

# THE LEGEND OF BLACK AGNES

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A SUPERNATURAL™ FAN FICTION

**BY**

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Chapters: 8 chapters + an epilogue (15'000+ words)

Type: drama, angst, adventure, supernatural and some good old mullet rock

Rating: PG 13

Main characters: Dean, Sam

Timeline: Set after *Born Under a Bad Sign*

Summary: In traditional Winchester demeanour Dean pushed aside what happened when Sam had gotten possessed and moved on to the next hunt. In Baltimore the brothers try to solve the mysterious death of a young sorority girl, but end up endangering their lives when they overlook some details on what they thought would just be a simple salt'n'burn...

Beta Reader: Shelby

Note: This story is based on the [legend of Black Agnes](#). However I've taken quite a few liberties with it, so it would fit my story.

Written: April - May 2007



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## Chapter I      A Deafening Silence .....

*"On a long and lonely highway east of Omaha  
You can listen to the engine, moaning out as one long song  
You can think about the woman, or the girl you knew the night before  
But your thoughts will soon be wandering the way they always do  
When you're riding sixteen hours and there's nothing much to do  
You don't feel much like travelin', you just wish the trip was through."*  
Turn the Page – Metallica

~\*~

Little time had passed since the incident. They had both fully recovered and all that was left were scars. One for Sam's arm and one for Dean's shoulder. Both were discreet, quiet, but would always be there, like a permanent reminder of what had happened and what might have happened.

They hadn't spoken much about it afterwards. What was there to say anyway? It hadn't been Sam; the kid was possessed, deprived of his will, so Dean held no grudges, or so he said.

Bobby bit them farewell a week ago. Told them to call him anytime; told them to be extra careful and to watch each other's back.

And now they sat in the car in silence; Sam may have looked calm and serene but the turmoil inside his head was unprecedented. Flashes of what had happened during that week kept coming back. Hunting him, a warning for what he would become. He couldn't help thinking about the hunter who had died of *his* hands and unconsciously that same hand wandered through his pocket, his fingers patting a now familiar object. It was a clean folded piece of paper covered in neat handwritten words of love. The letter he had found at Wandell's. Sam had read it over and over again, the lump in his throat growing bigger and bigger each time. He knew all too well the pain that came with the loss of a parent, it was the worst of all, and now he had put it upon the little Wandell girl. He fought back the tears that made way to his eyes, his fingers still brushing the sheet of paper.

The demon they had known as Meg had only sought revenge. It was all it was. No master plan, no higher purpose; just an unconditional need of vengeance. There had been no preparation, no clear pattern and yet she had managed to make Sam kill a man, torture a friend and hurt his brother. The next thought sent shivers through his spine while fear settled in his heart. Meg was like an armless girl compared to The Daemon. He was more powerful and *he* had a plan; a play that had been written many years ago and to which Sam was one of the main characters. He was like a pawn on a chessboard, pushed by an expert's fingers on an ever darker path.

The war had already begun and they were slowly but surely drawing closer and closer to the end, Sam could feel it. The final fight in which he'd have to take side would soon be held and the young man was afraid to be standing on the wrong side when the time comes. His heart constricted in his chest when his thoughts drifted back to his brother and the side *he* would be standing on.

His thoughts drifted back to that old warehouse they had been in. Some words echoing in his ears, random parts of what seemed like a conversation. In a heart beat he finds himself on the deck, a gun in his hand, watching motionlessly his brother falling over the edge, a pained look on his face. *Dean... oh god, Dean!* He had shot his brother; the one and only person who meant the world to him and he had shot him.

This time he couldn't help a silent tear to trace a wet path on his left cheek.

After all Dean had done for him, all the efforts and the sacrifices, this was how he was repaying him. A second tear mirrored its sister on his right cheek and it was hard for him to hold back the sob that came with.

Sam let his head rest against the Impala's window; the cold glass making his headache momentary hurt less. His gaze was on the scenery but he wasn't paying any real attention. He had tried to apologize but Dean had cut him off each time. And ever since, he'd been real quiet and that bugged Sam to no end. The younger only wanted to talk. He wanted to get the facts straight, wanted to apologize, wanted to scream, wanted to cry, wanted to pretend nothing had happen, wanted to run, wanted to die. But he sat there, motionless in a deafening silence that was slowly suffocating him.

Dean tried to let his thoughts drift away, not wanting to think back on the freshly reopened wounds. Not wanting to think of the new memories that had awoken hastily buried fears. Behind the wheel of his precious Impala, he felt like he was where he belonged. In his one true shelter, his solely reassurance, he turned the volume a little louder, hoping that Zeppelin would be enough to silence everything else. Of course things never go the way you want them to, now do they? Plant was singing 'Friends' and the lyrics unleashed the flood of memories that Dean had tried so hard to block out. He tightened his grasp on the wheel as a gun shot resounded in his ears while pain radiated from his shoulder.

Minutes before he had thought that he was just where he ought to be, but now the only thing that he wanted was to get out the car; to run away in the night and forget. But again, things never go the way you want them to.

~\*~

When Dean's world dangerously blurred, he figured it was maybe time to call it a night and he parked in front of the first Motel he found. He was out of the car before Sam even had the time to turn over and propose to go checking them in.

The eldest Winchester returned a few minutes later, keys in hand. They made way to the room, which would be theirs for the night, in silence.

It was old and the furnitures were tattered and ragged. Dean shrugged as he sat on the first bed, it wasn't worse than usual and at least the smell was faint. Sam mimicked him and started to take some of his cloth off but he was out in a heart beat. Sleep won him over before he even had the time to properly undress. He fell in a dark oblivion where images danced in front of his eyes, set to a psychedelic melody only he could hear.

Dean relaxed a little when he heard his brother's breath even. He had been afraid that he would have had to go through another one of Sam's attempt of an apology. More mumbled words, barely coherent and a sad puppy-dog's eye look pleading for forgiveness. He thanked Mr Sandman for the break he'd cut him, for he wasn't sure if he'd have had the strength to hold it all together one more time.

He dragged himself to the bathroom, quickly undressed and stepped in the shower. The water was lukewarm at best but he didn't even notice. He watched as the droplets washed away the stain from his limbs, he sighed when he felt his muscles relax under the massaging liquid and wondered why it couldn't do something for his pain as well.

He didn't have the energy to fight anymore so he let the memories assault him – cascading into each other, one fucking memory after the other – piercing through his already bleeding heart. Images danced between his eyes: *Sam, his beloved brother, slowly handing him the gun while his watery brown eyes were pleading him to take his life.* His knees gave way under him and he sank to the tub's white ceramic floor, hugging his knees close to his chest. *Sam standing on the bridge, smiling as he pressed the trigger.* He let his tears melt with the droplets, cursing whoever there was to curse for the fucked up lives he and his brother had. *Sam looking up at him with his five years old face, asking him if Dean would always be there to protect him.*

~\*~

Dean awoke when the first ray of light passed through the window. He turned his back to the door and gazed at a still very asleep Sam. The gesture was automatic, done unconsciously like a reflex. Checking on Sam had always been the first thing he did after waking up. Once he was assured that everything was ok, he got up and got dressed.

He scribed down a quick note, to let Sam know he'd gone out to get breakfast in case he'd wake up while he was gone, before leaving the room. He wondered what this new day would be like. Surely enough Sam would want to talk about what had happen while he really didn't want too.

He shook his head, realising he had to find something to divert his thoughts; a regular hunt to help him getting his bearings back; an easy job to help pretending things were back to normal.

Sam was still asleep when he came back, his arms in an awkward fashion on the folded sheets. What Mr Sandman had brought to the young man was no fitful sleep but this wasn't really unexpected.

Dean sat on the table and lit up his brother's laptop. He went online and started to look through the local newspaper, expanding his search wider until he spotted what could be their next hunt.

A soft moan announced him that his brother was slowly coming around. He waited for him to stir, sigh and then sit as he always did.

"Breakfast's on the table," Dean matter-of-factly said without adverting his gaze from the computer.

He caught a glimpse of Sam's hand reaching for the coffee on his right a few minutes later. Without looking up he could feel his eyes boring through him. The guy was probably frowning, wondering how to phrase his thoughts. Dean bit him to it and quickly stood, facing his brother, speaking in a low, controlled tone.

"Sammy, please, if you apologize once more, I'm gonna hit you until you see things straight again. You were possessed, it wasn't you," Sam was about to retort something but Dean spoke again, a little louder this time.

"I don't want to talk about it again. Ever. It wasn't you Sam. It. Wasn't. Your. Fault." Dean enunciated each word clearly, hoping that his brother would get the message this time.

