

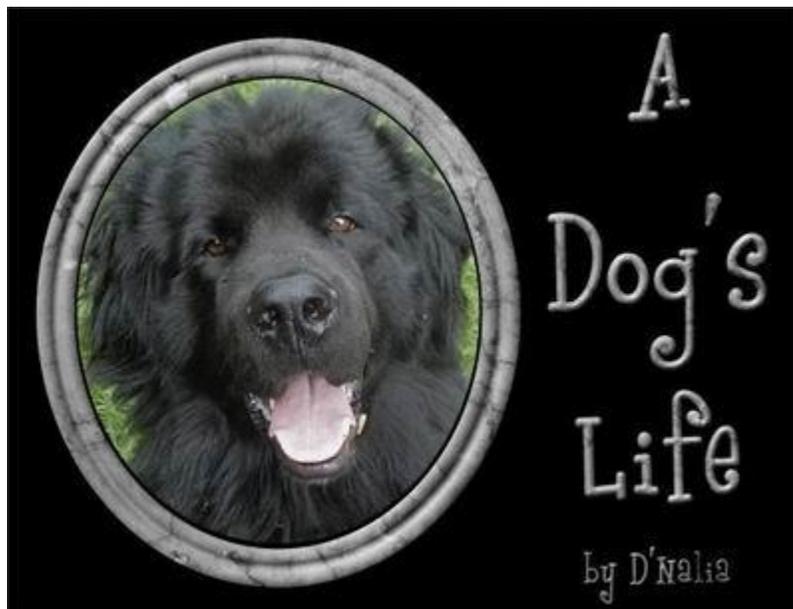
Rating: R for language

Pairing: None really, this can be considered either gen or pre-slash

Warnings: Kinda sweet, kinda silly

Notes: I started this a while ago and then forgot about it. After reading Scorpio's Greagus story the other day, I pulled this out, dusted it off and finished it.

No sequel planned at the moment. If anyone else would like to write a continuation, be my guest. I just want to read it.



A Dog's Life

by
D'Nalia

D'Hoffryn grabbed the little imp by the throat and threw it against the wall, ignoring the pain-filled whimpers as he stepped over the broken body. The King of the Fifth Circle and ruler of the Vengeance Demons had never been so blindly furious in his eternal existence.

Anyanka, one of his most loyal followers, had given up her quest to regain her powers for the love of a *human*. A weak, insipid human at that. This could not be allowed to continue, the human would have to be removed from the picture so Anyanka could be brought back into the fold. After she'd been suitably punished of course.

D'Hoffryn opened his link to the realm of mortals and settled in to watch Anyanka and this mortal, Xander, sure he'd find some weakness in this pairing.

~*~*~*~*~

Xander grabbed the back of his head and yelled, "Ouch! Anya! What the Hell was that for?"

"You were oogling that waitress again, Xander Harris. We're getting married in two weeks, you should be looking at me, not at other women."

"Yeah, Xander," Willow giggled, "Shame on you, you should know better. Bad, bad, Xander."

"Xander Harris, you are nothing but a dog." Buffy said, trying not to laugh.

"A big, naughty dog." Willow said, her eyes twinkling merrily.

Anya nodded emphatically, "A big, smelly, naughty dog. Bad dog, Xander. No biscuit."

~*~*~*~*~

Xander shut off the car and slumped over the wheel for a minute, trying to ease the headache pounding behind his eyes. The simple dinner with friends had turned into a Xander slam fest. The 'bad dog' jokes had flown fast and furious all night long, until, frankly, he began to lose his temper. Anya never did know when to leave well enough alone, and with Buffy and Willow egging her on...well, his loving fiance had reached new highs in all time lows. Threatening to have him 'neutered' to make sure he wouldn't stray hadn't really been that funny. Especially

considering Anya's former occupation. Buffy and Willow, however, had thought it was hysterically funny.

Xander slowly slid out of the car, and was overcome by a wave of nausea. He sank to his knees, dropping his keys to clutch his stomach as the nausea turned to pain.

"Well, well, well. What do we have here?"

Xander looked through tear glazed eyes, unable to see who was standing before him. The figure crouched down and grabbed Xander's chin in one strong, cold hand.

"What she ever saw in you, I'll never know. Then again, Anyanka has never been known for her choice in men. But, no matter, this relationship you have with my minion is over." The figure released its grip on his face and Xander let his head hang down, trying desperately to draw air into lungs that felt like they were on fire.

"A dog you have been named, and a dog's life you shall have. Now, let's see what kind of a pathetic mongrel you really are." D'Hoffryn let his magic loose, allowing it to choose its own path, and waited, enjoying the whimpers and moans of pain.

Xander tried to scream, but all that emerged was a

strangled whimper, a whimper that quickly turned into a howl of pain. Xander's nerves were on fire and his muscles were melting, shifting into new, distorted shapes. As suddenly as the pain began, it ended. Xander panted, trying to regain control and staggered to his feet, all four of them.

~*~*~*~*~

Anyone walking through the streets of Sunnydale that night would have seen a very large black dog snarling and growling at nothing. It's fur was matted with a foul smelling fluid, and the dog's hind leg was scrapped raw and dangled uselessly above the ground.

