eased his frail body behind a desk and sank into a weathered chair that had the same texture as his craggy skin.

Dean and Sam pulled up a chair each from a selection that lined one wall and sat in front of their host as he poured them all a Glenmorangie.

"So, Colonel Woodward," Sam began as he accepted the scotch. "What exactly is it we can do for you?"

Woodward took a sip of his own drink and gazed out of the window, apparently savoring the urban vista. Eventually, he took a deep, wheezy breath and began. "During the second World War, I served in England as a B17 pilot. Just recently, I've learned that my old base may be being haunted, and I'd like you two to investigate..."

Dean couldn't hide his surprise and grimaced before his mind caught up with his facial muscles. "You want us to go to England just to gank a spook? Don't they have hunters over the pond?"

Sam looked at his brother. "Actually, Dad knows some pretty good hunters in the UK." His brow furrowed as he apparently realized this had a deeper meaning. "So why would Dad suggest us to the Colonel when there are perfectly good people closer?"

Woodward smiled, and, placing his tumbler down, leaned over to clasp his hands together on the desk. "I'll tell you why, boys. Because this is no ordinary ghost."

Dean wasn't convinced – especially not when the prospect of getting on a plane was looming ever closer. "Oh yeah, so who is it, friggin' Elvis?" he muttered slightly disrespectfully under his breath.

The Colonel's smile faltered and his expression saddened, the creases of his skin seeming to increase a thousand fold until he looked like a taller version of Yoda. "No...the ghost is me!"

"Excuse me, sir, but..?" Sam questioned. "How can a ghost be of you when you're..."

"Still alive?" Woodward shrugged. "I don't know, but what I do know is that every witness who has seen the spirit identifies it as me – or at least me when I was about nineteen. And

then there's the plane."

"The *plane*?" Dean dared to ask, abruptly wishing Woodward would fill up his suddenly empty tumbler.

Woodward nodded. "People don't just see a ghost of me, they see a B17 – *my* B17. Every aircrew back then named their bird and mine was called "No Second Chances." Me and the boys renamed her after we nearly bought the farm on our first rookie mission. You soon learned back in those days that you didn't get any second chances in our line of work. One mistake, that was all it took, and you were snuffed out."

"The witnesses are sure it's your plane?" Sam pushed.

"Yes," Billy sighed. "They've seen the name on the side of the ghost plane as it taxis down Sutton Hallam runway and then vanishes..."

Dean ran a hand through the spikes of his hair as he often did when something was puzzling him. "You have to know this is impossible, right?" he eventually suggested to the Colonel. "You're either a spook, or you're not. Maybe the plane we could fathom, but how can your ghost be haunting a place when you're still in the land of the living?"

Woodward slid the top from the whiskey bottle and poured each of his guests another large drink, eventually stopping off at his own tumbler to do the same. "I don't know how, that's why I asked for the best – the Winchesters."

"Look, I don't mean to be rude." Dean took a swig of the single malt he'd been given and savored it. "But why do you even care about something happening all those miles away? So the spook looks like you, why do you care?"

The old man's sad look grew in intensity, his eyes almost blinking back tears of regret, and maybe something more. "Because in the last manifestation, someone died. Old Harry was a friend of mine who used to volunteer out at the airfield museum. Last week, he was cut down by what appeared to be a strafing run from none-existent aircraft. The local police, are, of course baffled."

"But you think it's all part and parcel of what's happening there?" Sam was nodding as if the gig was becoming more and more like their kind of case.

Dean wanted desperately to nudge him and say it wasn't, but try as he might, he couldn't bring himself to let Sam, or Woodward, down.

Because this *was* their kind of job, and if their dad had thought the Colonel needed them, who were they to doubt it?

So why isn't Dad here himself? Dean's mind questioned. *This is his friend, his gig...*

Except, of course, John was off doing something secretive again. Something even they weren't privy to yet. And it was something big.

"So, do you think you can help?"

Dean heard Woodward ask the question, and was vaguely aware of Sam suggesting that they could.

With no argument to give, save for his fear of long-haul flights and utter dread at leaving

behind the Impala, Dean simply nodded, wondering deep inside how he all-too-often let himself be railroaded by his younger sibling.

Damn, never mind him being a special kid, he was definitely some kinda hypnotist in another life...

Heathrow Airport Avis Car Hire

Sam watched his brother circle the car they'd been given by the rental company for the tenth time and only just managed to stifle a grin.

Being cooped up on the plane had made Dean more than just a little wired, and anyone or anything he came in contact with for the next hour or so was going to find out just how much with more than a few choice expletives.

It wasn't the little car's fault, it wasn't England's fault, but Dean was going to vent anyway, and Sam knew it.

Dean leaned against the driver's side window and squinted at the steering wheel as if it were an angry poltergeist. "Jeez," he bemoaned. "I forgot we have to drive on the wrong friggin' side of the road in Merry Old..."

He paced some more, nose puckering in disgust at the size, or lack of size, of the vehicle. "Sammy, what is this thing, a roller-skate? Hell, it's so small I need one for each foot and then some." Dean's arms wafted skywards in defeat. "And what kind of a name for a car is a 'Vauxhall Corsa' for crying out loud?"

This time, Sam's features did pucker into a grin. "Actually, it's a GM..."

Dean's expression changed from loathing to one of apprehension. "Great, just great, you'll be telling me next it has a mind of its own, like those freakish things in Michigan!"

Sam shook his head, finding it hard to believe sometimes just how childish his ass-kicking brother could be. And it wasn't even that Dean was mad at Sam for luring him over the pond – no, Dean was mad at himself for allowing it to happen, and for actually stepping onto the Boeing at L.A.X.

"Sam and Dean Winchester?"

Sam looked up first to see a thin, angular looking man with a well-trimmed beard approaching them.

The soft lilt to his voice said he hailed from Scotland, rather than Wiltshire, and his casual, but well dressed appearance suggested he was here on business rather than pleasure.

Before Sam could answer the man, Dean had stepped in front of the Corsa's hood, arms crossed, looking more confrontational than civil. "Who's asking?" He snapped, obviously still tetchy with jetlag.

The man didn't seem to take offence and offered up a hand. "Alan Hamilton, I'm the owner of Sutton Hallam."

Sam took the proffered palm and shook it. If Dean was going to be a rude ass, then he'd have to make up for it. "I'm Sam, this is my brother Dean. How did you know we were here?"

Hamilton shrugged. "Billy Woodward gave me a call and asked me to meet you here. He thought it best if I take you out to the airfield and bring you up to speed on what's been going on."

"Forgive me for saying this, but you two don't look like the most likely of buddies there, Haggis." Dean shot Hamilton an unsavory glance that suggested he had already taken a dislike to the man.

Sam squirmed. Dean's intuition was rarely wrong, but being out and out offensive wasn't going to get them the information they needed. *Besides, this guy seems nice enough. Maybe a little up himself, but that's businessmen for you...*

Hamilton seemed to sense Sam's pain and simply smiled at Dean's remark. He was apparently a man who could control his emotions way better than a certain Winchester.

But did that immediately make him a suspect in whatever was going on out at the field?

Little realizing he was being scrutinized like an ant under a microscope, Hamilton continued to answer the brothers' questions, although Sam couldn't help wondering whether he actually *did* realize and was one step ahead of the game.

"Woodward was a friend of my father's. They were both old-school pilots who wanted to leave Sutton Hallam behind as a legacy to those who died there. I barely know him, really. We talk on the phone occasionally, and Woodward makes the odd donation to help keep the planes we have flying..."

Dean clicked his tongue. "Figures," he muttered. "Funny how most things always come down to greenbacks."

This time Hamilton almost broke into a grin as he retorted. "Actually, pounds here, Mr Winchester."

"Yeah, well, Haggis, you can take your pounds, and your midget-mobile cars and shove them right..."

Sam grabbed his brother's shoulders, snapped open the Corsa's door, and pushed his brother inside. Looking back to Hamilton apologetically, he could almost feel himself blushing.

The Scot seemed to appreciate the sincerity of the move and nodded good-naturedly. He pointed to a Land Rover Discovery parked a short distance away. "It'll take a while to get back to the airfield. Make sure your brother keeps close. I wouldn't want you to get lost on your first day here..."

"Oh I'm already wishing I could get lost on this pokey little island," Dean muttered as he cranked the tiny vehicle into life. "Lost right on up to the nearest diner..."

Sam pulled a face. "Uh...I'm thinking they call them cafes over here, dude...or maybe chip shops?"

"Whatever," Dean groused as he pulled out of the lot after Hamilton. "All I can say is, the

food better be damn good, or I'm takin' the first plane right on outta this joint tomorrow..."

Sam chuckled, then winced as his head bumped against the Corsa's low roof. "I'm sensing some seriously negative vibes from you," he sighed. "Especially with Hamilton. C'mon, man, what's eating at you about him already?"

Dean shook his head. "I dunno, there's just something off about Kiltboy, and I don't mean because he's not wearing his native skirt. Maybe it's just a Brit thing..."

"You never did get over the Boston Tea Party, huh?" Sam chuckled some more.

Dean's face contorted into a scowl, and he flipped someone the bird with his left hand.

Sam wasn't sure if the gesture was aimed at him for being sarcastic, or at Hamilton, as the Scot sped down a one track winding lane that the Corsa struggled to traverse.

Maybe Hamilton was gaining a little sweet revenge, the younger Winchester pondered, as both he and Dean fought to keep their breakfast down over the myriad of potholes that littered the country backroad.

**RAF Sutton Hallam Aviation Museum,
Wiltshire, England,
Present Day**

Dean hit the Corsa's brakes just a little too harshly as he pulled up outside the airfield's main gates. He grumbled, slid the gear lever into neutral, and then killed the ignition before jumping out like his jeans were on fire.

"Man, I can handle a stick shift, but that thing is *evil*. Remind me to salt and burn the sucker before we fly home, will ya?"

Sam pried his gangly frame from the car and stretched, finally free from the vehicle's cramped confines. "I'll definitely supply the salt," he agreed, rubbing at his apparently aching shoulders.

"And what's with Brit roundabouts? Hell, I thought ours were weird, but these guys are plain suicidal at those things. Do the English like to be confusing just for the heck of it?"

Sam shrugged, then blinked when his eyes locked onto the tiny cottage they'd parked out front of. The place was white, with a thatched roof and climbing roses that made it look like something straight out of a fairy tale.

In short, it was stereotypically British to the extreme.

Dean noted his brother's gaze and joined in the gaping. "Jeez, is there anything that *isn't* creepy about this whacked out country?"

Sam opened his mouth wider to apparently respond, but a little old woman popped out of the cottage's front door, halting his answer with her perfectly wizened features – she was a total match for the cottage.

The pensioner hobbled down a cobbled garden path, her grey bun bobbing and her hand-knitted cardigan flapping in the breeze. At the gate, she paused to look over her wire-rimmed spectacles in annoyance – right at Dean.

"Young man, don't you have any notion of the Highway Code? You can't park there, it's blocking my right of way!" Her no-nonsense voice told both hunters she was in no mood to be trifled with, despite her age.

At her side, a minute Yorkshire terrier, complete with a red bow in its fur, decided to yap in agreement with its mistress.

When no one seemed to pay it any heed, it dived underneath the wooden gate and swiftly attached its razor sharp canines to the bottom of Dean's jeans.

The dog tugged, growled and chewed its way into everyone's attention.