'Yes *it was*,' Sam thought but he said nothing and nodded, he couldn't make things better, and he couldn't help Dean. At least he could cut his brother a break and leave him alone if that was what the older wanted.

~\*~

After the light breakfast the brothers, once again, hit the road. They weren't very far from their destination anymore and should probably get there in the afternoon, depending on the traffic.

Zeppelin had been cast back to the glove compartment, only to be replaced by Sabbath's Paranoid. Sam sighed for what had to be the hundredth time when Ozzy started chanting about fairies. '*Yep, the guy really is nuts*'.

Sam was about to sigh again when his world blurred on the edges. It's funny how sometimes memories resurface. Images settling themselves in your mind, unstoppable thoughts long forgotten fighting their way in, when you only want them to get out.

Sam tried to find out what had triggered this flow of memories but already the scenery was changing. The deafening music faded away and was replaced by a cold wind blowing against windows. The light dimmed and Sam found himself standing in the corner of an hotel room, watching his younger self turning and tossing in bed, shaken by a violent dream. Sam walked closer to the bed and noticed that Dean was slowly waking up. The sixteen years old Dean stirred and opened his eyes, slowly taking in his surroundings and turning over to his brother's bed. When he realised what was going on, he tossed over the covers and was by Sammy's side in the blink of an eye. He put his hand on his baby brother's shoulder, shaking him slowly and softly asking him to wake up. The younger woke up with a start and sat up straight, confused and afraid. 'Dean' he tried to call out, but it came out as a mere murmur almost covered by the sound of the wind battering hard against the windows. 'I'm right here kiddo, I'm right here,' came the strong yet soft reply. And Sam watched as his younger self slowly turned over to Dean and then buried himself in the elder's chest, small hands clutching his shirt, tears running free on his cheeks. Dean held him tight, slowly rocking them both and murmuring reassuring words. Without loosening his grip on his brother, Sammy slowly went back to sleep and Dean laid them both down, steadily manoeuvring them under the blankets. Sam felt his eyes grow damp as he watched Dean stroke his younger self's hair softly and place a soft kiss on his forehead before closing his eyes and drifting back to sleep.

The scenery blurred again and he found himself back in the Impala, gazing outside the window. He quickly stole a glance at his brother who was looking at the road, tapping his fingers on the wheel to the sound of AC/DC.

The memory however fresh in his mind seemed at the same time very distant and it felt all too bittersweet to him. Through the years Dean had changed and so had he. Life had been hard on them and the way they lived their lives was not helping. Mom, Jess and now Dad; they had taken every blow in full force but were still standing, forcing themselves to smile, pretending everything was ok. After all, they were Winchesters and nothing could hold them down, right?

*'Yeah right, but at what cost,'* Sam bitterly thought.

Dean slowed down as they entered Baltimore, Maryland. He kept driving until the city's precinct and parked in front of the morgue. He turned the engine off and reached for the glove compartment to get himself and Sam some fake IDs. Agent Ford and Hamill exited the car without exchanging a word and started towards the entrance door. Sam clenched his teeth hard; quiet had become an habit lately. There were no-more sarcasm and teasing and Sam would never have thought missing it would hurt so much.

The doctor looked up from his paperwork as he heard the door open. He frowned as the two men who'd just entered held out their badges. Damn he had already enough problems as it was. No need for these federal cowboys to pick their noses in his stuff. He gave them his best fake smile as he asked over-politely what he could do for them.

"Sheila Davies" The tallest man who had identified himself as Agent Hamill started. "Female, twenty-three, was brought in three nights ago,"

"What about her?" The doctor cautiously asked.

"We'd like to see her." Hamill's colleague replied with a smirk.

## Chapter II      Legends Have to Come From Somewhere .....

*"Waiting for the winds of change  
To sweep the clouds away  
Waiting for the rainbow's end  
To cast its gold your way  
Countless ways  
You pass the days"*  
Something For Nothing - Rush

~\*~

"So, what do you think is the cause of death Doctor Emmerson?" The youngest agent asked.

"Well, as strange as it is: heart attack." The sandy-haired man replied.

"Wasn't she a little young for that?"

"Yes, but it appears she's suffered major nerve damage. The pain induced by the nerve trauma triggered the heart attack."

"And what exactly caused the nerve damage?" The young man asked again.

When the doctor remained silent, both agents exchanged a glance that said long. To be honest Ted Emmerson had no answer to give them. He had been working as a doctor for over forty years, twenty-eight of them spent in the morgue, but he had never seen anything like it. And all his knowledge could not explain why this young woman had died.

~\*~

It was still early but already the sun light was going down. "Damn winter nights are always coming too soon," Sam hissed through gritted teeth as he got up to turn on the lights in the motel room. He paced a little, stretching his back, his aching limbs cracking. The researches he had been doing for the past three hours were going slow and an unwelcome headache was slowly building behind his eyes.

From what he had gathered, Sheila Davies was the sixth victim to have died in Baltimore's cemetery over the past ninety years. Each time the victim was a local young woman and each time the cause of death was mysterious, to say the least. Unexplainable cut and bruises; scared or pained look on the facial features and a massive nerve damage. Whatever rested in that cemetery seemed to only come out at full-moon nights and was merciless. Sam was betting on a vengeful spirit that could somehow induce pain to the persons it chose to attack.

He sat again behind his laptop, rubbing his tired eyes softly before returning to his researches. He had to find the evil thing that was behind those murders and more important find a way to kill it. Even though a quick salt 'n burn would surely be enough, he wanted to make sure that their adversary was a pissed off spirit and nothing else. Something was bothering him. This whole case felt wrong to him, his guts were wrenching and he could feel something bad coming.

He was still searching when Dean came back some ten minutes later. Sam was about to comment on his brother's long absence and how the researches could have gone a hell lot faster if he'd have had help but he bit back the angry words when he noticed the cup

of coffee and take away food in Dean's hands. He even managed to grumble a kind 'Thanks' when Dean handed him the food.

"So you found anything?" Dean asked as he sat on the bed, turning on the TV.

"Well, Sheila was the sixth victim. The others were all young women and all six deaths were kinda unexplainable. And it always happened during a full-moon." He replied in a neutral voice, stopping to take a sip of the black hot liquid. "What about you," he continued his voice a little less obliging this time. "Have you found anything during your three hours of research?"

"As a matter of fact I have," Dean replied taking a mouthful of his greasy burger. Sam refrained himself from commenting but couldn't help his eyebrow to rise in a questioning look. Dean acknowledged it but still took his time to swallow before resuming the talk. He was in a playful mind.

"I've met some of Sheila's sorority friends. They said she went to the cemetery because of a sorority initiation." He took another bite, followed by a few sips of coffee and this time Sam started to impatiently tap his foot against the chair. "Spending a night in the cemetery is a common rite of passage around here. Guess it's got to do with that local legend of theirs." He added taking another sip.

"What legend?" Sam asked impatiently. His head was really hurting now and he was so not in the mood for another one of his brother's childish game.

"Well, legend has it that there's a certain statue in the cemetery that kills young women at midnight. Her eyes glow red and you die a very painful death." Dean said giving up the game, and sticking to business. When has Sam ever been fun to play with anyway?

"A killing statue? A Black Agnes kind of killing statue, you've got to be kidding me Dean," Sam said a little sceptically.

"Well, legends have to come from somewhere. Anyway, I've checked with cemetery records and a woman named Agnes Chadwick was buried here in 1906."

"What a whole cemetery and only one Agnes buried in it?" Sam asked before turning to his computer and entering the name Dean had given him.

"Nope, but it's the only one who'd died a violent death." Dean replied as he got up to seat on the chair next to Sam. *'Ok, so you've really worked the case alright those past hours,'* Sam thought, but Dean's earlier patience-game refrained him from commenting out loud. The computer's soft blip snapped Sam back to reality and in a click a picture of Agnes appeared on the screen. It was attached to an old article entitled 'Local woman found murdered'.

A whole article had been written, carefully explaining how Mr Chadwick had killed his wife on an October night in 1906. It said that the man had lost his mind when he found out that his bellowed Agnes was having an affair with one of his colleagues. He took a knife and slit his wife's throat and watched her agonize on the floor for quite a long while.

"Well, she does fit the profile." Sam said as he finished reading the article.

"Looks like we've got ourselves a good old salt 'n burn." Dean said and Sam wondered what made his brother so happy about it. Sam returned his gaze to the computer; he was determined to find some more information on Mrs Chadwick.

He heard Dean move away, an impatient growl escaping his throat. *'What now,'* He thought without bothering to look up.

"Well, you coming or what?" Dean finally asked exasperation clear in his voice.