~*~*~*~*~

*'I do not fucking believe this. And God! How in the Hell do I get this taste out of my mouth? Who knew that demons tasted so nasty! Duh, Xander, what did you expect? I never should have bitten the asshole, but **FUCK!** He God damned well deserved it. Son of a bitch. Turn **me** into a fucking dog. Bastard. Oooohhh, and just waited til I get my paws on Anya. Her and her big mouth. She never did*

*know when to shut the Hell up. And dear, old, dad. Fucker. Of course the night I get turned into a dog would be the same night **Daddy** decides to drink and drive. Again. I hope I left a big dent in his car. And my leg fucking hurts!*

Xander limped into the cemetery and headed for Spike's crypt. With a little luck, Fangless would be home and he could convince him to give him some help. As he got closer, Xander smelled something on the wind. It took a minute, but he finally figured out it was blood that he was smelling. Xander stopped and listened, not wanting to get into another fight tonight. He really wasn't up to it.

~*~*~*~*~*~

Spike slammed into the side of his crypt and came up with a snarl. The two humans that had been hounding him just laughed in his face. "Oohh, I'm scared. Look JJ, it's a vampire! Eeekkkk!"

JJ just laughed harder. "Willie told us all about you, William the Fucking Bloody. We know you can't bite. And I really want that coat. So why don't you just hand it over before we hurt you some more."

A low grumbling snarl drifted through the air, one of the men turned around and jumped when he saw glowing green eyes staring back at him. "Hey, JJ, there's something out there, man. And it's big."

"Leave me alone, Mike, can't you see I'm busy?"

Mike started backing away from the eyes, "JJ, I'm not kidding. It's big, and it sounds really pissed off."

JJ looked over his shoulder just in time for the dog to lunge at his throat. He managed to dodge out of the way, barely. The dog's head was hanging low and its hackles were standing straight up. Black lips curled up from gleaming white teeth and the snarls got louder.

Mike turned and ran, JJ hot on his heels, both expecting to be ripped to shreds any second.

~*~*~*~*~

Spike cautiously approached the animal, "Hey there, mate. Thanks for that. Could have gotten a bit ugly there." Spike reached out a hand and gently scratched

the dog behind the ear, smiling when it flopped down on the ground in front of him. "Oi, Newfie are you? Bloody big one, too." Spike sat next to the animal, continuing to gently pet the massive head.

"Always liked dogs, I did. Let's take a look then, mate. Smells like you tangled with something nasty."

Spike checked the dog's injuries, being careful not to press too hard. Those teeth and jaws were more than capable of taking a hand off. "Looks like you need to see a doctor, pet. Hang on, Pet, and try not to bite, okay? Don't fancy getting chewed on tonight." Spike raised the dog's head and looked into all too familiar painfilled eyes, "Bloody Hell, Harris?" Xander barked softly. Spike rubbed the massive head one last time, "Don't worry, Harris, I'll get you to the Watcher. He'll know what to do."

~*~*~*~*~

Xander tensed when Spike slid his hands under his battered body, not relishing the idea of being carried around like a sack of potatoes. He was more than a little surprised that Spike was being so gentle, and let out a chuffing laugh when the vampire cradled him like a baby,

making sure that his injured leg was protected.

'Okkkaaay, this is a new one. I can't believe Spike is going to carry me around town like some kind of overgrown baby!' Spike opened his coat and draped the edge over Xander's body, trying to keep him warm. *'Spike has obviously gone completely mental. I'm covered with some pretty nasty goo and Spike bitches when a speck of dust gets on 'The Coat'. You'd think he was wearing the Shroud of Turin the way he acts sometimes. Uuummm, but it is warm, and I do feel better.'* Huge jaws cracked in an enormous yawn, *'Yep, nap time.'*

Spike smiled at sleepy eyes, "Go to sleep, pet. We'll have you right in no time."

For some reason, Xander knew he could trust Spike to take care of him and let his eyes close.

~*~*~*~*~

Giles looked up when the door to the Magic Box slammed open. "Spike! Do be careful! If you break the glass in the door, you will pay for it."

Spike snorted at the Watcher, "Oi, mate, leave off! Can't you see I've got my arms full here?" Spike managed to free one hand long enough to sweep the books off the table to make room for his burden. "Come give me a hand here, Rupert."

"Spike! Get that disgusting animal off my table! It's filthy!"

Spike immediately vamped out and got in Giles' face. "Don't try me, Watcher. Now shift your ass and help him."

Giles glared at the vampire, "I don't have time to deal with you right now, Spike. Do take that animal out of here before I call the pound!"

"But..."

"Now, Spike! Leave! And be sure to take that 'thing' with you!"

"Fine, Watcher, but you'll be sorry. Mark my words!" Spike gently lifted Xander off the table and tucked him back inside his coat. Xander let out a soft whine when

Spike touched his sore leg. "Steady on, Pet. I'll get you fixed up, then we'll figure out what to do."

~*~*~*~*~

Spike shifted Xander in his arms, the whelp had to weigh at least 12 stone, and while vampire strength could do a lot, he hadn't exactly been at his best lately. Spike thought about heading back to his crypt, but they were actually closer to the whelp's apartment so Spike heading in that direction.

Xander chuffed when he saw his car, wriggling in Spike's arms. Spike very carefully set him on the ground and Xander limped over to the still open car door. He pushed the door closed with his nose and then found his keys laying on the pavement. He pawed his keys, looking up at Spike and barking softly.