"Hey, will you get this mutt off of me? What is it with this place? Midget cars and now midget dogs..." Dean's expression suggested he'd rather be mauled by a pit bull, and the fact that Sam was laughing almost hysterically wasn't helping his already irked demeanor.

The old woman sniffed, but seemed to realize things were getting out of hand. "Here Beth!" She called softly. "Don't bite the young man, you don't even know him!"

Dean huffed, and leaned over, gently trying to pry the snorting animal off. "Who'd have thought it, a junior friggin' hellhound right here in Merry Old," he muttered, sending the Yorkie on its way with a tap to its rear end. "And just who does that old biddy think she is anyway, Miss Marble?"

"It's Marple," Sam corrected, watching as the cheeky old lady skittered back into her cottage.

"Whatever, dude..."

"Are you two ready for a tour of the museum?" Hamilton had returned from unlocking the gates to the airstrip, and had been apparently watching and waiting at a short distance as the pensioner grilled them.

He was smiling now, the corners of his beard creased in amusement.

"After Miss Marble and her pet pooch," Dean huffed, "I'm so ready for anything you and your mystery spook can throw at me."

"Cry havoc, and let slip the dogs of war, eh?" Hamilton nodded and led the way back into Sutton Hallam, his pace quickening as if he were late for some unknown date.

Dean scrunched up his nose as he followed. "Is that a Scottish thing?" He mumbled, asking no one in particular.

"Julius Caesar," Sam offered helpfully.

"Right, sooo never knew *he* was from Scotland..."

There was a look of mirth on Dean's face as he walked away – whether he was truly ignorant of the quote, or yanking his brother's chain, was anyone's guess.

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Dean drank in the atmosphere of the old airfield with a strange sense of dread. Hamilton escorted them through the old conning tower, and then a hangar containing a vintage B17 and Mustang, offering the odd narrative about each item's history.

There was little or no new information for them to really glean from the tour, but the air seemed to ooze something weird - like this part of England was somehow "off balance" with the rest.

Maybe it was the ancient smell of must assaulting his nostrils, oddly accompanied by a strong tang of aviation fuel from a nearby classic tanker.

Maybe it was just the thumping headache he'd had since landing, like pressure was building to some kind of crescendo in his skull.

Either way, Dean couldn't help but wonder just why their father had sent the Winchesters here. It was obviously important to John - like he already knew about the off kilter ambience of the place.

Like Dad knew this place was important somehow - and not just because of its weird spook...

But if John had believed Sutton Hallam was special, then why hadn't he been the one to investigate?

Because what he's working on is even bigger, knucklehead, Dean chided himself.

Not that the self-rebuke helped him any.

Dean's head still pounded until he wanted to snap at everyone he encountered. He wasn't even sure why he'd taken a dislike to Hamilton, maybe that was just the jackhammer in his cranium, or perhaps his intuition was saying the Scot was bad news.

Hell, this whole gig is already so clichéd we could be stuck in a friggin' episode of "Murder She Wrote" and I wouldn't even be surprised...

"As you can see we've attempted to preserve everything here as best we can. Everything is original." Hamilton was pointing to an old fire truck rather proudly.

"Everything except your ghosts," Sam corrected. "From what we hear, you have the spirit of a man who isn't even dead on site?"

Hamilton cleared his throat. "I wouldn't really know about that. Not something I've been privy to."

A none-believer. Dean had expected as much. That was probably why he thought the man was a dick from the get go.

Dean huffed at the idea, looking around for something to focus on rather than the annoying Scot. Eventually, he noticed a strangely interesting mound at the end of the potholed runway.

"So what's Mount Rushmore over there for? Some kinda natural brake for planes overshooting the concrete?"

Hamilton appeared to find the idea distinctly amusing. "That," he explained matter-of-factly, "*that* is an ancient barrow. You'll find Wiltshire is full of them." He was sounding like a smarmy school teacher now. "Don't you two know you're in Stonehenge country?"

"I know I'm in Asshatsville," Dean mumbled, coughing slightly over the comment to hide the scorn in his voice.

Hamilton appeared amused by the mockery, his eyes sparking with something Dean couldn't quite put his finger on.

"Anyway..." Hamilton droned, dragging out the word. "It's getting time to open up, and without old Harry I'll need to leave you awhile to man the office. We're a wee bit short staffed." He looked at his watch to make a point. "Perhaps you could retire to your rooms at the local? It must have been a long flight. You can always come back later if there's more you want to see?"

Is this schmuck trying to get rid of our butts already? Dean's mind was screaming at him, wanting him to put everything and everyone under suspicion. Were they being railroaded by the museum owner, or was something here putting him on edge so badly his cognitive reasoning was out the window?

Dean rubbed at his temples, wondering why the pressure there seemed so familiar – so frightening, almost.

He glanced at Sam, who had been even quieter than usual. Was he feeling something too?

"If you don't mind there, Haggis, me and my brother would like to take another quick look around before we leave. But don't worry, we don't need a babysitter."

Hamilton shrugged. "Fine. I'll be in reception if you need me." He blinked, looking both brothers over warily, as if they might suddenly get the urge to meddle with some of the display items.

After a second of deliberation, however, he strode quickly away from them, back towards the main gate and newer buildings that had been constructed there to sell memorabilia, tea and the odd assorted, and very British, cream cake.

"Is there a reason why you hate him so badly?" Sam asked, stuffing his hands in his pockets.

"Do I need one?"

Sam didn't seem to have an answer to that question, so posed another. "So now what? I don't know about you, but I haven't seen anything to suggest paranormal activity here."

"Me either," Dean conceded. "But something is wrong, I just feel it, Sasquatch. Something *real* big. And I don't mean your over-sized butt."

"Okay, so what say we try the EMF? If we're really dealing with a spirit, we might get a reading near some of the old pilot's gear, or maybe off the runway itself, where the phantom plane was sighted."

Dean nodded, pulling his home-made meter from his pocket with a grin. It had been a little tricky explaining to airport security why his Walkman had been modified, but in the end, he'd been able to convince them it really wasn't a terrorist's jury-rigged bomb.

"I'll take the runway," Dean suggested quickly. "No way do I wanna get cooped up in those damp, smelly hangars again. I've had motel johns smell better!"

"Admit it," Sam dared. "They creeped you out."

"Man, this whole gig is making me feel jittery. And seriously, I *don't do* jittery. You know that."

Sam looked down at his own EMF, but the needle remained static. "I know," he agreed without probing his brother for more. "I'll take the conn tower and bullet holes near where Harry died..."

Dean spun around to head towards the barrow and then turned back. "Thanks."

Sam bobbed his head in silent acknowledgement and then began to walk towards the damaged control tower.

Dean watched him amble away for a second and then resumed his own hike down the runway. As he walked, he scrutinized the cracks in the crumbling concrete, wondering how many aircraft had rumbled over them here.

The place felt like a graveyard, a shrine to something long gone – or perhaps, something still lurking in the shadows.

He looked up now as the morning sun appeared from behind a high bank of clouds. Peering out across the open vista of countryside, it would be easy to let the place charm him into carelessness.

Dean could see why England could be considered by some to be a quaint, old-fashioned country, but as a hunter, he knew, *sensed*, that evil lurked here just as much as in the States.

In fact, from the way the hairs on the back of his neck were reacting, maybe England – or this place at least – was worse than anything they'd encountered in the U.S.

So what is it I'm feeling? Spiritual? Demonic? Something else?

Dean squinted, shading the sun's rays from his eyes enough to take a second look at the burial mound that sat innocently at the end of the airstrip.

It was just a lump of earth covered in grass, and yet something was drawing him here.

This isn't right...

Dean glanced away quickly as he felt a sudden tug at his senses, like an unknown entity was invading his soul.

His eyes danced once again over concrete, and he expected to see encroaching weeds assaulting the runway, but instead, he caught a fleeting glance of an array of symbols.

Symbols that appeared oddly familiar, even though he was convinced he had never seen the likes of them before.

He moved to kneel, but before his legs would obey his brain, there was another sensation,

yanking at him.

And this time, it was more than a mental jerk, it was physical in the extreme.

The world spun around him as the molecules in his body were yanked to infinity and beyond.

Day turning to night, night turning to...

...a familiar numbness that Dean Winchester had hoped never to feel again.

Part Two

Dean found his body rolling over concrete until he stuck out an arm to stop the insanely rapid momentum. He jarred to a sudden halt, his head continuing to spin for several seconds.

He blinked, not really knowing what to expect from the world around him.

At first glance, it appeared he had never left the runway at Sutton Hallam. The sun still glinted above him like a warm beacon in the sky. Birds still chirped around him, their happy song seeming somehow unfitting for the moment.

And just past the concrete, the barrow still sat innocently in the Wiltshire countryside, its unnatural bump marring the otherwise perfect panorama.

All this was just as Dean had left it – except, except there was something different, something off about the scene now.

Dean screwed his eyes shut and let his ears do the work, and then it hit him.

There were voices, at first distant, but becoming louder and more real with every second he breathed.

The voices were shouting, barking out orders and reprimands, like a well-oiled machine – like a crew getting ready for battle.

Dean's eyelids jerked open and a huge, dark shadow instantly fell into place above him. He impulsively looked up at it, drawn by some kind of magnetism.

The dark aura now blotting out the sun was a B17 bomber in all its glory. And this was no museum exhibit from times gone by. This was real.

This was *now*.

Dean dared to let his gaze move from the aircraft to the area around him. Uniformed men were running to and fro – men in leathers and harnesses ready to fly, men in grease-stained coveralls carrying tools for last minute adjustments to a fleet of aircraft.

The whole airfield was buzzing with excitement, and with deep-seated fear.

"Hey, bud! I hope you weren't drinking last night? Not on our first mission!"

Dean's eyes locked with the man addressing him, only to see that it was Billy Woodward – except, this Woodward could have been no more than nineteen years old. The skinny slip of

a man was wearing a captain's uniform, the grey tinges of his hair and deep crags on his face having vanished as if a magician had waved a wand over him.

Behind Woodward were several other apparent crew members, all in thick, heavy flying gear.

"You're our new left waist guy, right?" Woodward continued, oblivious to Dean's true identity. "Just a bunch of rookies together, huh?" he laughed, but there was an edge to his timbre that suggested fear.

I'm dreaming, Dean's mind cried. Dreaming like I did with those friggin zombies...

But deep down, Dean knew this was no dream. He had felt the familiar tug, the unsettling wrench as he'd been whisked away somewhere just like...

I'm either really in the past with these guys, or my ass just got zapped to another reality.

Either way, it wasn't good news.

Woodward offered a thin smile, as if he thought Dean was just scared, then he jerked a thumb up to the plane. Dean followed the motion, noting that the aircraft hadn't been dubbed "No Second Chances" yet. This must be Woodward and the crew's first mission, the one he had talked about before they renamed the plane.

And now, now somehow Dean was part of it all, like he'd fallen through some whacked out looking glass all over again.

"Well don't just stand there gawking," Woodward finally barked. "Saddle up!" The captain tossed Dean a kit bag from a nearby jeep, and the hunter caught it awkwardly.

Crap, I'm about to go on a bombing run with a bunch of spooks, or whatever these freaks really are...

"Look, guys, I think there's been some kinda mistake. I really don't belong here..." Dean thought of about a million excuses he could use, and realized that none of them was probably going to work when the plane's crew all just looked at him.

