

Written for [👉tamingthemuse](#)

Pairing: Spike/Xander, mentions of Ethan/Giles

Fandom: Buffy the Vampire Slayer

Prompt: Osmosis

Rating: Mature/Adults Only

Spoilers: None, all human AU

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Warnings: Underage sex, manipulation, dark!fic, overall dirty!bad!wrongness. May be considered crack!fic. You've been warned.

Summary: Xander needs help to make it through his junior year of high school. His new neighbor is volunteered to help, but Spike decides to help himself to Xander.

Author's Note: This chapter is dedicated to [👤 sharvie](#) who made me the wonderful banner for this series

Disclaimer: No children were hurt in the making of this fanfic!

The Boy Next Door

by

[Strickensgirl](#)

1 Intervention

Prompt: Osmosis

It had started out innocently enough, as most evil things did.

Xander sighed and looked around the very large, very quiet library. He was here as a punishment, part of the conditions of the release, the only reason he was still allowed to be in school at all. He stared down at the text before him on the table. He was supposed to be reading. At least that's what the new librarian, Mr. Giles, had told him before the Englishman left to go to Xander's faculty-parent conference.

Just the thought of all those teachers and assorted disciplinarians, sitting around and discussing Xander's academic future at Sunnydale High, maybe him shiver. He wondered idly if his parents had bothered to show up. He could imagine his mother coming, what with the notice delivered by a uniformed truancy officer, but he doubted his father would take the time out from his busy drinking and passing out schedule.

Looking around the vast library, Xander wondered how he ended up here. It wasn't like he was a bad kid. He didn't start fights, he didn't smoke in the bathroom, and

he didn't pull pranks like slipping a used condom into his science teacher's coffee mug. No, that was Jesse, but Xander refused to give up his best friend and the hysterical laughter was a dead giveaway that the sable-haired boy knew something.

Of course, this all might have something to do with the fact that he was failing every single class, including PE. Or it might be because he'd already missed twenty-nine of the first seventy days of school. There were all legitimate reasons for his absences and he always was able to bring a note from home excusing him for this and that, but apparently the California Board of Education didn't care that he'd had an earache for an entire week. They'd decided he was student and he needed to be in school.

Great.

Xander shifted in the hard wood seat. You'd think a library would have nice comfortable chairs to sit in. You know, so you could be comfortable while you read, but not Sunnydale High. No, they had to have heavy, unforgiving torture devices so students wouldn't fall asleep while they were reading the super boring textbooks.

Reading the same paragraph for the fourth time, Xander rested his head on his fist before slowly sinking down to rest his chin on his crossed hands. Maybe he'd even rest his eyes a little. What could it hurt, right?

A loud shout of his name and a smack to the back of his head woke Xander abruptly. Startled, he rubbed his face, not at all surprised to discover he'd been drooling in his sleep.

Perfect.

He looked up at the disapproving librarian towering over him.

"I believe we need to talk, Alexander."

"Xander, Mr. Giles," the boy corrected the older man.
"It's just Xander, ok."

"Very well," the librarian said with a small smile. "Then it's Giles, alright?"

Xander nodded and returned the small smile.

"And just what do you think you were doing, Xander?"

Giles asked with a hint of mirth.

Xander thought hard for a long moment. "Learning by osmosis?"

Giles chuckled and asked, "Do you even know what that means?"

"Sure," Xander replied. "It's the tendency of a semi-permeable membrane to diffuse a solution to equalize the concentration of the solution on either side of the membrane. The idea being that the words would soak in through my skin because the War of 1812 sure wasn't soaking in through my eyeballs."

The Englishman stared at young boy for several long moments before he broke out in laughter. "See?" he said, seemingly talking to himself. "This is what I'm talking about. You're an intelligent boy. Not nearly as dumb as Principal Snyder thinks you are, apparently. At least you were able to pay attention in Biology."

"Ummm...thanks? I guess."

Giles pulled out the chair next to Xander and sat, looking both sad and uncomfortable. That made Xander more

nervous than anything else.

"I suppose you're wanting to know what was discussed in the meeting, then?"

"Uh, yeah," Xander said sheepishly, ducking his head and hiding behind the fringe of curly brown locks. "I'd kinda like to know if I have to come to school tomorrow or not. I'd hate to read all about this boring war for nothing."

Giles shook his head before continuing. "You're being allowed to remain in school but you've got a lot of work to catch up on. Your marks in every class are completely unacceptable but we all believe that you can and will catch up to the rest of your class...mostly."

"Mostly?" the boy asked quietly. "Let me guess, Snyder was willing to boot me without a second thought."

"Well, yes, the principal was rather vocal that he did not want you to continue here, but your other instructors and I were able to convince him that expulsion was not in your best interest."

"And my parents?"

"Your mother agrees with our plan."

So his mother had shown but his dad was probably still at home. He probably wasn't even worried about all of this, assuming he even remembered it at all.

"So, what is the plan?"

Giles sighed and ducked his head before turning to look the boy in the eyes. "You will attend school every day. Before you protest, your mother explained most of your absences and you will be expected to attend, regardless of the situation at home. You will come directly to the library following your last class of the day where you will work on your school work with a tutor who will report directly to me. The quality of your work will determine if you will be allowed to continue here or if you will be transferred to the Abraxas Continuation School."

The young boy shuddered just thinking about the "school for bad kids". He might have been bullied at Sunnydale High, but at Abraxas, he would probably have a permanent wedgie and bruises to match the ones he received at home.

Obviously, for Xander, it wasn't a valid option.

"So, who's this tutor I've got to deal with?"

"He's actually the son of an old friend of mine who has recently moved to town. His name's Spike."

"Spike!?" Xander burst out laughing. "My tutor's named after a dog?!"

"Not quite," Giles replied with a smile. "He's actually quite bristly and has hair that matches his name. He's very intelligent, received excellent marks while in England, but he's very...firm, I guess is the word I'm searching for. I believe he will be good for you."

Xander wondered. It's not like there haven't been others that had tried to help him in the past; Willow, Jesse, hell, even the new girl, Buffy had given a shot at trying to help him with his studies. Nothing, so far, had worked.

"Whatever you want," Xander agreed, not seeing as if he had a choice in the matter. "When do we start?"

"Spike will be here when you come tomorrow. I suggest you be prepared."

The boy nodded, sealing his fate.

Tomorrow would be the beginning of the end of his innocence.

2 Introduction

Prompt: #24 - Crabapple

Spike strode into his new home, dumping his numerous information sheets, schedules and assorted pens and pencils on the table by the door. He dodged the stacks of boxes still waiting to be unpacked as he wandered through the living room.

"Da?" he called out, listening quietly for a response.

When he received none, he tried again, louder this time. "Da!" The house remained quiet and the blond boy stopped long enough to draw in an insanely deep breath.

However, before he was able to bellow once again, he heard a voice quietly respond, "William, I'm in the kitchen. There's no need to shriek like a banshee."

Spike smiled lightly and made his way through the maze of boxes on the way to the spacious if cluttered kitchen. Sliding into one of the stools set up at the breakfast nook, Spike smiled at the man diligently arranging dishes in the cabinets opposite him.

He waited until his father stopped and acknowledged him.

"All signed up for classes at the university, then?" Ethan Rayne asked.

"Yeah, I was even able to get my schedule worked out like you asked."

"Thank you, William. I appreciate it."

Spike shook his head at his father's insistence of using his given name. "You're welcome, *Ethan*." The elder Rayne glared at him for a moment before chuckling lightly. "Please don't tell me you want my afternoons free so I can work in that awful store for you."

The older Englishman stopped his organizing for a moment, leveling his son with a serious gaze. "Yes, *Spike*, I do expect you to come and help me at the store. It's very important that we get everything in and settled as soon as possible. You know our situation is a little dire at the moment."

Spike did know. Ethan had used the very last of their money to come to Sunnydale to buy this house and the shop Ethan planned to open that would sell high quality costumes and antiques. All to follow the love of his life. Spike thought it was stupid, but Ethan had promised him a better life, and besides, things weren't going so well in London, so a new start was required.

"How soon do we start?" the blond boy asked as he walked to the sink, snagging a glass on the way.

"Tomorrow morning," his father informed him. "You have a few weeks before you are scheduled to start classes and I'd like you to help me when you are not helping Rupert."

Ah yes, Rupert. Spike had heard enough about the man his entire life. Well, maybe not his entire life, but his

entire life with Ethan Rayne. He didn't know his father even existed until he turned ten years old and his mother died in a car accident. According to the birth certificate, Ethan Rayne was his natural father and after some blood tests, the claim was confirmed.

The two got along swimmingly. It seemed that William's propensity for taking after his father was genetic and not environmental.

Spike drank the tepid water as he stared out the window into the neighboring yard. It was as rundown and ragged as their own, if not more so. When they had spoken to the overexcited real estate agent about moving to town, she had explained to them that this area was what had become known as 'University row'. The entire street had once been single family homes, but with UC Sunnydale so close, many coeds had taken to renting the spacious houses, sometimes cramming eight to ten students in to help curb the high cost. Needless to say, the homes quickly fell into disarray and many needed massive improvements.

That explained how they were able to purchase the house cheaply enough that the Raynes could pay in cash – in full. The bubbly agent was more than helpful and

told them she was happy to see another family moving into the area. The one single family left had apparently been there a lifetime and they might benefit from a 'positive influence'.

Spike had nearly doubled over in laughter at the idea of the two of them as anything positive.

If she only knew.

The rustling of leaves caught Spike's attention and he studied the battered tree in the opposite yard for a moment.

"What the bloody hell is that monstrosity?"

Ethan laughed before answering, "According to Jessica, that is a crabapple tree."

Spike turned quickly, his eyebrow quirked. "Jessica? Please don't tell me you're seducing our innocent suburbanite neighbors already."

"No," Ethan responded a little too quickly. "I just happened to wander over to introduce myself. Besides, she seems a little...rough for my tastes and her husband

doesn't seem to be the most forgiving bloke around."

"Met them both, did you?"

"Just Jessica. Tony was 'napping' which I believe was code for stone cold pissed."

Spike simply laughed. It seemed they'd moved to the right neighborhood after all.

As he studied the dilapidated yard, a dark-haired boy trudged up the sidewalk before stopping beneath the hideous tree. The boy leaned up against the dark, mottled trunk, staring at the imposing house.

The blond haired boy studied this new creature. The boy seemed younger than Spike, probably no more than sixteen years old. His hair was a lush, rich brown and hung in waves around his forehead and ears. He no doubt needed a haircut, but Spike loved the way it made him look sad and helpless, almost younger in a way. His skin was pale for a young man in Southern California, although it held onto a sunkissed tint on his cheeks and nose.

Spike couldn't miss the kicked puppy look in his downcast

eyes or the slowly fading bruise on the left side of the boy's jaw. His pain called to Spike in a way he'd never felt before. He was going to make the boy his.

"That must be Alexander," Ethan suddenly whispered over Spike's shoulder. The blond boy startled slightly. He had been so intrigued by the boy before him that he'd forgotten about his father completely. "Although Jessica called him Xander. She said his friends came up with the moniker. She's quite worried about him. She had to leave as soon as we were done chatting to attend a meeting at his school about him."

Spike nodded in answer, not trusting his own voice.

"You know, William. Age of consent laws are quite different here in the states than they are back home. You are twenty now. I'd hate for you to get us in a spot of trouble so soon after we've moved in."

The smile that graced the young man's features was nearly predatory as he studied the oblivious boy outside his window.

"Not to worry, Da," he replied, anticipation and lust coloring his voice, making it dark and husky. "I'll be

careful. Remember, I learned from the best."

Ethan laughed, his tone matching his son's. "That you did. And don't forget, you start your job with Ripper tomorrow afternoon."

Spike immediately caught his father's slip of the tongue, wondering what wicked plans the man had for his former best friend.

"I won't," Spike replied as he watched the boy sigh heavily before heading inside his home. "And maybe after I get home, I can go over and introduce myself to the boy next door."

3 The Meeting

Prompt: #25 - Kleptomaniac

Xander slowly walked down the hall toward the library. He hated having to do this, hated being punished just because he couldn't make it to school. It wasn't as if he didn't have excuses. His mother had written him a note for everyday he couldn't make it. He didn't realize that missing so much time could get you into so much trouble.

It wasn't like Xander was a bad kid. It's not like he beat people up on a regular basis like Larry or was a kleptomaniac like that Andrew kid that was always stealing stuff. Shit just seemed to happen to him.

Rounding the corner on the way to the library, Xander was stopped by his best friends all crowded around Willow's locker.

"Hey, buddy!" Jesse shouted, seeing the sable-haired boy first.

"Xander!" Willow cried as she ran up and threw her arms around the smiling boy. She squeezed him just a little too hard and Xander gasped in pain. "What's the matter, Xander? Are you alright?"

"Yeah, I'm fine," he lied. "I was helping my mom out,

moving a bunch of boxes in the basement last night and I think I may have overdone it a bit."

"Well, you'd better take it easy next time," Buffy chided. "You just about got creamed today in gym – by Cordelia. That would have been so embarrassing."

"Totally," Xander agreed. "But I got her first, although I can't believe how much her lip was bleeding. She's going to hate me forever. My mom wrote me a note to get me out of class but Couch Marin said I just had to tough it out. That man has a serious obsession with dodgeball."

The friends all chuckled lightly, chatting animatedly between themselves until Xander loudly cleared his throat. "Sorry to be a raining on the parade kinda guy, but I have to go and do the tutoring thing today."

"Man, that blows," Jesse complained as the rest of the group murmured wordlessly in agreement.

"No biggie," Xander replied as he started to walk off. "It's with some guy named Spike. What's his dad's name? Butch?"

As his friends laughed at the boy's attempt to lighten the

mood of his unpleasant situation, Xander waved before ducking through the doors to the library. "I'll catch you all tomorrow."

The doors to the library swung shut behind him, effectively shutting out all sound from the hallway beyond. Xander wandered further into the quiet room, looking for some sign of what he was supposed to be doing. There was no sign of the librarian in charge of his studies, so he softly called, "Giles?"

Receiving no response, the boy tried again. "Giles?"

He spotted some motion coming from the librarian's office and he began to move that way to ask what the agenda was until someone stepped through the door, leaning casually against the frame. Xander froze, staring at the man he was sure he'd never met, as the other's crystal blue eyes raked over him as if the man was sizing him up, taking him in, studying him somehow. He just couldn't figure out for what.

Finally, Giles strode through the door of his office, breaking the spell that had fallen over the two boys.

"Oh, good, Xander, you're here," Giles said casually as he

walked over to the large study table, setting the large tome in his hands on its smooth surface. "I believe introductions are in order. Spike, this is Xander. Xander, this is Spike, your tutor for the remainder of the year."

The entire introduction was done with the librarian studying his book and the two younger men staring at each other from across the room. "Come now," Giles chided. "No need to be so formal. Let's get this over with, shall we?"

The two boys stepped forward, Spike holding out his hand and Xander taking it automatically. They shook hands, slowly, gently and when Xander finally pulled his hand away, he wiped the sweat from his palm on the thigh of his jeans.

The librarian turned and motioned for the boys to sit before him. Xander moved quickly to take a seat, but Spike moved slowly, languidly sinking into the seat next to him. The younger boy was shocked when the heavy wooden chair scraped loudly against the floor as Spike moved in close to him. The tutor smiled slightly at the bewildered boy as he sprawled out in the chair, his knee lightly brushing Xander's.

Giles was talking, laying out the schedule for the two young men. Chemistry and French on Mondays and Wednesdays, Algebra and History on Tuesdays and Thursdays, and English on Fridays. Except Giles didn't say that. Xander heard a lot of "Imperative - blah blah blah – utmost importance – blah blah blah – ever vigilant – blah blah blah."

The young boy knew he should be paying attention, but it was hard when there was a warm, strong thigh pressing against his own. Spike looked like he was paying attention to the older man's speech but Xander could feel the other boy's leg moving, almost imperceptively, against his own. It was very distracting.

Xander tried to sneak tiny glances at the blond boy. He was so different from anyone Xander'd ever seen before. He looked hard, with his platinum blond hair and razor sharp cheekbones. His skin was pale, like he was made of porcelain, and his eyes were the palest crystal blue, like the purest arctic waters.

Shaking his head, Xander tried to rid himself of the weird thoughts. He never thought about these kinds of things about guys before – well, nobody but Jesse, but they were best buds and that didn't count. Spike was just

unique and exotic and completely different from Xander. That was it – it had to be.

Xander looked up suddenly as he realized that the room had grown suspiciously quiet. He ducked his head, hiding behind his fringe of bangs when he realized that they were both staring at him.

"Sorry, Mr. Giles," Xander whispered quietly. "What was the last part again? I'm afraid I didn't catch that."

The librarian sighed and pinched the bridge of his nose beneath his glasses before repeating, "I asked you if you had any issues meeting here with Spike alone after hours since I may have other duties that need attending."

Xander silently shook his head, his stomach fluttering at the thought of being left alone with the older boy, but didn't utter a word, afraid to trust his voice.

"Very good," Giles replied with a smile. "Now I'll leave you boys to it. I have to meet with an old friend this afternoon, so I will catch you up tomorrow. It's Wednesday, so I believe that science is in order. You need to be firm but fair with him, Spike. I want to see you take the boy in hand."

Spike snickered lightly until Giles gave the blond boy a hard look before slipping into his office for his jacket. After the Englishman left the library, Xander reached into his bag to pull out his chemistry textbook. He froze when he felt a strong hand encircle his wrist.

Turning to look into blue eyes, much too close for his liking, Xander cleared his throat before asking, "Something wrong, Spike?"

"Not a thing, pet," Spike whispered, his voice low and husky. "Just thought I'd stop you before you went through all the trouble of taking that book out, only to have to put it right back."

"Why?" Xander forced himself to ask, even as he shrank away from the tutor, who seemed to enjoy invading Xander's personal space.

"I thought we'd get out of here, you know, get to know each other a little better."

There was that funny, fluttery feeling again but Xander decided to push it away and ignore it for now. If Spike wanted to leave and talk, then that was less studying he

had to do. And Xander wasn't really in the mood anyway. He was tired and sore after a long night at home.

"K," he agreed quickly. "Where do you want to go?"

"I thought we'd head over to your house," Spike all but purred. "How does that sound, Luv?"

Xander started at the endearment, trying to hide his reaction by reaching down to pick up his backpack. Tossing the heavy bag over his shoulder, Xander gasped at the sudden pain in his ribs. He turned slowly to see the other boy staring at him, an unreadable expression on his face as he studied the pained boy.

"You don't even know where I live," Xander challenged as a distraction.

"I'll bet I can guess," Spike replied, a wide grin on his face.

"Ok," Xander said, practically bouncing in excitement. "But if you're wrong, you have to bring me soda and doughnuts for our tutoring sessions all next week."

"Done," Spike agreed as he began to steer the boy

toward the door.

"So, what do you want, Spike? Assuming you guess right, which you won't."

"Simple, Pet. Just want you to invite me in."

4 The Walk Home

Prompt: #26 - The Great Unwashed

Spike smirked as he followed Xander through the relatively small suburban town. He'd wandered through the ritzier part of town to throw the boy off, not let him know that Spike knew exactly when the boy lived. Xander had happily recited town history and gossip, giving Spike a taste for the town he and his father had so recently inhabited.

They walked past the mall with its paltry offerings,

although Spike was quick to stop and buy the boy a treat of a pretzel and an Orange Julius. Xander had wanted a corn dog and some other hideously sweet and/or fried treat. Spike had insisted that he have something that at least resembled nutrition. He needed to start molding the boy and he might as well start right from the beginning.

They began to head toward the seedier side of town, walking nearly all the way to the university campus, where Spike confessed that he was going to be a student as soon as the new semester started. Being near the campus, of course, meant the introduction of the Starbucks, artsy bookstores and greasy taco stands.

Heading closer to town, Xander pointed out The Bronze, which was apparently the one place, or more appropriately, the only place for kids Xander's age to hang out, assuming they were cool enough to go. Spike made special note of the longing in the boy's eyes as he stared at the dark, quiet club.

Spike steered them down one street, then another. Xander had apparently forgotten all about the bet until the older boy turned onto his street and began heading straight toward his house.

"Hey!" Xander complained as they stopped beneath the old crabapple tree. "You cheated. I don't know how, but you did, you big cheaterhead."

Spike chuckled lightly. This boy was going to be fun.

"Never said I wouldn't cheat, pet. Now how about you invite me in?"

Xander looked around like a frightened animal before Spike reached out and grabbed him firmly by the arm. "It's alright, ducks. I'm supposed to be around, right? Am your tutor and all. Doubt your folks would mind havin' me stop by time and again."

Spike watched the emotions play over the boy's face; fear, nervousness, anger and then resignation.

"Ok," the boy whispered as he ducked his head, hiding behind the fringe of dark bangs. It was something Spike could easily get used to. "But let's go in through the basement, please?"

It was the please that nearly undid Spike. It was soft and needy and painful and it went straight to the older boy's

cock. He fought to hold in the groan burning his throat and reached down to discreetly adjust himself before Xander noticed the growing bulge in his too tight jeans. He realized his grip on the boy's arm had tightened and had to be hurting his arm, but Xander never flinched or tried pull away. He remained frozen and still. Spike slowly eased up a little and began to stroke the warm arm.

"Come on," Spike whispered. "Let's get you inside, yeah?"

Gently but firmly, he directed Xander toward the house, following the boy around the side of the house until they found the door that would lead them beneath the house. Xander pulled out a silver key from beneath his tee-shirt. He quickly unlocked the bolt before quietly opening the door. Spike watched silently as Xander stuck his head through the open door, looking around in the dark, before reaching his hand out to flip the switch to turn on the lights.

Even with the lights on, the basement was filled with shadows. It made Spike wonder why any young boy would prefer this dark, dank hole to an airy, open house. He figured he'd get the answer to his question, most likely sooner than later.

They moved down the stairs and Xander immediately tossed his bag onto the lumpy, garish couch in the middle of the bare slab of concrete. The boy looked to his guest before moving the backpack to the floor.

"Sorry," Xander whispered with an embarrassed flush painting his cheeks. "You can sit here, if you want. It's pretty clean, I think. My parent's put it down here for when my Uncle Rory comes to visit, but he hasn't been by in a while. I hang out down here, you know, not all the time, but sometimes."

The blond man chuckled as he flopped down onto the scratchy couch. The springs creaked under the sudden weight and Spike had to move over to stay out of an uncomfortable wet spot. "You really live the life, don't you, Xander?"

"Yeah, that's me, the great unwashed."

Spike sat frozen, looking up at the boy in awe. He wondered if Xander even realized the reference he'd just made so flippantly. Maybe this boy was smarter than any of them had imagined.

They stared at each other for several long minutes, neither knowing what to say or how to break the tension. A loud crash from the house above them did that for them.

Xander fidgeted and laughed nervously before smiling weakly at the man watching him. "My parents," he explained. "Mom probably dropped something..."

Screaming followed close behind.

"...and then decided it was easier to yell at the mess than clean it up."

Spike laughed quietly as he reached out and grabbed the now pacing boy around the wrist. "No need to worry, pet. Everybody's parents fight now and again, yeah? Now come and let's have us a little chat." He pulled on the boy's arm, yanking him down, nearly on top of his lap in the process.

Xander landed hard, gasping harshly, his body arching in pain. Spike instinctively reached out, trying to sooth the boy, but Xander merely flinched away. The blond man reached over, softly petting him and cooing soft words to him, gently trying to calm the upset boy.

"What's the matter, pet?" he whispered. "Come on, let Spike see. Let me see."

"Hurts," Xander whispered as he wrapped his arms around his torso.

Spike tugged slowly at the soft cotton material until he finally worked it up from Xander's grasp. The colors were amazing. Xander had bruises decorating his midsection; purple, black, blue, green, the colors mingled and merged like paint on a canvas.

Looking at the contusions, the blond man had to fight to control his anger. Someone had marked this boy. No one would mark this boy, no one but him – ever again.

Reaching out slowly, Spike touched the warm skin, tracing his fingertips over the damaged flesh. Xander let him touch so he pushed on, exploring the patterns, quickly recognizing what had to have been footprints. He pushed on a tender rib, searching for a break he never found. He traced each rib, pressing and testing, amazed at the boy's resistance to the pain. Xander never cried out or complained. He simply whimpered at the ache caused by the slender seeking fingers, tears glistening in

the corners of his red-rimmed eyes, yet never falling.

Spike decided he loved the whimpered sounds that escaped the boy's parted lips and he was determined to hear them again. Slowly, he lowered the shirt before smiling up into the morose hazel eyes.

"That's a nasty bruise you got there, pet," he stated quietly. "How'd you manage that?"

"Helping my mom," Xander obviously lied. "I was bringing boxes downstairs and I fell."

Spike looked around the basement and noticed there were no boxes stacked anywhere.

"My dad must have moved them or something."

Spike chuckled knowingly before standing up from the couch. He held out his hand until Xander took it lightly. Pulling the boy up, Spike flung his arm over the boy's shoulders, making sure not to touch the sensitive flesh, before steering the boy up the stairs and outside.

"Don't worry about gym for the week, alright?" Spike said as they left the basement and stepped out into the cool

evening night.

