

## A Serious Thing

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](http://archiveofourown.org/works/27675938) at <http://archiveofourown.org/works/27675938>.

Rating:	<a href="#">Teen And Up Audiences</a>
Archive Warning:	<a href="#">No Archive Warnings Apply</a>
Categories:	<a href="#">F/M</a> , <a href="#">M/M</a>
Fandom:	<a href="#">Supernatural</a>
Relationships:	<a href="#">Castiel/Dean Winchester</a> , <a href="#">Eileen Leahy/Sam Winchester</a>
Additional Tags:	<a href="#">POV Sam Winchester</a> , <a href="#">Episode: s15e20 Carry On</a> , <a href="#">Fix-It</a> , <a href="#">Alternate Universe - Canon Divergence</a> , <a href="#">First Kiss</a> , <a href="#">Love Confessions</a> , <a href="#">Happy Ending</a>
Language:	English
Collections:	<a href="#">SPN Finale "Destiel is CANON" Collection</a> , <a href="#">SPN: Rewritten and Expanded episodes and additional scenes (not the finale)</a>
Stats:	Published: 2020-11-22 Words: 1,185 Chapters: 1/1

# A Serious Thing

by [domesticadventures](#)

## Summary

"I don't wanna die here," Dean says, voice catching. "Not like this. Not now, not after we just got out from under Chuck's thumb. I wanna live. I wanna have a life and I want you there. So please—"

## Notes

i'm fueled by pure rage at this point and i've never felt more alive

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

*it is a serious thing  
just to be alive  
on this fresh morning  
in the broken world*

-”Invitation,” Mary Oliver

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Dean is dying, and suddenly Sam is twelve years old again, sitting in a shitty motel room watching *The Little Rascals* with his big brother, rolling his eyes as Buckwheat asks, “Quick, what’s the number for 911?”

Sam holds Dean up as best he can, trying to keep his weight from resting entirely on the spike through his back, as he pulls his phone from his pocket and shakily dials the three numbers that have never been enough to save them.

Dean, meanwhile, is praying a plan B against Sam’s shoulder, his voice soft and pained as his mouth fills with blood.

“Dear Cas,” he says, “who art in—wherever the fuck you are, I know Jack wouldn’t have left you in the empty—”

Dean takes a shuddering breath that Sam feels against his chest, that demands all of his attention even as the call connects and someone says, “911, what’s your emergency?”

“Don’t know why you’ve been ghosting me, but I gotta believe you still give a shit, and I don’t wanna die here,” Dean says, voice catching. “Not like this. Not now, not after we just got out from under Chuck’s thumb. I wanna live. I wanna have a life and I want you there. So please—”

As Dean takes another labored breath, leaning on Sam more heavily, the air crackles with static electricity, making Sam’s skin itch, his ears ring—and then it disappears in a sudden rush, and a familiar voice is saying, “Sam. I’ve got him.”

“Okay,” Sam says, stepping aside, letting Cas take Dean into his arms. “Okay. Holy shit, Cas, it’s good to see you.”

Cas holds Dean up with one arm like it’s nothing, bearing his weight carefully, easily. He touches his free hand to the side of Dean’s face, strokes a thumb against his skin so tenderly Sam feels like he’s intruding. “I’m sorry,” Cas says, “but this first part is going to hurt.”

Dean has only a moment to gasp in pain as Cas pulls him from the post, and then Cas’ hand is at his back, grace radiating out from his palm and into Dean’s body.

As the light fades, Dean takes a deep, deep breath, hands clenched into Cas’ sleeves as he straightens, stands on his own. Sam sees it, the exact moment where something shifts—where Cas moves to pull back and Dean refuses to let go.

“I wasn’t trying to ‘ghost’ you,” Cas says, sounding almost embarrassed. “I just—”

Which is when Dean interrupts him by yanking him into a kiss so sudden and desperate that Sam huffs a surprised, involuntary laugh.

“I love you, too, you idiot,” Dean says, pulling back far enough to get a good look at him. “But holy shit, I’m so mad at you.”

Sam knew Dean hadn’t told him the whole story about Cas’ death, his deal. Looking between them, now, it’s become abundantly clear that he was missing more details than he’d thought.

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“So,” Sam says, hands steady on the wheel as they make their way back to the bunker in the dark. He isn’t even mad about playing chauffeur just this once, given the freshness of this latest miracle. “Jack brought you back all the way powered up? Couldn’t you just poof out of here instead?”

Sam glances up at the rear view mirror just in time to catch it—the way Cas looks down at the place where his fingers are intertwined with Dean’s own. Dean had fallen asleep with his head resting on Cas’ shoulder half an hour into the drive, and now he’s leaning into him fully, drooling a little on his coat.

He’d known for a long time that something existed between Dean and Cas that was different from what existed between them and anyone else, but, well. Seeing the terrible fondness with which Cas is looking at Dean—with which he’s always looked at him—Sam feels a little silly for missing it, now.

“Yes,” Cas says, smiling softly. “But why would I?”

“Fair enough,” Sam says, his smile echoing Cas’ own. “But—and not that I’m in any place to judge,” he continues, thinking of his own silent phone, of every quiet moment over the past two weeks where he had sat with his thumb hovering over the screen, never quite working up the courage to hit call, “why didn’t you come back sooner, man?”

Cas hesitates. “I was busy.”

Sam almost laughs. He forgets, sometimes, that Cas has learned to lie from the best of them, to tell careful half-truths that sound like honesty.

Instead, he says, flatly, “Busy.”

“I was remaking heaven,” Cas says. “With Jack. Tearing down walls, building it up better for all of humanity.”

“For humanity?” Sam asks. “Or for Dean?”

Cas meets his gaze in the mirror, smiles a little shyly. “Both.”

Sam does laugh, this time. “Well, I’m glad and all, but also pretty damn glad Dean doesn’t get to see it just yet.”

“Yeah,” Cas says. “Me, too.”

For a long stretch of road, things are quiet—the crunch of gravel under the tires, Dean’s occasional snore. As the miles drag on, though, Sam’s curiosity gets the better of him.

“Hey, Cas?”

“Yes?”

“What really kept you away for so long?”

“I...” Cas starts, looking down and away, squinting into the darkness. He sighs. “I was scared. That with true free will, Dean would decide what he wanted, and...”

Sam snorts. After all, he’s spent over a decade being subjected to the way Dean looks at Cas, too. “And it would be a life without you in it?”

“Being an angel has never exempted me from making very human errors,” Cas says, bemused. “You know that.”

“If it makes you feel any better,” Sam says, “I’m right there with you.”

—

Sitting alone in his room, Sam turns his phone over and over in his hands, calling up every excuse he’s made over the past few weeks and examining them one by one.

He knows Chuck had interfered, doesn’t think he was lying about that. But even so, he had felt that surely he hadn’t been micro-managing.

Even if Chuck had pointed Eileen in his direction, had put the spell in front of him, they still had everything else, didn’t they? They still had years of texts and calls going back and forth, their comfortable, easy camaraderie whether they were working a hunt or staying up way too late drinking way too many margaritas. They had the way Eileen nestled against him once the spell was completed, the way she’d kissed him back when she could have pulled away.

He had been so sure, back then, when Chuck was still around. So what was stopping him now?

Sam steels himself with a heavy exhale, unlocks his phone, and finally hits call.

Eileen picks up before the second ring—so quickly that it sets Sam’s heart racing.

“Hi, Sam,” she says, and her smile tells him everything he needs to know.

## End Notes

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