"What? You wanna do it now?" Sam asked sitting up. Sure enough Dean already had his hand on the door handle.

"That thing only comes out during full-moons right? That was two nights ago so there's nothing to worry about." The eldest replied, while opening the door.

"Yeah, but we don't have to do it right now," He tried to explain.

"What is it Sammy, need your beauty sleep?" He joked, fully knowing that his brother was right and that some complementary researches wouldn't hurt. But he didn't feel like staying locked in the room with Sam, doing endless researches. He knew too well that soon or later a more familiar topic would be brought up, accidentally or not. And given the choice he would rather like to face an angry spirit than his emo brother right now.

"I think we should do some more researches on this. Try to find out more about Agnes you know?" Sam tried again. The young man was tired and wanted nothing more than a little quiet time and maybe, if he was lucky, have some nightmare-free sleep. But when his request was met with a cold silence and hard look, he pushed his wishes to the back of his brain and grabbed his jacket.

~\*~

Both brothers were standing in front of the Impala's back. It was close to midnight but the moon was still close to the full and they did not need torches to gather the supply they would need for the job. A can of gasoline, salt, shovels, shot-guns, knives and a couple of other weapon 'cause you can never be too cautious.

Dean closed the trunk and led the way in the cemetery. Sam followed, tightening his grip on the shovel. He tried to clear his mind and pay attention to the job but he had one hell of a headache and it was making his thoughts fuzzy. He was thinking to a million things at once and none were really related to the hunt they were on. He tried to focus once more and mentally reviewed the plan. Find the grave, dig the grave, salt and burn the bones, go back to the Motel, sleep. Surely enough it sounded easy. The basic job they'd both done countless times. He reviewed the plan once more and then he realised that they were missing one key element.

"How exactly are we going to find the right grave?" He asked out loud.

"Guy I talked to this afternoon said that all the 100 years old graves are in the northern part of the cemetery, by the trees." Dean replied without even bothering to look at his brother. Sam nodded and resumed walking. He had to admit that when it came down to the job, Dean really was good. Rest of the time he could be a real jackass but he was a good hunter.

Sam's mind started to wander again. Thoughts came crashing into others like wild waves during a storm. He rubbed his palm on his forehead to wipe away the sweat. He felt so tired already and they had yet to dig the grave. *'C'mon Sammy, suck it up, you'll get your beauty sleep later,'* he could hear a voice that sounded much like his brother's say in the back of his mind. He nodded in acceptance and quickened his pace.

Dean stopped by the tree line. Satisfied to find that the information he'd received was reliable. All the graves that were here looked old and a closer look at the dates confirmed the fact.

"Let's split and find the right one," He said in a tone that sounded a little too much as their father's to Sam's hears. He bit his lip and said nothing as he went to have a look at

the graves that were on his left. He was flashing his light beam on each of them, quickly reading the names in the search of Agnes. He was about to walk back to Dean when he noticed one more stone a little farther to the left. The grave stone was at the base of large trees whose branches were covering it almost completely. He directed his light toward the grave to lit the marking and reveal the name of Agnes Chadwick 1880-1906. He walked to the grave and pushed some of the branches aside, revealing a massive statue of a pretty young woman standing by the stone with both arms open.

"Dean," he called out "Found it,"

In the moonlight he saw his brother turn around and make way to where he was. He was about ten feet from Sam when his face suddenly changed. Sam saw the light smile disappear to be replaced by a mix of fear and worry. Dean's lips parted and Sam wondered what had gotten into him. A scream of warning got out of Dean's mouth but Sam never had a chance to hear it.

### Chapter III Close Call .....

*"Moonbeam on her stone-carved face fell,  
And Black Agnes once again rose from hell.  
She opened her eyes and they were glowing red,  
And that night once again blood was shed."*

The legend of Black Agnes

~\*~

A terrible pain suddenly hit him. Every part of his body was hurting at once, he wanted to pull the hair out of his skull; scratch the flesh out of his bones to make it hurt less. His knees buckled under him and he fell to the floor. He heard a terrible scream that harboured so much pain it didn't even sound human. Sam wondered where it came from before realising it was his. He could feel his body jerk, as if electricity was running through it. And then he saw it, red eyes burning through the darkness. They were set on him, boring through him, sharp as a sword, burning like fire. And then out of nowhere the words came back to him and he remembered.

It didn't take a full-moon to bring Agnes back from the dead. Moon-light rays were enough and it was just a coincidence that the death had happened during full-moon nights. How stupid had he been coming in without doing more researches. How stupid had he been to push those branches away. 'Fuck,' he thought, then he heard a shot and his world went black.

~\*~

Dean recharged his shot-gun and shot the statue again, for good measure. Its eyes were now stone-like again and Sam's body wasn't jerking anymore. Apparently it was over for now. Dean knelt beside his brother and held out his hand to shake Sam. He froze mid-gesture when he noticed that his hand was shaking. Sam wasn't moving and Dean didn't know if-

He shook his head and put his hand on Sam's shoulder shaking him softly. Sam still didn't move and his brother's hand went to his throat, checking for a pulse. Dean felt it and took in a deep breath. He hadn't realised that he had stopped breathing. He didn't know how much time this rock-salt shot had bought them and he didn't want to stick around to find out. He passed an arm under Sam's knees and the other one against his back before lifting him up to carry him back to the car.

He drove as fast as he could, making it back to the Motel in a record time. He carried Sam to the room and laid him down on his bed before returning to the car to grab the first-aid kit.

Sam was pale and his breath was coming out in short gasps. Dean checked him from head to toe; he found nothing but a few gashes and cuts. He put some disinfectant cream on all the wounds and passed a damp cloth on his brother's warm forehead.

The adrenaline rush had now faded and Dean was feeling rather empty and cold. And more than anything else, miserable and guilty.

"Please wake up, little brother," Dean asked, his voice trembling a little. He passed a tired hand on his face as the events of the night replayed themselves in his mind. He'd seen the eyes of the statue glow red and its gaze had fallen on Sam. He'd tried to scream, to warn Sam of the danger but he hadn't had the time. He ran to his screaming brother, gun at the ready, shooting at the statue because he couldn't think of anything else to do. This time it had been close. Too close. Sam had almost died in that cemetery and Dean felt the bitter taste of failure invade him. How could he have let that happen?

They were on a hunt and they had split up, first mistake. The spirit had attacked them, when they thought it wasn't possible, second mistake. Sammy got hurt, utmost mistake.

"Wake up Sammy, please just wake up," Dean asked again, brushing away locks of brown hair from his brother's face. His voice had lost of its assurance and sounded much more like a plea. It was desperate and it was the desperation that got through to Sam. In the dazed blackness where he stood the words had been whispered to him. He heard the fear and pain in his brother's voice and willed himself to wake up to see why his brother sounded so wounded. He fought his way toward the familiar voice, leaving the comforting night behind. He had to get back to Dean.

The older hunter saw that his brother was coming around and thanked whoever was listening for granting him that little favour.

Sam opened his eyes and blinked a few times. The world was rather blurry and it took him a couple more blinks before the shapes sharpened and he was able to make out Dean's facial features. His brother seemed to be worried and he wondered why. He tried to sit up and let out a pained scream. His whole body was hurting. Why was it hurting?

Dean recognized the incomprehension in his brother's gaze and refreshed his memory. Then he helped him to a sitting position and put a couple of pills in his mouth before bringing a glass of water to his lips. Sam tried hard and forced himself to swallow them. He wanted to talk, ask more questions to Dean but he didn't even have the strength to open his mouth. His whole body was aching and even the weight of his brother's hand on his back was hurting. But it was also strangely comforting and he almost imperceptibly leant in the touch, letting the warmth of comfort racing through his soared body. Dean let him down again and brought the blanket up his chest.

"Try to get some sleep Sammy, you'll feel better tomorrow kid, I promise," He said in a soothing tone. Sam's eyes closed and re-opened and closed again a couple of times before Dean heard his breath even. "I'm so sorry," He murmured as he run his hand through his brother's ruffle hair before placing a soft kiss on his forehead. He sat up and made way to the laptop. It was time to figure out the mess they'd gotten into.

~\*~

When Sam awoke it was close to noon. He wasn't feeling much better but at least the pain had lessened a little. He forced his eyes open and scanned the room for Dean. A small smile played on his lips when he realised that his brother had fallen asleep his face on the keys of the laptop.