"Spike, Coach Marin is a dick. He'll never let me out of dodgeball."

The blond man smirked and winked at the boy. "Let me handle it."

"Spike?" Xander questioned quietly. "Where are we going?"

"You're walking me home."

"But Spike, my mom will be pissed if I get in too late."

"Not to worry, luv," Spike practically purred as they slowly made their way up the walk to the house next door. "Look at that. We're here already."

Xander gaped at him. "You're the good looking English guy that moved in last week?"

Spike laughed as he pulled away, ruffling the boy's hair in the process. "That would have been my Da, but yes, we moved in last week."

"That's how you knew!" Xander exclaimed, his face alight with joy.

"Yeah, pet. That's how I knew. Now you'd best get going so you don't get in any trouble. I'll see you tomorrow, yeah?"

"K," Xander whispered as he started to move away, heading toward his own home. "See ya' tomorrow, Spike."

Then the boy turned and quickly rushed to his house, slipping in through the basement door and into the dark of his own home.

The blond man chuckled as he walked through the door. This boy might be more than just a pleasant distraction or an easy paycheck. He had intrigued Spike, for better or worse.

He was standing at the kitchen window, staring at the house hiding the boy inside, when his father finally came home. Ethan smiled as he entered the kitchen, his hair disheveled and his lips kiss-swollen.

"Happy hunting, Da?"

"Well, yes. Thank you very much. And you, my boy? Was your day satisfying?"

Spike turned to look out the window once more.

"Very."

5 Discoveries

Prompt: #37 - Devotee

Xander sighed as ran into the locker room at full speed. He was going to be late...again. It had been a bad day. First, he had fallen asleep in the middle of his French test and then his pen had broken in History and leaked all over his hands and his text book. The professor told him that he would have to pay to replace the text. Xander flinched just thinking about it. Text books weren't cheap and his dad would surely take it out of his hide.

Then he'd been stopped in the hall by Principal Snyder and berated over his studying schedule. The beady-eyed man let Xander know, without a doubt, that he had no hope for the boy and expect him to be expelled within the month.

That had put the young man in a right foul mood and he ran into the doorway on his way in. Xander rubbed his sore knee, cursing the bruise that would surely be there by morning.

He fidgeted with the lock, frustrated that his fingers refused to get the numbers correct, once, twice, three times before slamming his fist against the metal door.

"Way to go, Harris," he grumbled to himself. "You're really batting a thousand today."

Xander's forehead banged against the cool metal right before he heard an amused voice say, "You keep talking to yourself, people will think you're crazy."

Spinning around, Xander yelped at the pain in his knees and ribs to stare into the smirking face of his new tutor.

"Spike!" he squeaked, embarrassed by the tremble in his voice. "Spike?" he tried again, "What are you doing here?"

"The real question is," the blond man started as he lounged back on the low bench he was sprawled upon,

"What are *you* doing?"

"I – I was just going to..." Xander started, stuttering lightly.

"You were just about to disobey a direct order of mine, weren't you?"

Xander tried to deny that he was going to change for gym, although it was the truth. He opened his mouth, searching for an answer when a bellowing voice filled the locker room.

"Harris! What is taking you so long?"

Xander turned quickly, yelping again at the strain on his sore muscles. He stared up at the angry, red face of Coach Marin.

"We're waiting for you, you lazy piece of shit," the older man growled as he stepped closer. "I hate having to hold up the class for you. Do you think you're special or something?"

The shaggy, sable hair dropped as Xander stared at the floor. He only looked up when he heard the physical

education teacher stammering.

"Oh, um, Mr. Rayne. Hello. I didn't realize you were here. I-I-I was just about to explain to Xander – I mean Mr. Harris – that he didn't have to dress down today. We're just playing dodgeball and he already understands the fundamentals of the sport so I'll just..."

Xander watched, flabbergasted, as the coach practically hurt himself trying to explain his ranting to the scowling blond tutor staring him down.

Finally, Spike spoke.

"I think you need to apologize to the boy here."

The words were quietly whispered, but they practically vibrated in the small locker room.

"Right," the older man scrambled quickly, nearly bowing to the startled student. "Sorry, Xander. Why don't you take the rest of the week off and we'll worry about you making the credits up later."

"No we won't," Spike said calmly. "He won't worry about them at all. You'll pass him just fine, won't you?"

"Yeah," Coach Marin reply extremely quickly. "Not a problem, Mr. Rayne. I have to go, I have class."

"You're excused," Spike practically purred and the frightened man turned and nearly ran for the gymnasium. He turned toward the shocked boy.

"Why's he so jolly over that damn dodgeball anyway?"

"He's a devotee to the sport," Xander giggled as his teacher scrambled out the door. "He's thinks it's an allegory for life or some other bullshit.

Spike rolled his eyes and grumbled, "Berk," after the man disappeared into the gymnasium.

Xander was laughing so hard at the sight, he had to hold his sides to keep from feeling like he was splitting apart. "That..." he spit between laughing fits, "That was beautiful!"

Spike simply glared.

"I wouldn't laugh if I were you."

Xander stopped laughing immediately.

"Follow me."

Xander's heart dropped into his stomach as he followed his tutor out of the locker room and through the school. He remained silent as they passed through the hallway as they walked toward the library. They strolled through the doors and the younger boy looked around wildly, hoping the stiff Englishman wasn't around. Luckily, Giles was nowhere to be seen.

Spike pointed toward a sign on the counter. Xander read it aloud.

"Gone for the afternoon. Back at three. Great. So no Giles this afternoon. So what are we supposed to do instead of PE?"

He turned and froze at the look on the blond boy's face. "Spike?" he whispered, suddenly afraid.

"You disobeyed me, Xander," Spike growled at the frozen boy. "What did I tell you?"

When Xander refused to answer, he barked, "What did I

tell you?"

"You told me not to worry about gym," the sable haired boy shouted, his fear causing him to cry out. "I'm sorry. I didn't want to get into any more trouble."

"Well, you found more trouble, Xander," the older boy answered, his voice hard. "I think you need to be punished to remember the consequences of your actions."

Xander didn't really like the sound of that but he knew he had fucked up and let his new tutor down. Spike really was his last chance and he felt bad for disobeying his orders. Slowly, he approached the scowling man.

"Spike, I'm so sorry. I know I screwed up by I..."

He froze when the older boy raised his hand, quieting him immediately.

The blond boy held up a large, thick wooden ruler before commanding, "Lean over the table."

Xander gaped. He hadn't been spanked in years, even his father hadn't threatened to spank him since he was six.

But here was Spike, threatening him with a flimsy piece of wood.

Reluctantly, he leaned over the table.

A warm hand rested on his lower back, just above the waistband of his baggy jeans, before warm words whispered in his ear.

"You'll take this and you'll like it, boy. You'll bend over for me because you know I'm right. I'm only doing what you need, Xander. Isn't that right?"

He nodded quickly, shocked at his own compliance to this unusual punishment.

The ruler came down, hard and quick. The first strike stung and the boy gasped at the shock of the pain. His cheeks stung with the blow and he was barely ready for the next when it came. He gasped and sighed with each stroke, surprised at the sting from the small ruler wielded by the small man.

Xander surprised himself with the tears that began to fall. It didn't hurt that bad, not really. But he was sad, overwhelmed by the fact that he had disappointed the

one person who believed in him. Around stroke eighteen, he began to beg.

"Please, Spike!" he cried out. "I'm sorry. I'm sorry, ok? I didn't mean to not listen to you. I promise not to do it again. I'll listen, alright? I'll listen to everything you say."

Spike stopped, reaching number twenty. He laid the ruler down next to the boy's flushed face before settling down in the chair next to the long sturdy table.

Xander lay on the smooth surface, softly crying. He never felt so lost and alone in his entire life.

Strong hands with long, gentle fingers pulled him down until Xander was settled firmly in the older boy's lap. They stroked him, calming him and alleviating his fears.

"I'll never do it again, Spike. I promise. I'll be a good boy."

Spike smiled as he pressed a kiss into the soft, sable hair. "I know, Xander. I know."

6 Counting on Each Other

Prompt: 38 - Abacus

Spike sighed as he walked to his front door. He'd left his boy inside the door to his basement all safe and sound. He smiled thinking of the day they'd had. Xander had disobeyed a direct order, yes, but he'd made up for it in spades. After taking the spanking so well, Xander had curled up in Spike's lap and let the older boy stroke him to his heart's content. Then they had worked on Xander's Chemistry homework and studied for the next week's French test.

The boy had been quiet and compliant and seemed to actually absorb the lesson so it was a day well spent as far as Spike was concerned.

As he'd walked up the drive, he'd noticed that his father's car was back. But it was the battered Citroen that caught his attention.

He entered the house quietly, not wishing to disturb the

men within. As he approached the kitchen, he heard voices arguing quietly. He'd missed the best part, it seemed, now he'd just have to watch the post-coital floor show.

"Ethan," Giles hissed. "We cannot continue this way. I'm risking too much to keep up this – this – this insanity with you."

Spike smiled at the evil chuckle in his father's voice. "Ripper," the silky baritone drifted toward him. "This insanity, as you call it, is the best thing that has ever happened to us. Tell me you don't miss those days. Tell me you don't love this now. Tell me that you don't ache for the things I can do to your body."

"I don't," was the strangled reply.

"Liar," Ethan practically purred. The room was silent and Spike stepped closer to the kitchen. He peeked around the corner and smirked at the sight of his father pressing the librarian against the island of the kitchen, fingers buried in each others hair, devouring each others mouths. They looked stunning together and Spike did his best to hold back the moan that built up inside him. After having Xander so close all afternoon, it was hard to

watch something so tempting so close to him that he couldn't have.

Suddenly, Giles pushed Ethan away and Spike hid again.

"No, Ethan," Giles groaned. "I can't. Honestly. I can't believe I let you talk me into this madness. I had hoped to keep an eye on William while he was working with Xander. I had hoped to be a positive influence on them both, but you've seen to it that I've either been busy with you or other responsibilities. I'm beginning to worry about William. Do you know that he threatened the gym teacher? The man came to me absolutely terrified. What have you done to that boy?"

Spike winced at the tone in the man's voice. Spike had always liked Rupert and the idea of the man not liking him was completely unappealing. Deciding he'd had enough, Spike took several steps back before loudly proclaiming, "Daddy, I'm home!"

Smiling widely, Spike bounded into the kitchen, sliding up to his father and planting a not so innocent kiss on his lips. Turning slowly, Spike turned and smirked at Giles as Ethan wrapped his arms around his only son.

"I didn't know you had company," the blond boy lied easily.

"Rupert came by for a little chat and I was hoping to convince him to say for dinner," Ethan said as snuggled the boy in closer. "Now boy, I'm a going to have to teach you some manners or are you going to go and greet your uncle Rupert correctly."

Spike chuckled lightly, remembering when his father actually did scold him in such a fashion. Now, it was just plain old fun.

"Sorry, Da," Spike apologized before stepping out of his father's embrace and slinking toward the other man. "Hi, Uncle Rupert," the boy purred as he stretched up onto his toes to plant a warm kiss on the man's lips. As he pulled back, he smiled that the man hadn't resisted him at all.

"Hello, William," Rupert answered, straightened his clothes nervously.

Spike licked his lips. He loved having an affect on people, especially people who could do things for him.

"Will you stay for dinner, Uncle Rupert?" the blond boy asked, his azure eyes pleading. "It's been so long since we've done something together."

Giles shifted again before sighing lightly. "I'm afraid that I can't tonight, William. I have other duties to attend to that I have neglected today. But we will soon, I promise."

"Good," Spike answered, genuinely pleased. "I'm going to hold you to that."

"You do that."

They smiled at each other for a few moments before Giles asked, "So, how is Xander coming along?"

"Quite well, actually," the boy answered with a wicked smile. "After a rough start, Xander was able to complete his assignment and work on his French a little."

The librarian nodded. "Good. I hope you're able to get him back on track. He really is a good boy. He's just had some – difficulties. I hope you don't ride him too hard."

Both Ethan and Spike laughed aloud at that, causing Giles to roll his eyes before removing his glasses to clean

them.

"Really," he snorted, exasperated. "You two are such children."

"Sorry, Ripper," Ethan apologized, still chuckling. "Are you sure you can't stay?"

"Yes, I'm afraid I must leave. I will talk to you both later."

As he started to walk away, Spike called out, "Aren't you forgetting something?"

"Oh yes," Giles said absentmindedly as he returned to plant a gentle kiss on first Spike's lips and then one on Ethan's. "Good night."

Once the front door closed, Spike began to laugh. "Good gods, Da! What did you do to the poor man?"

"You mean besides bugging him senseless?"

"Yes, besides that."

"Nothing, I swear." Ethan backed away slightly, wandering off into the living room as he talked. "He's a

little worried about that boy of yours. That teacher cornered him and told him you were evil and you were trying to destroy the boy in some fashion. Did you actually threaten a teacher, Spike?"

The blond boy smiled as he followed his father. "Yes, I did. The man is a pervert and deserves everything he gets. The git has cameras in the locker rooms. Caught him watching the boy's shower, I did. Asked him about it and he tried to say it was for security measures. But I told him he doesn't deal with security with his cock. Told him I wouldn't report him if he stopped reading Xander the riot act all the time. The old sod didn't like that one bit. Had to put him in his place a bit later."

"That's my boy," Ethan beamed as he rubbed his hand on the platinum locks. "How is your boy coming along?"

Spike smiled before answering, "Quite well, actually. I spanked him today, right in the library."

Ethan leaned in, obviously interested. "Hand or ruler?"

"Ruler," Spike practically purred at the memory. "Bent right over the table and took it. By the end of next week, he'll be bending over for me. I'm sure of it."

Ethan sighed as he wandered the room, touching random objects as he moved. "I'm very impressed. I don't suppose you'd be willing to share at all."

"I share about as well as you do, Da."

"Right then, so not at all."

The two men stood staring at each other. "You've grown into such a beautiful man, William."

"Thanks, Da."

As Spike watched, the father stroked an ancient looking abacus. "Remember this, Will?"

The blond boy stepped forward to look at the small treasure in their home. "Yeah, you couldn't believe I'd pulled it off."

"Well, you nicked it from the *Hong Kong Museum of History*, my boy. That in itself is a feat. Then passing it off as a birthday present to me, in front of Ripper, no less. I still do not believe that he doesn't recognize it. I think he just wants to believe in us so much. Isn't that sweet?"

"It is, Da."

"So," Ethan pressed, still playing with the priceless counting machine. "What are the plans for the boy?"

"Slow and gentle, Da," William whispered, as he stepped closer to the man watching him with sharp eyes. "Just like you taught me."

Ethan pulled his son in close to him, smiling into the blond hair, proud beyond belief.

Just a note - There will not be any Spike/Ethan in this piece. There may be some implied previous activities, but it is not explored in this fic. Just so no one freaks out about any Ethan/Spike. Not going to happen, ok?

7 Eye of the Beholden

Prompt: 40 - Revenge is Bliss

Ethan smiled as he handed the change over to the pleased customer.

"Not to worry, Mrs. Rosenberg," the Englishman whispered loudly, his fingers brushing the woman's pale palm lightly as the money was exchanged. "We'll have the table delivered tomorrow afternoon between two and three in the afternoon, if that is convenient for you."

The middle-aged woman laughed a little too loudly before reaching over to smack the Englishman's shoulder lightly. "I already told you to come by whenever, silly. I'll be home all day tomorrow."

After closing the register drawer, Ethan came around, steering the still smiling customer toward the door with an insistent hand on her back. "Well, tomorrow afternoon it is, then. We'll be looking forward to seeing you again soon."

Walking back to the counter, Ethan laughed at the look on his companion's face. "What's the matter, Ripper? Did you doubt my powers of influence and charm?"

"Never," Giles laughed, standing as the other man approached. Ethan leaned in close for a kiss but the librarian swiftly moved away. Giles removed his glasses, cleaning them efficiently before leaning around the corner to check on the two boys in the back. Obviously trying to change the subject, Rupert asked, "So why antiques, Ethan? It's not really your forte."

A chuckle bled from Ethan's lips as he looked around the quaint shop. "Well, let's see. I sit around all day, surrounded by beautiful things and lonely women with disposable income come to flirt with me and give me money. I feel like a high paid whore without the shame."

Giles laughed heartily at his friend.

"You are certainly living the dream, Ethan."

It was less of an insult and more like the truth for the two men whose highest aspirations had been, once upon a time, to be kept men.

"You know what they say, Ripper," Ethan teased.

"Revenge is bliss."

"I think you mean ignorance."

"No. Ignorance is overrated."

The two men stared for several minutes, the tension between building slowly.

"I'm glad that you are happy, Ethan," Giles whispered as his eyes broke their strained connection to stare at the floor.

"Could be happier," the other man whispered as he stepped closer. Giles looked up quickly, gasping lightly at the look in Ethan's burning brown eyes. Just before their lips met, a loud laugh was heard from the shop's back room, shattering the spell they were under. They split apart as if they had been burned.

They slipped back to their places behind the counter and settled in to watch the two boys in the back room. Ethan smiled at his son's laughter. The two boys had been sorting and categorizing costumes all day for the upcoming Halloween season. They'd laughed and teased and touched the entire time.

"They certainly are enjoying themselves," Ethan remarked off-handedly.

"Yes," Giles agreed. He sighed as he continued. "I'm not sure this was the best idea, Ethan. William is a little – overbearing. I'm beginning to worry about Xander."

"What are you saying, Ripper? My boy not good enough for your little Alexander?"

"No!" Giles denied adamantly. "He's just so – physical with the boy."

A wicked smile parted Ethan's face. "Nothing wrong with being physical. Sometimes that's just what the situation warrants. Besides, have you not noticed that Spike's been teaching him things all day?"

Giles frowned, the furrow in his brow so tempting to the other man, as he listened intently to the conversation flowing from the back room.

"Ok, so wait," Xander said. "So we have nine Spiderman costumes. Five of them are size four, two are size five, a seven and a nine. So the median of the sizes is four because that's the middle number if you write them all out like 4, 4, 4, 4, 4, 5, 5, 7, 9."

"Correct," Spike prompted.

"So it doesn't matter what the numbers are for the median, it's just which ever one is in the middle."

"Right."

"But the mean is like the average."

"Correct."

"So the mean of the sizes is..." There was a pause as the younger boy mentally completed the equation. "Five?"

"Very good," Spike praised as he reached over and ruffled the boy's shaggy hair. "See not so hard a concept, is it, pet?"

"No," Xander agreed. "I guess not."

Ethan smiled at the shocked look on his lover's face.

"Statistics," Giles whispered with awe tainting his voice. "Impressive."

"Spike has a talent for knowing people's motivators,"

Ethan said proudly. He leaned in close to his lover's ear before whispering, "I think I may have an idea about yours." He licked lightly on the tempting curve of the man's ear, pressing in closer as the librarian sighed and relaxed against him – at least until another burst of laughter brought them back to reality.

"I think it's time for me to leave," Giles said quickly as he stood and readjusted himself in his trousers. "I'll come by tonight?"

"Yes," Ethan replied, either a request or a demand or both. He smiled and waved as the other man slipped out quietly. Heading toward the front door, he flipped the sign to *Closed* before turning the deadbolt. He slowly began turning off lights before opening the register and counting the take for the day. It was quite sizeable, thanks to the easily manipulated female population of Sunnydale and the easily charmed tourists.

As he walked back to treat the boys to dinner, he stopped in the doorway to watch. Spike leaned back in one of the novelty beanbag chairs with the younger boy firmly in his lap. Pale fingers threaded through sable locks as the boys kissed languidly. They were beautiful together, the older man thought, probably much like

himself and Ripper at that age.

Azure eyes peeked over a quivering shoulder and Ethan smiled, motioning with his hands that he was waiting to take them to eat. Spike winked and Ethan slipped away.

Several minutes later, the two boys emerged from the back room, the blond looking quite smug and the brunet looking thoroughly mussed.

"All done, boys," Ethan asked silkily.

"Yeah, Da," Spike replied as the younger boy blushed prettily.

"How about we go get some dinner?" the older man prompted.

"Sounds great," Xander said enthusiastically before his face fell. "Oh, but I don't have any money."

The two Englishmen laughed.

"Not to worry, my boy," Ethan nearly purred. "I think I can spare you a meal for all your hard work today. Besides, you're a friend of Spike and that practically

makes you family."

Xander flushed even brighter at that and Ethan immediately understood his son's attraction to the sweet boy. He'd be beautiful broken.

"So the real question is..." Ethan started.

"You got any decent curry in this town?" Spike finished.

Xander's face brightened and he virtually bounced in place. "Oh yeah! There's this great Indian restaurant just a few blocks from here called *A Taste of India*. I've been a couple of times with Willow and Jesse. They have a great curry chicken and the samosas are to die for."

"Well, then boy, lead the way."

Ethan walked behind the boys, taking in every laugh, every stolen look, every surreptitious touch. He smiled and thought that they certainly were right when they said that living well was the best revenge.

And this revenge was most certainly sweet.

8 Call Me Crazy

"I would like a cup of coffee."

"J'aimerais une tasse au café."

"No! Try again."

"J'aimerais une tasse de café?"

"Very good. I would like a glass of milk."

"J'aimerais un verre de...leche?"

"Leche? Jesus, Xander where is your brain today?!"

The younger boy slumped onto his beat up couch. He was having a very bad day. Spike had come over way too early on Sunday morning, ten a.m., for crying out loud,

and insisted that they needed to start working on Xander's worst subject; French. They had been drilling vocabulary words and phrases for nearly an hour and the exhausted boy was ready to give up.

Thrusting his fingers into his sable locks, Xander sighed before looking at Spike. "Did I do something wrong, Spike? You're acting all snappy and jittery today."

The blond boy stopped his pacing and turned to face the pleading boy. "I'm sorry, Xander," he apologized. "It's just...never mind. You don't really want to know."

"I do," Xander pleaded, sitting up eagerly. "I'd like to help, if I can."

Spike turned and studied him for several long seconds. Xander squirmed under the intense gaze. He'd felt that stare before, still amazed at how much it felt like a physical touch.

"You don't know what you're asking."

Xander smiled, feeling like he'd won some small victory. "Try me."

"I'm worked up, is all," Spike began to explain as he resumed his pacing. "It's been weeks since I left England, which means it's been weeks since I've seen my boyfriend. Ex-boyfriend is more accurate, I guess." The blond boy paused in his speech to thread his fingers through the gel-crisp locks on his head. "And then kissing you yesterday and not..."

"What?" Xander practically shouted, suddenly frightened that he was the cause of his tutor's discomfort.

"Not getting off," Spike whispered, as if ashamed of his need. "I just feel like I've got all this – stuff built up inside me and no way to get it out. It's feels like I could just scratch all my skin off with this need. It's like I'm gonna go crazy. Just blow up and then they'll have to stick me in an asylum or something."

Xander felt a shudder run through his body in horror. An asylum. Visions of visiting his mother when she'd had her "episode" swarmed him mind and he could feel the tears beginning to well. He fought them back hard. His mother had assured him it wasn't his fault, no matter what his father had said. Xander shook his head violently, trying to rid himself of the fear and sadness building inside him.

Suddenly, a thought occurred to the younger boy. "Why don't you just..." Xander couldn't bring himself to say the word, so he just moved his hand in a suggestive manner.

Spike snorted a burst of laughter but shook his head. "Don't you think I've tried that? It's not working. I need someone else."

Xander sighed hard, his brain spinning at the thoughts bombarding him. "Would it..." He paused, silently praying for strength. "Would it help you if I did it?"

Blue eyes stared at him, studying him for a long time before Spike finally answered. "I couldn't ask you to do that, Xander. You're younger than me. Too young. We could get in trouble. The kissing might not be such a big deal, but this could be considered wrong."

"If anyone found out," Xander finished for him, suddenly determined. "I won't tell if you won't. Who would know but us? I want to do this, Spike. Please. Let me do this for you."

Spike seemed to deflate at the boy's admission. He flopped down onto the couch in relief, his leg bumping Xander's gangly limb. "Are you sure, Xan? I mean, I'll only

do it if you want to."

"I want to," Xander answered, his heart thumping a hundred miles an hour. "It's just – I've never – you know, with another guy before."

Spike smiled, petting the mop of sable locks affectionately. "Not a problem, pet. You just do to me what you do to yourself. You're going to do just fine, trust me."

Xander turned toward the other boy, unsure where to start.

"You can start by kissing me if you want," Spike suggested and Xander smiled before leaning in for a gentle kiss. It was soft and gentle, tentative and sweet, until Spike began to suck on the other boy's tongue lightly. Warm fingers wrapped around Xander's wrist and gently steered the younger boy's hand toward the other boy's crotch. Xander gasped as his fingers came into contact with something hard and hot. He froze when he realized what he was touching. He didn't even know when Spike had opened his jeans.

"Just take it nice and easy, pet," Spike prompted, as he

curled Xander's fingers around his length.

Squeezing tentatively, Xander smiled at the reaction from the blond boy. He slowly began to stroke up and down, loose on the down stroke and tighter on the way up. He stared, fascinated by the play of the velvet warm skin over the steely hot flesh beneath. Spike was uncut and Xander felt captivated by the extra bit of skin that he lacked. He pulled it up and over the head, swirling it in the pearly pre-come before sliding it down again.

