



Pairing: S/X

Rating: NC17

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Warnings: Bad language, strong sexual content between M/M.

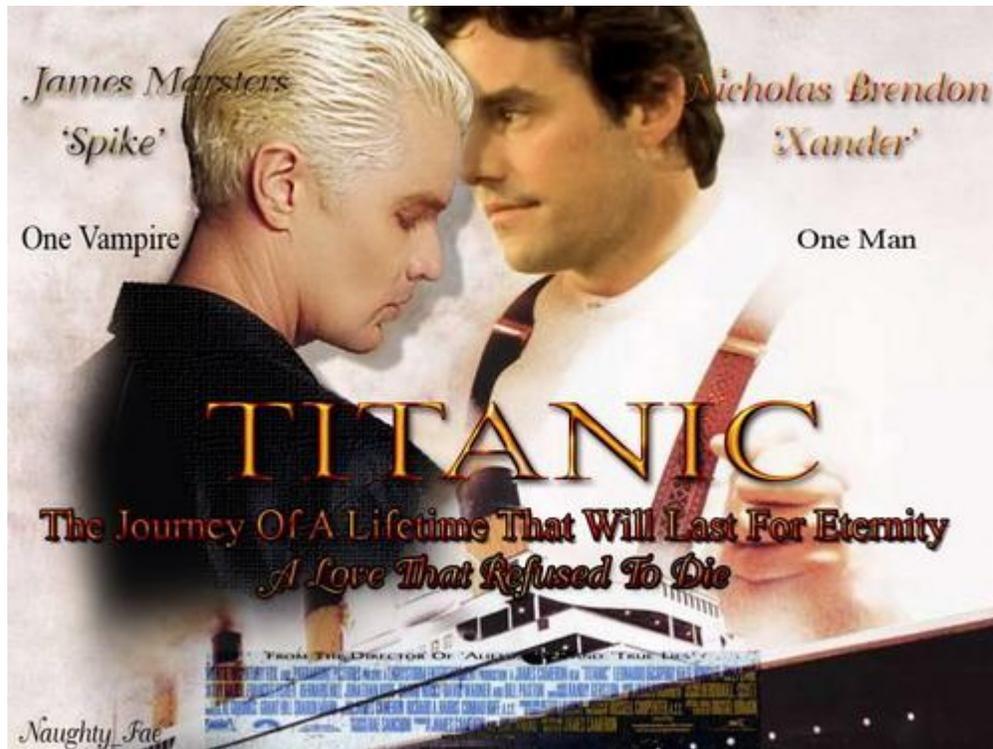
Second warning: Although I did do a lot of research, this story is not intended to be an exact historical account so please don't scream and pounce on a detail or two that may not be entirely accurate.

Credit: The snippets at the tops of the pages are from a web site entitled "Titanic, A Time Line of Events" Earl Chapman on the Titanic Discussion List originally published this chronology of events. Chapman modified it slightly in 1997. The 1997 version formed the basis of this timeline.

Summary: AU. It is the spring of 1912 and Xander Harris, who has been living with relatives in Ireland, is heading home. As a gift of love, he was booked passage on the maiden voyage of the Titanic with the promise that it will be the adventure of a lifetime.

Author's note: This story is NOT a retelling of any of the Titanic movies. It is the tale of one man and one vampire forgotten by history and the destiny they both find on this doomed crossing.

*As always, thanks to Petxnd for the wonderful banners and the valued friendship
Spelling and punctuation checked by the gracious
Silk_Labyrinth*



The Crossing

by
BmblBee

*When man invented the wheel, he ruled the earth.
When he built the Titanic, he conquered the seas.*

Part One

"You all packed?"

Xander folded the last of his heavy cotton shirts and he placed it in the large valise. He then closed the lid and buckled the straps that fit snugly around it and he set it off the bed and onto the floor by his feet. He hung his head, put his hands in his suit pockets and found a small, quiet voice. "Yes, Sir. I think that is everything. Uncle Paddy, Sir, I'm....."

"Don't be long, boy. The carriage will be here in a few minutes to take you to the dock. I have a letter of explanation for you to deliver to your father when you arrive in New York. It says nothing of the indiscretions or misunderstandings. It says only that the arrangement between you and my niece, Anya, did not work out compatibly and that you have shown less interest in the [employment opportunities](#) that you were offered and have expressed a desire to return to your native land. After much consideration, the missus and I deem it best all around to comply and we have booked your passage."

Xander flinched. Indiscretions and misunderstandings. Such a polite way of describing the horrifying experience of being caught in the small room over the carriage house, naked, rigid and in passion's grip with Danny Osborn, the blacksmith's apprentice.

He had until then been praised for his gentlemanly restraint in his courtship of the lovely and very eager, Miss Anya Patrick. He had taken their relationship very slowly despite knowing that the inevitable result was to be a lifelong commitment.

It was why he was sent here two years ago. It was the arrangement, the deal between two distant cousins in two faraway lands. One, a bartender in a small tavern in the Bowery of New York with a son that he had hoped to give a better future to, and the other, a successful factory owner in Ireland with a stepniece and no suitable prospects. It was decided through lengthy correspondence that Xander would travel to Ireland and find a new life.

He would be given the opportunity to work his way

up and one day, if all went as planned, take over the management of the fabric and woolen mill as Paddy had no sons of his own. He would earn this position through the matrimony and subsequent providing of several fat babies who would fill Paddy and Emma's house with love and family.

Things had not gone as planned. For any of them.

"Sir, I just wanted to say....."

When Xander lifted his face, he realized he was alone. The portly, pink faced older man had gone to tend the final details. Or maybe gone to avoid further discussion and contact with a young man he had invested so much emotion in only to be so crushed and shocked by.

With a sigh, Xander sat back down on the edge of the small bed in the room that had been his for the past two years. He looked all around. A bed. A dresser with a mirror and a wash stand with pitcher and bowl. It was sparse. It was plain. It was the most wonderful place he had ever lived in and it

broke his heart to leave it.

This was his biggest shame and regret. Paddy and Emma were good people. They had taken him into their arms, their home and their hearts from the moment he arrived on the emerald shores of the old country. At just seventeen years old, he was filled with so much hope that this new life would squelch all those terrible urges that consumed his mind and body. And for a short time it did.

"Xander? Honey? Are you all ready?"

Xander quickly swiped the back of his hand over his eyes to erase any stray tears that would betray his manhood. He subtly sniffed and he sat up straight as the chubby woman sat down beside him. As she softly spoke, the gentle lilt of her accent twisted his gut and broke his heart.

"Xander, you listen to me. You are still a young man, barely on the turn of nineteen years. We all have a path to take through this life and sometimes it takes a while to find the right road. This wasn't the road

for you and Anya was not to be your traveling companion but there is someone waiting for you."

Unable to control himself any longer, Xander threw himself at the older woman and sobbed as his arms circled her ample waist. "I'm so sorry I let you down. I really wanted this to work. I wanted to be everything you and Uncle Paddy wanted me to be. You have been so good to me and I.....I....."

Emma held the crying boy close to her bosom and rocked him lovingly. "Shhh. Xanny, my boy, your Uncle Paddy and I love you as though you were our own son. Nothing will ever change that. We aren't sending you home because we are ashamed of you or don't want you here. We are sending you home because this is not where your life lies. You can't live here and pretend to be what other people want you to be. Anya deserves better and so do you. You are a good boy, Xanny and you will one day soon be a good man. There is just one lesson you need to learn before that can happen. Always remember, Xanny, to thine own self be true. Stop trying to please everyone else and find your own happiness.

When you can do that, you will be a man on your own life's destiny."

Xander pulled away and rubbed his red puffy eyes. He couldn't imagine his life without this woman who had been a true mother to him and he again regretted that he couldn't just suck it up and suffer through a marriage and life with Anya just so he could stay here. He cursed this affliction that made him twisted and sick. He was what the parish priest would call an abomination.

It was what made his own parents keep him at arms length. Ever since he was very young they had recognized that there was a shortfall in him. He was their only child and he was not enough. They grew cold and distant. He shuddered when he imagined them reading the letter telling of his homecoming.