Gathering his strengths he managed to sit and it took a few minutes for the room to stop spinning. Grabbing the nightstand he managed to stand but the room swirled again. He waited a little and started to make way to the bathroom. He tried to be as quiet as he could, the idea of waking up Dean giving him a headache. Sure enough his brother would be hovering around him like a crazed overprotective mother and he didn't need this right now. Nor did he needed to hear the unavoidable lecture on how reckless he'd been. *'Moon-light wakes her, how could you have missed that college-boy?'* He could already hear Dean's reproach. Sam finally made it in the bathroom and Dean stirred when he heard the door lock click.

He woke up grunting, his back aching and he had the strange feeling that some squared letters were imprinted in his skin. He turned over to look at Sammy's bed and jumped to his feet when he realised it was empty.

"Sam?" He called out, trying to contain the worry in his voice. The bathroom door clicked again and the door slowly opened to reveal a ghostly Sam leaning against the door frame.

"You ok?" Dean asked, coming closer.

Sam nodded and started walking back to his bed. Dean gave him his space but stayed close just in case. The younger sat on his bed and a few minutes later a cup of coffee appeared in front of him along with a couple of pills.

"So how you feeling?" Dean asked cautiously as he sat on the second bed.

"I've felt better, that bitch is one hell of an angry spirit," Sam replied straightening up a little. He wanted nothing more than to lie down and go back to sleep but he didn't want his brother's concern to raise some more. He had purposely talked of the spirit hoping that the job would divert his brother's concerned thoughts.

"Yeah, so much for the quick salt and burn," Dean bitterly replied as a wave of guilt ran him over. The comment had come out harsher than he had intended and Sam took it as a reproach.

"Wouldn't have happened if we'd had done some more researches before jumping the shark," He bit back sharply.

*'I know,'* Dean thought but his ego's reply was somewhat different. "Oh excuse me genius, but you're the one who said it only came out during full-moons." He got to his feet and cursed himself mentally as soon as the words came out of his mouth. He was saying *'It's your fault,'* when really he should have said *'I'm sorry,'*.

Dean couldn't help but start a little as Sam stood in all his 6.4" length glaring angrily at him. His eyes were throwing daggers but his voice remained cold and detached as a spoke. "That's low, even from you Dean."

He held his baby brother's gaze until Sam turned to make way to the door. He exited the room with a quiet *'I need to get some air,'* and it took Dean a couple minutes to move from the bedside where he had frozen. He hadn't meant what he'd said. He was fully aware that his brother wasn't the one to be blamed. He should have blamed himself, apologize but hatred was so much easier to handle. Hate was a familiar feeling, something he could rely on anytime. Let it invade him, its soft heat warming and feeding him. Sheltering his heart so he couldn't be hurt anymore.

Sam stormed out vividly, the adrenaline running through his veins making his pain momentarily fade. He was walking without a purpose, his mind too busy relieving old memories to be thinking up a path. He walked until the adrenaline rush was over and the pain returned, leaving him breathing heavily on the verge of passing out. He sat on a nearby bench and forced himself to concentrate on his elaborate breathing. Memories assaulted him again. His hand raising the gun, his finger pressing the trigger, the look on his brother's face when the bullet pierced through him.

"I'm sorry," he whispered softly as tears built up behind his eyes. He knew Dean wasn't completely over the case like he'd pretended to, but he didn't know his brother harboured so much resentment for him. But after due consideration, it made perfect sense. He had managed to get possessed and hurt all the people he liked. And yet, Dean had taken him back by his side for another hunt, a second chance. And he had screwed it up good. As he sat there, looking at his shaking hands he wondered if this time Dean would leave him for good.

~\*~

"Fuck," Dean hissed as he got over the shock. Hell, his baby brother had been tortured and knocked unconscious by an evil bitch and now he was walking in a cold winter day in

jeans and T-Shirt. *Stupid, stupid, stupid*, Dean berated himself as he ran after Sam without even acknowledging the fact that he wasn't wearing more clothes than his brother and that he was running bare foot on the cold snowy streets. It took him a couple of seconds of looking around to spot the youngest sitting on a nearby bench, shaking with his arms tucked around him and tears in his eyes.

"What d'you think you're doing, sitting in the cold like that?" Dean asked as gently as he could when he got by his brother.

"Guess it shows how stupid I am," Sam replied without even bothering to look up. Dean's heart missed a beat and violently protested, constricting in his chest. The eldest sighed afraid that this was going to turn into one of these damn chick-flick moments he hates so much. Another tear ran down Sam's cheek and it decided Dean to push any hope of getting-through-this-like-a-man aside and do whatever it takes to help the younger Winchester.

"I never said that," He cautiously said.

"No, but you were thinking loud enough." Sam replied still keeping his gaze to the ground.

"You're wrong,"

"It's ok Dean. I keep screwing up and you're tired of it... You're tired of me, I get it."

"Well if you keep, telling stupid things like that, I'm might gonna start calling you stupid," the eldest replied, in a desperate attempt to lighten the mood and avoid the unavoidable. Sam finally looked up, and Dean was met with a disbelieving pained gaze and desperation. He sighed as he sat beside Sam, scratching his head in search of the right words.

"I didn't mean to hurt you Sammy, I'm sorry." He paused a little to gather his thoughts and also to make sure that he got his brother's full attention.

"Damn, you know me. You know I can't say what I think and then I get angry and I say more things I don't mean," He paused to scrub his hand over his face, this was it. His one chance to make amends "I... I wasn't angry at you, ok? I was angry at me. 'Cause you got hurt and it was my fault, and really I'm sorry."

"Dean," Sam said with a broken voice and so many feelings were tied to that simple word it caught Dean off guard. His eyes grew damp and his hand reached Sam's back and started rubbing small circles. "Why didn't you do it?" The younger asked, holding the gaze with the last bit of strength he had.

Dean felt that they weren't talking about the Black Agnes case anymore. No, Sam had gotten back to that damn event. He was bringing up again; the one topic that he'd put all his strength into avoiding lately. And this was it; he had run out of trick and couldn't avoid it any longer.

"It wasn't you." He simply said.

"What about next time. What... What about the time it's really me. What about the time I turn evil and do it out of my free will." Sam asked his voice shaking. Dean couldn't reply and looked away but Sam had to know so he asked again, his voice a little stronger this time and it broke Dean a little more.

"Will you do it then?"

"No," The reply was soft, fading away in the cold wind. Dean gathered all his courage before turning his head, his left hand grabbing his baby brother's chin forcing their gaze to lock, while the other still rubbed circle on Sammy's back.

"After all we've been through; you have no right to ask me this. I don't care what you might or might not become, I will not kill you, ever. It's like that so deal with it. And I don't want to have to talk of it again. It's useless anyway 'cause it won't come to that. I'm here and I'm gonna save you Sammy, even if it's the last thing I do." Dean's voice had been strong, filled with a tough resolution. He believed in the words he'd just said. He had to because it was what kept him going. Sam heard the belief in his voice and read the determination in his eyes and he too believed, because he wanted to, so badly. He nodded and averted his gaze, taking in the surrounding for the first time. As awkward as it was, the world seemed to be a little brighter now.

"So I'm stuck with you, huh?" He asked after awhile.

"Yup, you don't get rid of me that easy,"

"Thanks,"

"You're welcome. Now if you're done with your PMS Samantha do you think we could go back inside, 'cause I can't feel my toes anymore," Sam straighten abruptly, pretending to be offended but he couldn't help the smile that reached his mouth, nor the 'Jerk' that escaped his mouth.

"Bitch," Dean replied sitting up and holding out his hand to help his brother up.

## Chapter IV From Bad to Worse .....

*"Don't look in those sunken eyes  
Don't look and you stay alive  
Don't laugh in the face of Death or your tongue will blister  
Can't die 'til Satan says you die  
The Devil takes your soul  
With all his wrath he calls the reaper"*  
When Death Calls – Black Sabbath

~\*~

"Dean, check this out?" Sam called from the laptop.

"What?" Dean replied, sitting up from the bed he'd been on for the last hour, trying his best to think to nothing but the case.

"Agnes Chadwick, born Agnes Bella Rowen moved in Baltimore at the age of 20." Sam started.

"She left Salem to follow her soon-to-be husband Mark Chadwick in 1900." Dean continued, peeking over Sam's shoulder, stopping abruptly, realising what he'd said.

"Wait, Salem, as in wicca-witchy-Salem?" He asked, his mouth twitching in a smirk despite him.

"Well, we knew she was no ordinary spirit. I mean, the things she can do, it's huge. This could explain it," Sam commented.

"Yeah, but witches? Come on Sam, ain't no such thing."

"How can you be so sceptical about that, after all we've seen?" The younger asked raising an eyebrow.

"Whatever man, witch or not, bitch's going down in flames tonight."

"We'd better go before sunset," Sam sighed heavily.

