

The Happiness in Having

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Summary: The universe played by its own rules. The universe was also a romantic. -- *Companion piece to "Defining Heaven", Cas' perspective*

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Author's Note: Most times I win in these arguments with my brain (and muse) when it comes to companion pieces that show the other side of the story, because I prefer not to do them. This time I didn't win. Or did I? Ah well.

Light.

There was light shining into his face.

Light where there was supposed to be neverending darkness. Darkness and despair and literal emptiness. Of everything.

Frowning, Castiel carefully opened his eyes, squinting against the sudden brightness that hurt after all this time without it.

He half expected to be faced with another way to torture him, another one of these ideas the Empty had been so creative in producing. Admittedly, Cas hadn't exactly tried to be friends with the Empty, quite the contrary, so its vengeful way was no surprise. The angel clung to a vain hope that he would either be expelled or truly, permanently killed - he had once, many eons ago, heard that it happened in rare cases. A deletion of his existence and consciousness. He rather not be at all anymore than left alone in the dark and empty for all eternity with his thoughts and yearnings.

His tired eyes, however, showed him something - someone - he had least expected to see:

"Jack?"

"Hello, Castiel," the boy greeted and smiled.

"Is this..." he began to ask, but realized that inquiring a potential product of his mind about its realness was a rather useless idea.

"You are back in Heaven. We need you. We have much work to do." It sounded so simple what Jack said, and yet so surreal. Why would he be back, and why would the boy they raised be here to---

His own thoughts were stopped by his eyes finally opening fully, literally and figuratively, and he saw, really *saw*.

"You are--- but--- but how...?"

"We defeated him, Sam, Dean, and I. And so I came to be. I will tell you everything, but there is time."

Stunned speechless, Castiel followed as Jack led on, telling him what he was envisioning for that new Heaven he wanted to build, what needed to be rearranged and reshaped, and soon Cas, though still full of questions, added his own ideas, his own hopes.

As time - that concept that didn't actually exist in Heaven, but Castiel had become so accustomed to assuming after all his, well, *time* with humans - passed, their ideas and visions became a yet even better reality. Heaven wasn't a place of pretended contentedness and freedom anymore - instead, it gave what it was supposed to. True happiness. At least for humans.

But Cas wouldn't complain. Jack's - *God's* - plan for his angels was as simple as it was comprehensible and sensible: Angels were God's soldiers, serving the Almighty. They never had any business interfering in the affairs of humans, unless explicitly told to. And it was what Jack explained needed to be corrected. So angels were to stay in Heaven, watch over the human souls, take care of peace and order.

They were not to return to Earth if not absolutely necessary and allowed to by God.

This was the little drop of bitterness in a sea of sweet hope. Castiel had hoped he'd be allowed to go back to Earth, to the humans, the hunters - to Sam. To *Dean*. He wasn't. And though a notion of sadness filled him, he still understood.

It was not long after that he learned that Dean wasn't on Earth anymore. His friend, the man he loved, had died. After all these years of war, of fight and loss and sacrifice, and after that ultimate victory fate had given them, Dean hadn't been granted to savor peace afterwards. And Cas mourned his beautiful soul.

"Go, Cas," Jack told him shortly after the news had arrived, "go to him. Their Heaven is open to you."

While borders and walls in Heaven had been torn down, there still were designated areas for certain groups of people, so it would be easier to find each other in the afterlife. Families, friends, communities; everyone arrived in a place where they would be surrounded by familiar faces. They were allowed to venture out, visit other areas and people, even stay there if they preferred so; but most stayed among those they knew.

When they had reshaped Heaven, Cas and Jack had also created an area for the Hunter community. Watching their joy of seeing each other, of meeting again, had filled both the angel and the new God with a sense of a job rather well done. There was barely any group that was tighter knit than that of Hunters, despite not being family by blood, despite not having seen each other in years.

So when Castiel entered the part of Heaven that belonged to the Hunters, he immediately felt the happiness vibrating in the air. Here they met again, without worries and sorrows, without that everlasting inner sense of duty that had made them all proud, but had nonetheless weighed heavily on them. No one of them had ever dared to stop, as tired as some became over the years, all too aware that it would cost lives.

Here, that burden was finally taken from them, and Cas knew that while each and every single one now and then wondered how things were going on Earth, they didn't mourn having left this life behind.

There was, it seemed, some celebration going on in the Roadhouse, where most of them met. In front of a rather familiar Gas 'N Sip, the old man who had been like a father to Sam and Dean sat with his trademark grumpy smile, blinking into the sun and nursing a beer bottle. And in the distance, a family wandered through the fields, chatting and laughing.

What had been hundreds of miles apart on Earth was now close by and easy to reach; everyone still had their own place, but they didn't have to travel for days anymore to get to each other. It was a luxury they thoroughly enjoyed.

But while Castiel was glad to see the Hunter community so content, he had come here with a purpose.

With his eyes closed, the angel concentrated on the energy of the souls around him, trying to find the one he was seeking. And indeed, the man in question wasn't far away; guided by the call of this beautiful soul he had once saved, a call that had since then never stopped and often enough been his anchor, he flew blindly until he landed amidst a huge wheat field.