"How can I ever find happiness when I am like this? Why did this happen to me? Why can't I be what I am supposed to be?"

Emma just laughed and ruffled his hair. "Silly young

laddie. You are exactly the way you are supposed to be. Why was I born to be left handed? Why is your Uncle Paddy's right ear so much lower than his left? Why do the birds cringe and fly away when I try to sing my beloved church hymns? We are all the way God made us, Xanny. There is a reason for it all and someday, when you least expect it, you will find love with another just like you."

Xander sniffled and looked into her watery green eyes for the truth. What he found was a confirmation that she honestly believed what she said and it gave him hope. She then patted his hand and reached into her apron pocket. "Here you go. Here is the ticket for your passage. You should be excited. You are to sail on the most important ship in all the world. The Titanic! It is our special gift to you. It is said to be so fancy you will forget all your troubles. Now, we couldn't afford first class but you aren't in steerage either. You have a small cabin in second class. You will have about a week before you dock in New York. Take the time to look inward, Xanny. Enjoy the holiday and when you arrive, send us a cable to let us know you got there safely. We

will write. We will always love you and someday, when you are settled, you will come back to us. You hear?"

Before Xander could burst into a fresh round of tears, Paddy's voice boomed from the living room of the house.

"Carriage is here! Time's a wastin' Hop, Boy. Hop. Hop."

Part Two

Xander had no idea what to expect. His time spent in Ireland had centered around the lush green countryside on the outskirts of Queenstown and the few times he went to the city, he had been with the family and stayed to the more respectable parts of town.

The very thought of the ports where the ships were

docked was foreign, frightening and more than a little bit exciting. His arrival two years ago through the same harbor on low passage aboard a working troller had arrived at night. When they docked, he had been whisked away on horseback and observed none of the terrain, told by Paddy that there was nothing worth seeing.

Now he was to return to the ships for his departure from the adopted land he loved. The carriage had collected him nearly an hour ago and the sad and heart wrenching goodbye had been made somewhat easier when Paddy unexpectedly drew him into a crushing bear hug. "God's love and protection be with ye, me lad. Find yerself and return back to us."

Xander had been unable to do more than nod, his face brushing against the coarse wool of Paddy's jacket. It was still early spring and the small country cottage had a fire in the hearth and a nip in the air. There was no more need of apologies or explanations. There was only the love of a Father for a Son. Parentage that superceded blood ties.

Xander was loved. It was all he needed.

With one last look between them, Xander did his best to smile before collecting his carry all and climbing into the waiting carriage for the long trip through the city. His ticket was safely tucked into his inside breast pocket but he found himself repeatedly patting his jacket to assure himself that it wasn't lost or waylaid.

In addition, Paddy had given him a few bob to see him through. Last night, with the admonishment of keeping silent, Emma had done the same. There was no going back. Xander turned to face the road ahead and he knew in his heart that his life in Ireland was over.

"Tis an exciting day, Lad"

Xander shook his head to clear it before realizing that the carriage driver was speaking to him. "Sir?"

"I said. Tis a landmark day. A young laddie like yourself must be all a quiver with excitement to be

a sailin' on the great Titanic."

Xander leaned forward so the driver would not have to shout to be heard. As he spoke, he could see his breath in foggy puffs of warm air and he tugged his jacket closer around his chilled body. Winter had been a colder than normal one and although it was, by the claim of the calendar, early April, warm days were showing no signs of being in a hurry to arrive. "I guess I hadn't though too much about it. Is it a big ship?"

The driver clicked his tongue and snapped the reins, encouraging the horse to pick up the pace and the carriage jolted over the rough pot holes in the road. His head turned to look at his passenger with surprise before he answered.

"Aie! Tis the pride and magnificence of the White Star Line. Have ye never heard of the great ship, the Titanic? Tis the biggest thing ever built in Belfast and tis said that God himself had a hand in her creation. Tis historic it is. The Lady's maiden voyage and you are lucky enough to be a part of it. Tis

something to be tellin' your kiddies and grandkiddies when ye are old and grey."

This time when Xander's body shivered, it was more in thrill than the damp cold. His sadness was taking a back seat as his imagination was starting to paint pictures of a giant ship and lots of people and he suddenly couldn't wait to get there. When he had arrived just two years earlier, his father had paid a bartered passage and the sailing had been arduous and taxing. He suffered bouts of sickness and the men aboard scared him with their crude and cursing ways.

At seventeen he had been young, sheltered and inexperienced in life. The trip had been long, dirty, hungry and lonely. He was terrified of arriving in a foreign country and convinced that his guardians would be cold and unemotional as were his parents. The return trip was not an experience he had been eager to repeat.

Now, however, the cabby's words, combined with a young man's sense of adventure, had his soul

soaring and he wanted to take it all in. He wanted to remember every detail for when he was old as though somewhere in his heart, he knew this would be the high point of his life. He longed to store it all in his mind and heart. If he had to make this trip, he wanted to really live it.

Xander's head snapped in all directions as he attempted to see everything. The sights of the shifting landscape as it changed from the rolling hillsides and fields of green to the bustling city. The echo of one horse's hooves pounding against the dirt road to a virtual army of tethered beasts traveling in every direction, snorting and shuddering against the cold and transporting a seemingly limitless population of people to God knows where. And loud! Xander hadn't known the world could be so boisterous.

People shouting from windows, overflowing from taverns, laughing and celebrating life and companionship. Men arguing, some cheerfully, some not. Neither of which drew concerned looks by others passing them on the streets. Cats

screaming and dogs barking. His ears had never known a volume of this level and confusion. It was too much and Xander covered his ears with his warm, gloved hands.

As they turned and trotted through the cramped, densely populated alleyways of the tall tenement buildings, Xander noticed windows slightly opened and pans of food setting to cool on the sills. That was when his sense of smell came to the forefront. Meats and fish cooking in pots of heady spices, onions and garlic. Pies made of sweet, syrupy fruits and the distinct odor of alcohol. Foreign recipes Xander was certain he had never tasted. This was nothing Emma ever served.

But just when Xander thought he had seen it all, that he could no longer be surprised, the cabby leaned and called back to him. "Look, Boy. Look up ahead and smell. Can you smell it? That's the ocean, Boy. The great mysterious, black ocean. Home of the sirens and the sea serpents."

Xander sat bolt upright and inhaled deeply. It was

incredible. He didn't remember this the last time he sailed and wondered if it was a different ocean. Maybe a different world, or perhaps he was just a different Xander. He could smell it. He could smell the ocean and when he licked his lips and tasted the salt in the air, he knew they were close.

Suddenly, as they turned a bend in the road, it all burst to life in front of him and before he could stop himself, Xander shot to his feet. The cabby roared with laughter when the horse lurched and Xander fell back onto the seat in an ungraceful heap. Still, he was too overwhelmed and delighted to bother being embarrassed.

He again jumped up and held fast to the back of the cabby's seat as he pointed off in the direction of the most activity. "Is that it? OH MY GOD! Is that it? It's so huge! I have never seen anything like that in my life!"

The cabby nodded as he maneuvered his carriage through the milling crowds of people and cargo on the bustling port. "Ain't never been anything like

that. She's the Titanic, Boy. Most modern ship in the world."

When he finally decided he wouldn't be able to get any closer, the cabby pulled up on the horse and brought it to a stop. Xander would have to walk the rest of the way himself. He didn't mind. His adrenalin was surging as he hopped down, dragging his holdall with him. Briefly recalling Paddy's instruction, Xander reached into his pocket and pulled out a couple coins which he handed to the driver with his polite appreciation. "Thank you, Sir."

The cab driver smiled and tucked them away. "You are very welcome, young man. A word of advice. The world of the Titanic is a big one and not everyone means you well. Hold tight to your purse and always watch yer back."

As expected, the driver's words of wisdom blended indistinguishably with the roar of thousands of other voices as Xander rushed headlong into the mobs of passengers waiting to climb the gang plank for the adventure of a lifetime

Part Three

Thursday, April 11th, 1912

Titanic arrives at Queenstown, Ireland. It is her last stop before heading across the Atlantic. It is from this port that the last known photograph of the Titanic is taken. At 1:30 PM the starboard anchor was raised for the last time and the Titanic departed on her first transatlantic crossing, bound for New York.