Just *looked*.

A short, dumpy crewman slapped him on the back. "Man, we all feel like you do, but this is what we do. No turning back, no second chances..."

Dean opened his mouth. He wanted to explain everything, tell these people that somewhere on the airfield there was a real waist gunner looking for his bird.

But then, what would that make him?

Knowing my friggin' luck I'd get arrested as some Nazi spy...

And besides, no way could he let these people look at him like he was a damned coward for one more second.

"Just gimme a minute to get my gear on, okay?"

Woodward nodded, apparently satisfied, and then turned to clamber into a hatch in the

bottom of the B17.

As Dean watched him go, all the hunter could think about was how the next few hours would play out.

If this was just the past, then he, along with everyone else on the plane, should get home safely. Woodward hadn't mentioned any casualties when they'd spoken about it, after all.

But if this was another reality, then that opened up a whole new can of worms Dean had already seen up close and personal on his last visit through the wormhole, or whatever the damn thing was.

In short, he could easily die here.

* * * *

Inside the B17 was worse than Dean had expected. Riding in a sardine can had been how his mind had depicted it, but this was way worse.

He was perched in the midsection, a Browning machine gun tethered in front of him. Behind his position, the other waist gunner sat happily chewing on gum.

He gave Dean the thumbs up as he spotted the hunter staring at him.

No way is this happening. No way...

Must, oil, leather and other scents he couldn't even describe assaulted his nostrils. Maybe he could even smell fear.

These were a combination of odors no one had smelled in over fifty years, and he was experiencing them all the hard way.

Beneath him, the plane began to grumble, and Dean realized it was making its taxi run.

This was it. He was about to wage war on other humans for the first time in his life unless he could unlock the mystery of how he'd gotten here.

And that wasn't going to happen while his ass was being dragged into the heavens over Europe.

He looked down to see his normally steady hands were shaking. The claustrophobia was already getting to him. Flying in modern jets was bad enough, but the lurching motion as this ancient crate bounced down the runway was making his stomach sing a very unhappy chorus.

Dean tried to concentrate on the positive, anything to keep focused. Somewhere, Sammy would be looking for him. His brother might be sitting in some library right now, trying to figure a way how to drag Dean home.

The note from the B17's four cyclone engines changed suddenly as Billy Woodward opened the throttles and let the bird soar into the air. The sound, the droning was almost deafening in Dean's ears.

He closed his eyes, hoping that when he reopened them he would be lying back on the damaged concrete of Sutton Hallam, but instead, all he got was a disjointed view of the

British countryside – from the air.

Looking out from the open hatch in front of him was like looking from a hot air balloon's basket. There was nowhere to go but down.

Around the plane, other B17's were filling in gaps, bringing together a formation.

And they were so damn close he felt like he could reach out and touch them.

Watching old war movies with John had been one thing, but Dean would never get excited about the prospect again.

This was *real*, and there was no way to get away from it.

Was this nature's way of giving him the answers he needed about Sutton Hallam?

Fat lot of good that does me if I can't get back to Sam, to my time, reality, or whatever the hell it is I've slipped from...

The second waist gunner tapped him on the shoulder, bringing him back to the reality of here and now.

Dean jumped slightly, his nerves so heightened he almost took a swing at the man.

"Hey, man, you might wanna put your gloves and mask on or you'll be toast before we even reach the bomb run."

Dean blinked, and shook his head, not understanding the command. But then, why would he? He wasn't trained for this.

Jerry, the other man, pointed above his head and grinned as if this was child's play. "Gonna be heading high soon, capiche? Real high. No oxygen up there, and it's gonna be real cold too. Remember your training!"

Fear gripped the hunter again, fear like he'd never known before. One mistake like this and he'd never see Sam again. Never have the luxury of firing up the Impala and just riding along the freeways.

Silently, he tugged on the thick leather gloves that lay on the fuselage in front of him and slid the oxygen mask over his face. It smelled rubbery, and the edges stuck uncomfortably into his flesh.

Still, this would be the least of his worries soon.

Soon, he would have enemy fighters zeroing in on him, on the plane, and he would be forced to use the machine gun in front of him against something other than a supernatural being.

He had thought about moments like this before, even been confronted with them sometimes. There were many people he'd come close to ventilating for one reason or another.

But just because two ruling nations had argued over border rights, or politics?

Somehow, the value of life seemed worth more than that.

**RAF Sutton Hallam Aviation Museum
Wiltshire, England
Present Day**

Sam spun around slowly, the EMF meter in his hand remaining strangely quiet. It had been this way throughout every section of the museum he had visited so far, and he doubted it would change.

Whatever people had seen here, it wasn't the spirit of a pilot who was still living – albeit in Pacific Heights.

Of course, ruling out spiritual activity, didn't exactly tell Sam what the Winchesters were really dealing with. It was the most frustrating gig he'd ever worked, and he could now easily see why John had sent them.

He couldn't, however, see why their father hadn't come himself. Yes, he apparently had bigger fish to fry, but bigger than this? And if it was that big, why was he shutting them out as usual?

These were all questions Sam knew were annoying the crap out of Dean too, but it was difficult for them to talk such things over without getting into a blazing argument about who trusted their father and who apparently didn't.

The whole “Sammy went off to Stanford while I stayed behind to help Dad hunt” line was bound to come up again if he pushed his luck.

Dean was still hurting from Stull. He was hurting because John wouldn't open up and let them help.

Dammit, we're all still hurting...

“You still expecting to find something out here?”

Sam looked up to see Hamilton ambling over to him, shirt sleeves rolled up and tie now slightly askew. He looked more human now, more man, less businessman.

“Just finishing up,” Sam answered, letting the EMF fall to his side as he moved towards the Scot and the final building of his search area.

“I wouldn't have thought my wee airfield had enough to keep you busy this many hours. It's almost lunch already.”

Sam instantly checked his watch, almost dropping the EMF in the process. Hamilton was right, checking out Sutton Hallam should only have taken half an hour. It *had* only taken half an hour, hadn't it?

Sam's watch insisted otherwise, agreeing with Hamilton's first assessment of the time.

Somehow, Sam had lost track of the minutes and hours that had passed between leaving Dean. Lost track so badly that he couldn't even remember what he'd been doing in the interim.

Was it just jetlag, or was this all part of what was going on here?

"I just have this last building to check out," Sam finally responded. "Then I guess I better go find my brother. Knowing Dean, he's probably in your tea shop chowing down on your famous British cream cakes."

Hamilton smiled as if the idea amused him as he followed Sam into a small area where the older vehicles were apparently worked on and restored. It was darker here, the same musty smell permeating the air that the old hangar seemed to exude in abundance.

"I didn't see him in the NAAFI," the Scot corrected as Sam began to whirl around with the EMF again. "Perhaps he's still out on the runway looking for none-existent spooks."

Sam paused, watching as the meter in his hand jumped once and then settled again back to nothing. When he was sure the needle's movement had been random, he asked, "So I take it you don't believe in ghosts?"

Hamilton stuffed his hands in his trouser pockets and leaned back on an old Bedford fuel truck. "Honestly, no, I don't. To me, there can't be any such things as restless spirits, or I'd have seen one by now, wouldn't I?"

"Maybe you're just lucky," Sam countered, spinning left and right with the EMF as if it was a mine sweeper.

Hamilton shrugged. "You have to see things from my perspective. If I wasn't the owner of this place and know better, I'd have to say all this was some publicity stunt to get more visitors."

"That's just the capitalist in you talking." Sam smiled. "Sometimes, though, you just have to go on blind faith and accept the things you *can't* see."

A strange expression appeared on the Scot's face which suggested he didn't believe in anything that wasn't physical, and Sam decided the man was definitely more a believer in what science could prove than what it could not. The supernatural to Hamilton was the stuff of books, movies and dreams.

"So, you and your brother, do you really believe in spirits?" Hamilton prodded. "Or is your business more about prying money from gullible people who think they have a ghost in their attic?"

Sam realized the man was being sincere. Dean would probably have taken the question as yet another sign the man was a dick who thought they were a pair of con artists; but that wasn't the point, and Sam knew it.

Hamilton wanted to know what *they* believed. He wanted to know just what kind of people Billy Woodward had invited onto his airfield, and most of all, he wanted to know what was going on here as much as they did.

Either that, or Dean is right and the guy is behind all this...

"We believe in what we do," Sam answered honestly. "And I can tell you that I've seen enough out there to know there's some pretty weird crap walking around among us. What *you* believe, though, well that entirely up to you."

"Pretty weird crap, eh?" Hamilton's beard creased as his smile grew. "You must have met my first wife."

Sam stuffed the EMF in his overcoat pocket and was going to offer a counter quip when the door behind them both suddenly slammed shut. The force behind it suggested more than just a breeze had locked them in.

Hamilton's brow furrowed and his smile vanished, replaced by a look of annoyance. "I didn't tell anyone to lock up early," he growled, his accent thickening.

Sam winced. "I don't think this is about someone securing the building for the day..."

To confirm his concern, the ancient Bedford truck Hamilton had leaned on only moments earlier abruptly fired up, its engine revving so hard dense black soot belched from its muffler.

Behind it, a similar vehicle coughed into life, even though its cab was clearly empty.

"See, now that's the kind of weird I'm talking about," Sam offered as he ran to the door and pulled at the faded brass knob.

It didn't yield, but then he had expected as much.

They were trapped in a small brick building that had apparently no other exits, no windows, and no way for the rapidly-amassing carbon monoxide fumes to escape.

And if the fumes couldn't escape, and neither could they, then Sam and Hamilton would suffocate here.

"I have a spare key!" Hamilton joined Sam at the doorway, fumbling in his pockets for a keychain. He was obviously freaked by what was happening, but impressively had yet to express full-blown panic.

Finding the elusive key, the Scot rammed it into the lock and swiftly turned it.

Nothing happened.

He turned it again, cursing when the door refused to give way.

"We have to find another way out," Sam coughed, "Or at least make enough noise for someone to realize we're in here." He began banging on the door with his fists and yelling to anyone that might be outside.

The fumes and diesel smoke were already drying out his throat, though, making his lungs burn and ache with every breath he took.

From Hamilton's expression, he felt much the same.

"This is a garage right?" Sam hacked.

Hamilton raised a brow, the seriousness of the situation apparently making his mind a blank slate. "So?"

"Tools!"

Hamilton instantly spun around, lunging across the room to grab the nearest sizeable screwdriver he could find. Sam followed his lead, grabbing a tire iron and hammer.

Together, they assaulted the wooden doorframe and lock like they were their arch enemies; because on this battlefield, they were.

Sam rammed the iron into the wooden surround, expecting the old timbers to give easily, but things weren't going to be that simple. It was like trying to cut down a Giant Redwood with a penknife.

Hamilton was finding his attack on the lock's barrel was just as futile.

Sam groaned as he worked the iron further. The wood somehow seemed impenetrable, like it was made from armor plating rather than a humble tree.

"Something's working against us," he snapped.

"Some *thing*?" Even now, Hamilton seemed incredulous at the possibility of supernatural forces at work on his premises. "We should try and shut down the trucks' engines," he suggested, eyes streaming and red from the smoke and fumes.

Somehow, Sam doubted that they had any chance of success, but he nodded anyway. Whatever was controlling this situation had catered for every eventuality, it wasn't going to slip up on something so obvious as removing a key from an ignition. "You take the Bedford, I'll take the other," he barked, his voice sounding like he'd been chewing on sawdust for a week.

