

Checkmate

by

Lady Cat and Estepheia

To: Quentin Travers, Council of Watchers

From: Nigel Deighton, field operative

Date: Monday, July 15th, 2001, 5:49 pm, Pacific time.

Upon arrival in Sunnydale, I traveled directly to my hotel. A call to Rupert Giles assured me that all parties in question would be at his shop that evening, and that I should rest until then. I daresay I was grateful for his suggestion; international travel has never sat well with me. The hotel, of course, was abominable. Americans have no sense of style or class. After resting for a few hours and going over my notes, I remembered from my previous visit a quaint little sandwich shop, where I had supper [receipt attached].

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Xander paced through the Magic Box proper. "You're sure we have to do this?" he asked. It wasn't the first time, or probably the last, he'd asked that question, but

he thought it was still pretty valid. "You're asking me to—to—"

"To act like an overbearing git," Spike interrupted him, also for neither the first nor the last time. Delivered in a lackluster, less than luke-warm temper, the insult didn't carry much of a sting. "Doesn't seem like that much of a difference to me."

Xander glared, but before he could toss back something equally repetitious, Willow interrupted them. "Stop it," she said flatly. "We get it, okay? This isn't going to be easy. But we don't have a choice, Xander."

"We're fortunate to have ample warning this time. If Robson hadn't called, Lord knows what would have happened," Giles pointed out. "At least we had enough time to come up with a strategy, however ludicrous that plan may be."

"I still like my chain him up idea," Xander said sulkily. "Or maybe get Warren to implant *another* chip in his head? That way we can just use a remote control and presto, no more problem!"

"Xander." The weariness in Giles' voice was new. The long-suffering, please-save-me-from-stupid-children was not, but it was the weariness that made Xander cringe.

After four weeks, life was returning to normal—well, Sunnydale normal—for all of them but Giles. Exhaustion and sorrow hung around him like an invisible, life-sucking cloud. “We understand how difficult this is, but we don’t have a choice.”

Spike made a disgusted noise. “You lot are unbelievable. Sacrifice?” He sucked hard on the remainder of his cigarette, ignoring Giles’ pointed glare towards the white square with a slashed red circle on it. “I’m the one that’s got to ‘sacrifice’ here, yet you’re all toadying up to him, tellin’ him it’ll be all right, it’s not for long.”

“It isn’t that long,” Tara tried to placate. “Just a few days, Spike.”

“Yeah, Spike, and we’re doing this for you.”

Spike got right up in Xander’s face. “Bullshit. You’re doing this because you can’t afford to lose your best fighter.”

Xander glared back at Spike, hating him more at that moment than any other. Because the bastard was right. He wasn’t doing this to save Spike from the Council. Spike could save his own hide, no matter how sad Dawn looked or how annoyed Anya got with him. But Spike was their only serious fighter and the Buffybot couldn’t be trusted. If they wanted to keep up the pretense that the

'bot is really Buffy, they needed someone to meet her kill-quota. And that meant they needed Spike. There wasn't anyone else.

Why that meant *Xander* had to be the one to undertake this little charade, he didn't know—but even Giles had assured him that he was the best person for the job. "I don't want him in my apartment," Xander said. It wasn't the most graceful of retreats, but a retreat it was.

"Then we shall have to make Spike's crypt more habitable," Giles said, picking up a stack of newspapers and passing them around. "Check for yard sales. It's ludicrous, but it looks like we are going to buy Spike a bed."

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To: Quentin Travers, Council of Watchers

From: Nigel Deighton, field operative

Date: Monday, July 15th, 8:15pm, Pacific Time

My preliminary meeting went as well as can be expected. I met the Slayer, albeit briefly, since she was called away to deal with an emergency. She seemed like her usual airhead self. Of course I made tentative inquiries prior to the meeting. It would seem that Miss Summers has both

town and Hellmouth well under control. Vampire activity is scarce, and the Slayer's victory over Glorificus keeps the lesser demons in line.

The others were cordial, if distrustful, of me. As I am not convinced of their usefulness, let alone their trustworthiness, this did not bother me. I did, however, feel they were attempting to hide something from me. I'm not certain what it is, as they were very upfront about what happened during the Glorificus attack and after. Yet there was still a level of tension in the group, particularly around the vampire, Spike, and Mr. Harris.

The vampire's nervousness is understandable. We should have dusted the creature long ago. Mr. Harris's, however, is unusual. I will investigate further.

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"So, now what?" Xander asked.

"Now we wait." Spike told him.