Spike picked up the keys, "Let's get inside, Pet. Don't need the neighbors catching sight of you." Xander limped to the door and followed Spike inside. Luckily he only lived on the second floor, he didn't think he could handle anymore stairs. Spike unlocked the door and Xander pushed his way inside, turning to bark at Spike.

Spike grinned and stepped into the apartment. "Thanks, Pet." Xander growled at him and Spike held up his hands, "Sorry, Harris. Habit, no insult intended. Know better than to piss off anything with teeth as big as you've got. You got a kit?"

Xander limped into the bathroom and pawed at the cabinet. Spike opened the door and pulled out the first aid kit he found stashed there. "Right. Don't get pissy now, Harris, but you really need a bath. Don't know what you tangled with, but you reek."

Xander hung his head then stepped into the tub. Spike pulled off his duster and turned on the water, making sure it wasn't too hot. Picking up the shampoo, Spike shook his head. "Never thought I'd be giving you a bath, Harris."

Xander chuffed at the vampire and Spike laughed. "I won't tell if you won't."

~*~*~*~*~

Xander waited as long as he could, but he just couldn't

take it anymore. Practically bowling Spike over, Xander darted into the hallway and shook. Water flew everywhere, but that crawling feeling was finally gone. Xander heard a muttering and looked up to see Spike holding a handful of towels, wiping water off his face. "Bloody Hell, Harris, I was gonna dry you off if you'd have waited a second."

Xander barked and then shook again, the feel of water running under his fur was driving him nuts. Spike started laughing, "If I didn't know that was you, Harris, I'd think you were a real dog. Come into the kitchen, light's better there. I'd best be taking a look at those cuts."

Xander followed the vampire into the kitchen and flopped down on the floor, surprised by how good the cool tile felt. Spike sat down next to him and started checking him over. He found lots of scraps, small cuts and bruises, the worst being on Xander's rear left leg. The limb was deeply bruised, but he couldn't feel any broken bones. Spike put antibiotic ointment on every cut he could find, pleased that the damage wasn't any worse. "Well, Harris, I think you'll live." Spike closed up the kit and stood up, "Wish you could tell me what the Hell happened, it'd make it a lot easier to figure this out."

'My psycho bitch girlfriend's ex-boss did this to me. He got the idea from the bitch, Buffy and Willow. I swear I'm going to bite them, first chance I get.'

Spike had a really weird look on his face, "Repeat that, Harris."

'Why? Do you speak dog?' Xander heard the whines and snarls coming out of his mouth, wincing when he realized that he sounded like a puppy.

Spike tilted his head, "Try again, I almost understood you that time."

'Really? No shit? Cool. Find Anya and bring her here so I can bite her.'

Spike pulled out a chair and sat down, "Bite Anya? Did that demon bint do this to you?"

Xander climbed to his feet and staggered when his wagging tail pulled him off balance, *'You understood me! Yes! D'Hoffryn changed me, he's pissed about me and Anya. You gotta call Giles and get him to fix this!'*

Spike nodded, "Right. I'll call Rupert, but we'd better

come up with a way to convince him I'm telling the truth. He's not going to believe this one."

~*~*~*~*~

Spike opened the door as soon as the pounding started. "Rupert. About time." Giles pushed his way into the apartment, closely followed by Anya, Willow and Buffy. Spike frowned at the sight of the girls, "I didn't say anything about bringing the skirts along, Watcher."

Buffy pushed him against the wall, "Shut up, Spike. Where's Xander?"

"Oh look! A dog! When did Xander get a dog?" Willow asked excitedly, kneeling down to pet the large black dog standing in the living room. She snatched her hand back when it snapped at her. "Hey, I'm not going to hurt you!"

Spike laughed, "Little too late for that isn't it, Red? 'Bad dog, Xander'. Ring a bell?"

Willow's eyes went wide, "Oh no. No. No way. I did not turn Xander into a dog! We were just teasing him!"

Anya threw her purse down on the sofa and walked over to the dog, "Please. That is not Xander."

The dog's head dropped down and his teeth curled back from his lips. Growling deep in his throat, he took one step closer to his fiance, causing her to back up hurriedly.

Spike walked over and sat down next to him, "Calm down, Harris. You don't want to bite her, she'd probably taste bad."

Giles took off his glasses, "Are you trying to tell us that this 'dog' is Xander?"

Spike snorted rudely, "Not trying, mate. It's Harris all right. Look at his eyes, they're just the same."

Giles leaned down to look, then cursed. "Xander. Why do these things keep happening to you?"

Xander snarled, yiped and growled. Spike nodded. "Right, mate. Said he didn't do anything. The demon bint's old boss doesn't like the fact they got engaged. He heard the skirts calling Harris here a dog and that was that."

"You can understand him?" Giles asked curiously.

Spike shrugged, "Yeah. Took a little while to get the hang of it, but it's not that different from some of the demon languages."

'Spike, tell him to get the girls out of here. I don't want them anywhere near me. Anya said after we got married she was going to have her 'bad dog' neutered so I couldn't stray.'

"What did he say?" Willow asked Spike.

"He wants you lot out of here. Doesn't trust you a bit, no reason he should now is there?"

Buffy smacked Spike on the back of the head, "I don't believe you, Spike. Why wouldn't he trust us? Are you trying to tell me that he trusts you?"