It was mind boggling and the most visually stunning thing Xander had ever seen. Even his most exaggerated mental images of it paled in the face of reality.

It was massive as it consumed the entire skyline. It was beyond a ship. It was a huge, steel, floating walled city crawling with activity. Thousands of

people were milling and moving around on the decks while others were hanging over the side rails waving farewell to envious family and friends left behind on Irish soil.

Although Xander had no one who had come to bid him bon voyage, he too hung over the railing, caught up in the thrill of the day, he arched his arms high over his head, shouting his good byes to anyone on shore who glanced his way.

Xander knew the ticket in his pocket clearly identified his cabin number, but he was in no hurry to go below and locate it. Instead, Xander stood on the main deck with his suitcase at his feet and he reveled in the hustle and bustle of the mobs.

He was surprised by the intermingling of all classes of passenger, everything from the fur and diamond drenched women of high society to the tattered wool coated men of the lower working class. He suspected that once underway, that friendly companionability would end, but for now, this was all about sharing the pleasure of travel. It was about

the Titanic.

In direct contrast, the far end of the ship was strictly business. It was an organized disorganization of hundreds of muscular men toting and transporting crates, steamer trunks and cargo into the huge open hulls of the ship's lower levels.

He had arrived early in the afternoon and now the day was late. The hours had passed by in the blink of an eye and Xander nearly jumped out of his shoes when the boat's huge furnace towers blasted out a warning that the time for departure was near. The sound roared in his ears and he felt the vibration of it through the wood planking of the deck as it ran up his legs. It was as if the ship were alive. A humongous, fire breathing dragon of ancient myth and legend.

For a brief moment, Xander was frightened. A small voice told him to run, jump ship and flee back into the safety of the arms of Paddy and Emma, but he quickly regained his composure. He was not a boy any longer. He was a young man and it was time to

begin life as a man.

The ship's horn blasted a second time and he watched as lovers kissed and families embraced one last time before those who were not to go cried, clung and gradually walked back down the long gang plank.

Those left on deck were the privileged. The lucky. And he was one of them. He could feel in his bones the very importance of this event and he knew without a doubt that he would remember today for the rest of his life.

Clinging to the chest high railing, Xander hung over and watched as the ship's plank was slowly removed. The umbilical cord that connected it to the safety of the shore was severed and a thrill ran up his spine when the huge vessel jolted with the first movement as the Titanic began its long reversal away from the dock.

The shouts of the passengers to the ground below reached a frantic crescendo before gradually falling

to near silence as the distance between ship and land stretched to a nonreachable distance. And for a moment, time, space and the passengers seemed to stop and fall silent. Then, just as suddenly as it began, the pause ended and a new, renewed level of excitement and activity kicked in.

From seemingly nowhere, the decks suddenly swarmed with the crew and deckhands who weeded through the masses and tersely checked tickets directing the passengers to the areas of the ship that best suited their station in life.

The cast system was alive and well on the Titanic after all.

As second class, Xander was treated as less than the rich and privileged, but from what he had observed, much better than the emigrants and working poor who were rapidly being hustled out of sight and down to the lowest level where they would sleep in cots, several dozen to a dorm room. Xander was again overwhelmingly grateful for Paddy's generosity.

The rest of the day was spent locating his cabin and settling in before dressing for dinner. It had been a long and emotional day and eating had not been on his mind or schedule but as Xander finished straightening his tie and suit coat, his stomach rumbled loudly and he realized just how hungry he really was.

With a quick efficiency, he unpacked his sparse belongings into the wall cabinet. Although he didn't own much, he was no stranger to hand washing a few things out in the sink to stay fresh. No, he had all he needed and wasn't one for dreaming and wishing.

A small folder placed at the bottom of his neatly made bunk bed explained the rules and regulations of travel on the Titanic. It pointed out the importance of all the passengers adhering to the schedules and areas that were assigned to them without deviation. It stated that with such a huge number of people and activities going on at all times, the crew had to be firm in their insistence of

compliance.

It went on to describe what activities and decks could be used by First class, Second class, and according to Xander's interpretation, fuck Third. It explained times for meals and before he could finish reading, he heard two dings of a bell indicating his hallway was being called to dinner. Tossing the paper on his bunk, Xander bolted from the room and rushed for the dining hall.

"Bonjour. Commen t'appelles-tu?"

Xander's head snapped to the left and he was surprised to see a pretty young blond woman sitting beside him. He had been so focused on finding the table and seat assigned to him that he hadn't paid any attention to who was also seated there. "Huh? Como who?"

"Ah, oui, an Americana. You speak no French?"

Xander blushed and fumbled with the smooth linen napkin that rested next to his blue and white

trimmed plate. He regretted his lack of refinement and education. "No. No French. You speak English?"

The girl smiled. "Petite. A bit. I have no see you before. You get on today? My name is Yvette."

Xander's eyes picked up the movement of the waiters who were moving about the room delivering plates of food, pitchers of water and baskets of bread and his mouth watered. "Hi. I'm Xander. Yeah. I've been living with relatives in Ireland but now I'm going back to the States."

Yvette leaned fractionally closer and batted her eyes demurely. "I am travel with my Mother and sister. We shop in New York for a wedding dress for Monique. It is romantic, no?"

Xander turned his head to fully look at the lovely young woman beside him. His eyes blatantly roamed down her face to stare at the proud, perky breasts that stuck straight out and he wondered if maybe he really could change. Perhaps it would just take the right woman. Maybe Yvette.....

Nope. He was still Xander and right now all he wanted was a full stomach and a good night's sleep

Part Four

Supper at home with Emma and Paddy was a relaxed, easy going time of informal reach and grab. It was familiar foods and limited options. It was comfortable. But this was 'DINNER'. This was an occasion. An event.

Xander was amazed by the efficient and obviously practiced routine of the waiters who flooded the [dining room](#) with course after course of incredible culinary delights that teased and tempted the nose and eyes as well as the palate. It started with soups and salads and went to meat and vegetables. By the time the desert cart was wheeled out, Xander was ready to explode.

Part of him wondered if this was intended to fill him up for the entire crossing and he would not be given another meal till they docked in New York. His bulging stomach thought he could probably live

with that.

The entire served meal had lasted for nearly two hours and Xander spent the time observing and enjoying. The dining room was enormous and filled to capacity. Couples, families and singles, like himself, all talking, laughing, trying to be heard over the din and clatter of plates, glasses and other diners.

He too found enjoyment engaged in pleasant, light conversation with his table companions. Besides Yvette, who continued to lean uncomfortably close, Xander was flanked on the right by an older gentleman and his wife. The Websters. He was a store owner who loved to speak at great length of the women's shoes he sold and the newest fashions he had gotten in France. Xander struggled to feign interest.

Directly across from them sat the love birds. Mr. and Mrs. Henry Tinner. Married for just three days, they still found it nearly impossible to keep their hands from each other. A situation the Websters

found very uncomfortable and improper. Yvette's opinion was much more continental.

When he wasn't trading idle chit chat with the others, Xander spent his time marveling at the wonders of the Titanic and had to admit, it was everything the cabby had promised, and ever so much more. He couldn't wait till tomorrow to get out in the light of day and explore its decks and rooms. For now, he spent the duration between [courses](#) oogling the space around him, still amazed that he was really here.

The ceiling of the massive hall was at least fifteen feet high and contained no less than twenty incredible crystal chandeliers that flooded the room with a glorious golden light. It made Xander wonder, if this was second class what was first like? He imagined it must be surrounded with the pearly gates and St. Peter himself had been hired to seat the guests and serve the wine.

"You are enjoy the dinner?"

Xander slumped back in his chair and smiled at Yvette.

"Oh, God. So much food. I think I might explode."

She laughed her well practiced, coy, tinkerbelle laugh, dabbed her napkin at the corners of her mouth and batted her long, dark eyelashes. "You must, how you say, pace yourself. Take only a few bites of each course and send back the rest. You are not expected to eat all that is served you."