"Yup, we just have to find a way to pass those next couple of hours," The eldest replied, getting back to the bed and turning on the TV. Sam grunted in response.

"What's the matter, you can get all the beauty-sleep you want for a while, should be happy." Dean said, his smirk turning to a grin.

"Funny. Do you think next time we can stop in a city where not every cop is looking for us? So we can go out every now and then and I don't have to put up with you all the time,"

"Why not, I'm a joy to be around," Dean cockily replied with bemusement.

"Yeah, keep telling yourself that," Sam smiled as he closed his laptop, quickly stealing a glance at Dean who was now comfortably slumped on the bed. He swallowed hard as his mind took another trip down memory lane. Dean had reassured him in a way only his older brother could and he was thankful to him for that. Yet Dean's words and promises hadn't been enough to silence the little voice screaming in the back of his head. His uncertain future was still hunting him. Like an unshakable fear, yelling at him in a

desperate attempt to warn him of things to come. The fear of what he might do to his friends and family.

Dean was flipping through the channel, hopelessly searching something worth watching. *'Like you could find something worthy in daytime TV,'* He thought, looking sideway to Sam. His younger brother seemed to be lost in thoughts again. This often happened with the kid. *'He's thinking too much,'* Dean thought as he flipped to another channel. He was sure Sam was still going over the events of the past days. How delusional had he been to think that their little chat would have solved the problem. Dean shrugged, whatever was coming, he was going to make sure that nothing could hurt his Sammy. He'd do whatever it takes to protect him. Evil destiny or not.

~\*~

The moon had been at its full six nights ago, and it was slowly diminishing. Yet it was still in it's waning gibbous stage and it's ray were already piercing through though it was only 6pm. Luckily for the two Winchesters, the weather was bad and clouds were thick and numerous in the sky.

"Keep an eye behind your shoulder; I don't want to get arrested for digging a grave, again, again." Dean said as his shovel was breaking up the grass-covered soil.

Sam nodded, lifting the first shovelful of dirt. This was going to be a long night. It was still winter and the earth was slightly beginning to froze, making it harder to break up.

They had probably dug half way when Sam stopped, passing the back of his hand on his forehead, rubbing away the drops pearling on his brow. He was tired, drenched in sweat by the warmth induced by the effort. Yet a chill was tickling his spine. He had been feeling uncomfortable ever since they had entered the cemetery. At first he had thought it was the idea of being near that damned statue again. That it was bringing back memories of what had happened two nights ago. But he'd showed the uneasiness in the back of his mind; focusing on getting the job done. As he stood there, feelings of weirdness assaulted him again and he realised that there was more to it. Sure he had nearly died but that was not the first time. The chill running up and down his spine was the strangest feeling, like an indefinable warning of bad things to come.

To add to the drama of the scene a strong wind started blowing around, soon joined by loud noises in the sky; a sure sign of a heavy storm to come. Dean cursed as a wind stream made him shiver. His shovel hit the ground again as the first rain drops met the earth.

The wind had sent another shiver down Sam's spine, as he stood there, all his senses in alert. He turned his head left and right, searching for a possible enemy but found none. The cemetery was empty and real quiet. Of course who would be wandering around in a cemetery in a cold winter evening? He sighed heavily, his gut wrenching before lifting another shovel-full of dirt. He was eager to get this job done.

"What's the matter?" Dean asked, stopping in mid-motion, his shovel a few inches from the ground.

"Nothing,"

"Come on Sam, what is it?" His brother asked again, a little more insistently this time.

"It's just,... I've this feeling, like something bad's gonna happen."

"Final-Destination like? Beware the terrible killing-spaghettis," Dean laughed, digging up again. This time his shovel it something hard.

"Let's just get this over with," Sam bitterly replied, lifting some more mud to reveal a dark ebony crate.

Dean quickly got out of the grave to get the salt and gasoline and finish the damn job. Sam had let go of the shovel, and was now trying to open the crate. Neither of the brother had noticed that the wind had gotten stronger and that the streams had dangerously unclouded the night sky.

Numerous rain drops were falling from the sky, the wind making their vertical fall not so vertical. But no matter of much force Eos but in its blows it was never enough to stop them from meeting the ground. The pearly drops were glistening on Sam's hair, running along his back. Twin sisters were rolling down Dean's hand as his fingers grasped the salt box. Dean brought the salt up as he stood but stopped in mid-motion. He wondered for a second if he had hurt is head recently and realised he hadn't.

*'Then why do I hear voices,'* he wondered dully.

Without knowing why, he turned over to the head stone and that's when he realised. Weak rays had reached one of the statue's outstretched arms and her eyes were glowing red again. He felt drawn to her and to his own surprise he felt his feet moving. He heard his brother calling him, tried to reply but couldn't get his mouth to open. Though the woman's voice was getting stronger he couldn't make up the words. They were soft spoken, like a lullaby but not in English. Latin maybe? He was willing his feet to stop walking or better to start running in the other direction and cursed himself when he realised he couldn't get them to operate like he wanted to. He could feel Sam move behind him and hoped his brother wouldn't be affected like him and would burn the bones.

He took a few more steps and the edges started to blur. Suddenly everything was white and a pang of pain raced through his body. He let out a scream and had already lost consciousness before is head touched the ground.

## Chapter V      Pretium Aequus Vitae .....

*"Take a look to the sky just before you die  
It's the last time he will  
Blackened roar, massive roar, fills the crumbling sky  
Shattered goal fills his soul with a ruthless cry  
Stranger now are his eyes to this mystery  
He hears the silence so loud  
Crack of dawn, all is gone except the will to be  
Now they see what will be, blinded eyes to see"*  
For Whom the Bell Tolls – Metallica

~\*~

'*Shouldn't have drunk that much,*' Dean thought as he started to emerge blackness. He tried to open his eyes but the vivid brightness that assaulted him sent another wave of pain through his skull and he shut them close again. '*Shouldn't have drunk at all,*'

Something warm was moving on his forehead and he frowned. It felt like a hand and he wondered where he was and why were his thoughts so fuzzy anyway?

"Dean, are you ok?" He heard his brother ask and the hand moved from his forehead to his shoulder, nudging softly. Was he ok? he wondered? Then he realised that apart from the headache, he was. '*Not a hangover,*' he realised dully. '*Was on a job,*' the memories were slowly coming back to him. The cemetery, the statue, ...

"Bitch," he said out-loud, the final pieces of the puzzle falling into place. He tried to open his eyes again and realised they were back at the Motel. Sam was sitting on the second bed, frantically searching the first-aid kit now, concern written all over his face.

He tried to sit up and let out a groan when the room started spinning. His brother's hands quickly left the kit and in a matter of seconds found their way on Dean's shoulders, steadying him in his attempt to sit.

"I'm ok, stop hovering around already," Dean grumbled, brushing away Sam's hands, sitting up by himself, even though he had one hell of a killer headache and wanted nothing else than to lie down and die.

"I'm not hovering," Came the rapid reply but Dean found it hard to believe when only seconds later a couple of pills were laid in his hands and a glass of water materialized itself in front of him.

"You're like an overprotecting mother with hormones disorder." The eldest Winchester hissed between two swallow. The comment was meant as a joke but it was missed by the youngest and a flash of anger flickered in his eyes.

"Oh excuse me to worry when you go all puppet-on-a-string like and then play dead for a couple of hours."

"Hours?" Dean echoed. Had he really been out that long?

"Yes, Dean. Hours. Eleven if you want to know. I had to carry your ass back here and no-matter what I did you didn't wake up." Anger and fear in his voice now, Dean realised and he felt sorry for being the cause of it.

"Did you burn the bitch?" He asked hoping that the answer would be yes and that none of them would have to set foot in that damn cemetery ever again.

"Yeah I finished the job. How you feeling? You sure you're ok?"

"I'm fine,"

"Cause you look a little pale,"

"I'm fine," Dean said again more firmly. Yeah, he was feeling a little weird and his head was not better, but he'd been worse. And with the job done, he had time to rest. He curled on his side and closed his eyes hoping to get a few hours more of sleep.

"I'm gonna go get us something for breakfast." Sam said grabbing his jacket. "Call if you need me."

Dean nodded and slumped some more in the mattress. Right, truth be told, he wasn't felling so good. His head really wasn't doing any better even though the pills should have kicked in already and the mere idea of food made his stomach lurch. He gave it a second thought and realised he'd better get closer to the bathroom, just in case. He was half way through when his stomach started to make him feel like he was on a rollercoaster and he barely got in in time.