Spike glared at her, "I'm not the one who wanted to have him neutered now am I? Rupert can stay. The rest of you leave."

Anya immediately looked guilty, and ran out of the apartment. Buffy pulled back her hand to hit Spike again and Xander snapped at her. Buffy jumped back and fell

over the coffee table, landing on her ass. Xander chuffed and Spike laughed. Buffy glared and got back up, murder in her eyes. Giles grabbed her by the arm, "Not now, Buffy. Take the girls home, please."

"But Giles..." she whined.

"Now. Buffy. Xander has been through enough for one night. I'll see all of you at the shop in the morning. It's late and I doubt there's much we could do tonight." Giles looked at Spike, "I see you've already checked him over. I am sorry earlier, I'd had a hideous evening and I took it out on you. Do we need to contact a vet?"

Spike shook his head, "Mostly just cuts and bruises, I think he'll be okay."

Giles nodded, "Very well. I suggest both of you stay here tomorrow. We don't need people asking questions about this."

"Right." Spike looked at Xander. "What about work, Harris?"

'Tomorrow is Saturday, I'm off til Monday morning.'

"What did he say?" Giles asked.

"He's off til Monday." Spike answered absently, scratching Xander behind the ears.

Giles sighed in relief, "Good. That gives us a couple of days. Do you need anything before I leave?"

"No. I've got it for now."

"Very well. I'll call tomorrow then." Giles started to reach out to Xander, but pulled his hand back at the last second. "Well, then, I'd best be off. I'll see you both later." Giles said uncomfortably.

Spike made sure the door was locked behind the Watcher and turned to grin at Xander, "Well, mate, what shall we do now? Want to go chase a cat? Or maybe see if we can find a mailman to chew on?"

'Very funny, asshole, don't quit your night job, 'kay? Let's raid the kitchen, I'm starving.'

Spike was still snickering under his breath as he looked through the cabinets. "Don't see any Puppy Chow."

Xander growled at the laughing vampire, then tugged on the refrigerator door until it came open. *'Puppy Chow, my ass. I want steak.'* Xander grabbed the meat drawer with his teeth and yanked it out onto the floor. *'Oh yeah. Meat. Come to daddy.'*

Spike watched as Xander tore open the package and started chewing on the raw meat. "Want me to cook that for you, Harris?"

Xander put both paws over his dinner and growled, *'No. I'll gross out later, but this is really, really good.'* Xander finally got the hang of his new teeth and quickly finished the sirloin off, then returned to the frig. *'I think there's some blood in the freezer if you want it.'*

Spike raised a brow and checked the freezer, smiling when he found the packs. "What are you doing with blood, Harris? Planning on inviting me over for dinner?"

Xander chuffed at him again, *'Not hardly. Giles was defrosting his freezer and I was holding them for him. I forgot they were in there until now.'* Xander whined, *'Ooohhh, hotdogs with cheese. Yes.'* Xander fought with the package, but couldn't get it open. *'Spike! Open these for me!'*

Spike picked up the hotdogs and held them over Xander's head, "Say please."

Xander growled at him, *'You're really starting to look like a chew toy, Spike. Don't push it.'*

Spike cracked up laughing, "Sorry, Harris, couldn't help myself." Spike tugged and pulled, "Bloody Hell, what is this made of?" One yank finally split the package open and hot dogs flew everywhere. Xander jumped and snagged two out of mid air, practically swallowing them whole.

'Yummy.' Xander pawed another hot dog out from under the edge of the frig. *'Yuck. I really need to clean this floor. Spike, wash that off for me.'*

Spike sighed and gathered up the remaining hot dogs, "Demanding, aren't you, Harris?" Spike rinsed off the meat and tossed them to Xander one at a time, he easily caught and swallowed the entire package, then belched loudly.

'Eeww, gross.' Xander's jaws cracked open in an enormous yawn then he stretched. *'Man, that feels good.'*

I'm whipped, I'm going to bed. I'll crash on the couch, you can take the bed, there aren't as many windows in there. I think there's a couple of blankets in the closet you can use to cover the windows so you don't fry.'

"Thanks, Harris. I'll see you later." Spike shook his head as Xander walked out of the kitchen, tail waving slowly. "This is definitely one for the books." Spike muttered as he drank his blood.

~*~*~*~*~

Spike kicked off the blankets, he was too hot. The heat continued to increase, finally forcing him farther into wakefulness. The first thing that intruded beyond the heat was the smell. He wrinkled his nose and finally forced his eyes open. All he could see was black. He pulled back and rubbed his eyes, blinking in the dim light. Spike rolled out of bed with a curse, "Bloody Hell, Harris! I thought you were sleeping on the couch!"

Xander yawned and rolled over, lazily thumping his tail on the mattress, *'There wasn't enough room to stretch out. Besides, this is my bed.'*

Spike sighed and ran his hands through his hair, "All right, shove over." Spike got back in the bed and thumped his pillow, "And stay on your own side of the bed! You're hotter than Hell and your breath smells like old blood."

Xander snickered, which sounded really strange coming from a dog, *'Sorry, but it's not like your breath is minty fresh.'*

Spike was almost asleep when a cold nose touched the back of his neck, *'Spike? I'm thirsty and I need to go to the bathroom.'*

Spike groaned, "All right, all right. Come on then." Spike staggered into the kitchen and pulled a large pan out of the cabinet. He filled it with water and set it on the floor, raising his brow when Xander just looked at the pan and then at him. "What? Harris, there's no way you can get that big head of yours in a glass. Just drink the damned water."