In the thick soup now swimming around them, he could see Hamilton nod and then clamber up the first truck's side steps.

There was no time for Sam to watch the Scot further, however. Instead, he made a beeline for the other vehicle, his lanky frame allowing him to gain access to the cab in one move.

In frustration, he instantly banged his palm against the metal dash. There were no keys to even remove. The ignition barrel was a simple empty slot staring up at him like it was grinning in victory.

Sam jumped back down from the cab and yanked at the hood release. It wasn't over yet.

Pulling the hood open, he wafted the smoke in the air away, allowing him to look for any component he could tear away with his bare hands to stop the motor.

The heavy hood, though, had other ideas.

Sam could feel the metal pushing in his hands, testing him. Instinctively, he let go just before the hood decided to come crashing back down – a move which would easily have smashed his skull to pieces if he hadn't gotten out of the way.

Across the workshop, Hamilton was experiencing much the same level of resistance with his attempts to stop the Bedford.

Whatever was haunting Sutton Hallam didn't want the phenomenon investigating, and it was prepared to kill anyone poking their nose in to keep the truth from getting out.

Sam placed the back of his hand over his mouth to try and quell another bout of coughing, but he didn't know how long he could even keep awake anymore, let alone try and escape.

He was getting sleepy, and it wouldn't be long before the smog whirling around him became

too much to fight against.

Whether Hamilton believed in spirits or not, it was looking very much like he was going to lose his life at the hands of something very evil.

And very soon.

***March 9th 1943
Somewhere over Germany...***

The air was thick around Dean as anti-aircraft guns from below bombarded the flight of planes. Flak exploded everywhere, almost deafening him as shards of metal from disintegrating shells tore through the heavens, creating deadly projectiles.

And this was just the start of it.

As the flak subsided, an even deadlier weapon began its attack.

Luftwaffe fighters, hiding in the clouds until their moment came.

And that moment was now.

Even inside the thick fur gloves, Dean could feel the tackiness of his palms as he gripped the machine gun at his position. His mouth was dry inside the toxic-smelling mask.

Hunting was one kind of war, but not man against man. What must Lucifer think as he'd watched mankind over the ages? There was no doubt in Dean's mind now that humans were sometimes just as barbaric as the demon hordes he and Sam hunted.

An ME109 burst from behind a bank of white puffy clouds, guns blazing, Mercedes engine roaring, and suddenly, Dean was mesmerized by it. It looked like a bird of prey, a thing of great beauty and design, built for only one purpose – death.

Bullets from the fighter's machine guns strafed past his position just a little too closely, one ripping into the fuselage of the Boeing like someone was trying to open it up like a giant-sized sardine can.

The noise, the sudden realization of how close to death he was, galvanized Dean into action. Sweaty hands pressed hard on the triggers of his weapon and he returned fire as the German fighter bore down on his position for a second time.

He could see the fear in the pilot's eyes as for a precious moment, their very souls seemed to lock in midair. Then the instant had passed, and all Dean could feel was the Jello-like sensation in his knees.

More nervous radio chatter filled the airwaves, and behind him Dean could hear the wheeze of the hydraulics as the ball turret spun around to open fire on the attacking fighters.

If Dean thought being in the main body of the plane was claustrophobic, what must it be like to be cramped up inside a metal sphere dangling beneath the Boeing?

But then, Dean would never have thought he could stand to fly this way, period.

He heard Woodward come over the radio saying he was handing control of the plane over to

the bomb aimer. This was it, they were on the bombing run over Wilhelmshaven.

One way or another, it would all be over soon.

I friggin' hope!

Suddenly, there was more wild chatter, frantic voices screaming down the radio even though they knew better.

Dean heard fractured words made even more indiscernible by the loud static caused by interference. He wasn't sure, couldn't know for certain, but it sounded like someone on the crew had screwed up, big time.

Another fighter whirled by his position, spewing shells, but after hearing the problem, he hardly registered the deadly aircraft in his vision.

They were off course, not by much, but just enough that if they dropped their bombs, they might hit a school rather than the intended ammunition factory.

The navigator had made one small miscalculation, one error that could see little children maimed or worse...

Dean closed his eyes, seeing young, innocent lives being taken, caused by a chain of events he had helped to make happen.

This was the real reason Woodward's plane had been renamed "No Second Chances" after its first mission.

This was the secret Woodward had suffered for all those years.

Another voice yelled over the intercom one last time.

In all the garbled banter, the bomb aimer hadn't heard the order to abort and had already hit the release button.

It was the news Dean had been dreading, but expecting nonetheless.

The hunter said a silent prayer for those below, and then had to abruptly steady himself as Billy Woodward veered the plane off harshly to the left. The pilot was attempting to stop the still-releasing incendiaries from hitting the school beneath them.

But his actions came with a price. It would seem Woodward had two choices, carry on and drop the bombs, almost certainly hitting the school, or break away and veer into enemy fire.

Having taken the latter option, they were now a lone plane in a sea of flak that would almost certainly take them down.

Dean felt blood trickle from his lip as he unconsciously bit into it inside his mask. Of all the hunts he'd been on, he was going to die here, and the irony of it all was that he didn't even know where "here" was.

Around him, everything seemed to slow down, like he was watching through some bizarre time portal that allowed him to view events in slow motion.

The Boeing's port engine was hit, shrapnel from its cowl smashing through the main body of

the plane and tearing into anything it encountered – including the right waist gunner.

Blood splattered from the gunner's position, but Dean was spared the agony of seeing the man shredded like ground beef by a danger closer to home.

The hot flying metal had somehow ignited parts of the cabin, including the thick sheepskin of Dean's jacket. Instantly, he could feel the heat searing through the leather, but not quite reaching his flesh – not yet, at least.

He threw himself to the floor, rolling desperately atop a myriad of spent shells. And as he twisted to and fro, he felt the bomber begin to dive steeply, almost as if it was out of control.

More garbled radio chatter alerted him to another fighter on their tail. It was following them down, honing in for the kill.

His jacket scorched but no longer aflame, Dean scrambled frantically from the floor back to his position. If he was going out this way, then he was at least going out swinging.

He grabbed at the Browning machine gun, squeezing the trigger relentlessly until he was out of ammunition. There was no way to tell if he had hit the enemy, but it felt good to be doing something, anything, as thick black smoke filled the small space around him.

Dean could hear the plane's remaining engines screaming a death wail as they dived harder. They were out of control, smashing towards the earth at hundreds of miles an hour.

I'm about to become a human friggin' pancake, was all his addled brain could muster. Things shouldn't happen this way, Woodward and his crew were supposed to get back...

From the cockpit, Dean heard Woodward give the order to bail out, but for some, it was already too late. Dean knew that at least two of the men he'd climbed aboard with were now meeting their maker even further into the heavens than they were now.

Maybe he would be next if he didn't haul ass while the going was good.

The bird was low enough now for him to remove his mask and gloves, and he tore them off frenziedly, grabbing for his chute and strapping it on without even thinking about what he had to do next.

But then, he was no skydiver, he had no clue *what* he was supposed to do to get clear of the plane, let alone open the parachute.

Woodward's voice came over the intercom again, yelling at his men to jump over and over. It looked like the pilot intended to go down with the plane.

Panic gripped Dean, forcing him into action, and he pushed through the smoke and flames until he reached the still-open bomb bay doors. This was his only way out now, and he was going to take it.

Crossing his arms over his chest, he closed his eyes and simply stepped into oblivion.

In his mind, he had already convinced himself that maybe he would jump out of the plane and leap back home, just like Sam Beckett in *Quantum Leap*.

Except, Winchester luck never worked that way.

Dean opened his eyes again to find himself hurtling towards the green fields of Germany, the B17 breaking up in the air above him from the stresses placed on its airframe.

Wind howled in his ears and tears streamed down his face from the cold, but he had to ignore the elements.

He had to pull the cord for his chute to open before he got too low.

Hands shaking and body tumbling over and over, out of control, Dean just managed to yank the cord before he hit an unfavorable altitude.

There was an instant whoosh of silk opening above him and he was jerked backwards until the chute's straps dug into his flesh.

He looked up, needing to see the familiar rounded shape of a canopy above him, but what he saw instead was a torn and flapping piece of silk that would never truly take shape enough to defy gravity.

The parachute had been damaged by the explosions, or maybe even the fire aboard the B17 – it was never going to fully open.

Dean's momentum toward the earth had slowed, but not hardly enough for him to make any kind of landing and survive.

Finally the hunter understood the harsh reality he'd been dealt.

Dean Winchester wasn't ever going home in this time, or his own...

Part Three

Dean had often heard stories about parachutes that didn't open and miracle survivals, but he didn't expect to be one of those statistics. Death was the only option now, and perhaps it was what fate had in mind all along.

He tried to ponder the idea – did he believe in simple fate, or in a higher power? Just lately, he had succumbed to the idea that angels existed, so didn't that mean God had to as well?

Dean closed his eyes and waited for the impact of flesh and bone on earth. It would surely come soon, and he would perhaps find peace at last.

As he deliberated, his limbs finally crashed into the ground, his left side taking most of the weight of the fall. Something in his elbow gave a little, and he wondered why his mind was still processing that small fact.

Recalculating the math, even though he was no Stanford graduate, Dean decided in half a nanosecond that he hadn't hit the concrete anywhere near hard enough to have fallen from a plane miles up in the sky.

Concrete?

Dean pried an eyelid open, warily expecting to see a set of pearly gates, or maybe, given his occasional bad boy behavior, something a little hotter.

Instead, he found himself back on the runway at Sutton Hallam. And if he wasn't mistaken, back in his own time. The warm sun had been overcast by a multitude of grey foreboding clouds and the birdsong had strangely vanished, but the potholes in the concrete had returned, smiling up at him as he looked down at them.

Dean pushed away from the cracked surface and took down a breath. Had he fallen asleep here somehow? Had it all been some daytime reverie brought on by fatigue and talking to Billy back in Cali?

He rolled over and abruptly realized that moving felt stiff and laborious. Not because his limbs had been crushed and mangled from a fall, but because he still wore the thick leather jacket of a B17 waist gunner.

No friggin' dream then!

Groggily, he scrambled to his feet and tugged off the heavy coat, examining the charred scorch marks that permeated its back section. He had been lucky that only his flying gear had been damaged.

Gulping, he noted just how dry his throat felt from all the smoke in the plane, from the tumble through the heavens, and now, he suspected just a little from the shock of what he'd been through.

I so need a drink. Or maybe two...

Allowing himself the luxury of imagining several pints of England's finest, along with an abundance of whiskey chasers, Dean started to walk towards the airfield reception area, unsure just how he was going to explain the morning's events as seen through his eyes.

"Dean!"

The shout was muted, but appeared to be coming from somewhere down near the main hangar and service buildings.

Dean glanced over automatically. Wait a minute, was that black diesel smoke oozing from under one of the doors over there?

He took a moment to stare at it. As if today's events hadn't been confusing enough, this was even weirder.

BAM!

Dean suddenly found he was forced to take a step back as a pair of rotting wooden doors appeared from the ground in front of him like magic.

The doors rapidly swung upwards and outwards, and the hunter realized they had been long since hidden by earth and grass, and that was probably why he'd almost trodden on them.

