

Desperate Remedy

By Scribblesinink

Sam's vision shimmered, and he could barely see the demon's face any more. It threw its borrowed head back, mocking him as he failed yet again to drag it from the shop assistant that it was possessing. Blood thundered in his ears and Sam could feel a trickle from his nose, warm and sticky on his upper lip. His skull pounded, the pressure so great he feared his head might simply explode.

In a way, that would be a relief.

Unable to hold on any longer, Sam released the demon, a cry of pain escaping him as he let go. He put both hands to his head, as if that would stop the sensation that his brain was about to leak out of his ears. Then the last of his strength left him, and he crumpled to his knees. Groaning in agony, he barely registered Ruby moving to kill the demon with her knife, cutting off its laughter mid-taunt.

Another demon gone. And another human he'd failed to save....

How was he ever going to find the strength to go up against Lilith if he couldn't even figure out how to exorcise a measly underling? How could he force her to bring back Dean? Get his revenge for what she'd done to them?

The hammering inside his skull made it hard to think, and Sam curled in on himself, not caring about the cold, dirty floor beneath him. No matter how many times Ruby kept telling him he'd learn eventually, Sam was beginning to fear he just wasn't strong enough.

"Sam? Sam!" Ruby's voice gradually pierced through the buzz in his ears, and he raised his head, blinking sweat from his eyes. Ruby used the point of her knife to direct his attention to the diagram on the floor; the devil's trap had caught her when she stepped into it to kill the demon.

Sam grimaced and crawled over so he could reach out and smudge the chalk enough to let her walk out. A moment later, he found himself cradled in her arms, her hands warm on his skin.

"I'm not strong enough." His voice was muffled against her shoulder. "No matter how hard I try."

"It's okay, Sam." Ruby started running a hand through his hair, massaging his temples: an attempt to ease the migraine she must know he had. A part of him hated himself for it,

but a bigger part wanted—no, craved—the comfort she offered, and he clung to her, waiting for the pain to ebb and his strength to return.

Her hands stilled for a moment. "There may be... another way."

"What?" Sam tilted his head back a little, trying to meet her gaze. Her face still swam in and out of focus and he blinked rapidly to clear his vision.

"Another way. To make you stronger."

"Will it help me get Lilith?"

Ruby nodded.

"Then show me." He pushed away from her, settling back into a sitting position.

"Aren't you gonna ask what it is?"

Sam shook his head, instantly regretting the movement when a wave of dizzy nausea washed over him. If he hadn't already been crouched on the floor, he'd have certainly ended up there. He drew a breath. "Don't care."

oOo

It wasn't until later—much, much later—that Sam wondered what in hell had possessed him to accept Ruby's 'solution', no questions asked. Of course, by that time, it was already far too late....

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