The younger boy smiled as a low moan escaped Spike's parted lips. Xander leaned forward to lick at the seam between the pink lips, amazed at how easy this all seemed. Continuing to stroke and lick, squeeze and nip, Xander grew bolder, trying different things, judging by the sounds escaping the older boy what was working and what wasn't.

Moving his hand faster and harder, Xander moaned as Spike groaned loudly, thrusting up off the couch. They kissed harder and harsher, their teeth clanking painfully until Spike finally arched up off the ratty couch, crying out his release into the younger boy's mouth.

Xander watched, entranced, as Spike slowly came down

from his orgasmic high. The smile on his pale face was beautiful, like a glimpse at an angel, and Xander couldn't look away. Azure eyes opened as Spike turned and whispered, "That was bloody brilliant, pet."

Xander felt a blush covering his face, from ears to neck. He froze, however, when the other boy raised Xander's hand, smirking evilly before sucking a come covered finger into his mouth. Xander gaped, shocked beyond words, as Spike silently and reverently cleaned each finger before seductively licking his palm.

"Thank you," Spike whispered as he leaned in close. "Can I return the favor?"

Xander wanted to shake his head, to tell Spike he didn't need to, to protest in some way, but Spike was already leaning in, smelling of leather and smoke and sex and it was just all too much for the teenager to resist.

"Okay," Xander whispered just before soft lips descended on his own. Spike tasted sharp and tangy and Xander moaned, knowing that he was tasting Spike's come on his lips. Before his brain could wrap around that fact, his jeans were open and Spike's fingers were wrapped around his greedy cock.

Xander moaned loudly at the first claiming touch. It was the first time anyone other than Xander himself had touched there and his excited organ was pleased at the attention. He thrust up into the warm fist encircling him, rocking back and forth on the ebb and flow of passion. Spike brought him to the brink quickly before backing off, making Xander whine and moan in need.

He worked the needy boy, playing with him, teasing him, bringing him to the edge of pleasure and then backing off before starting the cycle again. Finally, Xander felt like he could take no more. He broke the kiss forcefully before begging, "Please, Spike. I need to come. You're killing me here."

"Don't want to kill you," Spike whispered huskily in the boy's ear before nipping it playfully. "Want to see you come. Bet you've never come with anybody else, have you?"

Xander looked up as Spike leaned back, waiting for an answer. Not trusting his voice, the sable haired boy silently shook his head 'no'.

"Didn't think so. But you want to come for me, don't you,

Xander? Be a good boy and come for Spike. You want to be a good boy, don't you?"

Xander nodded wildly. He wanted to be a good boy. At that moment, all he wanted in the world was to be a good boy for Spike.

"Tell me," Spike growled, squeezing the base of the boy's cock so tightly Xander nearly cried.

"Yes!" he gasped. "I want to be a good boy for you. Just for you. Please, Spike. Make me your good boy."

"Then come for me," the blond boy commanded as he began to strip Xander's cock wildly. "Come for me now, good boy. Come for Daddy."

Xander flailed and arched, whimpered harshly in the back of his throat as he came harder than he had in young life. The waves of pleasure seemed to last forever, one echoing off the other, until he finally collapsed against the couch, utterly exhausted.

Spike chuckled lightly as he hovered over the boy draped across the couch. "So beautiful," the older boy whispered, placing soft kisses over the smooth jaw and

cheek before licking a stripe up the sweaty neck.

Xander shuddered at the feeling of the wet tongue on his cooling flesh. He had nearly dozed off when he felt the brush of wet fingers against his lips.

"Open up," Spike demanded.

Obediently, lips opened as Xander took in the come soaked digits. He licked each finger clean, finishing with a thorough lick of Spike's palm.

"Such a good boy," Spike purred, as he manhandled the compliant boy to rest on his chest.

As Xander drifted off in a pleasant, post-coital nap, he thought about how happy he was to have thought of a way to help out Spike after all.

9 Daydreamer

Prompt: 42 - Cafeteria

Xander looked down at the food tray on the table before him. It was his lucky day. They had pizza, tater tots, extra gooey [mac](#) and cheese *and* green jello for lunch. All of his

favorites. Xander couldn't believe how lucky he was. He had just begun to dig into the tater tots after dipping them in the extra cheesy sauce, when he saw a familiar blond head enter the crowded cafeteria.

The sable haired boy smiled as Spike silently slid into the seat beside him. The older boy was looking especially smug as he leaned back, slumping in the small, uncomfortable chair. His legs spread out wide as long, pale fingers stretched out, fanning over his own denim-covered crotch.

"Hi Spike," Xander squeaked, his mouth suddenly going dry. His tongue snaked out to moisten his chapped lips. He smiled lightly as the azure eyes tracked the movement.

"Hi pet," Spike practically purred as he smiled widely. Slowly, the fingers over his groin moved, stroking playfully while Xander watched intently.

Hazel eyes grew wide as Spike leaned in, slowly drawing closer and closer. Warm lips hovered over Xander's own until he quietly asked, "Spike?"

His answer was a soft kiss, a simple press of lips, sweet

and wet. Xander whimpered lightly, the sound desperate and needy. Teeth nibbled gently on his lower lip before Spike nipped him harshly. As Xander gasped, Spike's tongue stole inside, licking and tasting as he probed deeply within.

Xander lost himself to the kiss, reaching out to the other boy, scrambling for something to hold onto, to keep his sanity. He found himself with fistfuls of soft, worn leather. It felt right, safe, perfect.

Suddenly, Xander was pulled out of the bliss of the kiss by a burst of laughter from somewhere behind him. He remembered they were in the school, they were in the cafeteria, they were surrounded by people who wouldn't understand. Frightened, he tried desperately to pull away, but Spike wouldn't let him. The blond boy held him tight, his grip firm.

"Look at them," Spike whispered, understanding Xander's fear without any explanation. "They don't know. They don't care. I could do anything to you right here, right now, and no one would do anything."

Xander's sable hair flew as he shook his head violently. It wasn't true. It couldn't be. Someone would know.

Someone would see. Strong fingers gripped his chin and forced him to look around the crowded room. Xander realized that Spike was right. No one was watching them. No one cared.

Jesse, Willow and Buffy walked up, giggling and laughing as they settled into the seats opposite the two boys.

"Hey, Xan," Jesse greeted as he tore into his lunch greedily.

"Hey guys," he replied, smiling nervously.

Spike reached over and began to stroke Xander's interested cock through his baggy jeans. The younger boy jumped at the touch, shooting a glare at his tutor, but Spike refused to stop. Xander tried to have a somewhat normal conversation with his friends, but it was proving more and more difficult as Spike's evil hand continued its ministrations.

Soon, Xander was panting for every breath. His skin felt like it was on fire and his every muscle ached and arched toward the demanding fingers. Sweat began to drip from his brow, causing his hair to curl at the ends around his forehead, sticking to his flushed face.

Spike leaned in to lick the salty drops from the boy's neck before leaning up to whisper in his ear.

"Tell me what you want, Xander."

"You," was all he was able to gasp out.

"Tell me, Xander."

"You," he repeated. "You. I want you to touch me. Take me. Make me. Please."

He was so close, so close it hurt. His every thought, every need was Spike. Spike's fingers, Spike's lips, Spike's tongue, Spike's words.

"Xander," he heard his name whispered.

"Xander?"

He sighed. Just a little more was all he needed.

"Alexander!"

The tone turned harsh, strict. Xander knew that shouldn't

turn him on, but it did.

"Mr. Harris!"

The loud yell in the distinctly female voice shocked Xander out of daze and he jerked his head up from its resting place on his upturned fist. As the rest of the class laughed at him, he smiled shyly up at his English teacher while trying to discreetly hide the tent in the front of his jeans.

"Sorry, Ms. Miller," Xander mumbled, hoping that all the teacher wanted was for him to pay attention in class.

"Now that you're awake, maybe you'd like to join in the discussion."

Panicking, the sable haired boy looked around for some help. Willow picked up her book and pointed to the title.

"Hamlet!" Xander blurted and the entire class laughed again.

"Yes, we were discussing Hamlet's fatal flaw. Would you like to provide your own theory?"

Without thinking, Xander answered, "His rashness."

The class laughed again and Xander blushed brightly.

"All right, that's enough," Ms. Miller quieted the class.

"Since Cordelia was just telling us that Hamlet's indecision was his fatal flaw, why don't you enlighten us on your theory."

Xander cleared his throat before making his case.

"Well, Hamlet was doing alright for a while, right? I mean, first this ghost shows up and tells him that his uncle killed his dad, but how can he know for sure that the spirit was really the ghost of his dad? Even Hamlet questions it when he says that even the Devil can take a pleasing shape, right?"

Half the class nodded and the other half giggled. Cordelia just looked outraged.

"So Hamlet decides to test the spirit by having the players do that show that was just like what the ghost said. When the king has his little freak out, then Hamlet knows that the spirit was right. But even then, he doesn't just run in and kill the king. He decides to wait. It's not

until he goes in to see his mom and he hears the annoying guy behind the curtain, he freaks out and stabs him.

"That's where he screws up. It could have been anybody back there. He didn't check and he killed an innocent man. That's when things go to hell. Ophelia goes nuts, Laertes swears his revenge on him and now the king knows Hamlet is after him. If Hamlet hadn't been so rash and waited, like he had been doing all along, things might not have gone so bad so fast."

Ms. Morris smiled wide. "Very good, Xander. That's an insight I had never thought of before. I'm impressed. I think that tutor of yours might just be doing you some good, after all."

Xander blushed and ducked his head, first at the compliment and secondly at the mention of Spike. His cock throbbed in his jeans, reminding him of his wandering mind and traitorous body. He shifted in his seat, trying to hide and will his erection away.

"Yeah," he whispered, as much to himself as to his teacher. "I think Spike is doing me some good too."

10 In The Stars

Prompt: #48 - Horoscope

It had been a long week for Spike and Xander. A test in French and US History, a large assignment in Math and an outline for an essay on Hamlet in English kept the two boys in the library later and later into the evening until Friday rolled around and they found themselves completely alone in the vast library.

Xander looked up at the high windows as he stretched, surprised at the darkness.

"When did it get dark?"

"It happens every night around the same time, if you hadn't noticed," Spike teased.

"Duh," Xander laughed as he punched Spike lightly on the

arm. He'd missed the touching and kissing he'd learned to expect from Spike. The older boy had limited their "recreational time" and had insisted on keeping Xander studying.

But Xander's mind had a tendency to wander and it usually wound up somewhere on Spike's anatomy. The blond boy came up with a solution to the problem. If Xander could get through an entire study session, completing all work to the older boy's satisfaction, he'd receive a reward after their walk home.

It seemed that warm, wet kisses and hot, furious hand jobs did wonders for Xander's attention span.

The sable haired boy smiled, pushing his overgrown hair out of his face as he put the finishing touches on his Biology homework. He brandied his pencil like an expert drummer as he sank in his chair.

"Stick a fork in me, Spike, because I am done."

The blond boy chuckled as he kicked at the chair, sending the younger boy scrambling to keep from landing in a heap on the library floor.

"Well, if that's what you really want," Spike drawled, his tongue trapped seductively between his teeth.

Xander flushed healthily and quickly put his school work away in his bag. Spike watched greedily before standing and leading the other boy outside. They walked home in the dark, moving swiftly beneath round patches of artificial light, unafraid of any danger that might be lurking beyond their borders.

They chatted and chuckled, playfully punching and touching as they walked, neither of them in too much of a hurry to reach their destination. As they neared their homes, Spike saw the look of dread and disappointment on the younger boy's face. Looking up at his neighbor's home, Spike noticed the numerous lights on and the two dilapidated cars now parked on the front lawn.

Xander seemed to notice where Spike's attention was centered and he snorted mockingly.

"Looks like my Uncle Rory's come for a visit. And brought a friend with him. I'd better lay low for a while. Do you mind if we go in through the basement?"

Spike didn't mind. They'd mostly spent time in the

house's dank cellar since Xander's parents were quite unpleasant and Spike didn't care to spend time around them if he didn't have to. But a glance at his own dark house told him his would be quiet.

"What do you say we stop at my place first, yeah?" Spike offered quietly, already steering the younger boy up the dark walkway.

Xander nodded silently as he stared at his own loud, raucous house behind them.

"Sure."

The house was dark and Spike flipped on the lights, looking around the quiet house. He smiled as he wandered around, searching for a sign of his father. Wandering into the kitchen, he picked up a note, waved it at Xander before he quietly read.

Suddenly, he seemed to collapse. Xander rushed forward to help, to hold, to do something, someday.

"What is it?" he whispered, terrified.

"My Da," Spike answered.

"Where?" Xander asked, fear gripping him. "Where is he?"

"The Police Station. Seems they had some questions for him. I don't believe it."

"What?" Xander asked, concern coloring his voice deep and dark.

Spike looked up into the chocolate brown eyes brimming with concern. He sighed before confessing, "Da and I got into some trouble in England. It's one of the reasons we came here. We'd hope it wouldn't follow us. Guess I was wrong."

He normally didn't share the truth. It was often too risky a venture. But Xander was different. The truth was effortless and simple. It was easy to spin the web with this truth instead of constructing some lie that he'd have to remember later.

"What kind of trouble?" Xander pressed as he held the older boy close to his heart.

"Don't want to go into now, alright? Let's just say we

aren't blushing flowers, 'k?"

"Alright," Xander agreed.

He waited, quiet and still, for Spike to decide what he wanted. When the other boy remained silent, Xander decided to press forward. "Can I do anything for you?"

"What can you do?" Spike snapped.

Xander froze. What could he do? He was nothing more than a silly little boy who knew nothing of Spike's or his father's problems. All he could do was this.

Quickly, he leaned down and placed a simple, soft kiss on Spike's parted lips. Suddenly, the older boy clung to him tightly, needy and desperate.

"Yes," Spike whispered. "That's what you can do. Distract me, please. Just distract me."

Xander did his best, exploring the familiar territory of Spike's mouth, tasting and teasing, kissing and nipping. Mouths moving quickly turned into hands touching and Xander found his pants open and shoved roughly away. Spike seemed to be single-minded in his pursuit of

Xander's naked flesh.

It was odd, being naked from the waist down in his tutor's kitchen, but Spike seemed to neither notice nor care. Finally, when warm fingers began to tug at his hard flesh, the cool, hard wood of the counter top brought Xander to his senses.

"Spike," he whispered. "Could we move this somewhere more comfortable?"

Reality settled in around the older boy and picked the younger boy up before throwing him bodily on the large couch in the living room. Xander chuckled lightly as he bounced on the soft cushions before Spike fell over him, blanketing him from head to foot. The worn jeans rubbed against Xander's naked flesh and he arched up to meet it. It hurt, but felt so right at the same time. He groaned and whimpered and writhed.

Spike looked into the wide brown eyes, his own blue eyes wild with need.

"Please, Xander," he nearly growled. "Need you. Please say yes. Just need you so bad."

"Yes," Xander agreed, not knowing what he was fully agreeing to, but trusting the other boy implicitly.

Spike smiled before kissing the boy forcefully, greedy, taking every bit that Xander was willing to give. Hands were everywhere, touching, stripping, teasing, loving. Before he knew it, Xander found himself naked with an equally nude Spike on top of him. The older boy rolled his hips, grinding into him, thrusting and teasing the hyper sensitive boy.

Suddenly, he shifted until Xander felt a cool slickness sliding behind his balls. It was an odd feeling, but one he was willing to deal with. Then there was pressure and the oddest sensation he'd ever felt.

He gasped and groaned and trying to squirm away, but Spike held him still.

"Shh," Spike encouraged. "You're doing so well, pet. Just let me in, yeah? It'll be perfect. I promise."

Xander nodded and tried to breathe as the slick finger invaded him. It slid in and out, twisting this way and that. Just when he thought he'd gotten used to it, Spike added another. This seemed worse somehow and Xander

whimpered and cried. The soft sounds only seemed to spur Spike on and his hands moved frantically in the boy's tight hole.

Suddenly, the fingers were gone and Xander sighed in relief. Spike pulled Xander's leg up, higher than it had ever been before, settling himself between the younger boy's parted thighs.

"Thank you," he whispered, the crystal blue eyes brimming with tears, right before he pressed forward.

Xander bit his lip to keep from crying out. It hurt, bad. Worse than anything he'd imagined before. It burned and ached as he was insistently stretched to his breaking point. Finally, Spike stopped. Xander gasped when he realized that Spike was inside him, completely.

Then Spike rolled his hips, grinding into him even deeper. The jolt of pleasure that shot through him shocked Xander to his core. It was delicious, exciting, addictive and he couldn't wait for more.

Spike pulled back slowly before slamming back home. Xander cried out, in pleasure and pain, hating it and needing even more. Spike gave him everything he

wanted and more of what he needed, riding him rough and hard. It became a blur of need and want and pain and bliss.

When warm fingers wrapped around his half hard cock, Xander came undone. He thrust up into the fist gripping him tightly before rocking back onto the intrusion inside him. He panted and moaned, cried and ached until he froze, his whole body throbbing with pleasure beyond anything he'd ever felt before. He cried out wordlessly, riding the waves crashing over him, until he collapsed onto the comfy couch.

When he came back to himself, he found Spike resting on his chest, silently stroking between his nipples.

"That was..." Xander started, unable to complete the thought with any coherency.

"Yeah," Spike agreed. "That it was."

The sweet afterglow was disrupted by the sound of a car pulling up in front of the house. Spike quickly stood and looked out the window, apparently unconcerned about his nudity. Suddenly, he shouted a happy whoop as he turned to Xander, his face glowing with excitement.

"It's the cops with my Da. They brought him home."

The boys dressed in record time and before the police officer could reach the door, Spike was out the door, running toward his surprised father. He charged into the older man, throwing his arms around the solid neck.

"Da!" Spike yelled, unable to say any more.

"It's alright, William. Let's go inside."

Xander stood in the doorway, watching the scene unfold. The easy comfort between father and son was a mystery and he couldn't seem to look away.

"Thank you, Officer," Ethan spoke eventually, addressing the officer looking on. "I assume we will be seeing each other again soon."

"Yes, Mr. Rayne. I believe we will."

Once the officer left, Ethan and Spike walked up to the house, slipping silently past Xander. Spike was the first to speak.

"What's going on, Da?"

"Let's not talk about it," Ethan offered quietly, still holding his son close. "Your little friend is here, William. Let's not neglect him."

Xander seemed to shrink beneath the stare of the two men. Slowly, Ethan walked to the young boy before enfolding him in his arms. Ethan seemed to gasp and sniffle lightly before whispering, "Thank you for taking care of my boy."

The sable haired boy stood silent, frozen by the show of affection. Finally, Ethan let him go, smiling. "What do you say you stay the night, Alexander? We could get take-away and watch a movie. Do you think your parents would mind?"

Xander knew his parents probably wouldn't even notice if he didn't make it home, so he nodded quickly, shooting a look at Spike to make sure the other boy didn't mind.

"Why don't you go over and check, young man," Ethan prompted. "Run along now. Grab a change of clothing as well. If they have any problems, you just have them come and have a little chat with me, alright?"

Xander nodded again before rushing toward his home.

Ethan closed the door and turned to smile at his son. "So, it seems I'll need to have the couch cleaned now, William?"

Spike chuckled, making a show of adjusting himself. "That'd probably be best."

"I didn't really frighten you, did I?"

"Not really, but what were you doing?"

"I had to report the robbery and vandalism so the insurance company would pay out. It's fundamental in business, William."

Spike nodded silently.

"So," Ethan continued. "Are we going to continue to see young Alexander or are you moving on from here?"

Spike thought for a moment. "I believe I'll be keeping the boy around for a while."

Ethan smiled wide. "Wonderful. Well, it should be an interesting night. So, pizza or curry?"

"Well, Xander's horoscope for the day warns of too many changes. So I'd say pizza. I'd hate to shake him up too much."

The older Englishman chuckled as he wandered into the kitchen toward the telephone. "Following the boy's sign now, William? I think someone cares."

"Damn right I do," Spike protested. "He's a special one this one is. Keeping him around for a while."

"Very well," Ethan smiled as he dialed. "But I expect details, son."

"Of course," Spike replied. "As always."

Prompt: #49 - Aladdin

Xander enjoyed his weekend thoroughly. Spike and Ethan had offered to let him stay all day Sunday until Jessica Harris stood on her front stoop around seven in the evening, yelling for her son at the top her lungs. Xander stumbled from the immaculate house, pulling his t-shirt over his head.

He was stopped outside his house by his angry looking mother. She yelled at the boy for not coming home on time while Xander explained, repeatedly, that she had given the boy permission to stay. She, however, refused to believe that she had done such a thing.

Xander sighed as he followed her in the front door, shrugging at the older boy watching him from the neighboring house. He shook his head as he smelled the fumes trailing in his mother's wake. No wonder she didn't remember giving him permission. He was surprised she remembered his name.

He had endured nearly half an hour of berating by his mother, followed by being shouted at by his father for another twenty. Then he set out to complete the chores

he had not completed during the weekend away.

Exhaustion hung to him the next morning as he tried to pay attention in class. Sleep deprivation was never fun and with the extra chores the night before, Xander's attention slipped time and again.

His meeting with Spike was strained and stilted. He didn't know how to act around the older boy now that he'd been inside Xander. It was odd and confusing...for about two seconds. Spike had leaned forward and grabbed Xander around the neck, chuckling all the while, holding the younger boy tight in a headlock before administering a decidedly nasty noogie.

Xander laughed heartily, happy that things weren't suddenly weird between him and his tutor, when Giles walked into the library.

"I say," the older man protested. "If you two are going to be this rambunctious, I would suggest you find somewhere else to do it."

"Yes, sir!" Spike replied sarcastically, saluting Mr. Giles comically. Xander giggled uncontrollably before following the blond boy out of the school. They made quick work

to make it to Spike's house. It was blissfully quiet and the older boy led them upstairs to his own, quiet room.

"What are we working on today?" Xander asked, curiosity getting the better of him.

Spike smirked before pulling out the offending text book. "History today, Xand."

Xander groaned. He hated working on history. It always seemed so unimportant to study what **had** happened. Shouldn't they be worried about what **was** going to happen?

"Because," Spike explained while Xander wondered if he had really spoken out loud. "If we forget about our past, then we have no chance to influence our future."

The sable-haired head nodded as if he truly understood; although Xander was quite sure what Spike had said was over his head. The blond haired boy smirked as he pulled the heavy text toward him.

"I'll make you a deal," Spike whispered, setting every one of Xander's hair's on edge.

"What?" Xander asked quietly.

"For every question you get right, you get to remove a piece of clothing."

Xander laughed loudly at the idea. It wasn't as if seeing each other nude was an issue, not any more.

"But for every question you get wrong," Spike continued, "You have to replace a piece of clothing and I get to remove one. The first person nude gets to have the other person give him head."

Xander gaped at the older boy. He couldn't believe Spike had offered such a thing. Xander had, of course, licked and sucked the other boy to completion, but he had yet to feel the other boy's mouth on him. Xander ached to feel to feel that wicked, snarky mouth wrapped around him and the younger boy nodded wildly, readily agreeing.

The questions came rapid fire with Spike shooting them at Xander and the younger boy repeating the answers he knew by rote and cursing the answers he didn't know. Xander grew increasingly more frustrated by the answers he didn't know.

"Dammit!" he cursed loudly, as Spike laughed at the boy's anger.

"What?" Spike asked the fuming boy. "You expect the answers to just pop up in your brain like rubbing Aladdin's Lamp, do you?"

"Well," Xander flushed frantically. "Yeah. I mean, I've been studying and studying. Why doesn't the information just jump out when I want it to?"

"It doesn't work that way, Xander. You have to learn the information and want to know what you learn but it doesn't just pop up in your head as soon as you need it to. You have to have motivation."

"And nakedness equals motivation?" Xander asked.

Spike smirked widely. "You tell me."

Xander worked hard through the afternoon, slowly losing and gaining clothing until both he and Spike were dressed in nothing more than their underwear. Xander knew the next question would determine who would be tended to and who would be on his knees.

Spike smirked as he turned the page. "Tell me the significance of the Zoot Suit Riots."

Xander scowled at the blond boy. "Very funny, Spike."

"Very funny, how exactly?"

"Zoot suit riots. Isn't that a sound by the Squirrel Nut Zippers or something?"

Spike scowled, his blue eyes burrowing into the younger boy's brown. "Be that as it may, tell me about the Zoot Suit Riots."

Xander racked his brains before conceding defeat. "Fine. What was it?"

"Don't tell me you don't know?" Spike asked incredulously. When Xander shrugged, Spike continued. "It's a vital bit of California history and you don't know?"

Xander's eyes were downcast at the idea that he didn't even know his own state's history. Spike continued for him. "The Zoot Suit Riots happened in 1942. It was a rather nasty bit of racial hatred that the law ignored. Many Mexican Americans wore zoot suits and were

considered to be gangsters by many in the Los Angeles area. These gangsters, or Zoot Suiters, were considered dangerous and 'blood thirsty' by the general populace. Due to this, several sailors on shore leave decided to teach these boys a lesson. Any person wearing a zoot suit was fair game. Local law enforcement did little to nothing to stop the assaults, saying that the servicemen were doing their part to stem the tide of the Mexican Crime Wave."