Wait? Easier said than done, Xander thought, forcing his gaze to roam through Spike's refurnished crypt. There was a bar, stocked with some of Giles's glasses and bottles, an old rug, a bedside table, and a huge four-poster bed that Xander pointedly wasn't looking at. That way he didn't have to look at the half-naked vampire in

it, or take in the shocking contrast of naked, milk-white skin against black, satin sheets.

Manacled wrists resting on the pillow above his head, Spike lay sprawled on the bed, one leg stretched out, one knee pulled up, kneecap peeking out from under the shiny black fabric, looking more comfortable than he had any right to be. Xander had insisted on the sheet, hence the *half*-naked, but the soft material only underlined what it was supposed to hide, the sharp edges of Spike's hipbones, the flat, muscled abdomen, and the outline of his manly bits. Xander, unlike Spike, was anything but comfortable.

But if Xander didn't look at Spike, the only thing his gaze could linger on was the assortment of... well, one couldn't really call them toys, because hey, toys were Legolas figures or X-Wing models, not paddles, riding crops, and butt plugs. Xander shuddered and wrenched his gaze away. The ceiling! The ceiling was safe. Not pretty with its rough hewn rocky surface, but safe.

"You really think this will work?"

"One look at this Penthouse-o-rama and he'll jump to the right conclusions," Spike assured him.

"Which, just for the record, are the wrong conclusions," Xander hastened to add.

"Like you're the paragon of heterosexuality," Spike snorted.

"You better believe it, buster," Xander said.

The smooth rustling sound of satin against skin and the clink of the chain indicated that the vampire was changing his position again, probably into something even more lewd, but Xander wasn't looking. No sir!

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Transcript of a taped interview between Council field operative Nigel Deighton (from now on referred to as ND) and Miss Anya Emerson Jenkins, (from now on AEJ).

Time and place of the interview: Espresso Pump, Wednesday, July 16th, 5.30 pm Pacific time.

ND: Miss Jenkins, I would like to ask you a few questions about the vampire you are acquainted with, William the Bloody.

AEJ: I'll have a tall triple shot fat free latte macchiato and a blueberry muffin—you are paying, right? After all, time

is a valuable commodity, so you should recompenses me for my time.

[Sounds of beverages being bought—receipt attached]

ND: As for the vampire, William the Bloody—

AEJ: Oh no, don't call him that! He hates that. His name is Spike now. Only very few people are allowed to call him William. Like Drusilla, she could call him whatever she liked, not now, of course, but when they were still together—

ND: Miss Emerson, you seem to know him quite well—

AEJ: Oh no, Xander talks a lot about him. [At this point Miss Jenkins began to get nervous—ND.] Not that Xander and Spike... I mean it's not what you think. Not at all. They're just close—I mean bitter enemies, after all, what else would they be? (fidgets) As Xander's best friend I know everything there is to know about him, all his kinky little secrets (laughs).

ND: Aren't you and Mr. Harris—

AEJ: Involved? No, of course not, I mean, sure, we're practically engaged. (laughs)...

ND: What is, in your opinion, the reason for Spike's continued presence in Sunnydale?

AEJ: (evasively) Oh. Uh, I don't know. You will have to ask Spike about that. (checks watch) But I wouldn't visit his crypt now. They— He's always very busy at this time of day. Very busy. Tomorrow! Try seeing him tomorrow. Anyway, I really have to get back to the shop now, as I am expecting a few deliveries...

[End of Transcript]

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'The eagle has taken off!' Willow's Obi Wil Kenobi voice boomed inside Xander's head.

"Jeez Louise!" He scrambled to his feet, knocking over his soda. It spilled with a light hiss on to the already stained rug. "Can you not do this at rock concert volume?" he asked into thin air.

'Oops.' The telepathic reply came through at a more manageable level. 'Anyway, Deighton's on his way. Anya dangled the bait and he swallowed it—hook, line and—well, the sinker is your job. Break a leg, guys.'

Xander sought Spike's gaze. The vampire nodded. "Yeah, I heard. That gives us about ten to fifteen minutes. God, I need a fag. Give a fellow a hand, would you?"

"What?"

Spike nodded towards the pack of cigarettes and the ashtray that sat on a rickety bedside table, rattling demonstrably with his chain.

"What if I don't?" Xander challenged him, but his feet had already carried him towards the table. He shook a cigarette from the pack and put it between Spike's lips, before working the lighter.

"Ta, mate," Spike mumbled, causing the cigarette to bob precariously. Blue fumes rose into the dank, moldy air of the crypt. The smell was actually an improvement.