As the shutter-like segments of wood settled with a clatter, Dean inspected them further, trying to place their original purpose. At a guess, he imagined they were once part of a service tunnel to one of the anti-aircraft bunkers on the airfield.

He huddled over to his knees to get a better look, but the space below seemed nothing but a dark, bottomless pit he wasn't sure he wanted to enter after his recent, claustrophobic ordeal on the plane.

He needn't have worried.

Two seconds after his eyes had started to adjust to the lighting in the tunnel, Dean was knocked off his feet by a charging, behemoth of a creature that seemed to have no sense or purpose beyond reaching daylight.

In short, a slightly desperate Sam Winchester.

Sam barreled past his brother, seemingly without realizing the force behind his stampeding motion. He stopped a short distance away, crumpling over into a hacking mess.

Dean gawked at Sam, who was shortly followed by an equally asthmatic Hamilton, and together Yank and Scot began to choke as if they both smoked fifty a day.

Eventually, Sam appeared to realize someone was staring at him and looked up through watering eyes. Eyes that widened as they took in Dean's scorched flight gear.

"Sammy, I think we have a lot to talk about," Dean offered incredulously. "Preferably over a beer...or maybe six. In fact, make that a *bottle* of your pal there's finest..."

Speechless from hacking, Sam simply nodded in agreement.

The Devil's Disciple Pub
Sutton Hallam
Wiltshire

Dean climbed from the passenger seat of the Corsa and stretched, simply happy to be back in his t-shirt rather than the cumbersome leather flying jacket.

The midget car wasn't so bad – at least, if you weren't trying to drive it. Because hell, you didn't actually *drive* roller skates, did you?

He smiled at the thought whilst taking in the appearance of his new home for the next few days.

The quaint country pub was nothing like the seedy bars he and Sam tended to frequent, and as he grabbed his gear from the trunk of the car he actually let himself believe he might sleep here without the constant nightmares he'd had since Stull.

The hope was short lived, however, as his gaze locked on the swinging plaque that bore the pub's name.

"The Devil's Disciple" swung in a light Wiltshire breeze, the hinges creaking as the faded picture moved to and fro.

Dean raised a brow and pulled a face that said he was suddenly less than impressed with their new lodgings. "Are they trying to tell us something, Sasquatch?" he bemoaned, hauling his duffel over his shoulder.

Sam inspected the sign and sighed, his own expression turning dour. "That's so not funny," he agreed, following his brother into the dimly lit lounge of the inn.

Dean nodded, but now that the smell of food and the sight of drink were assaulting his

senses, the nameplate was already a long distant memory.

He sauntered to the bar, his eyes instantly attaching themselves to the pretty blonde standing on the other side.

His trademark lewd grin appeared, even though his brain was unaware of summoning it from his facial muscles. "Hi, I'm Dean Winchester..."

The young woman smiled back, obviously liking what she was seeing. "Right, you're the two...gentlemen we've saved rooms for." She flicked her hair absently. "I'm Becky, Becky Naismith. Landlady here."

"And what's a nice girl like you doing in a stuffy old village like this?" Dean leaned on the bar, ignoring the light kick in the shins Sam had just given him.

"Living here," Becky answered cheekily back. "Drink, lads?"

Sam coughed. "Two beers, please." He glanced quickly at a menu behind the counter, "and some of those steak chips?"

The blonde smiled again and swiftly pulled two pints of England's finest. "These two are on the house," she offered, a slight London twang seeping into her accent.

Dean plucked the glass from the bar and looked at it uneasily. Somehow, it just wasn't right. There was a table to his left, and he quickly dropped down onto the nearest chair, suddenly exhausted. "Man," he grouched to his brother. "This really isn't the kinda drink I had in mind. I mean, is this stuff *really* beer?"

Sam took the small wooden seat on the opposite side of the table and took a sip of his own beverage. His expression said it wasn't exactly Coors. "It's wet," he finally suggested with a shrug. "And my throat doesn't really give a crap beyond that right now."

Dean's brow tipped upwards. Until now, he'd been so busy thinking about his own ordeal, he hadn't really had time to process what had been happening with Sam. And from the gruff edge to his brother's voice, and his more than quick exit from the tunnel, something *had* been happening.

"Okay, so I'm forgetting my need for food, bourbon and pretty blonde bar girls for a second here. What have I missed already? Something's tellin' me it ain't the Queen's next garden party."

"Hardly," Sam agreed, taking another sip of his beer and getting a thin white layer of froth on his top lip without even realizing it. "First off, I lost half the morning – just *lost* it. One minute I'd left you, the next it was almost midday. Then, someone, or something trapped me and Hamilton in the service building..."

"Sounds cozy," Dean quipped, wiggling a brow suggestively.

"Dude, the trucks were running without even having the keys in the ignitions. Carbon monoxide ring any bells? As in *death* bells?"

Dean cleared his throat. "Sorry, man, it's just that rabid trucks and poisonous gases are kinda small fry compared to my morning. When I went to the end of the runway, I *really* went to the end of the runway, and then some..."

“You what?”

Dean took a breath. He wasn't even sure he wanted to hear the sound of his own voice recounting this particular tale. “Dude, I zipped off Stull style. One minute I'm staring at that lump of earth out there, the next,” he clicked his fingers. “I was on the runway back in the forties and Billy Woodward was recruiting me for his latest mission.”

“You *WHAT?!*”

“Sammy, I spent the morning visiting Germany from a great height – and then I fell from said great height with the parachute from hell strapped to my back. I was convinced I was toast and then wham, I'm back here and you're charging at me like I'm a friggin' toreador and you're the prize bull or somethin'.”

Sam took in the information, pulling out the trusty Winchester laptop from his bag while Dean was still talking. He booted up, listening intently as Dean delved into great detail about his “mission.”

“So don't just sit there gawking at me, Sasquatch, tell me this makes sense and I'm not whacked out of my gourd here.”

“It makes sense,” Sam answered, tapping keys as his eyes dodged from his sibling to the laptop and back again. “At least, maybe it does...”

Dean rolled his own eyes impatiently. “So spill!”

“Dean, I don't think Sutton Hallam is haunted at all. I think it's something worse going on here, way worse. Especially if those symbols you got a glimpse of on the runway are what I think they are.”

Dean took a chug of his beer and decided maybe he liked the stuff – not as much as his favorites back in the states, but it had a distinct, addictive taste he could easily get to enjoy. He savored it for a second before forcing his mind back to the task at hand.

“Why is it I'm thinking you're about to mess with my head, big time?” he asked with a sigh.

“Dean, I think we might be responsible for what's happening here.” Sam screwed up his face as he offered the suggestion – it was his apologetic face, but not quite full-on puppy dog. Maybe he was saving that for what came next.

“*Us?*” Dean asked incredulously. “How can we have caused this? We've never been to Merry Old before.”

Sam licked his lips. “What if when we travelled to the other realities via Stull, we screwed with the universe more than we thought? What if destroying the reality we visited last at Halloween didn't fix the paradox we created?”

“Okay, you lost me after ‘what if.’” Dean squirmed.

“I think maybe time, reality, all those different dimensions might be in some kind of flux, Dean. And we caused it that first trip to Stull.”

Dean huffed. “That's a whole lot of maybes there, Sammy. And err...I still don't understand a word of the crap you just spouted...” He paused abruptly as a shadow fell over their table.

Looking up, Dean's scowl turned to his roguish grin again when he realized it was just Becky bringing food. His eyes struggled between ogling the landlady and ogling the consumables on the plates.

"Funniest looking steak flavor potato chips I ever saw." His mouth watered as he stared at the huge t-bone and what the British called chips that was now hovering under his nose. "Weird looking fries, man."

He grabbed one anyway, noting it was way fatter than a fry would be back in the States. Ramming the chip in his mouth, he munched, and then grinned even harder. "Maybe this Brit food isn't so bad after all."

Sam rolled his eyes upwards towards the oak ceiling beams. "If you'll just forget your stomach and concentrate..."

"Yeah, yeah, I'm all ears." Dean scarfed several more chips until he looked like an overstuffed chipmunk.

"What if somehow, because of the events we set in motion back in Stull, other hellgates are opening, allowing alternate universes to bleed into this one? That's why your little trip this morning didn't quite end like Woodward's original story."

"You're saying Woodward's ghost – the thing I just partied over the Rhine with – isn't a ghost, just part of another reality coming through some kind of portal – like back in Lawrence?"

Sam bobbed his head. "Something like that," he admitted. "But I think there's more. Someone, or *something* is trying to augment what's happening – trying to force the gap in reality wider. That's why the symbols are scrawled on the runway, and that's why someone tried to kill me and Hamilton to stop us finding out what's going on."

Dean squirmed. Things were getting worse, and after his trip as a waist gunner, he hadn't even thought that was possible. "And who do we know that would just love to open another hellgate?"

"Ferinacci, or at least one of his playmates," Sam agreed.

Dean cut a slice from his steak and rammed it into his mouth. If this was what they called comfort eating, then he deserved every damn bit of food on his plate considering what was going down.

And heck, the food was good, even if the locals had the weirdest accents and appeared to eat peas with every meal on the menu.

"So if you're right," he managed to speak through an overfull mouth. "And we're not dealing with actual spirits, how do we stop this? Hell, *can* we stop this?"

Sam tried a chip of his own, looked pleasantly surprised at the taste, and then spun the laptop around so Dean could see what he'd been researching.

The picture that filled the screen was of an ancient stone circle that many thought had been constructed not only for worshipping the sun and moon, but also for ritual sacrifice. Renowned the world over, even Dean recognized the structure.

Stonehenge.

Dean cringed. “Jeez, Sammy, I’m thinking the Queen might throw a hissy fit if we C4 a national monument. You aiming for a trip to the Tower or somethin’?”

Sam huffed, obviously not expecting Dean to have considered the bigger picture. “Will you just listen? Wiltshire is full of stone circles, barrows and other pagan sites. It’s the perfect place for Lucifer to try and drum up some support.”

“What? Here in England?”

“He’s not exclusive to the U.S., Dean.” Sam rammed a chip in his mouth, more out of frustration than hunger. “Think about it. Pagan gods like the Vanir we encountered for instance – they’ve all been abandoned by mankind for centuries. Pagan deities like that are bound to be pissed at us. And pissed at us means way more likely to side with Ferinacci if he comes calling…”

“And you think he’s here?”

Sam nodded ruefully. “It makes sense. I think Lucifer is trying to raise these gods through a gate here, and he’s using the local barrows – like the one at the airfield – to do it. They’re full of the bones of the pagan dead, after all.”

Dean rubbed at his chin. It was all falling into place, just like Sam said, but that didn’t mean he had to like it. “And you think we kinda left the door open somehow for Lucifer to be able to try this?”

Sam bobbed his head again. “Somehow,” he admitted.

Dean pushed his plate away into the center of the table. Finding out he’d helped unleash more evil onto the world was one sure fire way of losing his normally voracious appetite. “If we salt and burn these ‘barrows’ will it close the gate? Can we send Woodward’s other self and his buddies back to their own reality permanently?”

“I don’t know,” Sam confessed. “But what else can we do but try?”

Dean rocked his beer glass back and forth in his hand, just thinking for a second. “You said *someone* put those marks out on the runway, and *someone* caused the attack on you and Haggis. That means we have to find out just who is dabbling in the occult in this pokey little village.”