"But that's wrong!" Xander protested. "I can't believe they would let something like that happen."

"They would and they did," Spike whispered quietly. "People are more than willing to believe that anyone different from them is evil. Surely that doesn't surprise you."

Xander stared back at Spike, his eyes wide and sincere. It didn't surprise him at all.

The smirk that spread over Spike's face didn't surprise him either.

"You lost, little one," Spike purred. "That means I win."

Xander shook his head, smiling widely at the older boy. He might have lost, but he won as well. Pulling down the silky boxers, Xander set himself to his task. Taking the silky head of the other boy's cock in his mouth, Xander sighed. He tasted and felt so right, so real, so perfect that Xander didn't mind losing. Not this time.

He worked the silky steel length just as Spike had taught him, the boy licked and sucked with all his might. When the older boy began to thrust down his throat lightly, Xander was surprised to feeling the long, strong fingers wrapped around his own length. Spike stroked him in time with his own ministrations, rewarding the boy for his actions. Soon, they were both coming, Spike down Xander's throat and Xander over Spike's talented fingers.

Once he had cleaned the softening length, Xander worked on Spike's covered fingers. The blond smirked and sighed heavily.

After several long minutes, Xander sighed as well. "I suppose I should get home," the younger boy whispered, quietly pulling on his clothes.

Spike watched silently, reaching into his jeans' pocket to pull out a needed cigarette and lighter. Lighting up, he

leaned against the headboard of his bed to watch the boy dress. Once Xander was done, he loaded his books into his bag before turning back to the smirking, smoking boy.

"So, I'll see you tomorrow?" he asked, insecure and self-conscious.

"You bet," Spike smiled widely. "I'll see if we can't come up with something else to motivate you."

Xander smiled lightly, flushing and licking his lips, before saying goodbye and slipping out the door.

Spike relaxed, thinking about all the things that might motivate little Xander. The sheer weight of the thought caused his spent flesh to twitch between his legs. Should make for an interesting week.

12 Lessons Learned

Prompt: #50 - The Thin Line Between...

Xander growled as he paced the length of the basement. He was growing increasingly more frustrated as the study session went on.

"I'm just not getting it, Spike," he growled. "I'm too stupid to figure it out, alright. We should just forget about it and move on to something else. I don't know why I even thought I could do this in the first place. Actually, I do. It was Willow, talking about how sexy accents were and the girls would all go crazy over a boy that could speak French. Fat load of good it does me."

Spike snorted from his seat on the battered, lumpy couch. "Doesn't matter now, does it? You have to get it, Xander. You have to pass this test or you'll fail French. That's not an option, remember? You can do this, I know it."

Xander snorted his disbelief, staring at the blond boy from across the dank room. "I just can't get the hang of conjugating, alright? Let's just say I'm a hopeless cause and move on."

Spike stood up and breeched the distance in one fluid movement. He pressed in close to the shocked boy, their noses barely brushing as crystal blue eyes blazed with barely restrained fury and passion.

"I never want to hear you say those words again," Spike growled. "Ever. Do you understand me?"

Xander nodded softly, his nose bumping Spike's as he did. They stood like that for several minutes, frozen and staring at each other.

Finally, Spike pulled away, stalking back toward the couch where he had left his duster. Pulling the jacket up, the older boy turned toward the frozen teen before commanding, "Strip."

"What?" Xander nearly shrieked in fear.

Spike smirked evilly as he began to dig through his pockets. "It seems you need some extra incentive to learn your conjugation. I'll see to it you learn the lot by the end of the afternoon."

The sable haired boy laughed at that. That was, without a doubt, the craziest thing he'd heard all week.

But Spike wasn't laughing. He just stood and stared, his face unreadable.

Xander quickly stripped, dropping his clothes onto the floor as he stole glances toward the door that led to the kitchen upstairs. He just hoped his mom wouldn't choose that moment to come downstairs to see if they wanted marshmallow treats or Kool-aid or something.

Once he was completely naked, Xander stood, facing his tutor, waiting silently for his next command.

Spike nodded toward the couch, waiting patiently until Xander went to sit down.

"No," Spike whispered, stopping the boy before he could fully sit. "On your knees."

Xander knelt on the rough, lumpy cushions, resting his hands on the back of the couch, digging his fingers into the ratty fabric. He turned to look at the older boy, unsure what was coming next.

Spike smiled at him, as if he was trying to reassure him, but there was lust and power reflecting on his face that

made him terrifying. Reaching forward, petting Xander's lower back before trailing his fingers over the soft curve of the boy's ass. Xander gasped and shivered as gentle fingertips ran lightly over his goose-pimpled flesh.

Seemingly satisfied, Spike cleared his throat, capturing the boy's attention as he held a shiny toy between his thumb and forefinger.

"W-w-what's that?" Xander stuttered.

"They're called anal beads," Spike explained matter of factly. "Ready?"

"Ready for what?" Xander asked frantically. "What are you going to...those don't go..?" The boy's head nodded down toward his sumptuous backside.

Spike barked out a harsh laugh before asking, "Why do you think they call them anal beads? Now, here we go."

Xander shook himself lightly, closing his eyes tightly before sighing heavily, waiting for what was next. He heard the soft 'snick' of a lid being opened before Spike moved to stand behind him.

"What is the verb 'to take'?"

"Emporter," Xander dutifully replied. He gasped loudly as he felt a cold slickness slipping between his cheeks and then a soft, persistent pressure until the first and smallest bead entered his body.

"Now. Conjugate it."

Xander took a deep breath, trying his best of make his brain work. "J'emporte."

"Very good," Spike praised, slipping another bead inside. "Next."

"Tu emportes." Another bead slipped in. "Il emporte." Another. Xander was trembling and fighting to keep from leaning forward to rub his aching erection against the scratchy cushions. His brain fought to remember what came next. "Nous emportez?"

The pleasure he'd become used to from the slick slide of the beads was replaced by a swift, sharp pain as Spike's hand came crashing down on the over sensitized flesh so close to where the beads entered his body. Spike leaned in close, the brush of his clothes whispering against

Xander's naked skin making the boy shudder and keen.

"Want to try again?"

Xander racked his brain, forcing himself to come up with an answer. "Nous emportons."

"Very good," Spike purred, forcing the last bead inside the panting boy.

Xander continued to conjugate the various verbs as Spike instructed him, moaning as the string of beads was pulled in and out of him, flooding his body with waves of pleasure when he was correct and gasping in pain as he was spanked if he was wrong. They went through all the verbs required for the test twice, with Xander hardly missing any near the end.

They were nearly finished, with all the beads deep within the younger boy's body, when Spike leaned in, his front pressed tightly against Xander naked back.

"Knew you could do it, pet," he practically purred as he rocked his hips forward against Xander's sensitive skin.

"Liked that, did you?"

Xander nodded frantically, his sable hair flying wildly around him.

"Noticed you were even enjoying the spanking at the end there, weren't you, love?"

A flush spread up Xander's neck and face, coloring and warming him through. Slowly, he nodded softly, shy and embarrassed. "Why?" he asked, nearly too quietly to hear. "Why would I like that?"

Soft lips pressed between his shoulder blades, making Xander shiver all the more. "You see, pet, there's a very thin line between pain and pleasure. Sometimes, you can blur that line until even the pain can make you come."

Xander gasped loudly as Spike pulled at the beads inside him, pulling on them roughly, wrenching them from his body one by one. Arching his back, Xander cried out, coming hard against the rough fabric of the couch. He tried to catch his breath as Spike gently stroked him, running his warm hands over the trembling boy.

Xander slumped against the couch, Spike stood over him smiling as they heard a voice calling to them from upstairs.

"Xander?" Mrs. Harris called through the closed door.
"Are you alright down there? I thought I heard someone yelling."

"I'm fine, Mom," Xander called back. "I just tripped."

"Alright," she called back. Xander waited to continue breathing until he heard her footsteps trailing away from the door and across the kitchen floor.

"Well, good luck on the test tomorrow, pet," Spike called as he walked into the small bathroom to clean his toy before slipping them away once again. "I'll see you tomorrow after class?"

Xander nodded, suddenly embarrassed by his nudity. He scrambled for his clothes and turned to the other boy as he pulled his jeans up, buttoning them quickly.

"Yeah, Spike. In the library, as soon as I'm done with classes."

The blond boy stalked toward him, sleek and fluid, stopping before the gaping boy. He leaned in, kissing the

boy, softly at first, then more forcefully before finally pulling away.

~*~*~*~*~

Spike practically bounced across the lawn toward his home. He pulled the door wide, pleased at the delicious smell wafting toward him. He quickly went in search of his Da, needing to see the man as soon as possible.

Rushing into the kitchen, he smiled as his father stirred the heavenly smelling food on the stove.

"Hey, Da," Spike greeted as he rushed forward to be surrounded by the older man's arms. Ethan held him tightly before pressing a kiss into his son's blond locks.

"How did the French lesson go?" Ethan asked.

"Quite well," Spike answered, a wicked smirk spreading out over his face. "The boy'll be fluent in no time."

The elder Englishman laughed loudly, clapping his son hard on the shoulder. "He will be if he's half the student you were."

"Vous étiez un enseignant brilliant, Da," Spike purred.
::*You were a brilliant teacher Da::*

"Et vous un tel étudiant dispose.." ::*And you such a willing student::*

13 Talk to Me

Prompt: #51 - Your Zodiac Sign - Aries

Spike sat obediently at the dining table, waiting for the meal his father was dutifully preparing for him. The smell was wonderful and Spike's mouth watered as he watched the food plated so as to be as visually pleasing as the taste would be to his palate. Ethan presented the meal with a smile and a bottle wine, which he poured for both himself and his son.

Smirking, Spike took a sip of the pale wine before looking down at his plate of poached salmon with stir fried vegetables and risotto. "Pinot Grigio?" Spike asked after rolling the light alcohol on his tongue.

"Very good." Ethan praised his son as he sipped his own wine, studying the boy over the rim of the glass.

Spike took a bite of his meal before asking, "Why all this, Da? You know I'd much rather do with fish and chips or the like?"

"Because," Ethan explained, slightly exasperated. "Your body is a temple and I won't stand by while you ruin your own health while you ply your boy with the sickly sweets and greasy meals he seems to thrive on. A decent meal now and then is not going to kill you."

"All right, all right," Spike protested, chuckling lightly as he raised both hands in surrender. "I was just asking, is all. Didn't say I didn't like it, did I?"

Ethan laughed as well, taking a deep sip of the cool wine. "No, that you did not. Besides, I thought it would be nice to have a proper meal, the two of us together. We could have a nice little chat."

Nodding in agreement, Spike smirked to himself. He knew that this was his father's way of subtly indicating that he wanted details about the relationship between him and Xander. Of course, neither would ever admit that.

"Sounds nice, Da," Spike replied genially between bites of fish and rice. "What would you like to talk about? We had a very interesting discussion in Mythology class the other day about how astronomy influenced how myths were interpreted years later. I brought up the fact that my own sign, Aries, is often associated with the Greek myth of Phrixus and Helle's escape from their evil stepmother, Ino, even though there is no correlation between the sign and the myth. Furthermore..."

"Enough, enough," Ethan stopped his son's lecture as he laughed heartily. "I get it. You are too much like your sign, I'm afraid, my boy. Determination and stubbornness define you, boy. You caught me out. Tell me about your boy."

Spike snickered lightly, bowing his head as he delicately nibbled on another bite of tasty fish to cover his laughter. "Are you sure? I thought you found mythology interesting." The boy ducked as his father took a half-hearted swing at his head. "Alright. Xander it is then."

They took their time, Spike sharing stories of his conquest and Ethan listening quietly with rapt attention. He told of long, sweet kisses tasting of chocolate and innocence, of skin slick with sweat from desire and fear,

of whispered pleas of need and want. He explained his lessons, full of exploring fingers and greedy mouths. He recalled, with surprising clarity, their first time together and every time since then.

Finally, they had nearly completed their meal as Spike was finishing his tale. The bottle was sitting between them, empty. Ethan sighed heavily, shaking his head as he drained his glass.

"Ah, Spike," he sighed. "It looks like you've found yourself quite the boy there. Couldn't have picked a better one myself."

Spike smiled at the praise, a slight blush rising up his cheeks.

"There's only one problem."

The smile fell from the boy's face immediately. "What problem?"

"You're falling for him."

Spike sputtered for a moment in indignation. "What?!" he choked on his sip of wine.

"**You**," Ethan emphasized, touching his son lightly on the chest, "Are falling for that boy. I've seen the signs before. Recognized them in myself even. You'd best be careful, William."

Spike started to protest, annoyance flashing in his crystal blue eyes. A strong, warm finger pressed against his lips, silencing him.

"Trust your old man, William," Ethan whispered, "You care for the boy. Either accept it or move on."

Finally accepting that his father was not going to back down, Spike nodded slowly, sadly.

"Just remember, William, no matter what happens, that Daddy will always love you," Ethan practically purred before he replaced his finger with his lips in a not all together chaste kiss.

14 Get In, Get Out

Prompt: #52 - Lockpick

Xander sat in the library, pouting for the third day in a row. Spike seemed different somehow, distant and separate. He hated feeling like a girl, whining to himself about why Spike wouldn't touch him or kiss him anymore. There was no more fun studying. It was back to regular studying for the pair.

But what Xander missed the most wasn't the blinding pleasure or the intoxicating pain. He missed his friend.

He could feel the other boy staring at him, watching him, studying him. He should be used to it, Spike used to do it all the time when they'd first started working together. But lately, Xander could hardly get the blond boy to look him in the eye. It was enough to drive a young man mad.

Xander quickly put the finishing touches on his History study notes before handing them over to the waiting tutor.

He watched patiently while Spike looked over the notes,

nodding when he was pleased, scowling when he wasn't. Reaching over to take a pencil for some final corrections, Spike's fingers brushed briefly against Xander's and the boy gasped at the first physical contact in so long.

Crystal blue eyes met shocked hazel and both boys froze. Silence stretched out between them until Spike finally smirked.

"Need the pencil if we want to finish this and get home, yeah?"

The smile that spread across Xander's face was blinding and it nearly hurt his cheeks. He quickly handed over the pencil before leaning back in his chair, shifting slightly to ease the pressure of the denim on his suddenly hard cock. He watched quietly as Spike crossed out and corrected, writing in the flowing script that always made Xander smile.

Finally, Spike looked up as he put the pencil down.

"Ready to go?"

"S-s-Sure," the sable-haired boy stammered as he shoved his books and binders in his bag. He jumped up to follow

the retreating back of his tutor. They burst through the swinging library doors and made their way through the school. Walking in silence, Xander stole glances at the boy next to him. He couldn't quite get a grasp on Spike's mood swings and he hated trying to guess what was wrong.

Finally, he decided to just go with Willow's suggestion and just ask. It was crazy enough to work.

"Hey, Spike," Xander asked tentatively. "What's up?"

Spike turned to look at him briefly as he continued along the sidewalk. "What's that, pet?"

Xander sighed heavily and tried again. "Ok. I may be way off base here, and that's cool, just tell me and I'll totally back off, 'cause, you know, it's not like we're dating or anything, but things got kinda weird, in a totally cool way. I mean, I was down with the weirdness, in case you couldn't tell. Could you? 'Cause I'd hate to think I sent out mixed signals or anything. I'm pretty sure my signals were of the unmixed variety, because 'Oh, god, yes, yes!' is generally considered positive right? And..."

A strong, cool hand clapped suddenly over Xander's

mouth, stemming the tide of babble that poured out of him. They stood like that, in silence for several long minutes.

Finally, Spike asked, "Done now?"

Xander nodded slowly.

"Ready to start over?"

Another nod.

"Slowly and in English this time?"

Another more timid nod.

"Good."

Spike slowly slipped his hand away from the boy's mouth and Xander immediately licked his dry lips with a quick swipe of his pink tongue. He noticed that the azure eyes tracked the movement and he vowed to do it again soon to see if he could get a reaction out of the other boy.

Taking a deep breath, Xander tried again. "Are you mad at me?"

Spike actually looked surprised at the question. "Why would I be mad at you, pet?"

"I don't know," Xander replied, ducking his head to hide his blushing cheeks. A strong finger beneath his chin forced him to look at the other boy. "It's just that," he sighed before forcing himself to continue, "You don't – you know - touch me and stuff anymore. I thought we were cool and I really was ok with our...study sessions. Did I do something wrong?"

Spike stared at the boy for a very long time; at least that's how it felt to Xander. The older boy was thinking hard and Xander began to worry that he'd said too much, pushed too far. Suddenly, Spike barked out a laugh before punching Xander hard on the shoulder.

"You're such a girl," he chided as he turned and began to walk off again.

Xander hurried to catch up. "So, you're not mad at me?"

"No, ducks," Spike answered as he picked up the pace toward home. "Not mad at you. Just needed to sort a few things out is all. Now, come on. We need to get you

home."

Xander nearly bounced the rest of the way home, up until he remembered that he had left his keys in his gym locker.

"Spike, I think I left my keys in my locker at school."

"No matter, Xan," Spike answered. "I can get you in." Reaching in his pocket, Spike pulled out a key that looked a lot like Xander's house key.

He gaped at the older boy. "You copied my house key?" he cried.

Spike laughed as he cuffed Xander's head. "No, pillock. It's a bump key."

"What's a bump key?"

"I'll show you," Spike replied, wagging his eyebrows. Xander chuckled and hurried to keep up. As soon as they reached Xander's house, they slipped around the side to enter through the basement just like they'd always done.

Spike held out the key so Xander could see it better.

"This key is just like the one you'd use to get in, but it's special," Spike explained. "See this piece cut out here?" Spike pointed to a section that seemed to be worn smooth. Once Xander nodded, he continued. "Locks have tumblers inside, yeah? Keys are meant to turn certain tumblers in a certain order to open the lock. This key is missing a certain tooth for a reason."

He smiled that wicked smile that always made Xander go weak at the knees before pressing the key into the lock.

"So, you put the key in just about this far and then give it a little bump." Spike demonstrated, pushing the key in before hitting it lightly. "Hear that click, pet?"

Xander nodded wildly, sure he heard the tiniest of clicks from the lock.

"Push it the rest of the way in, turn and..." Spike turned the key and the door of the basement swung open.

"Wow," Xander gasped in awe. "That is so cool."

"Sure is," Spike nearly purred. "And all the houses on this block have the same locking systems."

"So you could get into any house on this block?"

"Any I want to."

Xander just about to respond to that, wondering what they might do if he invited Spike in, when a loud crash, followed by some very colorful shouting erupted from inside Xander's house.

"Maybe, we should head over to my house for a bit, Xan. What do you say?"

Xander didn't have to say anything. He simply smiled, turned, and walked to the house next door.

15 Traveling Blind

Prompt: #53 - Ayers Rock

Spike sat back, watching as Xander hung on every word his father spoke. The blond boy was happy to have some time to enjoy being with Xander without having to **be** with Xander. His father's revelation about Spike's feelings for the younger boy made him search Xander for signs of how he felt.

It was obvious that Xander wanted to be with Spike physically, that was never in doubt. And Spike couldn't blame him. Xander was a teenage boy with needs. Needs that Spike knew how to fulfill. Needs that Spike cultivated and exploited. Needs that Spike had too. It was a symbiotic relationship, one he wasn't ready to sever just yet, despite his concern about getting too close to the boy.

Coming back to the conversation, Spike laughed as he watched Xander inch closer to the edge of the couch, straining forward to look at the picture Ethan was indicating.

"So how long did you live in Australia?" Xander asked, his voice eager and happy.

"Just over sixteen months," Ethan answered smiling at the sable-haired boy. "You should have seen my sweet

William over there. He picked up the accent in no time. Anyone would have thought he was a true native, many over there did, actually."

"Really?" Xander asked, his eyes wide and curious. "Can you do some for me now?"

Spike snorted before bursting into a long stereotypical speech that an American would expect from someone Down Under. He threw in a lot of "Mate"s and "Shrimp on the Barbie", much to Xander's delight.

"Cool!" Xander exclaimed, nearly bouncing in his delight. "So, what is that place?" he asked, pointing to the picture still in Ethan's hands.

"This," the elder Englishman pointed to the large rock formation in the picture, "is Ayer's Rock. It's one of the most famous sights in all of Australia. That's where we were adopted."

"Adopted?"

Ethan chuckled lightly. "We were taken in by a family of aborigines, Pitjantjatjara to be exact. It was very hard to leave, but we missed England and decided to leave to

come to our real home."

Spike smirked at his father for the story he wove for the unsuspecting boy. The story, while true as it was told, was not the entire truth. The older man had left out the reason they were in the far off continent in the first place and their sudden return. Running from the law may sound romantic, but Spike was happy when the people hunting them decided they lacked enough evidence to convict the pair. Spike was more than happy to escape their desert prison and enjoy their homecoming to more familiar surroundings.

"You were part of an aborigine tribe?" Xander asked in awe.

"Nation," Spike corrected.

"What?"

"Much like the natives of this country, they prefer to be called a Nation," Spike explained. He may have hated living there, but he wasn't going to let someone go uneducated about them either.

"Oh. You guys are so cool!" Xander exclaimed, his smile

nearly blinding both Englishmen.

Ethan chuckled lightly as he replaced the picture on the mantel. "Why don't you boys go upstairs for a while? I've got some work to do and I'm sure you don't want to sit around, listening to an old man rambling away."

Xander began to protest, but Ethan held up a hand, sharing a meaningful look with Spike. The blond boy nodded as he stood before heading up the stairs. Xander followed immediately, just like Spike knew he would. He smirked, though no one could see.

Once in his room, Spike threw himself onto his bed, looking up at the younger boy watching him through the fringe of his sable-colored hair. The older boy tucked his hands behind his head and smiled crookedly at Xander.

"Come here," he commanded quietly and Xander immediately obeyed, crawling over the prone body on the bed. He settled down, covering Spike's warm body with his own, waiting for a signal from the other boy to continue. Spike never gave one.

Slowly, Xander leaned in, brushing his lips against Spike's, kissing him lightly, almost chastely. Spike allowed it,

sighing as the boy traced the seam of his lips with a moist, pink tongue. They kissed languidly, taking their time to explore and taste, search and learn. As the younger boy shifted atop him, Spike sighed, opening himself to Xander's greedy mouth.

It was a new experience having Xander on top, seemingly in control of what they did. Spike decided he didn't hate it.

After several long minutes of hot, slow kisses, Spike decided he was ready for more. He thrust his hips up against the hardness pressing against him, causing Xander to gasp in response.

"Let's move this along, yeah?" Spike asked, his eyes dropping to his needy crotch.

Xander nodded wildly, his hair flying in his earnestness. His fingers, normally clumsy and awkward, flew over the button fly, making short work of Spike's jeans. Soon, Spike's cock was exposed to the cool evening air as Xander stared at the hard flesh.

Finally, Spike couldn't take anymore and complained roughly, "It's not going to get itself off by you staring at

it."

The younger boy snickered lightly before leaning forward and taking just the head between his pouty lips. Spike sighed as the boy went to work, sucking and licking just as Spike had taught him. Either Spike was a brilliant teacher or Xander was an excellent student because that hot mouth had him on the edge in no time.

Lifting his head lightly from the comfort of his coupled fingers, Spike looked down to watch the boy pleasuring him. Xander's face was screwed up in concentration as the boy tried to remember every lesson and every suggestion that Spike ever gave him as he rutted against the rough bedclothes.

Spike watched for a few long moments, entranced by the lips embracing him, until he finally realized he couldn't let the boy suffer anymore, not with the sheer pleasure he was giving.

"Come round this way," Spike whispered, his voice rough and raspy. Helping Xander around, Spike quickly opened his pants, exposing the boy's ass and cock to his gaze. Lazily, he began to stroke the exposed cheeks with his fingertips before reaching down to wrap his fist around

the boy's leaking cock.

They stayed like that, Xander's lips wrapped around his hardness while he thrust into the circle of Spike's fingers. Spike waited until Xander's thrusts became harsher and more erratic before he slowly slipped his spit slicked thumb into the boy's pucker.

Xander bucked and arched, spilling over Spike's hand. The muffled moans against his sensitive flesh sent Spike over the edge and filled Xander's mouth, the boy rushing to swallow every bit.

After catching their breath, Xander straightened Spike's clothing before righting his own. He leaned in, settling himself against the older boy's body and snuggling his head beneath Spike's chin. They cuddled for several long minutes. Spike decided it wasn't half bad.

Moments later, Ethan called upstairs. "Spike! It's getting late!"

"Suppose I'd better head home," Xander whispered as he moved to climb off the bed. Spike stopped him with a gentle hand on his arm.

"This was nice."

Xander blushed beautifully all the way down his neck.

"Yeah, it was."

Spike walked him down the stairs and Xander said goodbye to Ethan. The older Englishman hugged the boy lightly before ruffling his hair. Leading the younger boy out on to the front porch, Spike pulled Xander around to face him.

"Sleep tight," Spike whispered.

"Don't let the bedbugs bite," Xander replied, smiling lightly.

Spike leaned and feasted on the boy's lips for several long languorous moments. Moments neither wanted to end.