"De nada." Affecting a cough, Xander sat down on the bed with his back to the vampire, perching on the edge of the mattress as far away from Spike as possible. Oh no, Xander wasn't affected by the proximity of Spike's smooth, hairless chest, with its delicate pink nipples, the sharp outlines of the vampire's ribs, the muscled abdomen, and the thin breadcrumb-y trail of dark hair that was trying to drag his gaze into a twilight zone

where luminously white skin met jet-black satin. Nope, not at all.

Okay, so Xander's heart was doing mad somersaults, hammering in his chest like an out of control dancer yelling 'What a feeling!' to a bouncy 80s soundtrack. But since they were putting on a show for the Watcher, stage-fright was only too natural.

Xander flailed his arms in an ostentatious attempt to disperse the nicotine cloud, but whenever the cone of ash grew he silently reached over to take the offending coffin nail out of Spike's mouth and flick the ash off, before putting it back.

“Mate?

“Hmm?”

“Got an itch needs scratching,” Spike grinned.

“Oh yeah? Get a back-scratcher. I hear they’re the new in-thing.” Xander snatched the remaining cigarette and crushed it in the nearby ashtray. It was a feeble punishment with only a mere butt of the cigarette left anyway, but better than no retribution at all.

Xander was uncomfortably aware of his unbuttoned pants—a necessary prerequisite of the whole caught-in-

the-act scenario. As if pulled down by an invisible hand his zipper had started to slowly come undone, which had everything to do with gravity and nothing at all with certain bodily reactions.

Xander realized he'd been staring at a butt plug in fascination and wrenched his gaze away.

Too late. A deep, resonant chuckle told him that his fascination had not gone unnoticed.

“This is not funny, Spike,” Xander said, and added, suddenly struck by the absurdity of the situation: “None of this is.” His arm described a wide arc to encompass the crypt, the bed—with the chains—the assortment of insertable... things, and the crazy, whacked out world in which girls jumped off towers to save humankind, leaving her sister, her friends and her stalker-turned-comrade-in-arms behind to pick up the pieces.

“Course it's not,” Spike scoffed, as though picking up on Xander's mood swing. Their eyes met and something passed between them, a fleeting moment of genuine understanding maybe, if that was at all possible with a soulless killer. In any case, it lasted only a second, and that infuriating shark-like smirk was back: “Lemme tell

you what *is* funny though,” Spike mocked. “The fact that most of these toys came from *your* apartment. . .”

“Anya! They’re Anya’s! And not all of them.” Certainly not the plug he can’t seem to take his eyes off of. The one that looked like it’d slide in like butter, full and solid and perfect, provoking feelings that Xander had only ever let Anya provoke before. “And anyway, it doesn’t matter. All we have to do is convince Watcher-man that you’re under my spell, and then he goes away. So just do what I say.”

“Think you’re gonna be able to give me those orders?” There was a note of sincere worry among the normal smarmy mockage. “Seems to me like you’re the kind to take orders, rather than give ’em.”

“What?” Flushing guiltily at the—accurate, damn him—accusation, Xander sat up straighter and tried to look manly. “I’m not—what you said.”

“Oh, please. Your little woman wears the pants and you know it. You really think you can pull this off, mate? Take control?” Spike’s eyes lowered, hips moving slowly underneath the silk black sheets. Xander tried to look away, he really did. ‘Really’ wasn’t working so well, though. “Can you tell me what to do, Xander? ‘Cause it means telling me what you want. Telling me to get down

on my knees for you, naked and hard. Telling me to suck you, hold my head still while you fuck my mouth. Think you can do that?”

“No.” His mouth was bone dry. It was like a switch had gone off, and instead of the normal, slightly-annoying vampire Xander had learned to tolerate, there was now a sex god, intent on spreading his porniness throughout the world. Starting with Xander. “I don’t want to—”

Spike just smiled and moved his body in snakey patterns. “But you’ve got to, Xander. Need a Master to make this work. Think you can do that? Hold me down and take what you want from me. I’m a good lay, Xander, and I’d make it good for you. But you’ve gotta take it. Master. Make me call you that. Come on, Harris, make me your bitch.”

‘What a Feeling’ had long ago given way to something in the Nine Inch Nails repertoire and Xander was moving towards the bed as if pulled there by steel wires. “Anya gave me some suggestions,” he admitted as he crawled up Spike’s body. “She thought I should call you names. Like whore.”

“Yeah, that’s it. Call me names, Xander.” Spike laughed, but his voice was suddenly husky and breathless.