There, not far away on the dirt path, he was.

When Castiel saw the man and felt his heart, impossibly, skip a beat, he almost faltered. He had never expected to see him again, face him again, and even though there was nothing he longed for more, the confidence he had felt when he had spoken his confession back in the bunker, before the Empty had taken him, was now more of a memory.

But here he was, about to meet again the man, the human he fell in love with, despite angels not being made to feel, especially not that deeply.

"Hello Dean." Because what else was there to say? It was like their very own, very personal way of greeting, the words so simple, and yet weighing so heavy with meaning.

When Dean stumbled upon hearing Cas' voice, the angel's resolve to stay back and wait waned. His desire to catch the man, in more ways than one, was deeply rooted inside him, and to refrain from doing so cost him more willpower than he believed he possessed.

Yet he stayed back, not interfering for now, and felt a painful twinge inside him when Dean, after a short glance left and right, continued on. Only the little headshake Cas saw gave him that tiniest bit of hope that maybe the human had expected to see something, *someone*.

It helped him dare to get closer, knowing that Dean would hear his wings flap. It did the trick. The human looked at him with an expression filled equally with disbelief and wonder, his eyes soon glistening with tears.

"Cas," the man breathed with a raspy, almost strangled voice, and he swallowed before continuing, "You're... here."

"Of course I am, Dean," Castiel gently replied in reassurance - of himself or Dean, he wasn't so sure - as he walked slowly towards the man who had claimed his heart, and came to stand an arm's length away from him on the dirt path.

"I thought you were... I mean, Bobby said, but... how did you..."

"Jack. He brought me back here." There would be time for the full story later on, of that Cas was sure.

"I... I buried you, Cas. We did. Gave you a Hunter's funeral, with an empty pyre. I thought I'd... Why didn't you come to us, to--- to me?" Dean demanded, and though that edge of accusation swinging in the human's voice stung a little, the angel knew that he hadn't really meant it as an attack.

"Angels are not supposed to be on Earth," he explained calmly, "our place is here, in Heaven." There was a sudden change in Dean's demeanor that immediately worried Cas. Worry, however, that vanished on the human's next words.

"So... you're a soldier again?" Castiel smiled.

"I am whatever I want to be. And... wherever I want to be, here in Heaven," he said, and saw realization dawn in Dean's face. There was a single tear rolling down his cheek, and it took the angel a lot not to reach out and brush it away. He knew whatever happened next had to be by initiative of Dean.

So when he all of a sudden found himself in a tight embrace he fiercely returned without second thought, he was sure it had been Dean who had made the first move. Or had he? It didn't matter, Cas found. All that mattered was that familiar warmth he felt, inside and out. And all he knew in that moment was that he had to hold on, if Dean let him.

"Don't you ever leave again," the human spoke then with a voice rough with emotion, "You hear me?!"

"I won't, Dean, I promise. There'll be no more reason to leave," the angel replied softly and maybe he even tightened his embrace a little more for the blink of an eye, before he felt the other pull back.

"Good, because," Dean said when he was able to look at Cas, while his arms still held on, "if this is my Heaven, I make the rules, and there is no more leaving and losing of people I love."

Castiel felt a smile bloom on his own face that must have told a thousand tales of happiness. Last he had felt this content and relieved had been when the Empty had taken him, but this time the edge to it was - thankfully - missing. He was just joyful beyond words, and tears of the same emotion filled his eyes.

"Dean--" he began, wanting to assure that there was no need for Dean to feel obligated to reciprocate, but he was interrupted by words he had never dared to dream he would ever hear.

"I love you, Cas," Dean said, the words followed by a relieved laugh and a happy twinkle in these green eyes. And he obviously couldn't stop saying it once it was out, repeating immediately "I love you." in a softer, gentler voice. "I have for so long. I just wish I had understood it sooner, had not been so--"

"It is okay, Dean," Cas stopped him. "I know. I understand. We don't need to dwell on the past."

Nodding lightly, Dean brought up a hand to cup Cas' face. Gently his thumb caressed the angel's cheek while their eyes exchanged what words could not have expressed properly.

There was a moment between seconds, an easy-to-miss movement, a combination of leaning in and pulling close, and their lips touched, tentative and shy, as their bodies once more fell into each other. And just like their love had grown slowly over the years, their kiss as well was deepened without the need to rush, guided by feelings and the simple longing to be with each other.

The depth of what the angel felt in these moments should have scared him, unfamiliar and overwhelming as it was, but he simply embraced it, savored it, that sacred feeling called love his father had once created for humans only and denied his own children. But Castiel, the one with *a crack in his chassis*, had been befallen by it despite not being made to love, inspired by a soul he may have raised from perdition, but that in return had liberated him in a completely different way.

Yes, there was happiness in just being and just saying it. For him, as an angel, maybe even in just feeling it.

But the happiness in the having?

It was without comparison.

And Castiel finally, blissfully, *had*.

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