Xander whined a little, but was soon lapping up water as fast as he could. After he finished, he shook his head, spraying drops of water on the floor. *'That's better, thanks. Now, what are we going to do about the bathroom? I think the toilet is pretty much out of the*

question.'

Spike walked into the living room and opened the front door, "Easy, mate, we find you a tree."

~*~*~*~*~

Spike stood in the entryway, being careful to stay in the shadows, and watched Xander make a total ass of himself. He ran from tree to shrub to curb then back to the tree. Spike laughed when Xander decided that the best place to relieve himself was the rear tire of his own car. Spike pulled open the door, "Come on, mate."

Xander ran back to the shrub, completely ignoring the vampire. "Don't make me come and get you, Harris. Come on already! I've standing here in my skivvies!"

'Nuggies. I'm not ready yet. This is amazing, Spike! You wouldn't believe the smells!' Xander turned and looked at the smirking vampire, 'Oh, yeah. Vampire. Guess you do know about the smells. How do you stand it? Ooohhh, donuts. I smell donuts.'

Spike rolled his eyes, "Later, Harris, after the sun goes

down, all right?"

'Geez, keep your shorts on! I'm coming, I'm coming.'
Xander trotted back inside, his limp barely noticeable,
'I'm hungry again.'

Spike led the way back up to the apartment, "Of course you are, Harris. Of course you are."

~*~*~*~*~

Xander whined and flopped his head down on his paws,
'Spike, I can't see anything!'

Spike wasn't paying much attention, "What's that, Harris?"

Xander jumped up on the couch and knocked the remote out of Spike's hand. *'I said, I can't see anything on the tv, it's just a blur! What's wrong with the tv?'*

Spike tried to look around Xander's head, but he wouldn't get out of the way. "Harris, you're a dog, of course you can't watch tv, your eyes don't work that way."

'What do you mean?'

Spike sighed, it was obvious that he wasn't going to get to watch the telly. "Harris, dogs eyes can't see flat objects like pictures, unless they're moving. Even if I showed you a picture of yourself, you wouldn't recognize it."

'Well, that sucks. What are we going to do? I'm bored.'

"I'm not. Come on, Harris, let me watch Passions and then we'll find something to do all right?"

Xander whined and jumped down onto the floor, trying to find a comfortable spot to take a nap, before finally getting back on the couch and resting his head on Spike's leg. The vampire absently reached down and started scratching his ears, causing Xander to groan happily. *'Aaahhh, that's better. You keep doing that and I'll let you watch tv all day.'*

Spike chuckled and kept scratching.

~*~*~*~*~

Spike stopped to light a cigarette, laughing when Xander darted ahead and started sniffing trees. "Don't go too far, Harris! Rupert wants us at the shop!"

Spike heard a loud bark, quickly followed by a yelp. He ran towards the last place he'd seen Xander, only to find two men wrestling him into the back of a truck. "Oi! Get your hands off my dog!"

One of the men glanced over his shoulder while the other shoved Xander inside and slammed the door. "He doesn't have a collar or a tag, we're taking him to the pound. You can pick him up there."

Spike glared at the man, "You can't do that!"

The man smirked at him, "I can and will. You have 48 hours to pay the fine and pick him up. After that, the fine doubles. One week after that, we put him to sleep."

Both men climbed into the truck and started the engine, Xander barking hysterically all the while. *'Spike! Spike! Help! I don't wanna go to the pound!'*

"Hang on, Harris. I'll get Rupert and we'll be right there!"

~*~*~*~*~

Xander pulled against the wire loop around his throat, but only managed to make it tighter. The man on the other end of the pole laughed at the gasping dog. "Come on, mutt. The harder you fight, the more it hurts." Xander reluctantly followed the man into the pound, cringing at the smells and the noise. "Hey! Ed! Got another one, where do you want him?"

The fat, greasy man sitting behind the desk sneered at Xander, "Big sombitch, isn't he?" Xander pulled back from the stench coming from the man, shaking his head trying to get the smell out of his nose. "Feisty one, huh? Put him in with Bruiser, that ought to calm him down."

"You sure about that, Ed? Bruiser's killed every dog we've put in with him. The owner is on his way to get this one."

Ed just laughed, "He'd better hurry then, Bruiser's hungry."

'Oh this is just fucking wonderful. They're going to lock me up with a psycho.' Xander got a good look at the

monster in the cage and tried to get away, but the dogcatcher knew what he was doing. He shoved Xander into the cage and slipped the noose from his neck at the same time.

Xander cringed when he heard the cage door slam shut. The monster got up from his rug, sniffing the air and growling. *'Oh shit. Nice doggy. Pretty doggy. Oh crap! Spike!'*

~*~*~*~*~

Spike flew out of the Watcher's car before it had even come to a complete stop, nevertheless, Giles was right behind him when he burst through the door of the pound. "Oi! I've come to fetch my dog. Where is he?"

The slob behind the desk leaned back in his chair and folded his hands over the belly straining his stained shirt. "Well, that depends...which dog are you talking about?"

Spike's eyes went gold and leaned over the desk to get into the man's face, "Newfie, big, black one. Brought in less than an hour ago. You fetch him out. Now."