Xander nodded. He knew that made sense, but it went against what he had been taught about the sin of wastefulness. Everything about this trip was a new experience. There was so much to learn and he wanted to know it all. He wondered if Paddy knew it would be this way.

Gently, Yvette laid a small delicate hand over Xander's. "Perhaps a stroll on the deck would be nice? I would love to go, but it would not be proper, a young single woman alone. Viens avec moi?"

Xander frowned. A walk out in the chilly, night air, looking out over the huge, endless, vast ocean was exactly what he wanted. But not with her. He knew any encouragement and he would be stuck with her for the rest of the crossing. He didn't want to appear rude, but a clingy silly girl would spoil everything. Besides, Xander Harris was no fool.

He may have lived a somewhat sheltered life but he knew the look of matrimony in a young woman's eyes. He had seen it in Anya's for months before it was slowly replaced by a resignation then a sorrow that he regretfully understood was his responsibility. He would not let that happen again. No matter what he decided to do about his strange mental disorder, he would never lead another woman on like that again.

So, with a yawn and an exaggerated stretch, Xander gave his patented, apologetic puppy eyes and goofy grin. "I'm sorry. That sounds great but I'm bushed. It's been a long day and I think I'll turn in, but, hey, Mrs. Webster said her and her husband were going to walk the deck, I'll bet you could go with them."

Before Yvette could conceal her horror and protest, Mrs. Webster threw a fleshy arm around Yvette's small shoulders.

"Oh, that's great, Hun. Timothy and I would LOVE to have you tag along. That will be exciting. We just adored France and you and my husband can talk all about them great French shoes."

Yvette spun quickly in her chair to fully face Xander. Her lovely blue eyes spoke volumes as they begged him to rescue her from this fate worse than death. Xander pretended not to notice and instead, jumped to his feet and dropped his napkin by his plate. With a smile and a nod to each of his table mates, he then stepped away and walked, whistling, with his hands in his pockets, from the room.

The moment he opened the door, the cold night wind slapped him in the face and caused a violent shudder to wrack his body. The sky was overcast, blocking out the moon and stars and the deck he now stood on was nearly deserted save one or

two women banished with their foul smelling cigars.

The contrast between this and the warmth, light and activity just inside the small steel doorway was startling but to return for the physical comfort wasn't a consideration. Instead, Xander moved slowly across the wooden deck towards the railing.

The fog that surrounded him was wet, salty and deep as it seeped through his woolen jacket and pants. Nights in Ireland had been cold and damp but nothing like this! Xander pulled his coat tighter around his body but made no shift toward the area of the second class cabins.

He walked over and placed his arms along the rounded tops of the smooth, polished railings and he leaned over to look down. The ocean. The Atlantic. It was mind boggling. A huge, vast crater in the surface of the planet filled with water and teeming with unseen life and treasures.

Xander drew in a deep breath of salt water and air as he watched the sides of the massive ship cut

cleanly through the waves leaving very little wake in its path. The water was black. Completely opaque and Xander leaned even further oddly desperate to see beneath its surface.

"Shouldn't lean so far, Pet. Might accidentally tumble over and be fish food before anyone knows you've gone."

The voice, only inches from his ear startled him so unexpectedly that Xander jumped back and stumbled away.

"Wha? Oh, Yeah. Thanks, I....I guess I wasn't thinking."

The stranger tipped his hat slightly and smiled. It was so dark, Xander could not see his face but he could make out the outline of his form. A man. Shorter than he was. Trimmer. Dressed in black with a long overcoat and a hat with a brim that rode low over his eyes.

"I really should know better, it's just that the ocean

is so amazing." Xander walked back to the edge and gazed out as he continued to explain. "I've seen it before, of course, but never like this. It is so....."

When he turned back to face his companion, Xander found he was alone. The man had gone

Part Five

Spike hunkered back. He stood in the dark concealment of the cubby hole beneath the steps that led from one deck level to the next one up. He held his long overcoat around his slim body as though he were trying to preserve body heat from dissipation in the damp night air.

A prospect completely moot due to the fact that Spike had no body heat.

He watched, out of sight, as the young man searched for him in all directions. At one point, the boy turned his weak, useless human vision bullseye on him and still saw nothing. Spike tipped his head slightly to allow the bill of his hat to dip low preventing the yellow glow of his demon's eyes from piercing the darkness and giving away his location.

When the young man again turned his back to him, Spike lifted his face and watched. He saw the slight shrug of confusion in the young man's shoulders as he eased, one last time, toward the rail of the boat to gaze off into the inky blackness of the mysterious, ominous ocean.

Spike could feel the boy's longing for the answers of life. He was drawn to his youth, his innocence and his indecisions. He knew the young man was at the age of crossroads. The time when choices were made before the understanding of those road's destinations were made clear.

Spike watched intently. He studied every twitch,

every nuance of the boy's body language. He studied him more to understand what it was about the human that held him so entranced rather than the human himself. With no certain answer forthcoming, Spike stayed in the shroud of darkness even as the young man turned and walked away.

After he was long gone, Spike closed his eyes and leaned back against the cold metal of the ship's siding and he sighed. When he opened his eyes, the reality of his own existence returned to him and he knew it was time to get moving. For him, this was early. His lunar daybreak, and unless he was mistaken, his breakfast was waiting.

Spike turned and blended off invisibly into the fog. He proceeded from the second class deck down, down, down toward the lowest level of human occupation. Descending toward steerage. Into the third class passenger areas where the nameless, faceless humans could go missing without too much notice or fuss made.

It was a demon's buffet. It was the reason he chose

to make the crossing on the great ship Titanic.

Spike had boarded the ship on its original launching in Belfast. He had been kicking around Europe for years with his family, of sorts. His sire and the love of his life, Drusilla. Her sire, the great lump, Angelus and his sire, her royal bitchiness, Darla.

They had moved through several of the old countries, stopping in places like Prague, Budapest, Hungary, and Transylvania. They had slaughtered the locals and livestock, feeding and fucking their nights away as they slept during the day in the homes of the dead and the barns of the doomed.

They had laughed hysterically as they ran at an impossible speed to stay just a step ahead of the ranting mobs of peasants with pitchforks and torches. Nearly being caught was part of the game and the excitement. It wasn't foolish miscalculation. It was designed to tempt fate. It eased the boredom of eternal life.

It had been an ideal existence, one that Spike had

imagined would go on as is, but everything, like the assurance of life itself, must end. The end of Spike's happiness had occurred in Athens.

They had arrived because Drusilla wanted to consult the oracles. The others had tried to explain to her that the oracles were an era that had died off centuries ago but she insisted that her dreams told her that she would find her destiny there, so they went.

Shortly after their arrival in Greece, they had settled into a quiet coastal town in a small abandoned boat shed. From the smell, no humans had used it for months and the group felt safe as they slept during the bright, sunny days, and it was within striking distance of the taverns and villages that teemed with life at night.

The village was picture postcard perfect. It should have been foolproof. Instead, it proved to be a disaster. Like common tourists, they cruised the ruins, taking Drusilla to all the rambling stone relics of the past great civilization. They stood by, amused

as she whirled and twirled in the moonlight, chanting and babbling in a sing songy voice of Gods and Goddesses, visions and myths.

As the days went on and her interest grew into an obsession, the others had trouble dragging her away to hunt and feed. The gossip of the locals was that the demons of hell had taken up residence in the ancient ruins. Within weeks, the stress of the situation began to take it's toll.

Darla became moody and secretive. She had always been cruel, but never toward her beloved Drusilla. Now she was impatient. She snapped at her grandchilde and refused to hunt with her, preferring to take Angelus, sometimes disappearing for days. At some point, Spike realized they had moved on.

Spike had done his best. When she insisted, he complied with her demands to bring young virginal sacrifices to the stone altars where she would kill and drain them before begging Spike to fuck her for hours on end as the stars sang to her from above.

The breaking point had come the night that, in his haste, Spike had chosen the Mayor's own daughter as the evening meal. The vampires, naked and bathed in the girl's blood were surrounded by cross wielding, stake carrying villagers with murder in their eyes.