“You think Lucifer is actually here?” Sam raised a brow. “Or maybe just one of his minions?”

“Dunno,” Dean shrugged, glancing around the now crowded pub as if their suspect would jump out and scream “Hey there, I’m a devil worshipper.” They didn’t, of course, which meant he and Sammy had to do some real detective work. “Maybe we could do with that Miss Marble on our team,” he eventually chuckled.

“Dude, it’s *Marple!*” Sam corrected for the second time.

“*Whatever...*”

Sam hunkered forwards as if he feared someone was eavesdropping on them. “Seriously, we could be sitting next to our perp, and we wouldn’t even know it. We don’t know these people. How can we trust any of them?”

Dean nodded thoughtfully. “Yeah, well my money is still on Hamilton. The guy is just hinky somehow.”

“It can’t be Hamilton,” Sam defended with a sigh. “He was the one who remembered about the old service tunnel. If he hadn’t, we’d both be toast by now.”

“Or that could just as easily have been a ruse to throw us off his scent. The guy is edgy, and you know how I don’t like edgy...”

Sam shoved his plate to join Dean’s in the middle of the table. “Okay, so we could watch Hamilton,” he conceded. “But if you’re wrong, then where else do we start?”

Dean’s eyes strayed as Becky passed them with another order for an old couple sitting behind the brothers. His gaze remained fixed somewhere it definitely shouldn’t as he lewdly answered, “Man, I know *exactly* where I’d like to start...”

Sam deftly kicked his sibling under the table with his over-large sneaker. “Will you start thinking with your other brain? Man, we don’t have time for any funny business.”

Dean grunted, eventually shaking off the apparent glue holding his stare to Becky’s extremely tight jeans. “Alright, alright, Mr. Grumpy. What say we go to our rooms and catch some shuteye. We can go stake out the airfield later and see if our mystery bad guy shows up to paint any more symbols.”

“Rooms?” Sam asked, a look of confusion marring his dimpled features. “We get a room each?”

“I know.” Dean grinned. “So not used to all this luxury. Finally might get some sleep, though, huh?”

“*Huh?*”

“Without your fugly butt in the room,” Dean elaborated. “Dude, I never mentioned this before, but *you snore*, big time. As in like a freakin’ Sasquatch.”

Sam pushed up from his chair and the small wooden frame stuck to his behind like he was an adult trying to sit in an infant’s seat. He pulled it away, letting it clatter back onto the timbers of the pub floor.

Sammy was narked, and Dean was enjoying it.

“I do *NOT* snore,” Sam argued.

And before Dean could rile him more, he stomped off up the pub’s narrow stairwell, despite the fact they hadn’t actually been shown their rooms yet.

Dean chuckled. Perhaps he’d make time for a few more beers before retiring to Sammy’s wrath – even if they were in separate rooms.

***The Devil’s Disciple Pub
Sutton Hallam
Sometime Later...***

Sam looked at his watch in the light from the bedside lamp and then nodded silently to his brother who was sitting opposite him.

They had been waiting for the pub to empty, and for midnight to come and go before they ventured back out to the airfield.

Their mystery worshipper probably used the cover of darkness for his or her little clandestine rituals, and the best time to catch them in the act was probably when the rest of the village was sleeping.

Sam clicked off the lamp. It was after two, and it was time to shag ass back to the museum and see if anyone was dancing to Satan's tune out by the barrow.

"You ready?" He whispered to Dean.

"As ready as I'll ever be to go back to that whacked out place," Dean confessed. "Just don't let anyone describe England as *quaint* to me ever again..."

Sam smiled and was about to point out that the place did have its advantages – like Becky for instance, but a loud creak outside their door sent alarm bells ringing through his brain instead.

Dean's head jerked towards the landing, suggesting he too had heard the noise.

Someone was outside their room, possibly keeping tabs on them.

Sam put a finger to his lips and then ever so carefully made his way to the door. He put an ear to the wood, listening for signs of further movement.

The sound came again, as more floorboards were pressed upon by the late night interloper. Whoever was on the landing wasn't spying on the brothers; they were going down the stairs, possibly exiting the pub.

Sam signaled for Dean to join him, and together they listened until the footsteps faded enough to suggest the person was downstairs, probably heading for the inn's rear door.

"So what are you waiting for?" Dean mouthed with a frown. "Shag ass and follow our suspect already!"

Sam cautiously turned the brass-handled doorknob and sidled out of the room. He took a peek over the oak balustrade and was abruptly shocked at what he saw.

Becky was the unidentified night walker, and she hadn't just toddled down the stairs for a warm cup of cocoa. The landlady was dressed completely in black, and had a large bag slung over her shoulder. There was no way to see the bag's contents, but the idea that it was filled with ritual items was already spinning through Sam's head.

He pointed over the railing for Dean to take a look at what was transpiring.

Dean's eyes widened slightly as he spotted the blonde exiting the pub's back door, and Sam could already see the creases of his best "sulky face" appearing at the edges of his brother's mouth.

"Dude, we have to follow her, she could be the one working for Lucifer."

Dean bobbed his head and warily jogged down the stairs two steps at a time. "She could just be going out for a walk or somethin'," he offered half-heartedly.

"Or *something*," Sam scoffed as they carefully trailed the blonde out to her car. "Look at it this way, maybe the pub's name is a direct jibe – an obvious fact placed under everyone's noses, blinding them to the truth."

Dean paused in the shadows as Becky walked out into the open, into the pub's small parking lot. "You think *she's* the Devil's disciple? C'mon, Sammy."

Becky blipped her Shogun's alarm off and opened the driver's door, tossing her bag onto the passenger seat before clambering in after it. Two seconds later, the V6 engine grumbled to life and she was pulling out onto the open country lanes – without switching on her headlights.

Racing to catch up, Dean and Sam dived into the Corsa and Dean cranked the tiny car from its slumber. He cursed as he accelerated to pull away like he would in the Impala, and all the Corsa managed to do was spit gravel for a few seconds before crawling forwards.

"From the direction we're going, looks like she's headed out to the airfield," Sam noted as his brother struggled to catch Becky up.

"Yeah, well if we had a car instead of this freakin' skateboard I might be able to tell..." Dean jostled with the steering as they hit a pothole. "Oh, and a little thing called suspension might be nice..."

Sam ignored the grouching, keeping his gaze firmly fixed on the gold Shogun that was traversing the back roads far better than they were. "Still think it's Hamilton?"

Dean shot him a look that screamed "shut your piehole" and then huffed. "Dude, I've been stuck in a flying tin can, shot at, scorched, shot at some more, had to jump outta said friggin' tin can with a burned parachute...I think I'm allowed a little leeway with my judgment today, okay?"

The gruffness in his voice told Sam that his brother wasn't kidding. He was pissed, not just at Becky for probably being their perp, but at the world in general.

Ahead, Becky abruptly began to slow as she approached Sutton Hallam's gates and Dean was forced to match the move or be seen. Amazingly, the landlady didn't grind to a halt outside the airfield's security fencing – because the gates had somehow been left open.

The blonde took the Shogun inside and parked in the visitors' lot in front of the tea rooms.

Dean guided the Corsa to a spot that gave it the relative cover of a hedgerow, and the brothers quietly exited, all the time keeping a watchful eye on the girl.

For a while, Becky simply sat behind the wheel, the mystery bag clasped in her hands as if it contained something priceless.

Eventually, the sound of another large engine approached and Dean and Sam were forced to use the nearby bushes as cover.

"Hey, isn't that Hamilton's car?" Dean asked as the Land Rover sped past them, churning up dust clouds in the dirt. "I told you Haggis was involved in all this..."

"Will you just *hush*?" Sam chided, gesturing back to Becky's vehicle.

As Hamilton parked up beside her, Becky clambered out to meet him, her precious bag in hand.

The pair smiled at one another, exchanged a few whispered words and then Becky's attention was back on the bag. She opened the top drawstring and both brothers held their breaths.

Would it be candles, paint to make more symbols perhaps, or worse still some animal to sacrifice to the heathen gods?

"You gotta be kiddin' me!" Dean squirmed uncomfortably as Becky pulled out not a pagan item, but an expensive bottle of champagne.

The blonde giggled far too girlishly for her age, and then pecked Hamilton on the cheek. He took her hand, squeezing tightly, and they sauntered off into the main hangar without turning on any lights.

Sam sighed. "Isn't he too old for that kind of thing?"

Dean rolled his eyes. "Man, you're *never* too old. He's already on his second wife, though. I'm betting there'll soon be a third."

"But this mean neither of them is our bad guy," Sam pointed out.

"Great, just *great!* We haven't been hunting one of Lucifer's cohorts, we've been tailing a pair of lovebirds having a secret fling." Dean threw his hands up in the air. "Now what? 'Cause I tell ya, I'm voting we go back to the pub and have ourselves a little late night drink on the house."

Sam screwed up his face and silently tapped his brother's arm, indicating something was amiss. When Dean looked up, confused, Sam pointed to the far end of the airstrip, near the barrow.

"I see lights," he explained. "Right near the mound where you saw those markings..."

There was a silent moment. Was Lucifer waiting for them out in the darkness, or would they walk the lonely path that lead to another dimension if they dared to venture out onto the runway itself?

Dean swallowed hard, and Sam knew his brother was reliving his earlier experience at the hands of the mystery symbols.

"We should get some gear," Dean eventually offered, his voice a little lower than normal.

Sam bobbed his head, and together they returned to the car. Dean popped the tiny trunk and tossed a blanket to one side to reveal a small stash of weapons.

There wasn't much to work with as they'd had to leave their own equipment behind in the States, but what they had was usable. John had hunter friends in the UK that had made sure the Winchesters had at least a few tools of the trade.

"Man, I miss my Colt," Dean whined as he looked the weapons over.

Sam grinned, dimples flaring as he picked up a handgun, assessed it, and then lobbed it to Dean.

Dean caught the gun and whirled it around in his palm, taking in its weight and size. He grunted, looking at the offering in disgust. “*What?* No way am I using this dang girly gun...”

“Dean, it’s a Walther PPK – James Bond’s weapon of choice,” Sam pointed out, choosing a shotgun for himself.

“Bond uses *this?*” Dean asked incredulously. “The guy must be more of a wuss than I gave him credit for...”

“Whatever.” Sam stuffed the Remington under his beige jacket and crammed his pockets full of rock salt shells. “You ready?”

Dean nodded, reluctantly accepting the Walther as his protection – for this night only.

Without the aid of a flashlight for fear of discovery, the brothers cautiously approached the flickering orbs that appeared to emanate from the barrow. As they grew closer, the dancing spheres morphed into their true identities – the burial mound was literally smothered in ritual candles.

Alongside the waxen lights, an abundance of strange markings littered the scene, standing prominent from the grass in the eerily lit panorama.

At the center of the barrow’s peak, someone, or something, was kneeling in a long, dark, monk-like robe. Whoever wore the cloak kept their back to the Winchesters as if in prayer to some unholy god.

And yet, as the brothers grew closer, a sneering yet sultry voice filtered through the night, chilling Dean and Sam’s blood as it ran through their veins.

“Why boys, what took you so long..?”

Part Four

The hooded figure turned slowly, the long brown cape adorning it dragging on the ground as it whirled.

“Tell me I’m seeing things,” Dean choked out, unsure whether to laugh or cry as he realized their nemesis was the old lady from earlier.