As they stood on the exposed porch, they never knew someone was watching them from next door. Someone who didn't appreciate his son kissing some fag from next door. Someone who would be waiting to teach his son a lesson.

16 And Let Slip the Dogs of War

Prompt: #54 - Cry Havok

Spike sat in the library, impatiently drumming his fingers on the heavy, wooden surface of the large table in the center of the room. Xander was late. It wasn't like that was completely uncommon, Xander had a habit of staying a little late to help Buffy and Willow carry their insane amount of books to Buffy's mom's car or talk to Jesse about his latest crush. Spike truly didn't mind that his boy liked to stay in touch with his friends. He thought it was cute, really.

But this was ridiculous.

Xander had never been more than fifteen minutes before, but now he was pushing thirty.

Spike decided he didn't like it.

He was going to have to punish the boy. Spike sat back in the hard chair, his fingers still drumming relentlessly on the table as he contemplated what he would do to the younger boy when they returned to his home after the study session. A spanking was most likely in order. For this type of infraction, spanking would be just the beginning. Twenty swats should be sufficient. Xander would probably enjoy the punishment, rubbing his inevitable hardness against Spike's lap.

After the spanking, Xander would practically be begging for more, Spike was sure of that. But he wouldn't comply. No, Spike would tease him mercilessly, holding him on the edge of release for hours, until the boy wept with need.

Spike smiled at the thought of it, aching to hear the pleas and whimpers that would escape from his boy's lips. His hand slipped from the table to trace the outline of his erection when he was startled from his thoughts as Giles stepped out of his office.

"Oh, William," the librarian exclaimed, sounding rather startled. "I didn't realize that you were here. What *are* you doing here?"

Spike looked at the older man in shock. Finally, he countered, "I'm waiting for Xander, just like always."

"You must not have heard," Giles said, stepping closer to the blond boy. "Xander's mother called in for him. It seems he's very ill and he'll be out of school at least until Monday."

Spike stared up at the older man, not truly believing what he was hearing. "What do you mean his mother called him in?" When Giles didn't answer, Spike pressed further. "Isn't that what happened before? His mother calls in, he misses days on end and no one cares?"

Giles held his hands in front of him as Spike advanced. The blond boy stalked forward, as if his body were moving of its own volition. His hands clenched in fists at his sides as he worked hard to force the words out.

"You don't think it's odd that he didn't call me to tell me he wouldn't be here, after everything we've been through? That he didn't think of me?!"

Spike wasn't sure why he was yelling, but he couldn't seem to calm himself down.

"Are you really that big of an idiot, Ripper? They're doing it again."

Spike froze, realizing he'd spoken the truth.

He whispered to himself, "They're doing it again."

Giles began throwing questions at him but he didn't hear them. He had to get to Xander. He had to get there now.

The way to Xander's house was just a blur and Spike suddenly found himself pounding on the front door so hard his knuckles ached. Finally, the door swung open, revealing Xander's mother looking scraggly and worn.

"What do you want?" the woman whispered harshly.

"Xander," Spike practically growled.

"What about him?"

Spike took a deep breath to keep from screaming. Opening his clenched eyes, he tried again. "I want to see Xander."

Red-rimmed eyes flew wide as Mrs. Harris stuttered lightly. "You can't," she snapped. "He's sick. I called the school and told them. He'll be out for several days. He's very contagious."

"Is that so?" Spike asked, a sneer crossing his face. "I still want to talk to him."

"You can't," the frustrated woman sighed as she inched the door closed. "Why do you even care?"

Spike stuck his hand out, preventing the door from closing all the way. "He would have called me and told me he wouldn't be at school. He didn't, so that concerns me."

The bleary eyes narrowed at him and Spike bristled.

"You're that tutor he's been working with, right?" When Spike nodded, she continued. "He talks about you a lot."

"Too right he does. Now let me in."

"What the fuck's going on out there?" a harsh male voice shouted loudly. Spike watched as Mrs. Harris spun around, obviously frightened by the yelling.

"Someone's here asking about Xander."

"Did you tell them he was sick?"

"Yeah."

"Then close the fucking door, bitch!"

"I have to go," the shaky woman whispered as she pushed the door harshly. "Xander'll be at school on Monday. You can see him then."

Spike was determined to see him sooner rather than later.

~*~*~*~*~

It was nearly two am when the lights finally went out at the Harris home. Spike was practically vibrating with anger and nervous energy. He had to get to Xander, just to make sure the boy was okay. Xander wasn't sick, Spike was sure of that. He needed to see him, to touch him, to reassure himself his boy was still in one piece.

Spike waited a full twenty minutes before sneaking up to the front porch and pulling out his bump key. Slipping it into the lock, he found just the right spot and hit the key hard, smiling as he heard the tumblers fall into place. He turned the key and slipped into the quiet house.

It wasn't hard to find Xander's room. He found it up the stairs and first door to the right, just like at his house. The knob turned easily and door swung open as silently as the night. Spike stepped into the room, his heavy boots making barely a sound in the small space.

The figure in the bed made a tiny noise and Spike whispered, "Xander?" hoping the boy was waking. When he did not respond, Spike stepped closer to the bed. After repeating the boy's name quietly a few more times, he reached out his hand, intending to shake the boy lightly. Before he even touched him, Xander's hand shot out from under the covers, his strong fingers gripping Spike's wrist so harshly it hurt.

"No," Xander pleaded, soft and desperate. "No more."

"Xander," Spike said, still quiet but commanding. "It's alright, pet. It's me. Spike."

"Spike?" Xander asked, his words soft and slurred. "Not Spike," he complained, suddenly limp in the bed, his fingers lax around Spike's wrist. "Never Spike. I'm dreaming again. Go 'way."

Spike snorted as he sat on the edge of the mattress. "Not a dream, ducks. Your mum said you were sick. Thought I'd best come and check on you. Make sure you weren't contagious and get me sick too. I'd hate to honk up my Da's best curry."

Xander chuckled harshly, moaning lightly directly after. "Not contagious, trust me."

Spike didn't like the sounds the boy was making. Xander sounded off, almost drunk, so Spike tried to turn the boy over, but Xander resisted.

"What's the matter with you, pet?"

"Vicodin," Xander slurred happily. "Mom gave them to me 'cause I was cryin' 'bout the pain."

Alarm bells immediately went off in Spike's head. "How many?" he asked.

"Oh, three or four," Xander drawled, giggling at his own joke.

Spike was seriously worried now. He had no idea how many pills the boy had taken or why they were needed to dull his pain. Steeling himself, he demanded, "Roll over, pet. Now! I wanna take a look at you."

Slowly, Xander complied. Even in the low light, Spike could see the massive swelling on the left side of the boy's face. Xander could barely open his eye as it was nearly swollen shut and he was in obvious pain, despite all the painkillers. Spike gasped at the horrendous sight.

Softly, pale finger caressed the mottled, swollen flesh, wondering how in the hell something like this could happen. Xander answered without him having to ask.

"Last night," Xander whispered, quiet and fearful, "My dad saw us kissing on your front porch. When I got home, he was – well, he wasn't very happy. Told me he wasn't going to have a faggot for a son. He hit me in the face. That's all I remember until Mom laid me in bed."

Spike suddenly shot up, quickly flipping on the bedside light. He pulled the covers of the bed harshly off the

prone body before pulling Xander's t-shirt up to his neck, exposed the boy's stomach and chest. Methodically, Spike checked for any other marks, any sign that Xander had been hurt any further. Finding none, Spike asked, "Do you hurt anywhere else?"

"Nope," Xander slurred. "But my head is really killing me and I can't see out of my left eye. It really hurts," he whimpered, tears distorting his voice.

It seemed that Xander's dad had cold cocked him and possibly become frightened when the boy didn't wake. It may have been the only thing that saved Xander from a more savage beating.

"Why didn't they take you to the doctor?" Spike asked.

"Too many questions," the boy sighed as he sank back into his bed. "Last time I went they made me talk to a Social Worker. Can't go back to the hospital."

Spike was becoming increasingly more worried. Something was seriously wrong with Xander. This wasn't a normal black eye or a normal reaction to pain medication. He made a decision, quickly rising to his feet.

"Come on and get up," he demanded.

"Why?" Xander asked, his head cocking to the side to see Spike better out of his uninjured eye.

"We're going to my house. Da will know what to do."

Xander protested the entire way, leaning all his body weight on Spike as if he had no strength left in his body at all. They struggled to make it the short distance to Spike's house and the trip felt like an eternity to the older boy. Laying Xander delicately down on the couch in the living room, Spike sprinted upstairs before bursting into his father's room, startling both him and his bedmate awake.

Several minutes later, Spike, Giles and Ethan all stared down at the sleeping boy. Xander had apparently passed out as soon as Spike had left his side.

"What do you think it is, Ripper?" Ethan asked as he gently probed the pulsing wound.

"I don't know?" Giles answered, watching intently over his lover's shoulder. "Perhaps an orbital or mid-facial fracture that's caused some hemorrhaging, but the

swelling should have stopped by now if this happened last night."

Spike sighed heavily. "Again, and in Queen's English this time, Giles."

The librarian removed his glasses and pinched the bridge of his nose in exasperation. "Either his cheekbone or the bones directly forming his eye socket have been broken, making him bleed beneath the surface of the skin."

"He needs a doctor," Ethan stated.

"He won't go," Spike explained. "He's been too many times and the docs are getting suspicious."

"Too many times?" Giles asked. "You mean this has happened before?"

"Of course this has happened before!" Spike exploded in the shocked librarian's face. "Haven't you seen the signs or were you just too blind to notice or even fucking care. He missed days of school on end and came back with bruises all over his body. I saw fucking footprints on him. Footprints! And what?! You thought he was home slacking off, maybe watching cartoons and SciFi

programs. That's rich."

Spike slowly simmered down, stalking across the lush carpet. The two older men simply watched him in silence until the blond boy had calmed down and seemed willing to speak again.

"Who did this?" Ethan asked, even though Spike was sure he already knew the answer.

"His father, who do think did this?" Spike snapped quietly, not wanting to wake Xander despite the fact that the boy refused to wake during his last tirade.

Ethan and Giles stared down at the battered boy. Spike stopped his pacing to watch them, knowing they were doing the odd silent communication thing the old friends indulged in frequently.

"Call Willie," Giles finally whispered. "He'll know where to take Xander so there won't be too many questions. He needs attention and he needs it now."

"Then what?" Spike asked.

"Cry havoc," Ethan growled.

"And let slip the dogs of war," Giles continued, his voice matching his lover's intensity. "That this foul deed shall smell above the earth with carrion men, groaning for burial."

Spike smirked. He knew that his father and Ripper would see that justice would be done for his broken boy

17 In the Naked Light I Saw

Prompt: #55 - Hello Darkness

The knock on the front door was persistent but polite, just three taps loud enough to be heard in the house, but not so loud as to be annoying. Not long after, the door swung open, just barely enough to let the fading light in through the crack.

"Yeah?" the woman asked, staring at the two men standing on her doorstep.

"Mrs. Harris," Ethan nearly purred in greeting. "How lovely to see you again."

The woman behind the door smiled as she swung the

door wider. "Jessica, please. It's Ethan, right? Won't you both please come in?"

Ethan turned to look at his companion as he moved to step across the threshold. A sly wink was all the communication the two men needed. Leading the pair into the house, the smiling woman apologized for the place being a mess but she'd been busy all day taking care of her sick child.

Silently, the two men stared at each other, thoughts seemingly shared that neither wanted the suddenly nervous woman to hear.

"I'm sorry," Jessica Harris stuttered quietly, breaking the silence in the house. "I'm afraid I didn't get your name," she said to the blue eyed man staring at her.

"I am Rupert Giles, the librarian at your son's school. We've met before, if you will recall the meeting we had when we discussed the options for Alexander's continued attendance at Sunnydale High."

The woman simply stared at them, her eyes already puffy and red-rimmed. The two men waited for her to respond when she finally offered, "I thought you might be the

baseball coach."

Ethan looked down at the bat Ripper casually carried into the home as the other man simply offered, "I am not."

Jessica looked confused at the response and seemed ready to question the statement, when a burly, unkempt looking man walked into the room.

"What the fuck is going on in here? Some sort of tea party?"

"Tony," the woman scolded, glaring at her husband. "I'm sorry. This is my husband, Tony. He took the day off from work to help me with Xander. Tony, this is Ethan from next door and Mr. Giles from the library."

"Whatever," the man grumbled as he settled onto the couch. "What are you doing here anyway? We called the boy in sick yesterday. I'm pretty sure we said he wouldn't be back to school until Monday, if he felt up to it. It is still Friday, isn't it? Or is the calendar different in frog country?"

Ethan chuckled lightly in the back of his throat. "No, the calendar remains the same, no matter where you are,

Mr. Harris. And just so you know, we're from England not France. We have one Queen, not a country full of them."

The two Harris's laughed as if they had understood the joke, although both Englishmen knew they had not. Finally, Giles spoke.

"We would like to speak to Xander."

"Not possible," Tony barked out before Jessica could try to answer. "The boy is sick, very contagious. He's been hacking all day. I'd hate to have you boys get sick too."

"Not much chance of that," Ethan growled, his voice dark and menacing. He turned to stare at the suddenly frightened woman. "Go get your son."

When she didn't move quickly enough, Giles tipped his hand, brandishing the bat held loosely at his side. She quickly scurried up the stairs to retrieve her son. Tony caught sight of the weapon and bristled indignantly.

"What'd you bring that into my house for?"

Giles smirked, the evil look echoed by Ethan. "Coaching."

Before the incensed man could respond, a screech was heard from upstairs. Jessica Harris stormed down the stairs in a panic.

"Xander!" she screamed, her voice high and wild.
"Xander's gone!"

The two Englishmen simply stared at her. "You're just now realizing this?" Ethan asked, his voice even and calm. "I thought you said you'd had a rough day taking care of the sick boy?"

"I...but – no, you don't understand...he was – his room," the shocked woman stuttered, looking everywhere but at the two men.

"What the fuck have you two faggots done..?" Tony Harris started. He quickly quieted as Giles pushed him back down onto the couch with the tip of the bat, harsh and firm.

Ethan stepped closer to the trembling woman, backing her up until she fell back into the chair she had previously vacated.

"Xander is gone. Has been, all night. It's now," he

checked his watch, "nearly eight in the evening. You've never checked on him all day. Would you like to know where your son has been?"

"What the fuck are you trying to pull?" Tony Harris yelled from where he was cowering on the couch.

"Ripper," Ethan practically purred as he smiled at his lover, "Would you care to explain to the Harris' about their son's condition?"

Giles simply sneered at the couple before speaking.

"Alexander had a fracture to the peri-orbital and intra-orbital areas around his left eye, resulting in blood and fluid build up behind his eye, causing a build up of pressure on the eye and optic nerve that had to be released by surgical means."

At the blank stares of the others, Ethan snorted and groaned, "Try again, Ripper and use small, simple words so they have a chance of understanding."

Giles smirked and leaned into Tony's scruffy face and spoke loud enough for his wife to hear. "You gave him what's called a Blow-In fracture. You broke his cheekbone and the bones directly surrounding his eye.

Because you refused to seek medical attention for him after you beat the daylights out of him, the wound continued to bleed beneath the skin and into the area behind his eye. He had to have surgery to relieve the pressure but we may have been too late. Xander might lose the use of his eye."

Sobs sounded from the trembling woman but Ethan scowled at her. "Don't waste your tears, you vapid bitch. You never even so much as checked up on him today, even after you knew your husband had knocked him around so hard he'd lost consciousness."

"No," the distraught woman cried, "I didn't...I didn't know."

"Of course, you did," Ethan whispered to her, speaking to her softly as stroked the tangled hair away from her tear-streaked face. "You've known all along. We've come to make things right. To make things right for Xander."

The woman looked up, fear overcoming the tears in her eyes.

"Oh, don't worry," Ethan reassured her, "I don't hit women."

Her smile answered his own until he continued, "But I can't promise anything for Ripper. He's a little put out about this whole thing. And it's been a while since he's had a chance to play."

Ethan stood, turning away from the woman frozen with shock, to walk toward his lover. He leaned in for a brief but passionate kiss from the other man while Tony Harris growled his displeasure.

Ripper turned his head, the tip of the bat still pressing the larger man deep into the couch.

"Do we have a problem? Something you'd like to say? Because I'd love to hear anything you have to say about us. You had a little problem with your boy, isn't that right? Is that why you beat him, hurt him, nearly killed him? Can't stand the idea of having a queer for a son?"

Finally, Tony couldn't take it any longer and he shouted out, "That's right! I saw that little blond faggot kissing my boy. Out in the front yard where anyone could see them. I won't have it. Not in my house. I wont!"

Ripper smiled, wicked and wide, as he leaned in close to

the livid man.

"Don't worry. You won't."

Ethan walked over to the ancient, out of date stereo and turned it on, twisting the knobs until he found something he liked. The haunting guitar floated out of the speakers and over them all as Ethan and Giles laughed.

"How appropriate, eh, Ripper?"

Ripper smiled at his lover as he sang the opening refrain.

*"Hello darkness, my old friend,
I've come to talk with you again."*

Ethan nodded and Ripper hefted the bat high in the air, singing all the while.

"Within the sounds of silence."

18 Tears in Heaven

Prompt: #56 - St. Peter

Spike sat on the edge of his bed as he slowly stroked the sleeping boy's cheek. He was close to heartbroken that Xander had remained unconscious so long after his procedure. He wanted Xander to wake up and tell him everything was alright, that he could see out of his left eye and the pain was all but gone.

But Spike knew that wasn't going to happen. The doctor who came out to talk to them didn't sound too convinced that Xander would retain sight in the damaged eye. There was too much fluid pressure on the optic nerve and the doctor was worried about lasting damage. There was so much blood and fluid that the doctor had added a drainage tube that Spike was admonished to take care of to aid in the other boy's recovery.

Trailing his fingertips over the younger boy's sweaty forehead, Spike swept the stray strands from the lax face. If only Xander would wake, maybe then Spike wouldn't have felt so bad.

He should have done something more. He should have forced that bitch to let him in the house to see Xander as

soon as he'd heard. He should have known that something was wrong when Xander was late. He should have called the police. He should have...

Spike sighed. He could sit around forever coming up with should haves. None of them would save Xander's eye. They would just have to wait.

Spike kept his vigil, despite his growing angst and worry for his father and Giles. He knew they had left for the Harris' home over an hour ago and he just hoped they were careful and safe.

He counted the times Xander's chest rose and fell before counting the freckles scattered across the boy's nose and cheeks.

The blond boy was lost in his thoughts when the hazel eyes slowly blinked open. It wasn't until he heard his name softly whispered by the boy next to him that Spike smiled down at the startled boy.

"Hey, pet," he greeted softly. "How are you feeling?"

He watched as Xander slowly licked his lips, trying to rid himself of the parched feeling lingering in his mouth.

"My head feels big," the younger boy complained. "Is it big, because it feels big?"

Spike smiled, happy that his boy's sweet spirit and humor remained in place. "No, pet. It looks to be normal sized to me."

"Good," Xander sighed, his eye closing in relief. "What happened, Spike?"

"You don't remember?"

Xander seemed to think hard for a moment before answering. "Not really. I think I remember bits and pieces, but the last thing I really remember is my dad..."

Spike leaned forward, placing a single small kiss on Xander's forehead. "Don't worry about it, pet. I already know."

They laid quietly together, Xander resting and Spike waiting.

"What's wrong with me?" Xander finally whispered.

Taking a deep breath, Spike began to explain. "I found you at your house night before last. Your mum and dad had called you in sick from school and I kinda figured something was wrong so I broke in. I saw you and knew I had to get you help. I brought you here and Da took you to a clinic he knew about. Turns out my Da had some connections with a guy named Lindsey who works for Wolfram and Hart in LA and they have a clinic and we took you there."

Xander lay quietly, listening passively. "And...?" he prompted when Spike didn't continue.

Spike sighed before continuing. "Your dad broke the bone socket directly around your eye. It kept bleeding beneath the skin and leaked into the eye socket. There was a lot of pressure built up, so they drained what they could. There's a little bit of fluid still in there so they put a tiny drainage tube in there so you can't touch it, okay? They put a big patch over the whole eye until it heals completely."

Xander sighed, sounding quiet and impatient. "There's something you're not telling me," he complained.

Spike debated with himself. He wondered how much he

should tell the younger boy. In the end, he decided on the truth.

"They don't know if they saved the eye or not."

Silence reigned for several long moments until Xander whispered, "Guess it's a good thing I've got a spare then, huh?"

After a moments shock, Spike laughed, hugging the smiling boy close. Xander might lose his eye, but his boy was still intact.

"You scared me, Xan," Spike whispered into the sweaty sable hair. "You were talking odd when I found you and I was so worried. It turns out your mum was stuffing you with pills because you were crying about the pain. She just about killed you off with those. I was worried you were off to meet St. Peter."

Xander chuckled. "Come on, Spike. After all we've been through, you really think I'd be heading to heaven?"

"There's no other place you could go, pet."

A single shocked hazel eye turned to stare at Spike. As he

watched, tears began to well, threatening to spill over.

"Don't cry, Xander, please," Spike whispered as he leaned forward to kiss Xander soft lips. "It's bad for your eye. Besides, there's no tears in heaven."

They kissed lazily for several long moments. Spike pulled away to look down at the boy beneath him, slowly stroking the skin around the left eye not covered with gauze and tape.

"Sleepy," Xander whispered, his uninjured eye closing slowly.

Kissing the slack lips again, Spike smiled. "Go ahead, pet. I'm sure you need your rest. I'm going to stay up and wait for Da and Giles to get home."

"Where did they go?" Xander asked, his words slurring with fatigue.

"To tie up loose ends."

19 I Must Be Dreaming

Prompt: #57 - Barophobia

Xander sighed as he made his way down the stairs. It had been nearly a week since he woke up at Spike's house, disoriented and in pain. He had spent the week being cared for by the three attentive men who were determined to make sure Xander had a complete recovery.

Reaching up, he adjusted the eyepatch he wore nearly constantly now. He hated it. It made him nervous, always wondering if there was something coming at him and he couldn't see it. He had nightmares that he would have to wear that damn patch forever. Those times, he woke up crying, Spike cuddling him, petting him and crooning to him softly until he would fall back to sleep.

Voices drifted up to him about half way down and Xander smiled. He loved being bathed in the rich, warm sounds of the accented tones of the men in this house. As he moved down toward the lower level, he mis-

stepped and tumbled down the remaining stairs.

Picking himself up off the floor, Xander rubbed his wrist, suddenly sore from the fall. Before he could even stand, Spike was there, helping him up, soothing and scolding him at the same time.

"What the bloody hell did you think you were doing, coming down the stairs like that by yourself?" Spike rebuked softly. "You know you're supposed to call me if you need anything, yeah?"

Xander nodded slowly to avoid the inevitable vertigo that came when he moved too quickly.

"I just thought I'd see if I could make it," Xander whispered quietly. "I thought maybe I'd check to see if I've developed barophobia yet."

"What?" Spike asked.

"Barophobia," Giles answered as he rounded the corner. "It's the fear of gravity."

After a moment of silence, laughter erupted. Ethan walked in a moment later, slyly draping his arm around

the laughing librarian's shoulders. "I think that sounds like a fabulous excuse to give your mates if that patch doesn't come off before you return to school."

Xander just smiled and let Spike lead him into the kitchen, the older boy's warm hand gently pressing in the small of his back. He stumbled a little, but quickly regained his footing. As he sat at the large dining table, Ethan sat a large plate of food before him as Giles poured a large glass of orange juice.

Slowly, Xander began to pick at his food. Nerves made him a little queasy and he could feel the eyes of all three men watching him intently.

"Are the eggs not to your liking, Xander?" Ethan asked quietly over his teacup.

"No," Xander replied, shoving another bite of the delicious food in his mouth. "They're great. I'm just a little...I don't know."

Spike reached over, laying his hand on the boy's thigh and rubbing slowly. "No need to be worried, pet," he purred. "We're just heading to the doc to make sure you're healing up alright. No poking or probing,

promise."

"It's not that," Xander mumbled.

"What is then, Xander?" Giles prompted.

"What if he says I have to wear the patch, you know, all the time?"

The three Englishmen stared at each other, all trying to figure out what to say to reassure the boy.

"Well," Ethan started. "You could grow your hair out long. It might give that roguish quality that makes all the girls swoon."

"Certainly," Giles added, smiling. "Perhaps we can even get you a tattoo."

"Yeah," Spike drawled huskily as he squeezed Xander's thigh. "We could dress you all in leather. You'll have everyone lusting after you. On second thought, can we dress you in leather anyway?"

They all laughed and Xander tucked into his food with gusto. He was suddenly feeling much better.

"So, what are we doing again?" he asked around a mouth full of bacon and eggs.

"We're going to L.A. to visit the doctor who performed your procedure," Giles said gently, sipping his tea. "He's going to check to see how well you're healing and determine how soon you can go without the patch."

Xander nodded slowly before looking up again, uncertainty plain on his face. "How am I going to pay for all this?"

The three other men stared at each other for a moment, quiet and still. Xander hated it when they did that odd silent communication thing. He hoped that one day he could do it too.