Once he was done throwing up, he rinsed his mouth and splashed cold water on his face. The cold droplets felt good on his skin and made him realised that he was rather hot. 'Fever,' he thought as he straightened and started to make his way back to his bed. As he got past the door the edges started to blur and he was feeling really fuzzy. He took a few more steps and wondered why the room was so dark when it was barely 7am.

"What the hell's wrong with me," He said in a drunken-like voice before everything went black.

~\*~

Dean woke up again feeling like his head was going to explode or implode; he wasn't really sure which one yet. He propped himself up on an elbow and grunted when he realised that it was now close to nine, curious as to where the last hours had gone.

"How are you feeling?" He heard his brother ask in a concerned voice and he wondered what the big deal was. Ok he wasn't used to sleeping past sunrise but it wasn't such a drama.

"I'm ok, just a little tired I guess," He casually replied.

"Tired?" Sam scoffed. "Tired? Dean, I found you unconscious on the floor. You're as pale as a ghost, you've got temperature and you were sleep talking non-sense gibberish all along".

"Really?"

"Yeah, evil bunnies threatening to kill us and then something about Paris Hilton being really supple."

"Ooh Paris," Dean's thoughts started wondering off and a smile played on his lips. Sam shook his head and continued.

"It's serious Dean. It's like you've got an heavy cold. You have all the symptoms, but people don't catch a cold in such a short time frame. I mean, you were fine before going in the cemetery. This, it's-. It's not natural." He said finally.

"Well, I'm sure it's nothing. You weren't doing so great yourself when we went after Agnes the first time. And now you're doing alright."

"Yeah, but she attacked me. She didn't do anything to you, so it makes no sense." Sam started only to be cut by his brother's bite-back comment.

"Except the funny chanting,"

That caught Sam's full attention and he searched his brother's face for more indication.

"You haven't heard the chanting?" Dean asked realising the youngest had no idea what he was talking about.

"It was soothing, like some Latin goo-goo mojo. Made me walk to the statue and I couldn't take my eyes off it. Couldn't walk away either."

"What did it say?" Sam was listening carefully. His attention to its full, sure that whatever it was, it was responsible for Dean's current state.

"I don't know. I only know so-much in Latin, I got a few words here and there."

"Make an effort, it's important."

Dean closed his eyes and tried to focus on the words he had heard. His headache wasn't making things easy and he was feeling like it was a hundred degrees in the room but after a couple minutes and came up with something that sounded close enough to the original.

"Pretium aequus vitae; aeternus letum; dies prae finis," He said without really understanding what he was saying. Sam however, he was sure, understood. He saw his brother frown and a small flicker of fear played in his eyes before he quickly stood up and got to his computer.

"What?" Dean asked concern rising inside him.

Sam frantically clicked on his laptop while shaking his head in denial. Dean's concern went up a notch and he asked again.

"What does it mean Sam?"

His brother stopped typing and took in several slow breaths, as if to calm himself before turning over to Dean and raising his eyes.

"The price equals a life, an eternal death. It'll be over in a day." Sam roughly translated. "Dean, I think she cursed you,"

Dean would have laughed at that if his head wasn't hurting him so much and his breath wasn't so short. Sure it wasn't possible, right? His eyes met with his brother's and he realised that the younger Winchester was dead serious.

"Shit,"

~\*~

As much as he didn't want to believe it, this was really happening. With his hands strongly grasping the sink Dean looked at his own reflection in the mirror and wondered

when it was that he had lost control over his life. Was it when they went to the cemetery without doing the necessary researches, no, things were already fucked up before that. When then? When Dad had died, when he got Sam back from Stanford, or when the kid left in the first place? No. Things had been wrong for longer than that. He had once been caught in a downward spiral and had never found a way to extract himself from it. Dean sighed as he put a date to it: November 2, 1983. That one single night had changed everything.

Dean couldn't really be qualified as an optimistic kind of person. He wasn't one to see the good in people and live out of faith, holding on to the hope that somehow things would get better. No he wasn't like that. He'd always known that he was going to die young; he was just hoping he'd go out guns blazing, in a fire of glory. A series of cough momentarily interrupted his thoughts and he sighed when he noticed the small drops of blood now in his hand and made a face at the taste of metal in his mouth. Not so much for the hero's death.

No, Dean really wasn't one to have great expectations out of life. In fact, he only had one. One wish, one hope, one silly small thing that was oddly strong enough to make it all worth it. One promise that he had always thought he would fulfil, no matter what.

*'...I'm gonna save you Sammy...'*

The words came back to taunt him as he watched the blood swirl down the drain. A lump grew in his throat and he knew it wasn't one of his sickness' symptoms.

He straightened himself and used his last strengths to put his game face back on. Now was not the time to break, he had to be strong for Sam. *Sammy*. He knew there were many things he should probably tell his brother: some kind of life-advice and wise words, but he didn't know where to start and where he was supposed to find the courage to do so. Yeah, that would be one hell of a chick-flick moment.

Sam got up as Dean came out of the bathroom; his face reflecting the worry that he was feeling inside.

"I phoned all the people we know to ask for advices." He said as he watched Dean sitting on his bed worried that he was going to pass out again.

"Please tell me you're not looking for a Faith Healer again?" The eldest asked, trying for a cheerful tone.

"I'll find something, Dean," Sam assured him. He was waiting for a few of their father's friends to call him back. There had to be a way to break the spell. If only he knew the spell entirely and not just the bits that Dean remembered. His thoughts wandered again, maybe a counter-spell. A spell to bind him to life. No. These come with a high price. *'So what?'* He wondered.

"Sam," Dean started without really knowing what he was going to say.

"No Dean. I'll find a way." Determination

"How? I'm running out of time here," Resignation

"I ain't giving up on you man. And neither should you,"

Dean shook his head and sat up, only to come sitting down again, this time beside Sam on the second bed.

"I don't want to spend my last hours arguing with you." He said softly as he raised his hand to let it rest on his brother's shoulder but Sam jerked away at the words 'last hours'. He sat up vividly.

He went back to his laptop and started typing. Only to stop every now and then to check on one of the many books scattered on the table.

Dean felt back on the bed, tears longing to escape his eyes. He was feeling life leaving him, getting weaker and weaker by every second. He curled on his side as another fit of cough assailed him.

*'The price equals a life,'*

## Chapter VI To Die Alone.....

*"Walking through the desert  
Hearing Nazi bells ringing from the church to farm  
That was never there  
Imagine I'm in heaven, but it is a hell  
Sun is drying out my brain  
The smile and installations are my pain"*  
I'm Going Mad – Scorpions

~\*~

Dean woke up with a lingering taste of blood on his tongue. He opened his eyes as he tried to sit up but however faint the movement was, it was enough to make his stomach lopsided. He tried to put his hand to his mouth but he wasn't quick enough and the best he managed to do was curl on the side and vomit on the carpet floor instead of the bed. The sight of the mixture of bile and blood almost made him throw up again.

He felt tears building up in his eyes and wished someone would put a bullet through his skull so he could at least die with the little dignity he had left. Almost unconsciously, his hand found its way underneath his pillow searching for the cool piece of metal that he knew was there. He patted the soft mattress and cursed when he realised that his ever present knife wasn't there. Looking around, he realised that it wasn't the only thing missing. His bag wasn't by his bedside anymore. Why in hell would Sam have taken all the weapons? Sam?! Sam wasn't there either he realised dully.

"Sam?" He called with the last bit of voice he had. Tears were harder to contain when his question was met with cold silence.

"Sammy?" He called out again, more pleadingly this time. But again silence was the only answer.

He forced himself to sit up and managed to get to his feet without blacking away. He started to make his way to the door, he had to find Sam. He could barely breathe, and the pain was overwhelming but he forced himself to put one foot in front of the other again and again. Every single muscle in his body ached, but he pushed the pain aside. No. He wasn't going to die, not before he had a chance to tell Sam all the things he wanted to say.

He pushed the door open and stepped outside, the brightness of the day assaulting his eyes. He put his hand up in a desperate attempt to shield himself from the burning rays of the sun. The air was dry and the grains of sand carried by the wind made it even harder for Dean to breathe. Sand?! Where was he now?

He looked around but saw nothing that could indicate where he was. The cabin he was standing in front of was the only thing around. He coughed and the grains of sand that made their way in his mouth cut through his throat. How the fuck had he gotten in the middle of a desert he wondered. And more important, where was Sam?

A shape appeared in the distance. Tall, dark. Someone was walking toward him. Threatening? He didn't know, and frankly it didn't really matter for he had no weapon and even if he had, he doubted that he could conjure up enough strength to fight. Leaning against the door frame, breathing heavily, he waited. He blinked and smiled as he recognised the facial feature of the dark-suited man in front of him.

"Sam!" He called out. "Where the hell have you been?"