At her side, her faithful, but vicious Yorkie yelped out angrily at the hunter, seemingly answering his question in its own canine voice.

“You’re so not seeing things,” Sam admitted, apparently squirming at the idea that their enemy was old enough to be their grandma.

“Miss Marble and her midget Furbee,” Dean mouthed incredulously.

“Oh, but I’m so much more,” the old hag crooned. “Don’t you know you should never judge a book by its cover? Or a demon by its disguise...”

As the brothers gaped, the grey-haired old lady began to change, her wizened features morphing and reshaping until she was no longer an aged foe, but a very beautiful redhead with long flowing locks, and a figure most supermodels would die for .

The Yorkie appeared to undergo a similar transformation, its muscle and sinew not just changing, but stretching and contorting until the creature was five times its original size or more – a huge black behemoth drooling spittle from its mammoth fangs.

The she-devil smirked, eyes flashing the color of her scarlet locks. “Not so far off the mark with your hellhound comment after all, Dean...” She patted the mutt affectionately and it slathered in response, eager to chow down on its enemies – the Winchesters.

Sam edged forward warily, his eyes darting from the dog and back to its Master as he appraised the situation. “And with whom do we have the pleasure?” He asked with a frown, suggesting there was no pleasure at all in the meeting.

“Some know me as Jezebeth,” the redhead admitted, a hand sliding to her hip as she took on the pose of a forties movie star. “I am demon of lies and falsehoods. Fitting then, that I fooled you pair with my simple age deception.”

Dean grunted, his eyes taking on a look of pity for the thing now flaunting itself before him. “Oh sweetheart, you’ll look a whole lot worse than your Miss Marble disguise when we’re through with you.”

He let a hand slide to his jacket pocket, where he kept the angel Castiel’s feather.

Jezebeth laughed, already anticipating the move. Turning her back to the brothers, she commanded the animal at her side with one simple hand gesture and the agitated tone of her voice. “Sic ’em boy!”

As she spun around away from them, a wall of flame erupted, encircling her and the ancient barrow she stood on in a protective barrier of unholy fire.

“Crap!” Dean barely had chance to see the demon’s defensive move before the hellhound was pouncing on him.

The rabid creature seemed to know he was the one with the feather. It knew he was the one that must be stopped to protect its heathen owner at all costs.

Winded by the thing landing on his chest and knocking him to the ground, Dean barely had time to get his hands to its throat before its fangs were snapping angrily at the flesh on his face.

He could see the hate coursing through its glowing eyes, he could sense its burning desire to tear him into thin strips of flesh and then devour the meat left on his bones as dessert (??).

“Sammy will you get this...*thing* off...me!” The words were disjointed as he fought against an evil far stronger than his mortal limbs.

Sam pulled his weapon, seemingly unsure whether to shoot at the animal or try shooting through the ring of fire at its Master.

But then, bullets were useless against these kinds of entities anyway. Without the feather, they were screwed.

Unless...

Sam let his weapon drop in favor of another form of retaliation. His powers worked against demons, so why not their minion animals? Maybe he could use the creature's own powers against it.

Stretching out his right hand, he focused his mind on the hound as its talon-like claws scraped at Dean's flesh.

Dean had no way to know what his sibling was attempting, and still desperately tried to hold the thing's maw from his face.

It snapped angrily, front legs and paws rigid on the hunter's chest as it fought his tenuous grasp.

"Sammy!"

Sam concentrated harder until his eyes began to water and his ears wanted to pop with the pressure in his head, but nothing happened.

"I'm going to lose him. I'm going to lose Dean and all I can do is stand and watch..."

The morbid thought was cut short by a deafening bang that made Sam flinch, unsure of what was suddenly going down.

The hellhound screamed and was sent flying backwards, knocked from all four paws. It quickly clambered up and shook itself, intent on resuming its attack.

THWACK!

Another loud bang filled the night and the creature was knocked down again. This time, before it had chance to regain any kind of footing, another shot rang out, followed by another and another.

The hellhound was literally blown backwards by the force of the shotgun shells until it was far enough away for both Sam and Dean to dare look what was happening.

Silhouetted by the moonlight, Alan Hamilton stood with an empty, smoking shotgun in his hand, his face a picture of both fear and anger. Somehow, he had managed to miss Dean and only hit the creature, despite the shots being seriously risky.

While Hamilton dared to spend time reloading, Sam joined in the barrage against the dog, finally snapping from his trance-like state to empty a clip into it. Again, there were no injuries, but with every blast from his weapon, Sam was able to keep the animal at bay.

Froth slathered from its maw and its jaws snapped angrily at the rebuke, but for now, it could no longer own the situation.

Dean used the lull in the attack to roll away from the direction of the hound and clamber to his feet. Dusting himself off, he inhaled, apparently with relief that he'd sustained nothing more than a few scrapes from the demon creature.

Hamilton didn't wait for the hunter to try and thank him, and instead jumped lithely over a mound of earth, dropping down behind it to use for cover. Originally, it had been part of a

wartime dugout, but now it could save lives another way.

Dean followed the Scot's lead, tumbling ungracefully down beside him. "Not exactly the greatest cover when you're running from a beast from Hades, Haggis, but it'll do," he snarked while pulling out the Walther Sam had given him and putting several slugs into the hound.

Behind them, there was a thump as Sam finally fell into place with them. Although the low mound was less than adequate cover for his taller frame, it was better than nothing.

As Dean and Hamilton reloaded again, he kept up his own onslaught of shells against the creature.

"Would someone mind telling me just *what* that thing is, and *what* it has to do with my airfield?" Hamilton rammed several shells into his pump action and then began firing anew, obviously oblivious to what danger he was really in.

"Dude, we don't have time to explain, and if we did, you wouldn't believe us anyway," Dean snapped, his eyes darting from the hound to search for its owner among the flames still engulfing the barrow.

"Dammit, I *deserve* to know!" Hamilton was scared, scared and annoyed at not being able to comprehend the truth.

"*Okay*...that chick over there in all the fire is a demon. Her name is Jezebeth, and that cute little puppy trying to bite our asses off is her pet. We have to stop her completing a ritual, or all hell is gonna break loose – *literally*." Dean waited, apparently expecting Hamilton to drop his weapon and run.

He didn't.

The Scot simply looked at them, either in confusion, or perhaps because he finally *believed* in *something*.

"Look, we have a weapon against all this," Sam tried to explain over the noise of their bombardment. "But even if we can use it, we need to salt and burn that barrow too, or it won't work."

Hamilton pointed to the flames, one eyebrow quirking upwards. "But it's *already* burning."

"They're ugh...kinda special flames," Sam tried to reason. "You just have to trust us..."

Strangely, Hamilton nodded as if he understood perfectly. Scooting from his concealed position, he began to run away from them towards the main hangar. Turning whilst still sprinting across the field, he managed to breathlessly shout back a curious message of his own.

"You'll just have to trust me too then. Oh, and keep the damn dog busy..."

With that the Scot was gone, darting like a gazelle over the grass and vanishing into the shadows.

"I knew it!" Dean cursed as he emptied yet more bullets into the thick-skinned hellhound. "Haggis might not be a friggin' demon, but he's a damn coward!"

“Maybe not,” Sam countered without really giving any excuses for the museum owner.

Dean huffed back, but didn’t complain further. His head cocked to one side slightly as the chanting from the barrow intensified.

Jezebeth was continuing her ritual to open a true “always open” portal between worlds – a gateway to bring back gods, demi-gods, and all kinds of evil creatures that had long since been banished from the planet.

“Dean, I hate to say it, but I’m running low on ammo and that dog isn’t getting any tamer.” Sam looked at his weapon helplessly.

“Ditto, but we can’t just cut and run,” Dean growled. “Not with Miss Marble still aiming to open that damn gate!”

Sam suddenly flinched as the deep grumble of an ancient engine clearly began to rev behind them. “Aww man, not again...” He spun around, quite obviously expecting the driverless trucks from earlier to have returned.

A vehicle used to refuel the classic aircraft at the museum was barreling toward the brothers at an insane speed, its huge wheels bouncing over the ruts in the concrete, jarring at its suspension.

And from its rear end, a thin stream of aviation fuel oozed from an open pipe, jetting onto the runway.

Sam instantly tensed, expecting the truck to slam into him, crushing his bones.

Instead, the blue-grey behemoth hurtled past both Winchesters, heading straight for the aged barrow and the skipping flames that surrounded it.

At the last moment, the driver’s door swung open and Hamilton jumped clear, his skinny frame hitting the runway with a bone-wrenching crack.

The truck carried on its journey without a driver until yet another furrow in the runway caused its steering to jar sharply to the left. The harsh change in direction at such speed was more than the heavily-laden vehicle could take, and it rolled – straight onto the encompassing fire created by the demon.

In an instant, the malevolent blaze ignited into a firestorm, the fuel and flames creating an explosion that lit up the night sky for several miles in either direction.

The unholy matrimony of human fuel and demon fire seemingly caused the barrow to detonate at the heart of the conflagration, sending out hundreds of dirt sods and disintegrating ancient bone fragments.

A shattered segment of dirty brown femur landed at Dean’s feet and he squirmed. “It’s really raining men, huh?” He snarked with a wince, but no one seemed to notice his misplaced humor.

Already, Hamilton was trying to climb to his feet, his lanky body bruised and battered from his quick exit from the truck. He tried to smile, having played a part in the barrow’s demise, but the grin was soon wiped from his face as the hellhound returned with a vengeance.

The creature appeared from the blackness of the night as if it had materialized from nothing.

It slammed into Hamilton's already teetering form, knocking him instantly to the ground.

The museum owner grunted, hands pushing the thing away from him desperately, but as it lunged again and again, it was obvious he wasn't going to have the strength to hold it off like Dean had.

He yelped, but there was no one to come to his rescue.

The Winchesters had problems of their own.

From the aftermath of the explosion, Jezebeth sashayed through the rubble and smoldering earth, her eyes glowing with a new kind of hatred. She was angry, and while her slathering mutt tried to maul Hamilton, it was apparent she was going to focus on the Winchesters.

And right now, the one in her direct line of sight just happened to be Sam.

Jezebeth raised a hand like she was about to conduct an orchestra and the younger brother was instantly snatched from his feet, his long legs dangling in midair like a puppeteer was trying to control him.

Jezebeth walked closer, craning her neck so that Sam could see the veins there throbbing and pulsing with her rage.

"Something tells me your boss is going to be pissed at your failure here," Sam smiled, despite the pressure pushing at his body.

Jezebeth shrugged, bringing him down just enough that her hand could reach his neck. She ran long, bony fingers over his flesh there, as if caressing his skin. "Oh, Lucifer will be... unamused, but I can handle him." She puckered her nose. "There are always other portals, other doorways I can work on – and it's all thanks to you Winchesters and that stupid little paradox you created..."

Sam strained against her hold. "You have to still exist to be able to open any more doors..."

Jezebeth frowned, apparently uncertain suddenly of her position. "If that's a threat, it's an empty one," she hissed. "Especially when you're dead." The demon moved to use one of her unnaturally long fingernails on Sam's throat, but her weapon never made contact with his flesh.

As Sam looked over Jezebeth's shoulder, Dean swooped on her from behind, brandishing Castiel's feather like a heavenly sword.

"Guess you're gonna need some pretty drastic anti-aging crap after *this!*"

Jezebeth screamed, the anticipation of what was going to happen next striking terror into her demonic soul.