Finally, Ethan spoke up. "Remember how we told you that your father had an accident at his work? Well, the company is giving him full benefits while he is out on disability and those benefits extend to you as well. So all the doctor's bills are taken care of, alright?"

"I still don't understand what my dad was doing on the site in the middle of the night," Xander pondered. "He's

never worked any overtime before - ever."

"We told you, Xander," Giles soothed. "He had requested the extra work the day before. Apparently, he had need of the extra money. The foreman approved it and, unfortunately, your father had a terrible fall from some scaffolding. They say he's going to recover eventually, but he may be permanently disabled. It's just better this way."

Xander was a little confused by the statement but nodded his head. "And my mom?" he asked.

"She's off visiting with your aunt," Spike answered. "Just needed some time away, I guess."

Xander thought hard while he finished his food. It was delicious and filling but, combined with the pain pills he was still taking, he began to feel a little sleepy. Ethan quickly removed the empty plate and glass, placing them in the sink before asking, "Are we ready to go? We're going to have to leave now if we plan to arrive on time."

Everyone stood and made their way to Ethan's car. Spike guided Xander on his way, gently settling the younger boy in the seat next to him in back as Ethan and Giles sat

in the front. As they began to pull away and head toward the freeway, Xander felt his eyelids grow heavy. Spike's hand felt soft and warm in his own and slowly his head began to dip. Spike chuckled and Xander let the other boy pulled his sable colored head down to rest on the leather covered shoulder.

Xander sighed as sleep threatened to pull him under.
"What if the doctor says my eye is fucked up forever?"

Long, soft finger threaded through his curling locks.
"Won't matter, pet. Won't make me love you any less."

Xander smiled widely as he drifted off, sure that he must be dreaming, because he could almost swear that he had heard Spike say he loved him.

20 A Pirate's Life for Me

Prompt: #58 - Straight from the dead guy's mouth

Xander slept all the way to Los Angeles, curled in the backseat, petted and cared for like a treasured child. When the car finally stopped, he sighed and stretched, the patch covering his eye slightly skewed.

"Are we here?" he whispered, his voice scratchy with sleep.

"Yeah, pet," Spike answered, helping the boy sit up.

Xander self-consciously adjusted the eye patch, making sure the injured orbit was completely covered. He smiled as Spike reached over to help move the band to make Xander's hair lay to make the patch less noticeable. The exposed hazel eye brimmed with tears that threatened to fall.

"No, no, no," Spike whispered quietly as he stroked his fingertips over the contours of the younger boy's eyebrows and cheekbones. "No crying, yeah? Everything's just fine. You'll see. We'll get you set right as rain."

Xander shook his head slightly, simply trying to rid himself of the gloom that remained despite the nerves that plagued him. As Spike helped him out of the car,

Xander smiled sheepishly at the two older men waiting for them.

"Sorry," the young boy apologized quietly, staring down at his feet.

Ethan walked over, throwing his arm around Xander's shoulder, smiling widely. "Nothing to apologize for, Alexander. Let's go see what the doctor has to say, yes? I have a feeling we're in for some good news today."

Xander sighed and nodded, smiling as Ethan pulled him into a gentle side hug. Looking up, the young boy smiled at the two men watching them. Giles nodded and Spike smirked.

"Come on," Ethan said as he directed Xander inside the small, nondescript clinic with Spike and Giles following behind. As they stepped through the door, Xander looked around, trying to take in all his surroundings. He was surprised to see the amount of people sitting around the perimeter of the room, all waiting to see the doctor.

Ethan steered the young boy to the reception window where a smiling redheaded girl waited for them. When the young woman slid the window open, she greeted

them warmly, "Hello, Mr. Rayne. Nice to see you again. It's good to see Alexander up and around."

"Thank you, Gwen," Ethan replied with a wink and a smile. The young receptionist giggled as she slid the window closed.

As Ethan steered the young back to his seat, Xander whispered, "You're good, you know that?"

"More than you know," Giles answered quietly as Spike laughed out loud. The three men sat, each of them chatting with the nervous boy in turn, trying to keep his mind off the reason they were here. Several long minutes later, the door opened and a young, pretty nurse stood in the doorway and called, "Mr. Rayne."

Xander looked over at Ethan for a sign of what to do. The Englishman just smiled.

"Mr. Rayne?" she called again.

Looking at Spike, Xander silently asked with his eye what was going on. Before Spike could say anything, the nurse called again.

"Alexander Rayne?"

Xander's uncovered eye flew open wide and Ethan chuckled lightly.

"Come on now, son," Ethan prodded as he helped the boy stand. "It's not nice to keep Fred waiting."

"The doctor's name is Fred?"

"No," the nurse replied. "I'm Fred."

"Okay," Xander said, confused by the entire situation.

As Ethan led him through the door behind the smiling nurse, Xander stared over his shoulder at the smirking blond boy tracking his very move. Spike winked at him, but Xander could tell the older boy was nervous and not at all pleased to be consigned to the waiting room.

The nurse took all of Xander's vital information; height, weight, blood pressure, and temperature, before escorting him to the examination room. She turned to close the door and said, "The doctor will be with you shortly."

As soon as the door clicked shut, Xander turned and asked Ethan, "Why did they call me Alexander Rayne?"

Ethan sighed, remaining silent for a moment before answering. "It was easier to get you in here without questions asked by saying you were my son. Besides, there was paperwork that needed to be signed and the procedure required parental permission considering the fact that you are still considered underage by American standards."

"Okay," Xander drawled slowly. "But I thought you said that my dad's insurance was paying for all of this. How does that work if they think you're my dad?"

A look of panicked shock passed across Ethan's features for a split second before the older man simply smiled. "It's simply a matter of preparing the billing paperwork just right."

"Sure," Xander scoffed. "Did my dad actually have an accident at work?"

Ethan paused for a moment before shaking his head. "He was found on his worksite badly injured. Paperwork was found in the office signed by the foreman stating he had

permission to work overtime and he is actually receiving disability pay while he – recovers."

Xander sat silently, taking all the information in. Finally, he whispered, "Just tell me Spike wasn't involved."

"He was busy taking care of you," Ethan answered. "Ripper on the other hand..."

"Giles?!" Xander exclaimed. "Giles really..?"

"Yes," the older man whispered quietly. "He really did. He cares for you, you know. We all do."

Xander's head dropped and he forced himself not to cry.

"I'm going to pay you back someday, you know that, right?"

Ethan chuckled as he pulled the boy into a gentle hug. "I would expect nothing less from you, son." A soft kiss was placed on top of curly sable locks. "You really are smarter than others give you credit for."

Xander was about to respond with his normal self-deprecating comments when a small knock was heard on

the exam room door. The doctor entered, smiling at the two.

"Hello again," he said as he sat on a small, rolling stool before extending a hand toward Xander. "It's nice to see you awake, Alexander. I'm Doctor Tam. Let's see how you're healing, alright?"

Xander scowled at the young man. "You look awfully young to be a doctor," he complained before turning to the man sitting next to him. "Have you checked his credentials? He doesn't look much older than Spike."

The doctor laughed softly for a moment before saying, "It's alright. I understand that I look young, but don't worry. I graduated at the top of my class and I do know what I'm doing. You're not the first person I've performed this procedure on."

"And he'd tell me you did a good job?"

"Sure," the doctor answered, smiling. "You could get it straight from the dead guy's mouth."

Xander simply glared at the young man.

"Was he this funny when I was unconscious?" he asked completely deadpan.

Ethan laughed loudly. "Even more so. I think it's a nervous reaction."

The doctor chuckled softly. "There really is nothing to worry about. My sister River is helping me work on my bedside manner, but I don't think she's doing such a great job."

Xander smiled at the embarrassed doctor. "No, you're doing fine, I just want to know whether or not I'm going to have to learn to sing 'Yo ho, yo ho, a pirate's life for me' or not."

Dr. Tam chuckled lightly. "Well, let's take a look then, shall we?"

The eye patch came off and the doctor performed several tests, pressing on the previously shattered bones, shining a light in the injured orb and making Xander track his finger visually. The light seemed too bright and the strain of trying to focus his injured eye was giving him a headache so he was happy when the doctor gently replaced the patch over his tired eye.

"Well," the doctor finally started after he completed his notes in Xander's chart. "It looks like you can forget about finding your sea legs."

"What?" Xander asked, afraid to believe what Dr. Tam was telling him in his own, teasing way.

"Your eye seems to be healing just fine," the kind doctor replied. "For the next two weeks, I want you to take off the eye patch in the evenings when you are at home. Dim the lights, if you have to, but you should go at least two hours every night without the patch on. You need to exercise the eye gently at first. After two weeks or so, start going outside without it, just make sure you wear good quality sunglasses while outside. I'll refill your pain medicine prescription because I'm sure you'll be getting headaches from the eyestrain, but you should be just fine within the month."

"So, no eye patch, no pirate jokes?"

"No pirate jokes, not permanently, anyway."

Xander's smile was blinding. He turned to Ethan and the older man gathered him into a crushing hug.

"That's excellent news," Ethan crowed before relinquishing his hold on the young boy to shake the doctor's hand. "Thank you so much. We really appreciate your discretion in this matter."

"As I have always appreciated yours," the young doctor replied.

Xander probably would have found the comment odd had he not been beside himself with the need to go and tell Spike the good news.

21 Lacerated

Prompt: #59 - Desolate

Xander sat on the bed in Spike's room, wondering how his life had changed so much in just a few weeks. It had been a struggle learning to live in this new place, this new life, he never tried to convince myself that it was going to be easy, but now Xander wondered how it all went so wrong.

He'd been so proud of myself, so wishing for Spike to be

proud of him as well. Spike had praised him at first, celebrating with Xander the first day he was able to go without the eye patch all evening and adjusting to living with the three other men. They'd had an incredible dinner, complete with gooey lasagna and crispy garlic [bread](#), courtesy of Ethan and Giles, followed by a night of slow, wet kisses and hard, rolling thrusts.

Soon however, Xander began to notice small changes, changes so tiny that they shouldn't have made a difference, but somehow, they did.

First, Spike stopped sitting next to Xander in the library, long fingers teasing the boy under the table while he completed his assignments for the day. Instead, the older boy focused on his own studies, reading and taking notes distractedly. Xander knew he shouldn't be jealous. Spike was in school too and he still needed to get good grades as well. But Xander felt the loss.

Then Xander noticed that the older boy had stopped watching him. It sounded stupid to the younger boy when he stopped to think about it, but it still plagued the back of Xander's mind. The sable haired boy missed the crystal blue eyes trained on his every move.

And soon the sweet endearments were gone. Spike still took to calling him "pet" but Xander missed being called Spike's "luv" more than he cared to admit. The softly whispered word began to haunt the younger boy's dreams.

But then Spike started going out at night, study sessions he called them. Xander would wait up as long as he could for the blond boy to come to his bed, the bed they shared, but sometimes, Spike would come in long after the younger boy had nodded off for the night. He tried not to let the absence bother him, but Xander had become used to the feel of the warm body next to his and the smell of cigarettes and leather surrounding him.

Spike explained how he needed to work on a special project for a class, how he needed to spend time with his classmates and people his own age. Xander had succumbed and agreed. He sent Spike out nearly every night with a smile plastered on his face, waving as his love rode away from him.

All of that Xander could have handled, he could have become accustomed to eventually. He'd given so much to Spike, become so much for Spike, admitted who he was, what he was, deep down inside for the older boy.

He'd lost his family, destructive as they were, to live in Spike's father's house just to be close to the blond boy.

But then Spike started talking about Angel.

Angel was Spike's partner for his literature assignment and soon this new boy's name began to seep into every conversation. Xander was tired of hearing how stupid Angel was or how broody Angel was or how bloody annoying he was. Xander didn't want to know that Spike had been out all night with *Angel*, didn't want to hear how badly *Angel* sang karaoke when he was drunk or how many girls the two boys had to fight off at the club. He didn't want to think about why they were still going out when he knew the project had been complete for at least a week.

Finally, Xander couldn't take sitting in the silent, still room anymore, thinking about everything he'd had and lost, everything he still wanted. The house was too quiet with Spike out and the four walls where he had learned his favorite lessons suddenly felt more like a coffin than the safe haven he'd known it to be.

Slipping down the stairs, Xander silently walked out into the backyard, leaning against the tree he'd cuddled

beneath with Spike many a lazy afternoon. They hadn't cuddled in a very long time.

The night air was cool, whipping the boy's sable curls around his ears and across his forehead. Spike liked it long, but not too long. Xander had continue to let it grow, hoping Spike would notice and demand Xander get it cut instantly, threatening to drag the younger boy to the barber himself if need be.

But Spike never noticed.

The brush of hair and the cool air stroked Xander's left eye and the skin around it rippled with goose pimples. Three days ago, he'd gone all day without wearing the dreaded patch.

Ethan had made him a special dinner and Giles had taken the black fabric, placing it in a frame and hanging it on the wall.

Spike forgot to mention it.

Xander stared at the quiet, dark house across the way, the one that used to be his home, in all honesty was his home.

It wasn't until a warm hand landed on the boy's shoulder that he realized he was shaking.

"Xander," Giles whispered, concern coloring his voice. "You should really come inside. It's too cold out here."

"Not just yet, please," Xander begged. "It's just too quiet in there and I needed a breath of fresh air."

Giles held on for a while, his hand squeezing the trembling shoulder and Xander soaked in the attention and touch.

Silence reigned between them until Xander finally asked, "What am I doing wrong?"

"You're not doing anything wrong, Xander," Giles insisted.

Xander sighed as he realized his worst fear; he hadn't done anything wrong, it was him. He was wrong.

"Thanks, Giles," he sighed. He waited for several long minutes until the librarian squeezed his shoulder one last time before he turned to re-enter the house. Continuing

to stare at the dark house across from him, Xander wondered if his father felt as desolate and deserted as the house he was stuck in, if he felt as alone and empty as Xander did at that very moment.

His mother always said he was his father's son.

Several moments later, Xander heard the sound of a car pulling into the drive. Hiding behind the tree he'd been huddled under, Xander strained to see who was there. He didn't recognize the car and the rough idling set the young boy's nerves on edge. He waited and waited for Spike to exit the vehicle, to rush into the house to find him and greet him with a hug and a kiss.

Finally, the passenger side door opened and Spike slipped out, smiling and laughing with the unseen driver. It was a mischievous smile, one that Xander had seen many times trained on him, one that he missed greatly. Then Xander heard Spike's rich baritone echoing through the night air.

"Good night, luv."

Xander started to move out of the shelter of the tree to answer the greeting until he realized that Spike wasn't

talking to him.

He was talking to Angel.

Standing frozen, Xander watched Spike enter the house. He waited to see if the blond boy was going to ask where he was, look for him, search him out, but the light in the room they shared turned on before the bathroom light turned on. Soon, Xander heard the shower running. Spike hadn't even noticed he wasn't there.

Slowly, Xander turned away to stop staring at the steamy window and began to walk back toward the house that was as dark and desolate as he felt inside.

22 Not What He Seems

Prompt: #60 - Leathery

Xander sighed as he sank deeper in the bed. The normally soft sheets scratched at the still sensitive skin around his left eye and the young boy grimaced in his sleep. He would have to ask Spike if they were low on fabric softener or something.

A new smell assaulted Xander's senses and he inhaled deeply, pleased at the smells that surrounded him. It was warm and leathery with overtones of whiskey and smoke. All the things that reminded Xander of Spike.

Smiling, he whispered the name in reverence, like he always did when he thought about the older boy.

Suddenly, the sleeping boy was jerked upright until he was sitting on the ratty couch in his basement, gazing directly into Spike's angry face.

"That's right it's Spike," the blond boy practically growled. "What do you have to say for yourself, Xander?"

Xander gaped at the angry blond boy for a moment, unsure if this was real or a dream. His head whipped from side to side as he took in his surroundings, half-surprised to find himself in his parent's basement.

"Spike?" he asked once he found his voice.

"Come on," Spike grumbled, his angry whisper reverberating in the tiny, dank room. "We're going home."

Xander let himself be manhandled and pulled out the basement. It wasn't until the cool air hit him did he seem to wake from his stupor. Angrily, he planted his feet and jerked out of Spike's grasp.

"What do you think you're doing?" he snapped.

"Taking you home," Spike spat back.

"Oh, so now you care?" Xander snarled. "You didn't care when you came home with *Angel!*"

Spike glared for a moment before he laughed so loud, he startled the sable-haired boy watching him.

"That's what this is all about, pet? Angel? He's nothing, Xan. Just a guy from school."

Xander stared for a moment, still in shock at the other boy's sudden shocking change. "If he's just a guy, then

why are you out with him all the time? It's like you forgot me or something."

"Didn't forget about you, pet," Spike purred as he stepped in close to Xander, nearly rubbing himself on the taller boy. "Your mine. Always mine. Don't want you over there. You belong in my bed."

Xander stared down, surprised that he could barely see any of the blue in the eyes he always loved. When he saw how dilated Spike's eyes were, he became extremely worried.

"Spike, are you alright?" he asked, reaching up to lightly stroke the sharply angled cheekbones.

"Fine, pet, fine," Spike protested, his words slightly slurred. He smiled as he turned his head, kissing each of Xander's palms in turn.

Xander's eyes slid closed as the warm lips kissed his cool hands. Slowly, he opened his eyes to glare at Spike again. "Are you sure? You're not taking anything, are you?"

Spike snorted before giggling lightly. "Maybe just a little something Angel gave me."

Xander sighed. Of course. "Angel gives you drugs," he whispered, neither a question nor a statement.

Spike giggled again, moving in even closer to the younger boy. "Yeah, he's a nice right bloke when he's not drinking. Turns into a right berk when he's pissed. Can be awful frightening, almost like a different person. But not to worry, pet. I'll introduce you and you'll see. He'll like you, no doubt. And you'll like him. You'll see. You'll see."

Xander watched as Spike drifted off, his eyes distant and his face slack. Sighing, Xander reached down to wrap Spike's arm around his shoulders. "Come on, Spike. Let's get to bed."

With a heavy sigh and a few steps, Spike laid his head on Xander's shoulder as they slowly made their way toward their house. He was nearly asleep by the time they reached the front porch. As they walked in the door, Xander smiled lightly as he saw Giles waiting for them at the bottom of the stairs.

"I see he found you," the Englishman whispered.

"Yeah," Xander answered. "He found me. Did you send

him or did he go looking on his own?"

A look of embarrassment flashed across the librarian's face before he answered, "I may have pointed him in the right direction."

Xander nodded slightly as Giles continued. "He was looking for you, though."

"The bed wasn't warm enough?" the young boy whispered, surprised at the bitterness coloring his voice.

"Xander, don't," Giles pleaded. "I'm sure..."

"Yeah, Giles," Xander sighed before the older man could complete the thought. "I'm sure too. Look, it's really late and I should really be in bed. I'm assuming it's late."

"Very," Giles admitted. Xander wondered how long it took Spike to realize he was missing.

"Good night," Xander whispered.

"Good night, pet," Spike murmured against Xander's shoulder.

The younger boy sighed, placing a soft kiss on the bleached head as he led him up the stairs and to their bed.

23 Hello Little Boy

Prompt: #62 - Solitary Confinement

The week had been long for Xander. He had spent many hours waiting for Spike in the library before Giles sent him on his way to Ethan's shop. Xander enjoyed spending time with the older Englishman in his antique shop, although he missed his Spike. But Ethan smiled and teased the young boy as he tutored him in history and helped him compose this English essay and the attention made the boy feel warm all over.

Well, maybe not all over. Although Xander had no trouble imagining Spike naked in all sorts of situations, the thought of this replacement father figure as anything

more than that gave Xander a major wiggins.

But the attention was still nice.

Ethan seemed to know when Xander was struggling, stopping over the boy's shoulder to point out a grammatical error or indicate which passages Xander should be concentrating on. The warm fingers that carded through his sable-colored curls and scratched his scalp in a way that was comforting and stimulating gave him some sort of peace.

Giles and Ethan did their best to keep Xander occupied when Spike was not at home. He appreciated the effort but he still missed Spike.

Not that Spike wasn't attentive – when he was around. Xander felt practically smothered by the blond boy when he was home. Spike often held the younger boy close, kissing and snuggling the boy every chance he got. Often, Spike's actions made Xander feel uncomfortable in front of the older men.

Whenever Xander pulled away from his affections, Spike became indignant, shouting or pouting until the younger boy gave in and let him do what he wanted in the first

place.

By Friday night, Xander had had enough.

"Look, Spike," Xander practically growled as the blond boy nuzzled below his left ear in the middle of the living room. "I understand that you want snuggly time and miss me and everything, but would you mind not molesting me in front of your dad? And please, could you make up your mind and decide if you want to be completely indifferent to me or insanely possessive, because not knowing which Spike is showing up is driving me crazy."

The older boy simply chuckled as he pushed away, smirking at Xander as he swaggered up the stairs.

"Always possessive of you, pet. You're mine, you know?"

Xander just sighed as he watched the man he loved walk away.

"Coming, pet?" Spike called without turning around. "We gotta get you dressed for the party."

~*~*~*~*~

The party had been a disaster. Xander hated being in the center of a crowd that he didn't know. Everyone there was in college and being a high school student made Xander stand out like a sore thumb. He tried to hide in a quiet corner of the living room, slowly nursing the beer Spike had handed him when they first entered.

Not that Xander didn't have any interesting visitors. He met more than a few. A boy named Oz approached him first, asking him if he was Spike's Xander. That set the young boy's nerves on end, the knowledge that someone knew who he was without Xander having any clue who was talking to him. Oz had been laconic, making the younger boy compensate by rambling about nothing worth, but he made Xander smile, so that was of the good.

Then this goth chic named Drusilla came over, scaring the living shit out of the young boy. Dru, as she liked to call herself, in the third person no less, rambled more than Xander, crooning over the moon and stars, calling Xander "kitten" and "poppet". She seemed a little crazy but she hit the mark more than once, telling Xander he was empty inside and needed to be filled. When she asked if she could crawl inside him to fill his hole, Xander decided

it was time to find a new hiding place.

The kitchen seemed an innocuous place to Xander, but a Catholic school-girl wanna-be named Darla trapped him in a corner, telling him how tasty he looked. Xander was smart enough to feign the need to vomit to escape the awkward situation.

Finally, Xander found a nice quiet hiding place beneath the stairs. It was dark enough that it was hard for the people at the party to see him but he could see everyone else, everyone but Spike. He consigned himself to solitary confinement, afraid to venture out and running into anyone else who might scare the crap out of him.

The party slowly began to wind down and Xander watched as people began to leave. All he wanted to do was find Spike and go home, glad that he never ran into Angel.

As if the thought of him conjured the man himself, the tall, unnaturally good-looking man appeared before Xander, smirking down at him in a way that made the young boy tremble inside.

"Xander," the chocolate eyed man purred as he stalked

closer, blocking the boy's escape with his large, solid body. "I think it's time we got to know each other."

24 Trapped

Prompt: #63 - Enamored

Xander stood frozen, transfixed by the steely gaze of the larger boy. The chocolate eyes seemed to pierce Xander as Angel's gaze caressed every inch of the smaller boy's frame.

"I'm Angel," the taller boy introduced himself, smiling altogether too widely for Xander.

"I know," the boy snapped. "And what kind of name is Angel anyway? It's a little girly, isn't it?"

The brown eyes turned cold as the older boy's smile faded slightly. "It's a nickname, if you must know. My

name is actually Liam Angelus Donnelly but I was told that I have a face of an angel, hence the name. Besides, Angel gives the promise of heaven. Would you like to know how close I can get you there?"

Xander fought the urge to laugh, wondering how far the boy actually ever got with such a corny line, but as the taller boy leaned in, Xander caught the scent of alcohol and smoke. Remembering what Spike had said about the other boy's temper and his experience with his own father gave Xander pause.

"Where's Spike?" Xander finally managed to ask instead, his voice a small squeak.

Angel stepped in even closer, his mouth turning up in wicked smirk that made Xander shudder deep inside.

"Spike's a little occupied right now," Angel practically purred as he reached up to place a large hand on the wall next to the smaller boy's head, trapping Xander in the alcove below the stairs. "He's tucked safely away with my – associate Lindsey. He's trying out some Oxy. I'd say we have a little while by ourselves to get to know each other better."

"And why would I want to do that?" Xander asked, more than a little annoyed with the hulk before him.

Angel chuckled lightly, though his eyes were hard and unforgiving.

"Well," Angel started, leaning down ever closer, "Spike and I have become close these last few weeks, in case you haven't noticed. I like having him around, he's proving to be quite entertaining – when I'm not wanting to kill him, of course. There's just one problem."

"What's that?" Xander asked, suddenly afraid of the answer.

"You."

Xander shuddered under the unexpected harsh glare directed at him.

"Me?"

"Yes, boy. You."

Xander heard the scrape of fingernails on the wood next to his head as Angel's displeasure was released. As he

turned to see the gouges left by the strong fingernails, Xander jumped at the brush of fingertips against his skin as Angel stroked him gently with his other hand. The contrast of anger and care frightened Xander more than he cared to think about.