Spike lunged toward the group, snarling and allowing himself to be captured in order to give Drusilla a chance to escape. When he felt she was safe, he turned and attacked. By the time the fight was over, he had cross shaped burns seared into his flesh and splinters of wood piercing his chest, just missing his cold dead heart by inches.

He hid out and healed for days before deciding he, too, had had enough. Drusilla made no attempt to find or help him and although he understood it was the insanity that drove her on, this time he had reached his limit.

When he emerged, he read a newspaper article on the miracle that was the Titanic, and he decided

that was just the change of scenery he needed. He immediately worked his way north to Ireland and arrived in Belfast just days before the sailing.

Boarding had been simple. He had paid good money to have a crate constructed, packed in secrecy and delivered to be loaded into the hull of the ship for transport to New York. Once the ship had sailed, he was free to roam the halls and decks at night and return to the security of the hole during the day.

It was a system that worked flawlessly. The third class level was crammed to overflowing with immigrants hoping for a better life in the new world. A country where the streets were paved with gold and every man could get a job and every young girl could get a successful husband.

It was a vampire's dream. Watch for a wounded animal. Cull the herd. Select one, male or female and separate them from their group. There were any number of dark secluded areas on the ship where lovers could go and find the privacy needed for passion and murder.

With a full stomach and a sated libido, he would toss the empty shell overboard and slither off, unseen and unknown. Unfortunately, it did not satisfy his deepest need. Spike was lonely. He had never been a solitary creature and he craved the companionship of another. Someone to walk with, talk with and share the intimacies that make time on earth bearable.

He had promised himself that he would find someone in New York. Surely a city as huge as that contained one person. One human or demon who would join him in this long walk through the years. Someone sane.

But that was for later. For now, he was content to enjoy the night air, the sight of the ocean and the glorious walks on the upper decks of the amazing ship that was the Titanic.

Now he was intrigued. The young man on the deck had caught his eye and Spike decided to seek him out. Find his cabin and get a better look at him.

Later. Right now he was late for a rendezvous and he quickly picked up his pace.

"William? Oh, there you are. I have been waiting. You are late and I was beginning to think you weren't coming. I had to sneak away from the others and I thought....."

Spike grinned widely and sauntered up to where the young girl was standing, insecure and trembling in the dark of the small storage room where they had agreed to meet.

"Am I late, Love? You simply must forgive me. Look how cold you are. Come here and let me hold you till you stop shivering."

With an innocent, shy smile, the Irish peasant girl hurried into his arms.

Part Six

Xander sat on the edge of his small bed in a cabin that his ticket called a stateroom. It was a misnomer. The entire space was no more than possibly 8' wide by 10' long. It had a bed that was barely a cot and a wall of shelves. It also had a window. A round port hole that looked out into the vast, unknown, limitless world beyond.

What it did not have was a roommate. He was one of the ones who, because of the price of his ticket, was not forced to share his room with another person. It was a privilege. An extravagance. He was overwhelmed to think what Paddy must have spent and sacrificed for this.

Most people would have thought the room small, cramped and claustrophobic. Xander thought it the very definition of luxury. The floor was carpeted to protect his bare feet from the cold and the walls

smelled of the pure rich lemon oil that was used to make the wood shine like glass. The bed had white fresh sheets and blankets and he was stunned when the realization hit him that this was the Titanic's maiden voyage which meant that he was the first to ever sleep here.

The overwhelming knowledge of it all nearly brought tears to his eyes. He was part of history. He smiled as he swung his feet inches from the floor and listened to the constant low hum of the massive boiler engines that ran the ship.

He had adhered to the habit of a lifetime and come to his sleeping quarters directly after dinner. It was what he did with his parents home to avoid their evening drunken bickering and it was what he did at Paddy and Emma's simply because it was their way.

But now, sitting here, with his shoes off and his suit jacket hung on a hook by the wall closet, he reached into his vest and pulled out the pocket watch Paddy had given him as a departing memory and he checked the time.

It was a half nine and Xander was twitchy. With the round port window open he could hear the far off melody of music playing and the voices of people laughing, talking and living the adventure of an Atlantic crossing.

Why the hell was he sitting here, alone in the dark when there was so much going on? It was a question that came to him like a bolt of lightning and he was absolutely giddy when he realized there was no legitimate answer.

Surely Paddy hadn't given him this wonderful gift only to have him sleep it away. He would be cheating Paddy if he stayed here. There would be plenty of time for sleep when they docked in just a few short weeks in New York. Till then, he was on the ocean and the trip was his oyster. What was to stop him from digging for the pearl?

Immediately, Xander leapt to his feet. He dove back into his shoes and he snatched the woolen suit coat off the hook. He knew it wasn't much protection

from the cold air on deck, but, fuck it, he thought. I can be warm when I'm old and grey.

With no other hesitations, Xander dashed from his warm stateroom and rushed up the hallway toward ballrooms and areas that sparked with the electricity of activity.

~*~*~*~*~

Spike held the woman close, his arm protectively gripped her shoulders in a lover's embrace and he leaned in as though whispering a sonnet of poems and promises. As he did, he glanced all around them, his face in a demon's distortion to enhance his senses and he assured himself that there were no other passengers nearby. When he was certain they were alone, he nonchalantly lifted the body and pitched it overboard where it landed in a silent splash.

He casually looked over the railing and watched it quickly drop beneath the surface of the water. It

was simply the cycle of life, he told himself. One human body had fed both him and the fish in the ocean. In fact, he reasoned, not only had he been physically provided for but he'd also spared some poor, witless human male the shame of being trapped into marriage with an apparent working girl who had offered him her long gone virginity.

Spike snorted in disgust. She had carried the scent of two men in her as well as the trace of a vile social disease that, unbeknownst to her, had already robbed her of her ability to reproduce. Humans were such a complicated species. He then turned his back on the water and gave her no more thought.

Spike smiled. His demon facade slid away, replaced by the handsome features he had brought with him from life and he headed toward one of the outer deck stairways that led up to the second class level. The night was young, his stomach was full and a spot of drinking, dancing and merry making was exactly what he needed. He also might catch a glimpse of the young man he'd met on the deck

earlier.

Although he held no ticket, his manner of dress and attitude gave him unquestioned access to come and go as he pleased without any of the crew questioning him. That and the fact that all areas of the ship were public, he never needed an invitation. Traveling on the Titanic was clearly the best idea he had had in ages.

~*~*~*~*~

Xander moved quickly down the long hallways past the other small, private cabins. He nodded politely to the other passengers he passed and responded to the litany of "Good evenings" in a like manner without slowing or encouraging further comment. He remembered from his earlier explorations, that the starboard side of the ship was the area of public concern.

It was where the massive dining room was where he had eaten and it was where there were men's

smoking rooms. Liquor was served while men of business discussed the world's finances. It didn't interest Xander.

There were game rooms where couples played ping pong or card and board games while laughing and joking with other young people, some of which neither spoke nor understood the language being spoken. Xander passed by those too.

He continued on down, hunched and holding himself against the cold night air. He listened as the soles of his shoes slapped on the wooden planks of the decking and he noticed that the temperature must have dropped considerably as there was now a thin sheen of ice coating the railing.

Directly ahead, Xander could see the bright lights of the dance hall and what sounded like a thousand voices laughing, talking and shouting. There was a band playing jazz and the closer he got the more thrilled he became at the thought of joining in on the biggest party on the ocean tonight.

Running the last few feet, Xander grabbed the cold handle of the door and jerked it open. The instant he stepped in, he came face to face with....

"Alexander! You have looked for me, no? You have come to dance with me! I knew you would come. Hurry, we are over there. We have a table. We will sit with my sister Monique and her fiance, Harrold. Come, we will drink and dance."

Xander cringed and despite Yvette's solid grip on his arm and her best attempt to tug him into the room, reluctance had Xander's feet glued to the floor.

"Well, there you are. I thought I had missed you."

Xander spun around and found himself face to face with the handsome stranger he had met earlier on deck. Unexpectedly, his heart lurched in his chest as he stared directly into the most incredible blue eyes he had ever seen. "Ah, no. Um, missed me?"