Dean didn't falter or flinch, bringing the feather down to touch her flesh with a strange look of satisfaction on his face.

Instantly, Jezebeth's skin began to wrinkle and age, her form degenerating from young to ancient in a matter of seconds. Folds of tissue morphed into blackened, cracking flesh, and then abruptly, she was gone – nothing more than an erupting cloud of hoary dust that made Dean hack like he had bronchitis.

Behind the hunters, Hamilton instantaneously stopped struggling with the hellhound as it too vanished into a crumbling haze of ash. Like its master, a creature no longer of earth, or indeed Hell.

Dean and Sam turned as they heard the Scot groan from the gashes and bites he'd sustained.

"Dude, you almost look like a Winchester on a good day," Dean chuckled.

Hamilton attempted a wan smile despite looking like he might collapse at any second. His shirt was torn, body bloodied, but he didn't seem to notice.

"I suppose this means I better start believing now, eh?" He spoke pointedly to Sam, who seemed to understand the comment.

Dean offered up a hand in friendship, and maybe, just maybe, a little respect. "Yeah, guess I better start trusting your sorry ass too, English," he grinned, giving what was probably the closest to an apology Hamilton was going to get.

The Scot nodded back and tried to shake on it, but stumbled forwards instead. Dean caught his shaking form.

"Scottish," Hamilton corrected with a wink.

"Oh yeah, how could I forget you're a haggis..."

"Alan?" There was a girly squeak from the main hangar and Becky appeared from the gloom, apparently unaware of what had been going on outside.

Looking all three men over with an expression that said she'd seen better in the local cemetery, she jerked a thumb back towards her 4x4. "I'm thinking we might be needing a drink...a BIG drink, yeah?"

Dean's face instantly brightened. "Sweetheart, you took the words right outta my mouth."

***Harry's Bar
2020 Fillmore Street
California***

Dean quietly took a sip from his glass of Jack Daniels and waited patiently for Billy Woodward to return from the john. He'd come here to explain to the old man what had happened in England – but he'd also come to give the ex-pilot one last chance to set his conscience free.

Given the experiences Dean had gone through at the airfield, maybe he was the one person who could relate to Billy enough to get the man to open up and unburden his soul. They had, after all, shared the same mission, even though Woodward didn't realize it.

Dean huffed to himself; if only it were that easy for a Winchester to confess sins or forget the past.

He took another chug of his drink and set the glass down on the bar with a clunk. As he swallowed hard, Woodward hobbled back to his own perch and stiffly sat down next to the

hunter.

“So, you were just telling me about the barrow?” The old man asked, picking up his own glass but not drinking.

Dean nodded. “Yeah, we had to go back the next day and salt and burn that sucker again just to be sure we’d zapped all the evil mojo going down there.” He shrugged. “It was kinda a messy business. And England was kinda weird all around...”

Billy laughed, the creases on his face showing a rare picture of mirth instead of the usual unbridled guilt. “It’s addictive, isn’t it? No place like it anywhere else on the map.”

“I guess,” Dean agreed, draining his tumbler and pointing to the bartender for another for them both. “And the food,” he continued with a big cheesy grin. “Man, the food is weird, but kinda awesome. I mean, who else could batter a cod that way and make it taste so good. And those whacky fries...”

Billy finally downed his own drink, quickly followed by the second the bartender had brought over. He gulped, licked his lips, and it was obvious he was becoming more serious.

“Dean...” He coughed, face draining of color just a smidgen. “There’s something I wasn’t entirely honest about when we originally met.” He looked at the younger man, perhaps for signs of surprise, but there were none.

Dean simply watched the old man expectantly, guessing what was about to come next. Woodward had to tell this tale. He had to let go once and for all, or he would never have peace.

“Remember how I told you about my plane’s name?” Billy questioned slowly. “Well, she wasn’t called “No Second Chances” just because my crew nearly bought the farm on our first mission.” He hesitated, as if rekindled memories were cutting him to the core. “No, she was called that because of a screw up I made that I can never change, and never forgive myself for...”

“Everyone makes mistakes,” Dean attempted to calm the pilot, but being sympathetic wasn’t normally his thing. He tried again anyway. “Look, man, this was war. Crap happens. Hell, still is happening over in Afghanistan.”

Billy didn’t seem to hear him, continuing his oratory as if he were a priest in a pulpit. “Our navigator got his figures wrong. We were off course – only slightly, but enough to put us over a civilian area rather than a Nazi factory. We only realized as the bombs were released. And there was a school below...”

Tears welled in Woodward’s eyes and he tried and failed miserably to sniff them back.

Dean put a consoling hand on Billy’s bony arm but couldn’t find the words to placate the man’s agony.

“I...I could have veered off and maybe stopped some of the bombs hitting, but if I had, my bird would have been straight in the line of intense enemy anti-aircraft fire.” Billy stared into Dean’s eyes, like a man condemned. “I was a selfish bastard. I let those bombs continue falling on that school to save my own worthless life. And in all these years since, I’ve not slept one night for my crimes.”

“Hey, maybe there were no kids there that day, huh?”

Woodward shook his head and gestured to the bartender for more drinks. He held up two fingers, signaling he wanted an extra Jack Daniels for himself. As soon as they were poured, he downed them, then looked hungrily at Dean's.

If the old man was trying to drown his sorrows, all he was going to get was a humdinger of a headache the next morning – Dean knew that from lots of experience trying the same experiment.

He didn't mention the fact to Billy. "Knock yourself out." He pushed his glass over to Woodward, and the pilot took it with a nod of thanks.

When the alcohol was no more, Billy looked to Dean, his bottom lip quivering slightly. "Do you think there's a chance, just one small chance that a version of me exists in one of those other universes that *did* make the right choice that day?"

Dean hesitated. Should he tell Billy everything? Should he admit that, yes, Billy made the right choice in the universe that he visited, but there was a price? That the entire crew of the B17 died to save the three kids?

In the end, Dean just couldn't make that kind of call. He couldn't replace the old man's hell with another. *Because all roads lead to...* He bit down on his own lip, stifling the thought before it had chance to expand into the obvious.

"Look man, you only did what you thought was right. Who knows? Maybe more people would have died if you *had* changed course that day. Sometimes war is a bitch, and there are casualties no matter what we do. It's part of life."

"Part of death too," Billy huffed, drawing out his wallet to pay their bill. "A part I'll never be able to accept..." he looked up, his features contorting into the nearest he could come to a smile. "Thank you, anyway. You at least stopped any more deaths because of me."

Dean felt his mouth go dry. This wasn't a happy ending, for Billy, or for the Winchesters. The old man still had his cross to bear, and he and Sam had opened up a whole new can of worms he wasn't sure they could handle.

He took Billy's hand anyway, shaking it heartily. "I hope we see you again, sir," was all he could muster to say in response.

Woodward shook his head. "Yeah, maybe on the *other* side..."

* * * *

Dean exited the bar feeling hollow somehow. Maybe he'd made the wrong choice not telling the old pilot what he knew, maybe he hadn't, but deep down he felt like either reality was the wrong one.

Hell, was there a "right" reality out there? A place where God, the angels, mankind could win?

Was there even a God? Yes, they'd seen evidence of angels and the devil, but the big guy with the beard had yet to show.

The Impala drew up at the edge of the sidewalk and Dean grabbed the handle and dropped inside, happy to be back in his baby, even if Sam was at the helm.

Speaking of Hell – driving that “roller-skate” in the UK, now that had been a real trip to Hades and back. In fact, his spine was still suffering the consequences.

“So how’d it go?” Sam asked, tapping the gas and heading back out of the city.

“Not good.” Dean shook his head. “What that poor guy has had on his conscience all these years...”

Sam looked in the rearview, and from the dull glint to his eyes, Dean knew his brother was carrying a weight of his own. Something was irking Geekboy.

Finally, he came out with it. “Dude if Billy has something to live with, then we have a whole lot more.”

“The gates?” Dean asked flatly.

Sam bobbed his head, taking a right turn onto the highway. “Lucifer has the power to open all those hellgates because of us. He’s using the aftermath of the paradox we caused and we can’t do squat to stop him.”

Inside the Chevy grew quiet; the only sound the drumming of the tires on the newly replaced road surface.

Dean twiddled with his thumbs on his lap, suddenly wishing he had the big lady’s wheel to caress with his hands – anything just to be doing something other than actual *thinking*.

They had caused a problem, and now, like Billy, they were stuck with it. Except the Winchester’s problem might just cause the annihilation of mankind.

Eventually, Dean attempted to change the subject. Prolonged silences were never his thing –*too much like something religious*, he pondered.

“There’s something that’s been eating at me since we got back from Merry Old,” he admitted, hoping Sam would take the bait.

“Yeah?” Sam raised a brow, apparently forgetting their guilt for a second in favor of his brother’s conundrum.

“Just how the hell did I get back from that alternate reality anyhow?”

“Maybe it was just the universe forcing you out like it bounced us around before we got home,” Sam pondered, his face suggesting he thought there was more to it than that, but his mind apparently not having the answer.

Dean shook his head. “No way, man, when I was dragged through into that crazy-assed dimension it felt just like before – just like Stull. But coming home after my parachute went AWOL? Dude that was a whole new bucket of whacked, even for me. It felt different, like someone or *something* was plucking my butt outta thin air.”

The car grew silent again, and Sam’s face grew pensive.

Dean pretty much knew that look. It meant his little brother was stumped, and it was eating at him.

Dean on the other hand, well, he had a suggestion he wasn't sure he dare voice.

His hand strayed to the pocket where Castiel's feather sat innocently. As his fingertips brushed the plumage, he felt a strange tingling sensation, and deep in his mind, Dean heard a familiar voice mutter, *"I'm the one who gripped you tight and raised you from perdition..."*

The phrase was new to Dean, and yet not. Part of his subconscious was sure he should have heard it before, like in another time, another place.

Perhaps it was some weird kind of déjà vu?

The Impala's interior light suddenly flickered and came on, then slowly faded to darkness again. It repeated the action several times, even though it was still daylight.

Sam didn't seem to even notice.

There was a fluttering noise, a rustling that reminded Dean of a flock of birds abruptly taking flight. His head spun around over his shoulder without the hunter even thinking what he might be confronting.

But out of the periphery of his vision, all he managed to see was what looked like a vanishing silhouette of wings.

White, swan-like wings.

Dean gulped. *Castiel?*

Sam sighed, still trying to answer his sibling's question, and obviously not realizing that anything untoward had happened in the car. "I don't know, man," he said, half-jokingly. "Maybe we just really do have angels watching our asses..."

Dean swallowed again, harder this time, no mirth to his own timbre as he replied gruffly. "What have we ever done to deserve that kinda recognition, dude?"

Sam's eyes grew distant. From his suddenly serious look, he seemed to sense his brother was spooked, and that was a rare occurrence indeed. "This is the start of something big, isn't it?"

"Very big," Dean agreed. "And a certain angel on my shoulder is telling me we're destined to have our asses dragged into it whether we like it or not..."

Sam guided the car past a huge billboard that marked the outskirts of the state, but he didn't notice what it was advertising.

Dean did, but couldn't bring himself to accept the possibility of what it might mean.

The huge poster was apparently for a local gospel minister, but its message unmistakably had a larger meaning to those who understood it.

"The End is Nigh!"

And perhaps it was.

The End