"He cares for you, you know?" Angel whispered, his words hard and slightly slurred. "Enamored with you, really. Talks about you all the time. It's really annoying. He talks about how sweet and open you are, like a little puppy or something. Calls you 'pet', doesn't he? Training you up and everything so you'll do anything he asks. One night he about drove me over the edge, telling me how you writhe and beg for him and how good you taste. Think he'd mind if I check for meself?"

Xander shook his head, shocked that Spike talked about him like that, to Angel no less, but that he was here, stuck in this situation. He braced his hands on the larger boy's chest, trying to force him back as Angel leaned in to lick at Xander's straining neck.

"Mmmm," Angel purred as he pulled back just enough that his breath was ghosting over Xander's spit-slicked skin. "You are tasty, boy. Spikey shouldn't keep a delicious treat like this all to himself."

Xander pushed harder against the muscular chest in vain. Angel reached out to grip the wrists pressing against him, forcing Xander's arms above his head and pinning them there with a single, strong hand.

"Don't," Xander bit out, fear and tears coloring his voice.

"Don't what, little one?" Angel growled, a faint Irish brogue leaking out. "I know you like this. Spike told me."

Xander forced down a sob as the older boy dove back down to lick and suck at the tender, sensitive skin of his neck. Angel reached under the soft t-shirt Spike had insisted Xander wear to stroke at the soft, warm skin of Xander's chest before roughly scratching and pinching his nipples. Xander groaned and arched his back, trying to escape the exquisite torture, but Angel held him firm.

"I don't care what Spike told you," Xander panted. "I like it when he does it, not you."

"I think you're lyin' to me, Xander," Angel purred as he leaned in again, pressing a stabbing hardness against Xander's matching erection. "I think you like this just fine."

Xander started to try and protest but was stopped when Angel's hard mouth clamped over Xander's, silencing him with a kiss. Angel's tongue snaked in, forcing its way inside and taking over the younger boy's mouth, tasting and claiming him. He considered biting down on the thick muscle inside his mouth but thought better of it. He knew he was vulnerable like this and he was afraid of the larger boy's violent, drunken reprisal.

Xander yelped into the questing mouth as Angel brutally scraped his fingernails down Xander's naked chest, leaving red welts and a trail of blood in their wake. Xander gasped for air as Angel pulled back, the taller boy's chocolate eyes wild and feral.

Angel smirked at Xander, an evil smirk that made the younger boy tremble in terror. Before he could think, the older boy was at his throat again, licking and biting, pulling blood to the surface of the thin, tanned skin. As the button and zip of his jean were opened, Xander began to whimper, "Please, no. Don't, please."

A wicked chuckle was all that met his pleas as Angel reached inside the soft material to stroke at Xander's cock. Tears pricked Xander's eyes as he forced himself

not to cry.

"Don't worry, boy," Angel purred after a particularly vicious bite at his neck, followed by a brutal pull on his dick. "I won't hurt you – much."

Xander cried out then, as the older boy sank his teeth into Xander's throat, drawing blood as he broke the skin. "No," he whispered over and over, praying that his begging would reach the other boy somehow.

The stroking hand then reached down farther to cup and fondle his balls and beyond until suddenly, the hands and mouth were suddenly gone. Xander opened eyes he hadn't realized he'd closed to see Spike pulling Angel off him. He stood in shock as he watched the blond boy throw Angel to the ground before Spike fell upon him with flying fists and feet.

Xander stood frozen as Angel was pummeled by an infuriated Spike. The prone boy tried to fight back, but Spike had landed several devastating blows and Angel was wounded. It wasn't until Spike stood and began to kick Angel in the ribs with abandon that Xander realized the brown eyed boy wasn't moving.

Startled out of his stupor, Xander rushed forward, wrapping his arms around the blond boy's waist and pulling him away from the unconscious boy on the floor. Spike continued to fight, trying to get at Angel until Xander whispered in his ear, "Spike. Please take me home."

Spike froze for a moment before nodded jerkily. Without looking at Xander, Spike took his hand and dragged him away from the body. Xander let himself be pulled toward the door, gasping lightly as he saw another boy lying prone at the foot of the stairs in the same state as Angel, knowing that he had to be Lindsey.

When they reached the car, Spike pushed Xander inside without a word before jumping into the driver's seat and driving off, tires squealing and gravel flying. They drove in silence, heading toward home, the only sound in the vehicle their rough breathing.

Eventually, Spike reached over and laid his hand on Xander's trembling leg.

"You alright, pet?"

In response, Xander quietly wept.

25 In the Face of Fear

Prompt: #64 - Promise

Spike sped the rest of the way home, terror seeping in through the haze of the Oxy buzz he was riding. He was suddenly very happy for the lack of decent law enforcement in Sunnydale. The last thing he needed was to get pulled over with Xander bawling in the front seat, especially now that he could make out the blood seeping through the front of Xander's shirt.

Rage flared inside Spike's chest, hot and harsh. He hated Angel for hurting the boy, but he was more disgusted with himself for letting everything get so out of control. The ride seemed to take forever, but finally he pulled the car into the drive, the brakes squealing as they screeched to a halt.

Spike threw open his door before reaching over and pulling the resisting boy out of his own door instead of bothering to get Xander out on his own side. Supporting the taller boy's body weight, Spike crashed through the front door, nearly stumbling as Xander tripped on the rug in the entryway.

A startled gasp drew his attention and Spike looked up to see two pairs of very disappointed eyes watching him.

"What the hell happened?" Giles shrieked, his voice rising in panic.

"I can explain," Spike answered quietly.

"You'd better," Ethan drawled, low and dangerous.

Spike cleared his throat nervously, knowing the two men were as close to violence as they'd ever been.

"I will," Spike started, "But not right now."

The men glared at him, the threat clear, but Xander's quiet sob made Spike push forward.

"I need to take care of Xander and I need your help."

Ethan and Giles remained silent, waiting for Spike to explain.

"There was some trouble tonight."

Ethan snorted indignantly as Giles rolled his eyes.

"The bloke I was hanging with, Angel, he got a bit rough with the boy tonight and I might have lost my temper."

When the two older men started forward, Spike held them off with a single upturned palm.

"He's my responsibility and I'll take care of him. I need you to go over to Angel's place and make sure that they're ok?"

"They?" Ethan asked. "What did you do, William?"

Spike ducked his head before whispering, "I beat up Angel and his [mate](#), Lindsey. Neither of them was moving when I left, although I'm pretty sure that Lindsey was still breathing."

"William," Giles sighed, his voice colored with disappointment.

"Please," Spike begged, his eyes pleaded with the other Englishmen.

Ethan turned to Giles before the lovers left without

another word.

Spike quickly maneuvered the still sobbing boy up the stairs and into their room. Gently, he pulled down the bedclothes before settling Xander on the bed.

Methodically, he removed the younger boy's shoes and socks before standing to pull the bloodied t-shirt over his head.

Xander gasped lightly as the cotton pulled at the dried blood of the raw scratches. Spike winced in sympathy before pushing lightly on Xander's shoulders, urging the boy to lie down. Once the sable colored head was resting on the soft pillow, Spike set to work on removing his jeans.

Staring down at his boy in just his boxers, Spike felt the rising desire to strip him naked and ravish the body he loved so much, but he knew that was the last thing Xander needed. Instead, Spike stripped down to his tight black jeans before sliding into the bed and pulling the covers over the both of them.

He tried to pull the boy in close but Xander resisted with a jerk of his shoulders and a shake of his head.

Spike shushed him, gently rubbing his hands over the boy's exposed chest. Xander flinched lightly when Spike's fingertips brushed over the scratch marks. Gently, Spike propped himself up on his elbow before leaning down to lightly lick the ragged, red marks.

Xander gasped and tried to twist out of the way, but Spike gripped Xander's hip firmly, pressing him down into the mattress. Eventually, Xander acquiesced and sagged bonelessly against the soft fabric. Spike stroked the angry marks with his tongue, removing all traces of blood, trying to soothe the boy he'd hurt so much.

"I'm so sorry," he whispered after licking a long stripe along Xander's side. "I never wanted to hurt you. I never thought Angel would do such a thing. I'll never let anyone touch you again. I promise. I promise you, Xander. Nothing will happen to you ever again, I promise."

He continued to lick and stroke and whisper his promises and devotion until the boy's sobs tapered off and Spike finally recognized the steady, even breathing that signaled Xander had fallen asleep.

But Spike knew sleep would be elusive for him. He had a

lot to dwell on, most importantly; he had to figure out how to keep his promises to his boy.

26 Where Does That Leave Us?

Prompt: Nowhere

Xander smiled as he walked up to the familiar clinic doors, reaching out to clasp the hand stretched out to him.

"Dr. Tam," he beamed. "It's really good to see you again."

"You too, Xander," the doctor replied, smiling. "Ethan, if you'd like to step in the other room, we can discuss payment?"

Xander's brow furrowed at the statement, but the older Englishman raised his hand to stop any questions before answering, "No. Xander's a member of the family. He can

hear whatever affects the family."

"Fine," Dr. Tam sighed softly, looking at the young men nervously. "Ethan, I wasn't able to secure the full payment at this time, but I'm sure I can get the rest of it by the end of the month and then..."

"Not to worry, Simon," Ethan practically purred as he moved closer to the doctor. "We've always had an amiable relationship and I'm sure that can continue. We appreciated you taking care of Xander when he was hurt. I'm sure if we need your help again, we can count on you."

"Certainly," Simon answered, his voice and face displaying his sincerity. "I'll always be grateful to you for..."

"Simon?" a quiet, broken voice whispered from the doorway. Xander watched as the doctor, normally so serious and stoic, softened as he quickly made his way toward the tiny, trembling girl watching them. "I heard voices."

The doctor slowly led the fragile looking girl into the room before stopping in front of Xander. "River, you

remember Ethan and William, right? From their visit with you before? And this is Xander. He's one of my patients. Xander, this is my sister, River."

"Hi," Xander greeted the wary looking girl with a smile and a small wave.

River didn't return the greeting or the smile. She walked forward until she was looking up at the sable-haired boy before reaching up with shaking fingers to trace the contours of his face. "You're the one who sees, aren't you?"

Not knowing how to answer such a question, Xander looked to the other men for an answer. Finding none, he turned back to the girl still stroking his face.

"You can see because they don't see you. They don't watch you, so you can watch them. It is your gift."

Xander was confused about whether the girl knew about the injury of his eye or not, so he simply nodded. The girl turned from him quickly to stare at the father and son watching close at hand.

"He is your heart," she told them forcefully. "Listen to

your heart."

With that declaration, she turned and left the room.

"O-kay," Xander drawled after she left.

Simon sighed before explaining, "River's been through some – trauma. A few years ago Ethan and William here helped us out. Found where she was and helped me get her out of a horrible place. Then last week, she went missing again. She got confused or distracted or something. They found her when no one else could. I couldn't have done this without them."

Xander nodded, happy that the men he loved had been able to help these people. He smiled, pleased when the doctor returned the smile before the man turned to follow his sister out of the room. The younger boy turned to Ethan and Spike before asking, "So, that's this secret family business? You rescue people?"

The two Englishmen chuckled lightly before Ethan explained, "Not exactly."

"Although River's case was too intriguing to pass up, it's not our normal gig," Spike said.

"Gig?" Xander asked.

"Yes, well," Ethan continued, "William and I have been pulling gigs for many years. Back in the day, Rupert and I did as well. He was the one who actually brought me into the business, you know. Not exactly pure as the driven snow, our Rupert. Most of our jobs were simple in and out scams, nobody gets hurt kind of things, but occasionally, we got ourselves in a spot and had to make a run for it."

Xander head whipped back and forth as he looked between father and son. "I don't understand. Jobs? Scams? You guys were con-guys?"

"Are," Spike corrected. "Con-artists, grifters, confidence men, whatever you want to call us."

"That's why you went to Australia," Xander whispered in realization. "You were running from something."

"Yeah," Ethan admitted. "A nasty mess that one was. Not that we didn't enjoy being Down Under. Learned a few new tricks."

Xander gaped at the two men. "Is that all this is, this little trip to California? You needed to run away from something again? Have some fun, learn some new tricks and then be on your way?"

When neither man spoke, he knew he was right.

"Perfect!" he shouted, "This is just perfect. So what am I? Some experiment?!"

"No," Spike yelled as he darted forward to take Xander in his arms. "I saw you, Xander. Saw you hiding in that awful house and I knew I had to have you, had to save you. You were never a gig, I promise you that."

Seeing a glimmer of truth in the azure blue eyes, Xander let the issue drop for the moment before plowing ahead. "So what? You want to bring me into the family business so I'll stick around? You want to teach me to be like you, some sort of criminal?"

"You'd be perfect, Pet," Spike whispered as he began to stroke the sable-colored curls. "You're so sweet and innocent. Anyone would believe those dark, sad puppy dog eyes."

"You want me to deceive people? Take their money or whatever it is you do? You'd make me do that?"

Ethan and Spike stood in shock. Obviously this wasn't the reaction they were expecting from him, so he continued.

"You're willing to sacrifice what you have right now for the unknown? Just leave a town that adores you? Ethan, I know the antique shop is doing very well. I've seen your books and you're make money hand over fist without any scams or games. Sure, you flirt with all the old ladies and they come and pay a lot of money for a bunch of old stuff, but it's a real business. And Spike – you're doing well at the university. You're getting a literature degree, for what? So you can speak eloquently at your trial when you finally get caught? Have you even thought about what this might do to me or Giles? Or do you not care?"

Silence reigned in the small room for several long minutes until Xander finally spoke.

"I think it's time we go home."

The three men made their way out to the car, separate and in silence. When Spike tried to hold his hand, Xander gently pulled away. "Maybe crazy girl was right," he

offered in the quiet of the car. "I see things and I see you two. I see you as good. Please don't disappoint me."

The trip to Sunnydale was made in silence with only the hum of the engine and the gentle whisper of the radio to distract Xander from the confusion in his mind that felt like a trip to nowhere.

27 Fell Over the Crowd

prompt: Hush

Silence reigned in the car the entire trip back to Sunnydale. The radio played softly while the hum of the engine threatened to lull Xander to sleep. But he did not let sleep take him. He fought against it as the thoughts swam through his brain, confusing and overwhelming.

Ethan tried, on several occasions, to say something, but nothing ever came out. He made a few odd sounds and

started off with several, "Yes, well" and "Certainly"s, but that was always as far as he got before it was silent once again.

Back in Sunnydale, the three men entered the house in silence, each going their own way. Xander found Giles in the kitchen as Ethan and Spike made their way up the stairs. Quickly and quietly, Xander told the story to the librarian, who listened without saying a word.

Giles nodded frequently, as he listened, as if he wasn't surprised by the offer Ethan and Spike offered or by Xander's reaction. He waited until the young man was finished with his story before offering a few words of advice.

"Xander," he assured quietly, "It's a difficult decision to make. I've been there, I've lived that life. It's very – tempting. It's seductive and shiny. I made a lot of money and lived a fantastic lifestyle. I also lost a lot of friends and ran for my life more than once. I went to jail on several occasions and did deplorable things. I must warn you that it is very addicting. The next con, the next big break is always just around the corner. And even though I know it is wrong, I still can't keep away from it. Somehow, Ethan always pulls me back."

Xander shifted in his seat as he heard the older man's voice crack. The hint of tears was enough to make the younger boy feel weak.

"It is a decision that you only must make, Xander. Think long and hard about this. Use your head and not your heart. I do not envy you."

With a gentle kiss on the top of his head, Giles left the young man alone, staring at the table and his fingers clenched so tightly the knuckles were bone white. Finally, after too many minutes to count, Xander stood and marched up the stairs. He slipped in the room he shared with Spike to see the older boy in only a towel, fresh from the shower. Blue eyes sparkled at him as Spike gave a timid smile and ducking his head slightly. Xander watched as several large drops formed at the ends of the platinum curls before falling to the floor.

Maybe a shower was just what he needed.

Returning the smile, Xander grabbed some clothes before heading to the bathroom. The spray of hot water was relaxing and the boy let his thoughts drift as he ran the sudsy cloth over his skin.

He hated the thought of hurting people, but Ethan and Spike never really seemed to be hurting anyone. They'd even helped people like Dr. Tam and his crazy sister. Xander smiled thinking about the pretty, strange girl. He hoped she would be alright and that Ethan and Simon had rescued her in time. Could he do something like that? Do something against the law? He supposed that if it was to help someone, he could. But where would he draw the line? When does it stop being about helping someone else and helping yourself?

Xander sighed as he ducked his head under the spray and began to wash his sweaty locks. The evening of dancing and drinking – alcoholic or not – seemed so very far away now. He had enjoyed himself, and hadn't he got into the club because of Spike? The fake ID didn't hurt anyone even if it was illegal. Was that so very bad?

Besides, it was pretty cool to be on a certain side of the law if you looked at Ethan and Spike. Ethan was charming and fun to be around, even if he was way too old for Xander, the young man could appreciate what his appeal was. And Spike was the personification of cool with his blond punk hair and the leather jacket and the miles of attitude.

Decision made, Xander shut off the shower before stepping out and quickly toweling off. He brushed his hair and his teeth before slipping into the clothes he had brought with him. Checking his image in the mirror, Xander smiled and hoped he was presentable enough to be accepted in this new, exciting life style.

He checked the bedroom first and when he found it empty, he bounded down the stairs to look for Spike. Noticing the light in the kitchen, the young man bounced into the room, disrupting the hush that fell over the men assembled there by announcing, "I'll do it!"

The three Englishmen turned to look at him, looks of confusion and amusement on their faces.

"Do what?" Spike asked.

Peering over their shoulders, Xander was shocked to see Spike marking a catalog of classes for the next semester at UC Sunnydale. He was obviously looking at a full schedule of literature and teaching classes. Shocked, Xander looked into sparkling blue eyes before turning to see Ethan reviewing the legal terms on a long term lease for the shop downtown. Stepping over toward the

librarian, the young man saw he had a lease as well.

"Are you moving, Giles?" he asked.

"Yeah," the older man replied. "I need to see if I can get out of my lease at the apartment if I'm going to move in here."

"You're moving in here?"

"How else are we going to be a family?" Ethan asked.

28 Turnabout is Fair

Prompt: Mount Everest

"What?" Xander asked in shock. He was expecting to be accepted into the fold with smiles and hugs, not shut out entirely. "I don't..."

"Xander, please sit down," Ethan whispered, his voice soft but strong, causing the boy to respond immediately. Sliding into the seat next to Spike, the young boy waited for an explanation.

Giles was the first to respond. "Xander, it seems you've been able to do what I have not in too many years. You have given a reason to reconsider their lifestyle."

Confused, hazel eyes turned toward the two men watching him intensely.

Ethan spoke next. "I've been on the run most of my life, Xander," he started, his gaze intense but his voice gentle. "That trip to Australia was not just for fun or a quest for knowledge. I didn't join an aboriginal tribe for the honor of doing so. I was trying to avoid being caught and punished or killed. I waited until the people looking for me had died until I brought us out of hiding. It was fun and exciting and addictive. But it was also dangerous. I've been stabbed and shot more than once. I've hidden in many awful places, done things I've been ashamed of, hurt more people than I've helped. I've run nearly everywhere. I've never been to Mount Everest, mind you, but I'd have run there as well if I thought it would save my hide."

Xander sat and listened, entranced by the story revealed to him. Some of the tale he had guessed at but he never thought Ethan had ever done anything so bad to have people try to hurt or kill him. His eyes slipped to Spike, wondering about his lover's part to play in all of this.

"Oh, yes," Ethan chuckled lightly as he followed the young boy's line of sight. "William has played his own part in this whole sordid tale. It's all he's known since he's been with me. He's been the source of several of my better plans, actually. He has his own collection of scars from our escapades, as I'm sure you've discovered on your own."

Spike chuckled lightly at that and Ethan answered it as he smacked the back of the platinum blond head. Spike scowled before settling back to listen again.

"When we came to Sunnydale, I told myself it was only to hide from the latest mistake I had made," Ethan continued. "We had a great scam going in England and we had made a great deal of money, but we had upset quite a lot of people. We could have gone anywhere, but we came here. I knew Rupert was here and it seemed like a good excuse to see him again. I tried to convince

myself that I was doing it all for a bit of fun but I found myself falling in love again."

Xander's head flew to Giles, smiling at the faint blush creeping over the older man's face. He looked back to Ethan, pleased to see the warmth and love shining in the man's deep brown eyes.

"I thought I could leave it all behind when it was time to move on from this place," Ethan said quietly with a sigh. "But now that the time has come to move on, I've discovered that I don't want to leave at all. It wasn't until you spoke your mind tonight that I even realized it, Xander. Those were powerful words, showing wisdom beyond your years. You made me see how much I was losing, what I was really risking, by leaving all this behind. I would hate to think you'd want to take that away from me now."

Shock and shame bled all the color from Xander's face as he thought that his desire for adventure might hurt this man who had cared for him like a father, much more so than his own father. "No," he whispered urgently. "I'd never want to hurt you, any of you, ever."

The smile that spread across Ethan's face was brilliant

and warmed the young boy to his core.

"So, you're staying here in Sunnydale?" Xander asked, needing to be sure. "Both of you? You're staying here with us?"

He missed the smile Giles gave him as he stared at Spike and Ethan.

"Yeah, Pet," Spike spoke finally. "We're both staying."

Xander smiled, wider than he ever had before. It had to be wrong to be so happy, Xander knew that happiness like this was fleeting and something would have to go bad soon to bring him back to earth, but for now he let himself enjoy this perfect moment.

Just this once.

29 Great Chewing Complacency

Prompt: Rocking the Boat

Xander was doing quite a bit better academically and was on track to graduate with the rest of his class. He'd changed his electives to try and get an idea of what he

might be interested in after high school. Art and photography didn't quite hold his attention and so he tried out the woodshop class. He discovered that he loved working with his hands and building something others could enjoy.

He spent time in Ethan's shop, studying different antique pieces to see what designs he liked and which ones he could replicate. The older Englishman was more than willing to help the young man learn about different styles and pieces, even going so far as to invite Xander on a trip to look for new items for the shop. The shop owner was amazed at the sable-haired boy's ability to pick out the best pieces. Xander seemed to innately find quality work with solid wood and intricate detailing. Ethan went so far as to offer Xander a place to work at the house after graduation for his own pieces. If they were as good as the older man expected, he'd sell them in his shop for the boy.

Giles moving in had a positive affect on all the men in the house. They were all happy to stay in to watch a movie or play cards after a satisfying dinner. Giles had insisted on letting Xander have his friends over every so often. It was nice for Xander to get some guy time in with Jesse, watching brainless action flicks like *Alien Versus Predator*

or *Transformers*, yelling at the tv and tossing popcorn all over. Plus he got snuggle time with his girls watching cute chick flicks like *50 First Dates* or *Elizabethtown*.

Spike gave the young boy a lot of his attention, especially when Xander still needed study help. The older boy had some harder classes that required some actual study and homework time, but he always made time when Xander asked.

Xander's counselor was amazed at the change and had begun to discuss college with the overwhelmed boy. He had never considered college before, always simply concerned about simply getting out of high school with more than a 2.0 grade point average. Now, however, higher education seemed an actual possibility.

But first he needed to pass the Exit Exam. It only took him two tries. It wasn't that the test was that hard, but he'd fallen asleep halfway through the math portion of the test the first time. It really wasn't his fault, he'd been so nervous the night before, Spike had decided to help Xander relax and study with a reward system that involved blow jobs and nipple clamps.

Xander had studied late into the night.

Too late, as it turned out. He had slept so hard that he drooled all over the test sheet and it wouldn't even read in the machine.

He did, however, pass the test with flying colors on his second try, rewards system or not.

Everything was going well. They were happy, healthy and whole. They all played their part, playing it safe and laying low, and no one rocked the boat. Xander thought there was nothing that could destroy their happy home.

Until the day the police officers showed up at their door.

30 Proclamation

Prompt: Emancipation

"But I don't understand," Xander whispered for what felt like the hundredth time that night. There were so many complicated terms and legal jargon being thrown around that the young man felt like he was going to drown in the sea of confusion.

The taller of the two police officers - Sergeant Cobb, Xander reminded himself - sighed and pinched the bridge of his nose in a gesture that Xander recognized from Giles as frustration and impatience.

"We've explained this already three times," the irritated officer growled before his partner- Officer Wash - stepped closer to Xander, squatting down to put himself at the seated boy's height before he clarified the situation.

"I know this is all very weird, but the law states that you have to live with your parents," Wash explained. "It is their responsibility to feed, clothe and care for you. Because you're living here, they can be charged with abandonment. We went over there, along with Mrs. Kroeger from Social Services, and explained it to them. They expressed to us that they do not wish to go to jail or have any legal troubles over this issue so they asked us to come over here and bring you back home."

"But those people are terrible to him!" Spike shouted, his anger finally boiling over. "They haven't even checked on him since he's been here, for Christ's sake. The things that have happened would make you ill."

The Sergeant took a step forward, all menace and anger. "Do you mean to tell me that this boy has been abused by his parents?"

"Yeah, I mean to tell you..." Spike started to yell until a firm hand reached out to grasp his shoulder tightly. Ethan's face was grim and he shook his head to quiet his son.

"What would happen if it were reported that Xander was being abused?" Ethan asked.

The two officers looked to each other as Officer Wash slowly stood before they took turns speaking.