Spike laughed easily and slapped Xander companionably on the back as Yvette stepped back

and scowled, hoping her most evil stare would cause this trespasser to rethink his plans. It didn't

"Yes. We agreed to meet here for a drink and a bit of conversation about that business proposal I had. You haven't changed your mind have you?"

Even as slow on the upswing as Xander usually was, he could read a save when it was all but spelled out for him. He grinned in relief and gratitude at the gorgeous man and gave him a light punch on the arm.

"No, of course I haven't. I've been waiting on you. Come on, let's find a seat. Oh, sorry Yvette. Thanks for the wonderful invitation but this is man talk. Boring stuff. Tell ya what, maybe we'll catch up with you later."

Without waiting for her reply, Xander and Spike strode happily into the hustle and bustle of the dazzling ballroom

Part Seven

The size, scope and electric atmosphere of the ballroom was staggering. It was like nothing Xander had ever, in his wildest dreams, imagined possible. It was twice the size of the dining hall and several notches up on the scale of sinful extravagance.

Despite his hesitation in the open doorway, Spike had a solid grip on Xander's forearm and led him through the mass of moving, teeming bodies as Xander gaped and stared in all directions at once.

The room itself was massive. Supported throughout by ornate, white carved pillars, the ceiling was domed in the center with a heavy circle of stained glass that sparkled and seemed to ripple as it reflected the golden light from the modern electric chandeliers.

There were easily over one hundred tables. All round, some small and intimate, some huge and able to accommodate larger groups of rowdy partiers. Each table was draped with white, new, linen cloths and set with crystal goblets for wine or the service of harder drinks which everyone seemed

to be downing in great volume.

And the room was warm. Warm to the point of nearly uncomfortably so. The contrast of the outside air was startling as the giant boilers in the bowels of the ship cranked a **radiant heat** throughout all the areas of occupation. That alone would have made the ballroom pleasant and cozy, but when combined with the body heat of over a hundred perspiring, gyrating and moving human bodies, the heat was reaching swamplike temperatures.

One wall of the room was floor to ceiling **glass windows** that overlooked the ocean. It was designed as a point of relaxed lookout during the daytime hours, but now, in the late evening, with only the blackness of night, it reflected, like mirrors, the activity in the room. Spike seemed to want to avoid that interesting view.

The focal point of the room was the band. Four men in tuxedos, they played their instruments as backup and accompaniment to a gorgeous colored woman

in an elegant, low cut evening gown who belted out the latest jazz tunes and kept the passengers on their feet, kicking out [the steps](#) to the popular dances.

Situated on a raised platform at the far side of the room, they were set up like an island, surrounded by the polished, hardwood floor that allowed the passengers to see and hear them from any seat in the club.

Surrounding the band, couples filled the dance floor, twitching and jumping in perfect synchronicity to the music. Xander wondered how on earth people learned to do that. Did they take lessons? Did someone teach them? He could never imagine himself doing something so uninhibited in public although he did have to admit, it looked like great fun.

"Oi, there's one. Come on."

With luck, Spike was able to spot and claim a small table at the rear and he quickly shoved Xander into

one of the two chairs that sat there.

"Sit. I'll go retrieve us a couple tankards of ale and be right back."

Xander nodded blankly. His mind responded only to the sit and stay command but was able to give it no deeper thought. He knew he was probably ogling like a country rube but couldn't help himself. His brain was on overload and with no release valve, it was threatening to explode.

When Spike returned, he found the young man grinning like a loon and tapping his feet in time with the music.

"The band is good, yeah? Do you like to dance?"

Xander jumped, surprised at his companion's return. He nodded his thanks and took a big gulp of the beer before answering. "Me? Dance? No, that's something I never learned."

Spike laughed easily. "It's not that hard. You just

hang on to your partner and let the music fill your body. Before you know it you're movin' and swayin'. Want to try? Want to dance with me?"

Xander's eyes bugged out at the outrageous suggestion and as his gaze quickly scanned down the smaller man's frame and he was flushed warm with embarrassment as he realized that, hell yes, it was an idea that sat very well with certain parts of his torso. Quickly, he swallowed the lump in his throat and he snorted. "Don't be silly. Two men can't dance together. It just isn't done. It would be terribly scandalous! Besides, I don't even know your name."

Immediately, Spike stuck out his hand and he formally bowed his head. "William Robert Pratt, Esquire, at your service, Sir. And you are?"

Xander giggled as he accepted and shook the small, almost feminine hand. He attributed the icy coldness of it to the fact that they had just come in from the elements. "I am Alexander L. Harris. Previously of the United States of America, most

recently residing in Queenstown, Ireland. Very pleased to make your acquaintance Mr. Pratt."

Spike held onto the hand and their eyes continued to stare deeply, blue into brown as the moment rolled on. Spike used the time to read the young man. His heart rate was escalated. His breathing, short and irregular. His body temperature rose when their hands connected and Spike knew. He knew what the boy probably didn't.

Spike smiled broadly and released his grip. With the contact broken, Xander blinked as though he had been in a trance. He quickly turned his face, terrified he would give himself away. He had promised himself that when he returned to the States, he would pretend to be normal. He would see women and act as a man was meant to act, yet, here he was, so burning with attraction for this stranger, he feared he might release his seed in his trousers right here at the table.

Spike inhaled deeply, drawing in the heady aroma of desire and need that poured from the human

boy. For him. The boy wanted him. It was a knowledge that both thrilled and excited the vampire. It wasn't like the tarts from below that were used only as food. They too smelled of sexual attraction but theirs was a cheap, perfumy stench that assaulted the senses, repulsive and foul.

This was the sweet, heady scent of a human unaccustomed to guarding against displaying his feelings. This was fresh, pure and innocent. This was what Spike wanted. This was what he would have. "I'm very pleased to meet you, Alexander. Please call me Spike."

Xander again looked up, his eyes bright and cheery. Spike. He liked the sound of that. "All right, Spike. You can call me Xander."<

Part Eight

Yvette fussed restlessly with the large satin bow at the bodice of her new gown. She had bought it during their shopping trip in the heart of Paris' fashion district at a small boutique where Monique had tried on the one hundredth wedding gown before, like all the others, tossing it to the floor in tears.

Monique was spoiled. She was mean spirited and whiny. Two attributes that actually worked in her favor when hunting for the ideal husband. It made her appear to be exactly what all French women should be. Aloof and bored. She comfortably wore the childish pout that drove Frenchmen to distraction and that women struggled to imitate.

It was the bait that hooked one of the biggest fish in the sea. Harrold Westcott. He was old in both mood and money and Monique had set her sights on him the first night they met at the Batele's dinner party.

He was a man of business. An entrepreneur who had taken a small field of grapes, handed down through the generations, and developed it into an

internationally famed winery. He knew facts and figures and had built an empire on the broken backs of the workers, field hands and those who eked out a living on his scraps.

His home in the south of France was a showplace. It had servants, original artwork and even the modern luxury of an indoor bath. The only thing it lacked was a mistress. A woman to run his house sternly, yet be young enough to give him children, hopefully sons, to carry on after he was gone. A woman sexually appealing enough to provide pleasure at night and make his contemporaries jealous during the day.

Someone suitable to his new station in life who could take him from his soil roots and make him part of the upper society he needed for the connections of success.

Harrold and Monique were a perfect couple and they both knew it.

So, the courtship began and ran as expected. She

ignored him, rebuffed him and sneered with rolling eyes when he asked her to dance. In the weeks that followed, she all but took out a restraining order to keep him at a safe distance from her.

When they did find themselves alone together, she batted her eyes suggestively and arched her back, causing her padded bodice to show teasingly as her cleavage peeked from the ruffled top of her dress. She spoke in quiet, breathy tones yet when he leaned in to answer or dared to touch her hand, she haughtily rebuked him.

When he could stand it no longer, Harrold went to her father and begged for her hand in marriage.

He had chased her till she caught him.