“Bitch.” It felt strange saying that word without a catty reason behind it, but Spike open-mouthed moan helped. “Whore.” Another groan and oh, god, he was starting to get hard. “Gonna fuck you. Gonna flip you over and fuck you dry, Spike. And you’re gonna let me.” That was something Anya had made him practice, working through the absurd giggles until he could deliver it the way his director wanted. Now, there were no giggles. Not with Spike starting to writhe against the sheets, head tossed back so every twitch of his Adam’s apple was visible.

“Master,” Spike panted, pleading. “Yes, Master. Fuck me, Master, please.”

It should be clichéd and stupid, but it wasn’t. “Oh, yeah. Gonna make you bleed for me, fuck you until you scream.”

Spike let out a deep, guttural moan of need—that abruptly cut off. So did the writhing, his attention focused on the crypt above their heads, where the sound of a door slamming shut could be heard.

“Think that did it,” Spike said calmly. “Wanna get off of me, now?”

Xander flushed, too confused and angry to obey. “What the hell just happened?”

“Give us the key ,” Spike demanded. “I can't wait to get out of these.” And when Xander continued to gape at him, he explained: “Heard his Watcheriness poking around upstairs. Since you were dithering, I figured I'd just help it along a bit.”

“‘Help it along’?” Xander repeated, aghast. “That wasn't helping! That was—that was manipulating! And—and almost cheating! And manipulating!”

“The key.” Spike reminded him, impatiently rattling his chain.

Xander's eyes narrowed. “What if I don't?”

Grumbling, Spike started feeling around above his head on the end of headboard where Xander had placed the key. “You've got no right to be such an insufferable tosser about this, you know. It's my reputation that's shot to bloody tatters. Being the Slayer's lapdog was one thing. But pet to a bloody human boy? One that looks like *you*?” Spike's sharp gaze left no doubt as to what he thought of Xander's clothes and physique. “I just know it's gonna end up in that bloody lady-Watcher's thesis.”

Xander was aware of Spike's disdain for him. He was also aware that Spike was more concerned about his precious reputation than actually insulting Xander—it was a reflex,

something they did to pass the time. But this time, it only served to prod Xander's anger and misplaced arousal into a flame.

Leaning forward, he snatched the key away from Spike's questing fingers and dangled it in front of Spike's face. "And what if I don't?" he asked. His voice was dry and cracked and he was still hard. So hard. "You're a tease, Spike. What if I call you on your bluff?"

Chained up with manacles that had once held a Slayer, pinned underneath a guy that was solid and heavy enough to take whatever Spike threw before the chip went off— there was no way out. No way Spike could win. Checkmate—and Spike knew it.

Xander remained still as pale blue eyes glared up at him, brimming with hatred and defiance. Spike was hard, though. Xander could see the outline of Spike's cock underneath the black silk. All Xander had to do was go a little bit further. Take what the cocky bastard had always offered, with every twitch of his body and every unforgivable word that had ever come out of his mouth. And he could do it, too. He knew he could. Just as soon as Spike stopped looking at him like that; as though Spike knew he was screwed either way.

Resignation and bitterness weren't a good look for Spike.

Xander leaned forward again. Spike tensed underneath him, an instinctive confirmation. Offering a tight smile, Xander unlocked the manacles, removing them before climbing off entirely. Buttoning up his pants, he kept his back to the bed as Spike dressed.

“Wish I could’ve seen his face,” Xander said quietly. “Lame, sure, but giving Spike peace-offerings was still a new thing for him.”

“Dunno which probably shocked him more,” Spike replied in the same tone. He sat on the bed to pull on his boots, looking amused. Forced, a little, and tentative, but real. “A vampire playing sub, or a sadistic fuck of a human disguised as the Slayer’s best friend.”

Feeling the tension drain away with the reintroduction of their normal bitching, Xander made a sappy face at him. “You say the sweetest things.”

“Wanker.”

“Bottom-boy.”

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To: Lydia Chalmers

From: Nigel Deighton

Date: Tuesday, July 16th, 10:13am, Pacific time

My flight leaves in an hour. This is possibly the first meeting with the Slayer to not end in some sort of drastic manner—someone seems to always get fired, like poor Roger or that Wyndam-Pryce fellow a couple of years ago. I have also discovered what it is the Slayer's friends attempted to hide from me. Details when I arrive, but suffice to say, I do not believe that William the Bloody is on the list of potential methods of killing the Slayer, should we need to do so. His attentions have shifted. Once I've reported to Mr. Travers, I'll be happy to let you in on all the sordid details—over a nice bottle of Glenlivet and a game of chess, perhaps?

The End