Ed gulped and hit the buzzer on the wall, Fred came out of the back, wincing when he recognized the owner of the black dog. "Fred, get this man's dog for him."

Fred grabbed the keys off the hook and led the two men into the back room, hoping that Bruiser hadn't hurt the dog too bad. When he opened the door, he got the shock of his life. Bruiser was huddled in the corner, whimpering. Fred couldn't see any obvious wounds, but Bruiser had obviously run into a dog he couldn't handle.

Spike pushed the man aside, "Harris? You all right?"

Xander climbed out of the cage, snapping at Bruiser's nose as he passed. Bruiser whimpered and scurried back into the corner. Spike ruffled his ears, "Good on you, mate. Taught him who's boss, did you? Come on. Let's get the Hell out of here."

Ed had the paperwork waiting for them when they got back to the desk, "You need to fill these out. There's a fifty dollar fine for your dog not being licensed. You have twenty-four hours to have him certified by a vet."

Spike started to snarl, but Giles shook his head, pulling out his wallet. "I'm afraid that might not be possible. It is

Saturday evening, most veterinaries are closed."

Ed smirked, "Doc Jenkins is open. We already told him you were coming. You don't get the dog certified and turn in the paperwork, we come get the dog and put him to sleep."

"Yes. Right. Well, we'll be off to the vet's then."

~*~*~*~*~

Giles dropped Spike and Xander off at the vet's office, saying he needed to check with everyone at the shop, but would return as quickly as he could. Spike shrugged, "We'll wait. It's not like either of us have any dosh."

Giles sighed and handed Spike his wallet with the admonition, "Try not to bankrupt me, Spike."

Spike just smiled and led Xander into the vet's office where an overly perky blonde was waiting for them.

As soon as she saw Xander, she squealed, "Oh what a cutie!" She threw both arms around Xander's neck and hugged him to her chest. Xander, being the dog he was,

snuggled into her enhanced chest and licked the side of her face.

Spike rolled his eyes, "We've got an appointment." He said, rather rudely.

The vet's assistant nodded and popped her gum, "Yep. Follow me."

Xander wagged his tail, trotting right along behind her, leaving Spike no choice but to follow.

The assistant, who introduced herself as Candi, weighed Xander and took some general measurements, cooing at him all the while. Xander just ate it up. Candi finally left, telling them that the vet would be with them soon.

Xander gave Spike a doggy grin, *'She likes me.'*

Spike rolled his eyes, "You animal, you. Never knew you were into bestiality, mate."

'Ewww. That's gross, Spike. You're just jealous because she liked me and not you.'

Spike started laughing, "This is too weird, Harris. Us

arguing over a skirt."

Xander snickered, *'Yeah, it is pretty weird.'* Xander scratched his ear then flopped down on the floor, *'Man, I'm tired.'*

Spike nodded, "Bet you are. What happened at the pound anyway? That poor mutt in your cage looked scared out of his wits."

'Poor mutt, my ass. That was Bruiser. I heard that fat blob behind the desk say that old Bruiser had killed every dog they'd put in there with him. I thought I was toast.'

Spike was really interested now, "So? What did you do?"

'Freaked him out. He got one look at me and figured out I wasn't really a dog. I told him if he got anywhere near me, I was going to have him fixed. Then I explained just what that meant. He got real nervous after that, but man, was I glad to see you.'

Spike started to say something, but the door opened so he shut up. A small, fussy little man came in, reading a file. "Mr. Williams? I'm Doctor Jenkins. And this must be Xander. Unusual name for a dog."

"It's short for Alexander." Spike said shortly.

The vet nodded, not really paying attention. "Well, let's get started, shall we? If you could get him up on the table, we can begin."

Spike patted the table, "Come on, Xander, shift your arse, I've got things to do."

Xander glared at him, but jumped up on the table. *'You are so going to pay for that, Spike.'*

Spike just grinned at him. Doctor Jenkins grabbed a stethoscope and listen to Xander's heart and lungs, writing notes on the chart. He looked in Xander's ears, checked his teeth and thumped his chest. Lifting Xander's tail, he said, "I see you haven't gotten him fixed yet. If you aren't planning on breeding him, we can take care of that for you here."

Xander whirled and snapped his teeth in the doctor's face. Jenkins jumped back and Spike snickered, "Sorry about that, mate. He doesn't like it when people mention fixing him. Takes it personally, he does."

Jenkins shook his head, "Some dogs react badly to people touching their tail, Mr. Williams, that's all. I do admire dogs a great deal, but they're still just dumb animals."

Spike took one step away from the table and just in time. Xander lifted his leg and pissed all down the front of Jenkins lab coat. Spike stuffed his fist in his mouth and turned away, choking down his laughter. Jenkins stuttered, "Um, these things happen sometimes. I think Xander is healthy enough, I see no reason to continue with the exam. You can pick up your certificate from the front desk."

Jenkins left the room, closing the door quietly behind him and Spike finally let loose. Tears streamed down his face as he laughed. Xander just hung his tongue out of his mouth and wagged his tail. "Well, Harris, I think that's it for you and the vet."

Xander scratched his ear, *'Uh, Spike? I think I've got fleas.'*

~*~*~*~*~

Xander was still scratching when Giles finally picked them

up. The Watcher started to say something, but one growl from Xander convinced him that now was not the time. They made it back to the Magic Box, where Xander kindly consented to allow Dawn and Tara to pet him.