Yvette had watched it all with envy and fascination, wondering how on earth had Monique learned to do that so expertly? Was it an instinct? Would Yvette herself, some morning, rise with the secret, hidden knowledge awakened within her? It was very frustrating. However one thing for Yvette was

unquestioned. Yvette wanted what Monique had.

Not Harrold. Certainly not Harrold. Although, more than once, Harrold had insinuated that he would be agreeable to taking a sister into his house after he and Monique were married, and Yvette knew he wasn't talking about someone to press his shirts.

No, Yvette wanted the security of a husband with money and home of her own. She wanted the attention of being the bride. The glamour of shopping for everything and anything and claiming it as necessary. Even as their Father protested, Monique had made it clear that she couldn't possibly step into her role as Mrs. Westcott in the shame and shabbiness of last year's fashion.

It was only after weeks of failed searching for exactly the right wedding dress that the girl's mother had suggested they sail to New York and look for a gown there. Just the three of them. It promised to not only be a memorable, and hopefully successful shopping trip, but a bit of a tension breaker as well.

A change of scenery and pace to get their minds off the stress of planning the wedding. Yvette's father was thrilled to see them go. So much so that he happily sprang for the cost of the trip to be made on the stunning maiden voyage of the Titanic.

It was there and then that Yvette decided to do some shopping of her own. She was nearly nineteen years old and would quickly be labeled an old maid if she didn't make her move soon and this was a wonderful opportunity.

So, with plans and a checklist in her mind, Yvette knew what she would be looking to acquire. She did not want a dress or a pair of frilly pantaloons. She was not looking for a hat with huge, colorful ostrich feathers and not for new shoes that buttoned up the side, although those would be nice too.

No, Yvette was determined to procure a husband.

Someone young, like herself, virile, handsome, dark and tall. Someone whose touch would stir the

quivering womanhood within her. That was what the novel she was reading called it. 'Her quivering womanhood.'

Yvette always shuddered and giggled when she repeated that line. She had no idea what it meant but from the shocked disgusted look on Monique's face when she asked about it, Yvette knew it must be wonderful.

When they boarded the ship at Cherbourg, France, she was stunned. It was like nothing she had ever seen. Even Monique was wide eyed and chatty, a pleasant change from the sullen complainer they had come to know and love.

Evelin, their mother, was acting more like their sister than their parent. Laughing, singing and skipping on the decks comically, the three were certain this was to be the adventure of their lives.

From day one, Yvette had remained alert. She decided that to wait till they arrived in a city the size of New York was foolish. Any man she met there

could easily slip away and never been seen again. No, she needed to find someone on the ship. A captive audience who would have nowhere to go as she displayed all her charms and female wiles. She would have him begging and promising the world by the time they docked.

She laughed at the analogy. Hooking a big fish on the ocean. It was, after all, what a woman must do. Men were so clueless. They had no idea they wanted a wife and, like cattle, must be trapped and led into it carefully. Of course once the ring was on their finger, they would realize that they were miserable before and would remain eternally grateful.

It was the way it was in the world of men and women.

Unfortunately, the beginning of the cruise had not gone as planned. The men who fit her criteria were already spoken for. Husbands with scowling, possessive wives who gave her evil looks and held tightly to their men's arms.

The single men she had seen so far were equally unsuitable. Old. Fat. Widowers. She was well aware of what they wanted with a ripe young woman and it wasn't a respectable marriage.

The young men were too young. Most were children running and screaming like wild unrestrained animals. Some even roller skating on the decks. Yvette resolved that when she had children of her own, she would hire nannies that didn't allow that type of undignified upbringing.

She had all but given up when they docked in Ireland. Dinner that night had been a Godsend when the handsome Alexander sat down beside her. He was perfect! Strong arms to catch a swooning damsel. Full lips for that first earthshaking kiss. Dark, handsome features that would blend flawlessly with hers to make attractive, perfect sons and daughters.

And rich. He was American, ergo, rich. From what she had heard, all Americans were crude but very

rich. She would, of course, have to refine and polish him to meet her standards, but yes, Yvette Harris had a very nice ring to it.

Yvette had found her future husband.<

Part Nine

The frigid night air swirled around the huge ship as it cut cleanly through the deep, living ocean. The sky was impossibly black and overcast, preventing lovers on the deck from gazing up at the moon and stars which was just as well. Even the most romantic of poets can only retain body heat for a short time in the presence of a chill factor that would make a polar bear smile.

But that didn't mean the population of this huge floating city slept. Exactly the opposite. The Titanic was a living, breathing entity. Her every deck and

level were alive as each class of passenger spent their evening hours celebrating the thrill of the cruise. The parties, dinners, dances and games were distinctly tailored to reflect and suit the station in life of the attendees.

The lowest level, third class poor and emigrants, were the least catered to aboard ship. Their paid passage, while it was every cent of savings and borrowed money they could get their hands on, was to the White Star Line, petty change. They were, in fact, looked upon as little more than the cargo that filled the hull.

They were not plied with drinks and hors d'oeuvres. They were not entertained by elegant hired orchestras and bands. Left to themselves, they packed the huge open dining areas of the hull of the ship to find and create their own forms of celebration.

They drank the ales and beers that they themselves provided. They sang and danced in wild uninhibited fashion to the music they had learned to play at

their grandparents' knee.

Harmonicas, guitars, and fiddles were the prized possessions being carried by some to their new lives in America and tonight these were the instruments used as the travelers commemorated the chance to escape the poverty of their homelands and to honor the less fortunate friends and family they left behind.

Not one of them lamented the inequity of their station on the ship in comparison to the privileged passengers on the uppermost decks. To the contrary, they counted their blessings each night and the Titanic's name was always whispered to their God in prayer.

In the most extreme contrast, the first class was the pinnacle. No expense was spared in the effort to cater to the rich and famous. These were the passengers who mattered. The ones who were hardest to impress. World travelers. The ones who had already seen and done it all. They were the people who had to be startled by glamour and

opulence unimagined.

No personal request or whim would be denied. Nothing less than the best wines, the richest foods including exotic meats prepared by the world's finest chefs and served on expensive china and crystal. They slept in cabin suites that would not only rival, but surpass, anything the Waldorf could offer.

And the White Star's efforts were successful. It was guaranteed that even the most jaded millionaire would depart in New York commending the Titanic's success. For the ship's line, that praise translated into money.

The second class was in between. Their comfort was the ship's concern but not overly so. The quarters were a combination of large dorm style rooms that slept as many as eight up to the single cell-like cabins that the highest priced second class ticket afforded.

The meals were nourishing, plentiful, and adequate.

They were fixed and provided from a separate kitchen on the second class level to ensure that none of the food or liquors from top deck were accidentally served.

The evenings were programmed with nightclub-like entertainment. Local bands comprised of musicians who were paid in passage and meals in exchange for the price of a ticket to New York.

The common areas were bright, clean, colorful and garnered no complaints from any of the passengers who enjoyed them. The minimum expense which was invested in the second class brought the greatest return on the paid passage. Second class was the bread and butter of the White Star Line.

"Captain?" The young crewman tried to catch his breath from running across two slippery decks in the freezing cold.

"Yes, son?" The older man in the elegant, gold trimmed uniform of the ship's master stood ramrod

straight, staring out the front window into the black night. When he answered he made no move to turn around.

"Sir, we have reports of ice in the area. A cargo ship wired that she passed through two days previous and encountered huge caps in the strait. Should I instruct the boilermen to ease back and drop our speed?"

The captain spun around to face the impudent young man. The fierceness in his eyes and the set of his jaw gave no doubt who was in charge. Without being conscious of it, the young ship's officer stepped back and dropped his gaze.

"You will do no such thing. We, so far, remain ahead of schedule and I intend to keep it that way. The Titanic will complete her maiden voyage well before her projected arrival in New York and nothing, certainly not unsubstantiated reports of floating ice, will prevent that."

He made no mention of the huge promised bonus

from the owners of the White Star Line if he brought her in to port early. The ship had made headlines worldwide even before it was launched and they wanted its first Atlantic crossing to be the news of the year. Possibly the century.