The youngest kept his lips sealed as he took the final steps towards the cabin. Only when he was by Dean's side did he turn around to meet his brother's quizzical eyes.

"It's ok Dean." The words were soft spoken with an undertone of resignation and it sent a shiver through Dean's spine.

"It's ok." His brother said again. "You can die now,"

What was that resolute tone, Dean wondered? Since when was Sam so okay with him dying? Did he not care at all? He met his brother's eyes again and winced at what he saw, slumping back more into the door frame. Nothing.

He felt like screaming but all the air had left his lungs. He opened his mouth to gulp some more air but couldn't get it down his throat. The loud pounding of his heart resounded throughout his whole body, so loud, so loud, so loud it hurt.

He fell to his knees and tried to breathe again but his throat was like closed with glue. He looked up to Sam with teary eyes but his brother wasn't even looking at him anymore. The pounding slowed and suddenly the sun wasn't so bright anymore. Was it dawn already? Yeah probably, that would explain the cold that was spreading through, chilling him to the bones. He closed his eyes and in his heart, he cried. His worst fear had come true. He was dying alone.

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It wasn't cold; it wasn't scary. It was warm around him and things weren't so bright anymore. It wasn't dark either he realised as he opened his eyes. The tears in them made it hard to see but it looked like he was inside again. He closed his eyes again, feeling good, safe, in that warmth that was oddly comforting. Death wasn't so bad after all. Something around him shuffled and he realised that he wasn't alone. Someone was holding him. His senses were slowly coming back and he realised that someone's hand was stroking his hair while another was running up and down his arm in a soothing motion.

"Sam?" He knew for sure, though he hadn't seen him.

"Yeah Dean, I'm here. It's ok. Everything's ok." His brother replied in a soothing voice. And Dean let the feeling of relieve wash over him. Sammy's here. Sammy's ok.

"Am I dead?" He asked, his voice hitching a little.

"No. No you're not. You just had a nightmare."

Dean let out a sigh and leaned in closer. They had never been a hugging-kind of family and he couldn't clearly remember the last time he'd been hugged but frankly he didn't really care anymore. He was feeling horrible and this was helping.

His mouth was dry and he could swear it tasted of sand. Gosh that dream had been so vivid, it had felt so real. He had felt like dying. Thinking back on it, sent a shiver throughout his entire body and Sam held him a little tighter.

"I'm sorry," Dean choked out.

"Don't be,"

"I am. I don't want to die. Sammy. Who's going to look after you now?"

"Dean, it's-"

"No it's not ok." Dean cut him, glad to realise that his voice had regain some of its strength and that the tears had finally stopped falling. "It's not ok. It's not how it was supposed to be and really I'm sorry. I wish you could have had the normal life you wanted. I do, really."

"Dean it's ok, you've done right by me,"

"It's not ok," Dean said again like a stubborn kid and it was hard for Sam not to smile.

Sam looked down at his brother and his heart constricted in his chest. He had never seen Dean so vulnerable before; even as kid the eldest had always been strong and confident, even in the worst situations.

But today... Today things were wrong. Earlier Dean had appeared to be sleeping fitfully and Sam had taken it as a good thing. More time for him to do researches and avoid looking at the truth; the seriousness of the situation. Yes, things had been as fine as they could have been until the moment Dean had woken up screaming, shaking and – much to Sam's bewilderment – crying. He wasn't used to seeing him like that and his brother's tears were perhaps the wrongest thing in all that fucked up situation.

As he sat there, holding his brother as close as he could, he swore to himself that Dean Winchester would live to see another day. Go to Amsterdam where coffee-shop don't even sell coffee and visit the Grand Canyon if that was what he wanted to do.

Never in his life had Sam been so resolute, so sure about a decision. He knew the risks were high but there was nothing that he was not willing to try. And when he spoke it was with the utmost confidence.

"I found a way,"

~\*~

"I found it in Bobby's book 'The Key of Salomon' remember it's where we found that trap for Daemons," Sam started as he got up to fetch the book.

"It's a ritual, a bidding ritual actually." Sam continued, "It's very old, ancestral even. I believe it's powerful enough to sorta outrun the curse. Here have a look,"

Dean shook his head to clear his thoughts and tried to focus on the words imprinted on the old paper but the headache was back and it made it difficult for him to concentrate. Some words however registered. 'two souls, eternal binding, equal outcome'.

"Sammy this is wrong," Dean started only to be cut by his younger brother.

"No what is wrong is you dying. We don't risk anything. We'll do this out of our free will and by ourselves without any kind of dark forces interfering. So it's safe. And then our souls will share the same fate and since I haven't been cursed, you won't be anymore."

"You can't cheat death Sam,"

"It's not cheating Dean. Okay! I know my stuff. I've spent the last fifteen hours or so, reading on curses and rituals and more, so trust me I know what I'm talking about."

Sam's tone was convincing and god how badly did he want to believe it as well, but it couldn't be so simple. Dean wasn't lucky and he knew it. Everything had always come with a price and it was hard for him to believe that this could be any different.

He forced himself to stand a little straighter so he could get eye-to-eye with his brother. He searched those big brown eyes to see if he could find the lie and was amazed at the strength that reflected.

"What's the catch Sammy?" He asked sternly.

"There's none Dean I swear," Sam lied with as much conviction as he could. "It will save you," *Either that or it will kill us both*, he thought. But that last part Dean didn't really need to know.

## Chapter VII Stubborn Is a Way of Life .....

*"May my love reach you all  
I locked in myself and buried too long  
Now that I come to fall  
Please say it's not too late"*  
Dead Man's Will – Iron and Wine

~\*~

He watched, as Dean seemed to be considering the proposition. And Sam held his breath as he waited for the answer.

Suddenly Dean's gaze was again searching for Sam's. He waited for their eyes to lock to speak.

"Look me in the eye and swear to me that this ritual will in no way whatsoever endanger your life!" Dean asked in a voice that left no place to arguing, sounding so much like their father used to. No matter how resolute Sam was, he couldn't help but flinch. It was just a flicker that passed through his eyes, for a second, but that was answer enough for Dean.

"Spill it up," He said dryly breaking eye contact. And his tone again left no place for comments or remarks.

"It can work Dean. I'm sure it can. And all I said was true."

"How about what you didn't say then?"

"Well, this ritual will bind our souls and then no matter what happens, we'll share the same fate and there's... there's a small possibility that... maybe... that maybe you're too far gone," Sam forced the words out and Dean really had to listen attentively to get the last part.

Dean shook his head. *'Too good to be true,'* Just like he'd thought.

"Then we're not doing it."

"Yes we are. I'm not going to let you die Dean. I don't care if it's risky or not," He spat back forcefully.

"No,"

Sam sat up abruptly, anger hard to contain. Why was he always so stubborn?

"Are you so eager to die? Is that it? Wanna be a fucking martyr?" He asked with barely contained venom.

"I'm not gonna let you risk your life to save mine?"

"So what? Am I supposed to watch you die and do nothing? Then what? I shrug; say 'It's fine' and move on with my life? Is that it?" Sam asked running a hand fiercely in his hair.

"Well here's a news-flash brother: I can't! I'm not gonna sit on my ass while you die and I don't care what you think about it. I can't lose you!" Sam punctuated his monologue with the forceful slam of the entrance door.

'Why is it so hard to say I love you?' Dean wondered as he watched the old wooden door shutting on him in awe.

~\*~

Dean was relieved to find out the youngest hadn't gone too far. His headache had lessened a bit but his limbs were still hurting like hell and the exhaustion was overwhelming so he didn't think he could have found the strength to run after his brother too far.

He sighed as he sat by Sam on the front steps.

"You should be in bed Dean," The young man said, keeping his head low and tilted a little to the right to hide his face. It was futile for the tears could be heard in his voice.

"I'm sorry," Dean said and he meant it. His right hand unconsciously found its way to his brother's back, rubbing small circles. "I don't want you to die for me, that's all."

"Well then, you're an hypocrite!" Sam replied turning his head a little, his gaze lost on the parking lot.

"I'm gonna save you, even if it's the last thing I do. Your words Dean. So you dying for me is okay, but I can't return you the favour. That's B.S.!"

Dean bit his lip; he hated it when college-boy used his own words against him. How could he argue with himself now?

"Sam,"

"No Dean. You're not gonna have it your way. Not this time."

"Sam,"

"No. I can't Dean. I can't lose you. I wouldn't survive it, okay?" The youngest said with a broken voice, as he finally turned his head to his brother with glistening cheeks and reddened eyes. That was it; he had laid down his final card.