"A report would have to be made. Then our agency and Social Services would have to come out and interview the family and Alexander."

"We would probably pull school and medical records to

determine the extent of the abuse, if any exists."

Xander watched as Spike's hands curled into fists at the accusation the officers made before sighing, "And then..?"

"Then, if the abuse claims are confirmed, Alexander could be removed from the home..."

Then the words Xander had been dreading were spoken.

"...and placed in a foster home."

Numb from the situation, Xander barely heard Spike's growl or Ethan's gasp, even though he knew Giles was cleaning his glasses without even looking.

"Couldn't he just live with us?" Spike asked. "He's been here anyway."

"Not our decision," Wash explained. "Social Services have a very strict policy about who can serve as a foster family. You'd have to apply for an interview and submit to an inspection of your home. It could be weeks before Alexander would be allowed to return."

Despair and defeat crashed down upon Xander. His head dropped with the weight of it as he refused to listen to the remainder of the conversation. He knew it had been too good to be true, things had been perfect. He'd finally had all that he ever wanted and now that dream was being ripped from him.

"Ok," he whispered as he stood, shocking the other men in the room, still deep in conversation. "Let's go."

"Just like that?!" Spike snapped as he jumped up and grabbed Xander by the shoulders, shaking him lightly. "After all this time, you're just going to get up and leave me?"

"I have to go, Spike," the sable-haired boy whispered, tears choking his voice. "What else am I going to do?"

"You know," Sergeant Cobb interjected softly, "*Living* in your home only means you have to sleep there at night. If you just *happen* to come next door after school and maybe stay for dinner most nights, that's not against the law. Even if it gets reported, there's nothing we can do about that."

"Perfect," Spike spat before he ran up the stairs at full

speed. Xander looked questioningly between the two Englishmen and the pair of police officers, wondering what was wrong with his lover.

Giles and Ethan stepped forward, the librarian rubbing the younger man's back soothingly.

"Don't worry, Xander," he comforted the boy. "We'll figure something out."

"Yeah," Xander whispered, misery and hopelessness coloring his voice. He wanted to trust them, but it all seemed so impossible.

Just then, Spike stumbled down the stairs carrying two duffle bags and Xander's backpack. The sable-haired boy frowned. Spike had run upstairs to pack his things. He was ready to get rid of him.

"Ready to go?" Spike asked, his voice harsh and angry, as he began to head for the door. Xander nodded before hugging both the Englishmen watching the scene before them. When Xander moved to follow him, Spike looked at Ethan and said, "Work this out tonight, Da. I'll see you in the morning and you can tell me what you came up with, right?"

"Where are you going?" Xander asked.

"With you, Pet," Spike whispered, trailing his fingertips through the tear tracks on the boy's wet cheeks. "There might be a law to make you stay in that hellhole they call your house but there ain't no law that says I can't stay there with you."

Xander eyes flew open wide at the declaration. He turned to look at the police officers watching them. Sergeant Cobb smiled widely as Officer Wash declared, "Blondie's right, you know. We can't keep him from staying at your house unless your parents object."

"They won't," Spike growled as he reached down to twine his fingers with Xander's before dragging the boy toward the house next door.

~*~*~*~*~

The police had left after ensuring that Xander and Spike were safe and comfortable in the basement they had converted into a private bedroom. It was musty and damp and smelled kind of funny but it was comfortable

and the boys didn't need to have any contact with the Harris' unless they chose to do so.

They slept cuddled together on the pull-out bed, Xander muttering fitfully as he was haunted in his dreams. Spike held him close, muttering nonsense words of comfort as he tried to soothe the upset boy. They woke to the sounds of Xander's parents arguing and decided to shower and leave as soon as possible.

Once they were home, Spike stalked into the kitchen. Xander followed more sedately, scared of what the older Englishmen might have discovered. He was most afraid that they hadn't found anything at all.

He froze when he saw Ethan and Giles sitting at the table with a small pile of papers.

"So?" Spike demanded. "What's all this?"

Giles smiled as Ethan pulled out the top sheet before handing it to Spike with a smile. "Court papers for Xander's emancipation."

Spike shouted, "Brilliant!" before settling down at the table to read the paperwork while Xander stood in the

doorway, wondering at the joyful expressions on the other men's faces.

"What's the matter, Xander?" Ethan asked finally as he stood and ushered the confused boy to the table, setting his breakfast before him.

"I just don't get it," Xander muttered as he shoved a forkful of flavorful eggs into his mouth. "What's this whole thing got to do with the Civil War and the whole Lincoln speech thing?"

There was a moment of silence before laughter erupted in the room while Xander began to recite the Gettysburg Address in his head.

31 When You Were Young

Prompt: Marigold

Xander was stressed as he paced in the lobby of the courthouse. He hated being in places like this, with so

many cops and social workers around. He'd had to deal with his social worker's visits once a week at his parent's house and now, here she was again. He wondered what she would say at the hearing. She had seemed supportive when he'd told her of his plans, but one could never be too sure with government workers.

Five weeks he'd spent at his parent's house. Five weeks he'd made sure to be in his basement bedroom when the social worker came to call. Five weeks he'd hated his life.

Spike had come with him every night after dinner with Ethan and Giles, but it still felt wrong sleeping under that house, hiding under the covers as he heard his parents fighting in the house above them. Spike would cuddle him and pet him as he shook, fear and rage building up inside him. They didn't have sex though, no matter how much Xander begged. Spike refused to bed him in the dank basement, even though he'd done so many things to the boy's body in the past in this very room. Now, the older boy wanted his time with his boy alone and in their own room in their own home.

Besides, Xander's mother had developed an impeccably bad scene of timing where intimacy between the two boys was concerned.

So Xander paced the hallway in the new suit Ethan had insisted on buying. It was nice and it fit Xander's body better than anything he'd ever worn before. Tailored, Ethan explained, meant he would look responsible and able to take care of himself, like he no longer required parental care.

Their case was called and the three Englishmen stood before ushering the trembling boy into the courtroom. Xander sat and listened quietly as the case was called. The judge explained what the situation was, focusing on the seriousness of the proceedings. Xander was surprised to see his parents had attended, most likely the social worker had gone and picked them up to insure they'd actually be there.

The social worker spoke first, speaking of the conditions she'd found in the house, describing Xander's fear of his father and the signs of substance abuse in their home. A snort of indignation was the only sign that his father was even paying attention to what the woman had to say. Finally, the judge was done asking his questions and Xander was called to take the stand.

The judge, a tall rugged man with a rough Southern

accent, smiled at Xander through the questioning. Xander answered each question as Giles and Ethan had prepped him.

"Yes sir, I have a place to live. I've been staying with Mr. Ethan Rayne."

"Yes sir, his son is my tutor at school."

"Yes sir, I've been working weekends at the antique and costume shop run by Mr. Rayne. I stock the shelves, log in new shipments, deliver shipments to customer's houses and clean the pieces in the store. Mr. Rayne has also let me set up a shop in the back of the storeroom where I can work on my own pieces. I've been taking woodshop in school and I'm doing quite well, according to my teachers. Ethan thinks I might be able to earn a living creating my own line of wood furniture and has been encouraging me to try new things."

The judge nodded, taking in everything Xander has to say. Finally, he asked, "Now, Son. Tell me. What was the defining moment, the one thing that let you know that it was time to break ties with your parents?"

Xander thought hard for a moment. They hadn't prepped

for this question and he had no immediate answer. He looked at Spike before glancing at Giles and Ethan for some idea of what to say. None of the men said anything, they couldn't in court, but they smiled encouragingly, as if they knew Xander would say the right thing. Finally, he turned and looked at his parents. They sat there, staring at him as if they didn't know him at all. He locked eyes with his mother, her eyes so like his own, and Xander knew the answer.

"Marigolds."

"What?" the Judge asked.

"Marigolds," Xander answered again. "My mother used to plant them along the walkway of our house every year. It was a ritual of ours. She'd go to the store and buy several flats of these beautiful yellow and orange marigolds. She'd set them out in the yard and hand me a trowel. We'd go along the walkway, digging up the dirt and making room for the pretty flowers. She showed me how deep to plant them, how hard to pack the roots into the dirt. She let me water them once we were all done. And we'd talk the whole time. Sometimes she'd tell me stories about our family or about her time in school. It really didn't matter, we just talked. It was our time to be

together, just the two of us. It made me feel special to know that my mom was doing something for the both of us. It was fun and educational and made our house pretty.

"But then one year, the day we were supposed to do our planting, she was sick. She was sick the next day, and the next day too. But she wasn't sick, not really. She was hung-over. We never planted flowers that year, or the next, or ever again really. It was like our special time was over. She didn't want to spend time fixing our house or talking to me.

"That's when I knew that I didn't matter to my family anymore."

"How old were you?" the Judge asked, his voice heavy with emotion.

"Ten," Xander answered matter-of-factly.

Looking around the courtroom, Xander noticed that his mother, the social worker and several other people had tears in their eyes, including his family, his real family. Giles smiled in encouragement as he gently rubbed Ethan's back.

"We'll take a recess while I make my decision," the Judge announced as he stood and left the courtroom.

Xander immediately left the stand and moved to sit next to Spike. Slowly, long pale fingers slipped into his own as Spike reached over to hold younger man's hand. "That was so sad, Xander," the blond man whispered.

"I lied," Xander whispered back, his head ducked so no one would see him cry.

"You lied?" Ethan asked, shocked. "About what?"

Xander looked up at the three Englishmen staring at him. "I was six."

32 Judgment Day

Prompt: Rule Number Seven

They sat in the courtroom, waiting for the judge to return from his deliberations. It was only minutes, but to Spike, it felt like an eternity. He'd been trying to take care of his boy in that awful house but it was getting increasingly difficult, what with those awful people screaming at each other all the time. Every time they fought, Xander would retreat into himself and it would take hours for the older boy to coax him out again.

The three men surrounded the young boy, trying to shield him from the looks being thrown his way. Spike glared and all but threatened the man who fathered his boy. The man didn't dare approach them, keeping his distance and sending fearful glances at the Englishmen who all but disregarded him. Jessica Harris tried to catch the boy's eye once or twice, but Spike made sure to place himself before his boy, protecting him from her now like he couldn't before.

Finally, the door to the judge's chambers opened and the bailiff called, "All rise. The honorable Malcolm Reynolds presiding."

As the judge sat in his seat, he waved to the court to sit as he called, "You may be seated."

The judge's eyes swept over the courtroom, looking at the group of men huddled together, waiting for his decision before glancing at the parents wanting to hear about their son's fate. Slowly, he sat back, his fingers steepled before his lips. He sighed before leaning forward to address those assembled before him.

Spike held his breath as he waited to hear the judgment.

"The petition for emancipation is always a difficult one," Judge Reynolds began. "It is a judgment that is rarely granted due to its implications. A minor is protected under the law, needing guidance and security in a world they don't yet understand. It is only under special circumstances that any judge would grant such a request."

Warm fingers tightened around Spike's as Xander trembled beside him. He squeezed back and stared at the judge, fearful and hopeful at the same time.

"*This* appears to be one of those circumstances," the judge continued. "I've heard some horrible stories in my career and family court seems to have some of the worst. This time, I've been moved by an unusual tale. Neglect and abuse of a child is inexcusable. The fact that

Alexander has turned out to be such a well adjusted young man is remarkable. I believe a lot of that has to do with the influence of the Rayne family taking him into their home.

"Thus it is my judgment to grant the petition for emancipation for Alexander Lavelle Harris. You will be considered an adult as of this day forward. I expect you to take that responsibility as you would at the age of eighteen. Don't make me regret that decision. Court is adjourned."

With that the judge stood and left the bench. People began to stand, to move from the courtroom. The social worker left without a word to anyone and the Harris' followed closely behind her with only Jessica whispering an apology before leaving.

Once the courtroom had cleared, Xander finally spoke.

"That was it?"

The other men chuckled. Ethan stood, holding out a hand to the shocked boy. "Come," Ethan said, a wide smile gracing his face. "We have to go give our thanks."

Spike watched as Ethan helped Xander stand before following them out of the courtroom with Giles by his side. They made their way through the halls of the courthouse before reaching an unmarked door. Ethan pushed a button next to the door before a voice called through the intercom, "Yes?"

"Ethan Rayne here to see Judge Reynolds."

The door buzzed to allow them entrance and Ethan opened the door to usher the others inside. Down the hall and around the corner, Spike followed the others until they reached a small office at the end of the hallway. Ethan knocked lightly before a muffled "Come in," was heard.

Spike watched in awe as the father walked forward to hug the judge from their proceeding. They laughed as they hugged, then Ethan pulled away slightly.

"I don't know how to thank you, Mal. I really appreciate you getting us a court date so quickly."

"Not a problem," Judge Reynolds drawled. "Anything I could do for an old friend like you. So, this is the family?"

Ethan turned quickly, looping his arm around Spike's shoulders. "Sorry, Mal. This is my boy William, although he likes to go by Spike these days. This is Rupert Giles, my partner. You probably read his report in Xander's file. And of course, this is Alexander, the newest addition to the family."

Malcolm smiled at the men assembled around him before reaching out to shake each of their hands.

"So, you set this all up?" Xander asked Ethan, confusion coloring his face.

Mal chuckled before motioning them all to sit. "Ethan called me when the petition was filed and the court date was put off for nearly three months. It's just the way the court system works sometimes. Justice can be a little slow. So I called the clerks and got a new date set a bit sooner. Ethan said it was an emergency and he was right. I was glad to be able to help."

Spike smiled as Xander's hand automatically slipped into his own, needing the reassurance.

"So, you did this for Ethan?"

"No, Xander," Mal smiled as he leaned forward to make his point. "I got the earlier court date on Ethan's request, but the judgment was based upon the facts and the law. You were emancipated by the circumstances around you Xander, and what you can achieve, not who you know."

Xander sighed in relief, sagging back against Spike, who easily took the boy in his arms and snuggled him against the back of the puffy couch.

"Remember who you are and who your friends are," Spike whispered, smiling at his father.

"Rule number seven," Ethan replied.

"What are the first six rules?" Xander asked.

The judge smiled as he leaned against his desk. "If you really want to know, we could tell you over lunch."

"That would be great," Xander remarked, returning the smile. "As long as I can pay."

"Why would you pay?" Giles asked.

"Well, I suppose I should now that I'm a responsible

adult."

The other men in the room laughed as Spike cuddled him close. "That you are, pet. That you are."

33 Guilt Upon the Conscience

Prompt: Rusting

Spike stood leaning against the old crabapple tree he'd once watched Xander hide beneath what seemed like so long ago. Three boxes sat at his feet. Three boxes filled with things that Xander wanted to take home. Three boxes that symbolized Xander's life in his parent's home, that represented his childhood.

Spike kicked one of the boxes, smirking as it clinked slightly. It's not like there was much that Xander would take from that place that Spike couldn't provide for him, but there were things that the boy would miss if he'd left them all behind like Spike wanted.

The older boy longed to have Xander forget all about the people who hurt him, to leave that old life behind, like a snake shedding an too-small skin, and start his life anew with him and his family. But Xander wasn't like that. He

couldn't just leave his old friends and his old things behind. They were a part of who Xander was and Spike wouldn't have him any other way.

Soon, Xander walked out of the basement door carrying one more box. He moved to join the blond boy in the shade. Dropping the box on top of the pile, he leaned against the reclining boy, his sable covered head resting on the shorter boy's shoulder.

"That the last of it, Xan?" Spike asked.

"Yeah," Xander replied, snuggling down into the older boy's embrace. "I couldn't find some of my older comics though. I think my mom might have sold them or thrown them out or something."

Spike snorted instead of spitting out the rude comment waiting on the tip of his tongue. He pulled the younger boy closer, snuggling the warm neck.

"Probably right, Tossers." Well, he'd tried not to make a rude comment for an entire two seconds. They rested against each other, soaking in the other's warmth and strength while they studied the house that had been the source of so much pain and grief.

"I should tell Dad to replace those," Xander whispered after several long minutes.

"Replace what, Pet?" Spike asked.

"The gutters," Xander replied, motioning toward the rusting metal surrounding the roof of the dilapidated house. "They're getting pretty bad and they could fall if he doesn't replace the rusted ones. Maybe I should go in and..."

"No, Pet," Spike whispered, tightening his arms around the body leaning against him. "You're not going back in there now that I've got you out."

Xander sighed and relaxed, nodding his head slowly. They stood in silence, simply watching as the sun set, turning the sky into an amazing cascade of colors. Suddenly, the porch light turned on and the front door opened tentatively.

Spike watched warily as the woman slowly made her way over toward them. They moved away from the tree as she approached, leaving little room between them. Jessica Harris stopped and smiled slightly, her hair falling

in front of her face as she ducked her head shyly.

"I wanted to say good-bye," she whispered just loud enough for the boys to hear. "I'm sorry things turned out like they did, but that's how it goes sometimes, right?"

Spike had to swallow hard to keep down the ire rising in him. He wanted to grab the woman and shake her, tell her that she ruined her child, leaving him to pick up the pieces. He quelled the desire, knowing that he would upset his boy by hurting his mother.

Xander remained silent as well, waiting for his mother to finish talking.

"I'd like it if you'd keep me up to date, you know, with your school stuff and all," the shy woman continued. "Just stop by once in a while, please."

Xander nodded before whispering, "Sure, Mom."

Before Spike could stop her, the woman had her arms around Xander's neck, hugging him close. The younger boy froze, seemingly unable to move, until finally he reached around to return the hug. Jessica's brown eyes met Spike's blue ones over Xander's shoulder and she

whispered, "Promise me you'll take care of him."

Spike glared at the woman, incensed at the request, as if she didn't know him at all.

"I always do," he growled.

Finally, Jessica let the boy go and Spike pulled Xander close as she stepped away. She was suddenly thrusting something into Xander's hands.

"I made you some banana nut bread," Jessica mumbled quickly. "I remembered that you liked sweet breads, right? I could never keep you out of the Twinkies and stuff like that. This is better for you."

Xander looked down at the plastic wrapped loaf in his hands. "Thanks," he whispered.

"Well, bye." Jessica blurted before rushing back into the house, locking the door and switching off the porch light.

Xander turned and smiled slightly at Spike before tossing the [bread](#) into the top box, picking up two of the boxes, leaving the other two for Spike.

"Let's get you home," Spike said, smirking at the boy. "Da will have dinner ready and I'm sure Giles has the assignments you missed today. Besides, we need to get the bedroom ready, yeah?"

Xander laughed when Spike waggled his eyebrows before he began to head to the house next door. Looking back over his shoulder, he said wistfully, "I can't believe she baked for me."

"Yeah, Pet," Spike replied before asking, "But does she even know that you're allergic to walnuts?"

"I thought so," Xander chuckled. "Maybe she just forgot or something. Who knows? Maybe Giles will eat it?"

"Doubt he'd eat anything that woman made. He'd probably be afraid she would poison him on accident."

"Too true," Xander answered. "Still it was nice."

"Yeah, she probably felt guilty for everything, but I don't think a loaf of banana bread is adequate repayment for years of neglect, Xan."

"At least she's trying," Xander offered.

"That she is," Spike conceded.

They'd reached their house and as they stepped over the doorway, Spike called out, "Da! I'm home! And look what I found on the way. Can I keep him?"

They all laughed and hugged as Xander and Spike set down the boxes. Before Ethan and Giles could steer them toward the kitchen, Xander turned to close the front door, glad to be home at long last.

Epilogue

On the Edge and Off the Avenue

Prompt: Center

The smell. Spike's favorite thing was the smell. The smell of them together.

No, his favorite thing was the sound. The sound of them moaning and sighing, the slap of skin on skin, the bed squeaking.

No, his favorite thing was the feel. The feel of the smooth skin, slick with sweat. The way they moved together, lips and hands making muscles tremble, skin sliding across silky skin.

No, his favorite thing was the taste. The taste of Xander's salty sweat as it dripped down his golden tan skin or the come that clung to his body, bitter and cooling in their afterglow.

The blond man smirked down at the panting boy beneath him. Xander had done it again, gotten his way simply by asking Spike a question he knew the older boy wouldn't be able to answer.

Growling low in his throat, Spike fell down on top of the giggling boy, nipping and licking at the sensitive throat.

"Not very nice, Pet," the older boy purred, licking a long stripe from collarbone to earlobe. "Distracting me like that."

Xander giggled as Spike licked and bit, hitting all of the younger boy's hot spots. He thrust his hips up despite the weight pressing him down, forcing Spike's cock further inside him. The older boy moaned at the sensation of sinking deeper inside his boy. Rolling his hips, Spike smirked at the tortured whimpers he was able to pull from Xander. After all this time, his boy was still needy and wanton, begging for his every touch.

Slowly, Spike pulled out, gasping at the pull of the body beneath him, as if Xander's entire being was aching to have him back inside. He sunk back home, unable to hold in the groan of pure pleasure at the hot body holding him tight.

Spike felt the tip of his cock brushing the brilliant bundle of nerves deep inside his boy's body, smirking as Xander twitched and moaned, his back arching as he sought for more.

Spike gave him more.

Setting a harsh pace, Spike began to pound into his boy, spurred on by Xander's cries and moans. He loved the sounds the younger boy made even after all this time. Soon, they were rutting and groaning, each boy racing

toward his completion. They cried out, falling over the precipice of pleasure together, riding high on the waves of ecstasy.

Spike collapsed, his weight settling heavily over the younger, but bigger boy.

They remained that way, shuddering and trying to catch their breath, until Xander squirmed, silently asking for his lover to move. Grudgingly, Spike rolled over, falling heavily on to his side of the bed before curling up against the overly warm body.

After several long moments, Xander sighed before turning to kiss the older boy lightly. Soon Spike heard the words he knew Xander was going to say.

"Can we watch it again?"

Spike chuckled lightly, shaking his head. "How many times are you going to watch it, Pet?"

Xander smiled wide, full of mirth and malevolence. "As many times as I need to."

Spike smiled as he rolled over to open the laptop, the screen immediately lighting up the dim room. Clicking

the link, Spike settled down to watch, sighing as the younger boy gathered him close. The video began to play and despite the warmth of the afterglow, Spike could feel the boy humming with excitement. Immediately, the sounds of moaning and grunting could be heard.

Xander rolled closer to the screen to get a better look, despite the fact that he'd seen it numerous times already. The camera zoomed in and focused on the two men on the bed before them slowly becoming visible as they rutted and fucked hard. Xander giggled lightly as Angel whispered, "That's it, Linds, open up for Daddy. Be a good little boy."

"Yes, Daddy," Lindsey replied in a little boy voice, the sound so ridiculous that Spike is still honestly surprised that the young Texan doesn't start to suck his thumb to complete the act. The little pink dress rucked up around his middle doesn't help.

The two boys lay back to watch the show, Xander nearly howling with laughter when Lindsey nearly starts crying when Angel spanks him. Spike's favorite part is when Angel starts cursing because he's so high he can't even come. Finally, the video ends as they both collapse, Lindsey nearly hoarse from crying and Angel shuddering

from his denied release.

Xander moved to lean over Spike, face close to the screen. "Wow, looks like there have been almost two thousand more hits since we watched it last."

"That's pretty amazing," Spike replied, "Especially considering it's only been two hours since you last checked the site."

"Soon the whole campus will know," Xander declared with pride.

Spike smiled and gathered the boy close. He was amazed at Xander's ruthlessness. Once the boy had gotten settled in his new life, he'd decided to get even with the men who had hurt him so. It had been easy for them to pick a proper punishment. Surprisingly, it had been even easier to break into the frat house and set up the surveillance equipment. Spike had been amazed at how quickly Xander picked up the art of lock picking and equipment hiding. The younger boy seemed to have a knack for knowing just where to put things to get just the right angle to humiliate the other boys.

Once they'd collected enough embarrassing video of the

boys doing drugs, talking about other students and professors at the university and engaging in embarrassing, kinky sex, Xander set up a website with a little help from Willow and Jesse.

The hardest part of the entire plan was telling Buffy. The beautiful blond had started seeing Angel when the two had met at a party and Xander immediately tried to warn his friend away from the threat. Of course, Buffy thought she knew better and continued to date the drug dealing college boy. She'd cried while watching the first video and had refused to watch the rest, although she'd been more than happy to help distribute the flyers that promoted the new website.

Word was spreading fast around both the high school and university campuses and Spike expected both boys would be leaving soon, hanging their heads in shame. At first, he'd been a little worried about destroying the educational careers of two young men, but these were two people who had tried to hurt him, hurt his boy, and they deserved whatever punishment Xander thought appropriate.

Spike smirked as he thought about Xander, how the boy had changed his life. Xander had become his guide, his

template. He'd always thought he knew who he was, what he wanted. But somehow, Xander had thrown him left of center, taking him in a direction he'd never thought he'd travel.

But his boy had taken from him as well. He smirked remembering the look of pure evil that passed over Xander's face when the website finally went live online. There was no nervousness, no pause in destroying two boys simply because they'd tried to hurt Xander and Spike. He had truly become Spike's boy.

Reaching over, Spike turned off the laptop before closing the screen. He snuggled down into their bed pulling the covers over them, pulling the younger boy close. As they finally surrendered to the pull of sleep, he was glad that he'd taken a chance on the boy next door.

The End