Spike took one look at Xander laying on his back, all four legs in the air with a goofy look on his face, as Tara and Dawn rubbed his tummy and snickered. "Maybe you should stay like that, Harris. You definitely get more attention."

'Bite me, Spike. I've been traumatized. I need to be pampered.' Xander said indignantly.

Spike shook his head, still laughing, "Better watch it, girls. Muttley there has fleas."

Dawn just shrugged, "That's okay. I've always wanted a dog. A few flea bites would be worth it."

"He must change back. Soon. Or he can not." Whispered a voice from across the room.

Everyone turned, Xander jumping up to place himself in front of Dawn and Tara, to see a small, skinny gray creature standing in the doorway leading to the

backroom.

"What are you doing here?" Anya asked angrily.

"You know this imp?" Spike asked.

Anya nodded, "He's one of the imps that takes care of D'Hoffryn's realm."

The imp bowed, "Anyanka. This is your doing. D'Hoffryn has killed many of my brothers because of his anger with you. Then he killed the Mother."

Anya turned pale, "He killed the Mother? Has he gone insane?"

The imp nodded, "Yes."

Xander barked at the imp, *'Not surprised, he spent over a thousand years with Anya.'*

Spike nodded. "Good point."

"What did he say?" Giles asked.

Spike shrugged, "Doesn't translate."

Giles glared at the vampire, but realized Spike wasn't going to talk. "Never mind. Anya, explain this to us please."

"The Mother is just that. **The** Mother, of all the imps. With her gone, there won't be anymore. Imps serve on every level of Hell, every demon Lord will be after him now. This is going to be very, very bad."

Giles looked at the imp, "What happens if D'Hoffryn dies before we can break the curse?"

"Curse stays. Can't be broken. Must be soon."

"Can you tell us how to break it?" Willow asked.

"Call Grendor. He can undo." The imp bowed and vanished.

Dawn looked at Anya, "Who's Grendor?"

"Another vengeance demon, but I'm not sure if we should call him," Anya said nervously.

"Why not?" Spike wanted to know.

"Grendor will only remove the curse if the person who's been cursed is truly innocent of any wrong doing. He takes the curse and turns it on the person who was really at fault. But if he's called and decides the person deserves the curse, then the person asking gets the curse too, and it'll be permanent."

Xander barked at Spike, "Right. So? What's the problem? You saying that Harris here deserves this?" Spike asked angrily.

Anya shrugged, "He was drooling over another woman when he's engaged to me. I've done a lot worse for less."

Xander growled and stalked towards Anya, his lips curled up from his teeth. Spike managed to grab him before he could lunge, but he had a hard time hanging on to him. "Get the bitch out of here, Watcher, before I let him go."

Buffy grabbed Anya's arm and twisted it behind her back, "Allow me." Buffy shoved Anya into the broom closet and locked the door from the outside. Anya immediately started yelling and pounding on the door. "Wills?"

Willow chanted a few words and waved her hand, all

sounds coming out of the room ceased. Willow realized everyone was staring at her and said, "What? I just put a silence spell on the closet, I didn't hurt her."

Buffy shook her head and sat down on the floor in front of Xander, careful to keep out of reach of his teeth.

"Xander? I'm really, really sorry. I was just teasing last night, I was afraid I wouldn't get to spend much time with you after you got married and I kinda wanted to save up. Will you forgive me?"

Xander whined at Spike and the vampire let him go. Xander jumped on Buffy and started licking her face. Buffy giggled helplessly, "Xander, stop it! Yuck! Doggy breath!"

Xander barked and flopped back down on the floor. Buffy sat up and scratched her arm, "Xander Harris! You gave me fleas!"

Spike lost it, Xander chuffing along with the laughing vampire.

~*~*~*~*~

Giles finished drawing the circle on the floor and stepped back. "Well, that's it. Now...who's going to call him?"

Everyone looked at Giles and he sighed, "Xander can't call, so someone needs to call for him. The person most hurt by this, besides Xander I mean. Normally, it would be Anya, but frankly, I doubt her sincerity." Willow raised her hand, but Giles shook his head, "I'm sorry, Willow, but D'Hoffryn used your words to set the curse. Neither you or Buffy are qualified."

Spike stood up and pulled out his cigarettes, "Right. So, what do I have to do?"

Giles' brows went straight up. "You, Spike? Are you sure? There's no way to tell how this Grendor will react."

"Oi! I'm the one who had to give him a bath, feed him, take him out, and smell doggy breath while I was trying to sleep, not to mention keep him entertained so I could watch Passions in peace. Besides, this way, he'll owe me one."

Giles nodded, "Very well. This is what you have to do, step into the circle and spill three drops of your blood. As

each drop falls, you call Grendor's name."

"That's it?" Giles nodded and Spike nodded, "Right. Let me talk to the whelp for a second and we'll get started." The vampire sat back down by Xander. "Well, Harris, this should be over soon, but I just wanted you to know, if I get turned into a dog for this, I'm going to bite your ass."

'Thanks, Spike, I really appreciate this, but hey, look at it this way, you get turned into a dog and you'll get tummy rubs too. We can chase cats together. We'll have fun.'

Spike shook his head, "You're a sick puppy, Harris, you truly are. Well, best get this done then." Spike scratched Xander's ears one last time and stepped into the circle.