And Dean knew. He knew that no-matter what he would say, Sam wasn't going to back down. Not this time. No, it was written deep in his dark brown eyes. Concern, Love and above all Determination and Dean couldn't help but feel proud of the strong man his brother had become.

"Ok," He said in a murmur. "Ok, we'll do it. But it better work, otherwise my ghost is so going to kick yours ass."

Sam shook his head '*Trust Dean to make a lame joke in such a bad moment*' but he smiled none-the-less and a small nervous laugh escaped his lips. The chuckle slowly morphed into a loud laugh and Dean's joined in because sometimes it's better to laugh than to cry, until a fit of cough almost suffocated him.

"You should go back to bed," Sam said as he helped his brother back inside. "I'll prepare all we'll need for the ritual."

## Chapter VIII Tomorrow Is the New Today .....

*"Oh the war is common cry, Pick up you swords and fly.  
The sky is filled with good and bad that mortals never know.  
Oh, well, the night is long the beads of time pass slow,  
Tired eyes on the sunrise, waiting for the eastern glow.  
The pain of war cannot exceed the woe of aftermath,  
The drums will shake the castle wall, the ring wraiths ride in black, Ride on.  
Sing as you raise your bow, shoot straighter than before.  
No comfort has the fire at night that lights the face so cold."*  
The Battle of Evermore – Led Zeppelin

~\*~

Time was running out and Sam knew it. He rushed to prep the few things he needed, a candle and some rope. In his mind he recited the words of the ritual again and again like a mantra.

With his hands full, he sat by his brother on the bed. Dean stirred and propped himself up, leaning against the headboard. He was even paler than the last time he'd looked at him Sam realized and it had barely been over ten minutes ago.

"I need some of your hair," The youngest said as he bent forward to cut a strand of Dean's short hair. He placed them on the middle of a sheet of paper that he'd pullet out of his notebook and then proceed to cut some of his own that he placed above his brother's.

A black pen soon replaced the scissors and with it Sam drew a pentacle in the corner of the sheet.

"Draw one as well on your side," He advised his brother handing him the pencil while he lit the candle.

Dean did as told and recapped the pencil when he was done. This whole ritual was making him uneasy but he forced himself to appear collected as he watched his brother carefully folding the paper and circling it with rope and a strong knot.

He couldn't bring himself to believe in this. To anyone who'd ask he would reply that this was crap, just like Santa and the Tooth Fairy. But in truth Dean was scarred. More than he's ever been, not so much for himself, but rather for his brother. And all this was bringing back some bad memories. Two persons had already died in his place and he had sworn to himself that it would never happen again.

As he looked at his brother, he prayed that this wouldn't work. That this was crap, just like Santa and the Tooth Fairy.

Sam noticed his shaking hands and offered him a reassuring smile as he brought the paper closer to the flame. With his other hand he grasped his brother's. He started speaking, and Dean tried to listen but the words made no sense to him. It wasn't Latin, and sounded very ancient. The language did felt somewhat familiar and he tried to listen more intensively and recognized it but he was feeling dizzy again. Not only, he realised. He was also burning; either that or Sam's hand was getting colder. 'No, definitely me,' he thought just before the world went black.

~\*~

He had never seen real black, he realized. Sure he'd been in dark places before; caves, canyon, mines, you name it. But never before had he seen a black so black. There was really no source of light what so ever and he found it a little frightening. The words resounded around him. Bouncing on the invisible walls that surrounded him, imprisoning him.

He tried to get away from them – running away in a way or the other – but they followed him wherever he went.

Was that death? It sure as hell looked like it. Cold, frightening and lonely. Well not so much what he had hoped for, but it was a little too late to argue, wasn't it?

Without any other option or real alternative he sat down and waited. The dark and cold he could get used to but that voice repeating the same words again and again was getting slowly but surely on his nerves.

He tried to cover his ears with his hands to block out the sound but it still got trough to him, loud and clear. '*Death sucks*' he thought.

As he sat there, the world started shaking under him and he felt backwards. He couldn't help a yelp of surprise as his head violently connected with the floor. He closed his eyes in a reflexive manner and when he reopened them a few seconds later Sam's worried face was above him. He realised that he was lying flat on his back at the feet of the bed.

"Dean?" He heard is brother's concerned voice. He wanted to reply but all this had scared his voice away and all he managed to do was nod lightly. His brother's mouth broke into a big smile as he continued

"We did it Dean, it's tomorrow and you're still alive."

"You sure?" Dean finally asked, his voice still a little hoarse.

Sam nodded and extended his hand to help his brother sitting up.

"How do you fell?"

He took a few seconds to assess himself before replying. Relieved to realise that his headache and general dizziness was gone. If anything he was feeling a little hungry but that was all.

"I'm good," He finally replied smiling a little.

"Can't believe it worked," Sam let out, as he walked to the table, closing his book. That small statement caught Dean's full attention and he spun over, letting out an estranged '*What?*' .

"Hum, I mean I was pretty sure, it would Dean,"

"Pretty sure?"

"Really pretty sure, but who cares. You're alright and so am I, so everything's fine."

Dean shook his head as he went to the kitchen, smacking his brother's head on the way. '*Pretty sure,*' The words echoed in his mind, as he turned on the coffee machine. Got how could he had let Sam drag him into this. '*Pretty sure,*' his mind scowled again. "Never again," He muttered softly to himself.

"So now we share the same destiny right?" Dean asked sipping on his coffee, getting out of the kitchen. "I hope it's not gonna turn me into a girl, like you."

"Ah.Ah. I don't really think it works like that Dean. But if I go dark side, you might as well." Sam joked back. His brother however, missed the joke and took it all too seriously. His smile faltered and his reply was stern.

"I made you a promise Sam, I'll fulfil it." The youngest couldn't help to smile at that, it really was a comforting thought.

"Either that, or we'll both go dark-side and none of us will care anymore."

"A whiner like you, that'll be interesting to see," Dean joked back and Sam couldn't help laughing a little though he tried his best to look offended.

"C'mon, I'll buy you dinner,"

"What, is it Christmas already?" Sam asked as he followed his brother outside.

## Epilogue      **Whatever the Wind May Bring.....**

*"Back in black, I hit the sack,  
I've been too long, I'm glad to be back  
Yes I'm let loose from the noose,  
That's kept me hangin' about  
I been livin like a star 'cause it's gettin' me high,  
Forget the hearse, 'cause I never die  
I got nine lives, cat's eyes  
abusing every one of them and running wild"*  
Back In Black – AC/DC

~\*~

Two days had passed since the ritual and none of the brother had really spoken about it again. Yeah, old habits really do die hard. Dean was packing while Sam was finishing the researches he had been on for the past hours. He had found them a ghost to hunt in an old mansion in Indiana. As he piled the books, Dean couldn't help a shudder to run up his spine as he put away 'The Key of Salomon'. This last week joined the week after Sam left for Stanford and the week after their father had died in the top three of Dean Winchester's worst moments. He sighed heavily as he closed the bag.

He walked back to where Sam was sitting, standing beside his younger brother, peeking above his shoulder to look at the LCD screen. Lowering his hand, to rest it on his brother's shoulder he asked.

"Could you stop for a sec'?"

"Sure Dean, what is it?" The youngest replied, closing the laptop and turning over to look at Dean who was dragging a chair.

"What a week," He said dryly while sitting down.

"Yeah, what a week,"

"Look, I just wanted to say, that I... I'm glad to be alive and that's thanks to you, so-" He paused to make sure that Sam was looking at him. "Thank you," He finished simply.

"Any time Dean," Sam replied with a warm smile.

"We're still no out of the woods yet, huh?"

"No, we're not. ... Dean, look I, I have this feeling. I don't, it's like something big's coming and, I feel like... like we're going to be crushed in the middle of it." Sam confessed sitting up nervously, a little unsure of himself.

"I know," Dean replied, sitting up as well. He smiled softly before placing his hands on his brother's shoulders. "But we'll get through this together, I promise."

Sam smiled and leaned in hoping that his brother wouldn't back away, for he really needed this. Dean let him and closed his arms behind his back, apparently he wasn't the only one who needed this little bit of comfort.

Sam let his head rest on his brother's shoulder, leaning against the curve of his brother's neck, like when they used to be kids and he had just woken up from a nightmare.

Yes, Sam could feel in the air that the war was drawing near. The pawns were set in motion, mindless puppets moving accordingly to their master's comments. Sam knew it wouldn't be long before the final check-mate but as he stood there, sheltered by his brother's warmth, he knew that no-matter what the wind would bring; he wouldn't have to face it alone. Dean would be right by his side all the way. As he relaxed in his brother's embrace, he let a small smile play on his lips. Yes, however faint, hope was still there...