Spike pricked his finger with the dagger he kept in his boot, calling the demon's name as each drop hit the floor. There was a shimmer in the air, and a demon appeared in the circle with him.

Grendor didn't look threatening at all, he almost appeared human. He looked at Spike and smirked, "Well, this is a new one. I don't think I've ever been called by a vampire before. I hope you aren't planning on asking me to remove your demon, I can do it, but you'll be dust."

Spike shook his head, "Nah. My mate Xander there got turned into a dog by D'Hoffryn, he didn't deserve it and I want him human again."

Grendor looked surprised, "Really? Well, let's see, shall we?" Grendor stared at Xander, seeming to look right inside him. Finally, the demon nodded, "I concur. I will grant your request."

Grendor waved his hand and the door to the broom closet flew open, revealing a really pissed off Anya. Another wave and D'Hoffryn appeared in puff of smoke. The King of the Vengeance demons was still favoring one leg, and Grendor grinned, "I see that you've already felt the sting of failure, D'Hoffryn."

"Grendor. What are you doing here?" D'Hoffryn snarled.

Grendor shrugged, "I was asked for judgment, and I have judged you, D'Hoffryn, and found you guilty."

D'Hoffryn opened his mouth, but Grendor just shook his head, "You are also bound by your own laws, D'Hoffryn. Here is my judgment...for cursing a human for your own gain, and not for legitimate vengeance, the curse is

yours."

D'Hoffryn screamed and twisted, his body deforming, slowly shrinking down into an incredibly ugly little dog. Grendor turned to Anya, "And for you, Anyanka, you knew full well what D'Hoffryn would do if you agreed to marry a human without his permission, so the curse is also yours."

Xander started to step forward, but Buffy and Dawn wrapped both arms around his neck and held him back. Anya screeched, melting down into the form of a small terrier, yipping and whining loudly.

Grendor pointed at Xander, "And vengeance is served." Xander howled, the sound quickly turning into a scream. He shook his head, his eyes blurred from the change. He finally looked up, human once again, "Thank you, Grendor."

Grendor nodded, "You are welcome. Now, if you'll excuse me, I'll take these two back to the vengeance realm. I doubt that you want to have them underfoot, they're still demons and I'm sure they bite." Grendor grabbed Anya and D'Hoffryn by the scruff of their necks, making sure they couldn't get their teeth in him, then

vanished.

Spike snuck out while everyone was busy hugging Xander, going back to his crypt alone.

~*~*~*~*~

Spike opened the door, not really surprised to see Xander on his doorstep. "Harris, you're looking much more like yourself today."

Xander grinned, "Yeah. Uh, can I come in?"

Spike nodded and stepped aside. Xander took a seat on the ledge, setting his backpack on the floor. "Why'd you take off the last night? I wanted to thank you for what you did, taking care of me and all."

Spike shrugged, "Not really into that huggy, mushy stuff, Harris. You know that."

Xander nodded, "Yeah, well, I just wanted to say thanks."

Spike nodded and they both sat there silently for a minute, staring at the floor. "Well..." They both said at

the same time, then started laughing.

Xander picked up his backpack, "I, uh, got you something, to say thank you."

Spike raised his brow, "Really? Well, let's have it then."

"Yeah. Okay." Xander nervously opened the backpack and pulled out a small, black bundle of fur. "I remembered you saying that you'd always wanted a dog, so...here, I got you one."

Xander handed the puppy to Spike, who took it out of sheer reflex. "A puppy?" He asked incredulously.

Xander grinned, nodding excitedly, "Yeah. I checked around this morning and found a breeder that some Newfies that were ready to go. This one is pretty small, but she said that her biggest dog now was actually the smallest one of the litter. Hang on." Xander darted outside and grabbed a couple of shopping bags. "I got some food, and toys and stuff for him. He's already had his first shots, so he's good for now."

Xander sat down on the floor and started pulling out a lot more stuff than one tiny puppy could possibly need.

Spike stared at the little bundle of fur in his hands and then at Xander, "I can't take care of a dog, Harris. Vampire, remember?"

"Piff. You did a good job with me, and you understand dog now, it'll be easy." Xander picked up a chew toy and squeezed it until it squeaked, "Besides, I'll help, you know, walking him and buying food and stuff."

Spike nudged Xander with his foot, "Can't have pets, huh?"

Xander turned red, "No. I got a letter from the super this morning, saying that someone had seen a dog going into my apartment. I let him check it out and told him that I didn't have a dog." Xander reached up to pet the puppy's head, "It's okay, isn't it?"

Spike stood up and said, "Shove over, let's see what you've got. What's his name anyway?"

Xander pulled a piece of paper out of his pocket, "SinJin's Royal Majesty, he's registered."

"That was expensive, wasn't it?" Spike asked curiously.

Xander shrugged, "I had a lot saved up for the wedding and stuff, it's no big."

"I'm sorry, about Anya and all." Spike said uncomfortably.

"That's the problem," Xander said, "I'm not. Not really. I'm more pissed than anything. I think I'll get a lot more out of the money I spent on Sin than I ever did out of Anya."

Spike held the puppy up in front of his face, "Sin, huh? That'll work."

The puppy yawned and opened his eyes to look at Spike.
'Mama.'

"Oh, bloody Hell."

The End