The success of the quick crossing would mock the naysayers who took great pleasure in pointing out the unfortunate debacle that had befallen her during her original launching in Belfast. The headlines stating that God himself had cursed the Titanic for her owners' blasphemous claims would be forgotten in the face of the triumph of the maiden voyage.

Everything about the Titanic's first trip had been carefully calculated by the conglomerate of owners, designers, and builders. After much debate and consideration, they had settled on Captain E.J. Smith as the best candidate to assure that a quick crossing happened and although he had promised his wife that he would retire, this was the opportunity every Captain dreamt of.

His previous experience on the Atlantic guiding other ships with their company and his stern, no nonsense personality gave them confidence that he would succeed where others could not. As fair consideration, they offered him a salary that ensured he would not say no.

With all this on his mind, Capt. Smith stared daggers at the young Second Officer Lightoller.

"Yes, Sir, but....."

The captain sniffed and again turned his back, dismissing the boy and his unimportant reports.

"That will be all son. Keep me apprised of any further radio calls."

Frustrated, the young radioman wanted to tell the captain that it was nearly impossible to receive or transmit due to the constant stream of first class passengers monopolizing the radio for personal overseas calls to the mainland, but he knew it was pointless.

The Titanic was all about the passengers and the Captain's job was to see that nothing interfered with that. Not even the threat of icebergs.

"Yes Sir." He quickly turned on his heels and rushed away.

Part Ten

The cold outside the huge dance hall was all but forgotten as Xander and Spike sat together at the small table. The combination of the alcohol and the atmosphere of the hot, sweaty mob of dancing bodies filled the room with a steamy heat that had Xander wiping his brow, removing his suit coat and draping it over the back of his chair. Spike had shed his long woolen overcoat earlier, though temperature fluctuations had little effect on him.

The celebratory party feeling in the huge ballroom reminded him of New Year's Eve and yet he understood that this was more. New Year's comes around every year. Predictably. But this was a first. A one and only. It was loud with music, laughter, shouts, party horns and glasses clinking. It was a

once in a lifetime experience that they, as total strangers, would always share. A bond between them that even family and friends back in port would never fully comprehend.

To be a part of the maiden [voyage](#) of the greatest ship on the face of the earth was something to tell stories of for years to come. If he never saw any of these people again, Xander knew, in some small way, he would always be connected to them.

Looking around, he was incredibly thrilled that he had decided to come out again. Exhilaration had him twitchy and jumpy as a cat. He refused to admit to himself that part of the flush that brought a pink hue to his cheeks and formed a ring of perspiration beneath his armpits had anything to do with the handsome, blond man who sat across from him.

Yet, Xander couldn't help but stare. The blue eyes and sharp facial features were so enticing that Xander could almost imagine himself reaching across the white starched tablecloth and touching the man's cheek. It was a mental picture that

horrified him. He couldn't bear the thought of that wonderful face contorting in disgust at the concept that Xander was 'one of those'. Despite his fumbling and naked groping with Daniel, Xander, himself, still refused to believe he was 'one of those'.

So, while they sat here, two men getting to know each other in pleasant conversation, he tried to appear calm and detached though he suspected he was failing miserably. His voice, when he spoke, sounded foreign, high pitched and breathy. It was as if he were standing off to the side and observing himself. Xander was shocked to admit that he was behaving like a silly young schoolgirl, batting his eyes, grinning like a fool and hanging desperately on every word that rolled off the blond man's tongue.

His arousal was reaching a startling level.

Spike, too, was struggling to maintain. His vampire senses were extremely acute and he was unable to ignore the pheromones and masculine scents rolling

off his companion. It was so overwhelming, Spike could nearly taste the boy's need and want on the tip of his slightly pointed tongue. It was intoxicating. It was maddening.

And it was becoming more and more difficult to keep his human mask in place as his inner demon screamed to come to the forefront and claim this human with a bite, a bugger and the taste of blood.

Not yet. He told himself. He didn't want this one to be forced. He wanted the boy to come to him willingly. What he expected as an outcome, he wasn't sure. He hoped for more than an empty, cold shell to be tossed overboard, but he had no preconceived notion of what to do with a human. All he knew was that, for now, this was as **close** to heaven as he ever thought he could be.

For now, he was no longer lonely.

So they continued to talk. To get to know each other even though the conversation was secondary to the growing comfort and familiarity they were

developing through gestures, smiles, eye movements and all the subtleties of body language.

They had discussed Spike's life in London with his mother, the various jobs he had held, the schools he attended and the different places he had called home. He chose for now to forego mentioning the details of his gruesome death, his insane sire and the fact that the life he had described had ended nearly fifty years ago.

Xander told of his less than blissful childhood in America and he explained how he had come to live in Ireland. Spike was not surprised when Xander told him of his engagement to the lovely Miss Anya, explaining only that it had not worked out between them and because of that, and other reasons, Xander and his Irish family thought it best if he returned to his homeland and tried to find his future there.

Spike read all the untold [details](#) of Xander's story in the wave of shame that poured off him and the way his eyes diverted when he explained that things just

hadn't been meant to be with Anya. He made the point that it was not her fault but he stopped short of taking the blame himself. Spike had a pretty good idea that the lovely Miss Anya lacked a certain body part that Xander required for marital happiness. No, life with Anya was not to be.

Xander placed his hands in his lap. Although he had tried to think of other things, rock skipping on McTily's pond, counting the apples as they tumbled from a mental tree and looping a tune through his head, nothing he tried to concentrate on could prevent the inevitable. Xander's cock was hard as a rock.

He briefly gave in to the wave of sexual need that pooled in his crotch and he discreetly squeezed his thighs together and pressed the heels of his hands down against the huge, awkward bulge in the front of his trousers. Both men quietly moaned. Spike realized that if he didn't get a grip on himself quickly, he would say 'fuck all' and leap over the table, jerk the boy's trousers down and bugger him as the orchestra played on. Probably not a good

idea.

"Alexander?"

Both men blinked as they realized they had been staring intently and wordlessly at each other when the spell was broken by the soft, feminine voice. Xander wiped the sweat from his forehead and turned to see Yvette standing next to the table frowning slightly and glancing back and forth between the men, curiously concerned at the intensity with which they each regarded the other.

"Yes? Oh, Yvette, yes?"

Yvette hesitated. She had walked over here with such determination and resolve, but now had second thoughts. Clearly there was something going on with these two. Whatever the business matter was that they were dealing with must not be going well. Perhaps she should walk away and look for another. Perhaps.....no. She would not be dissuaded so easily. With a renewed smile, she straightened her back, pushed out her chest and

flipped a long blond curl back over her shoulder.

"Well, Alexander, you have had over two hours to discuss your business matters with this gentleman. I have waited for you all evening and now I am here to collect my dance."

Xander was flustered. He did NOT want to leave Spike's side, even for a moment, yet how could he possibly refuse and still maintain his facade of masculine intent? His brain scrambled for an excuse, a perfect retort that would send this shark on her way to circle another table and hapless victim. "No, um, no, I mean, I can't. I don't know how to dance."

Spike watched with amusement. The hormones these humans were giving off were repelling and bouncing off each other like two positive magnets pushing each other away. Unfortunately, the lovely Miss Yvette didn't have a clue. For Spike, this situation was a godsend. He was dangerously close to losing control and this would give him a chance to get a grip on himself and shove his demon back

into its cage. "Don't be silly, Xander. Please, dance with the lady. I'll be here when you return and we can finish our business then."

Before the horrified Xander could speak, Yvette squealed with delight and tugged the unwilling dance partner to his feet. Quickly, Xander glanced down and was grateful for the baggy pants that only marginally concealed the raging hard-on that now seemed to twist and turn, facing in Spike's direction as a sunflower strains to the sun.

Spike threw his head back and roared with laughter as Yvette pushed Xander into position. She placed one gloved hand on his shoulder and the other on the back of his outstretched hand. Then, with a saving, respectable distance between them, the attractive couple began to clumsily move about the floor.

Part Eleven

"OW!"

"Sorry. Sorry."

"No, that's o.k, I....Ow!"

Xander jumped, shuffled his feet and tried not to step on her toes again. This dancing business was much harder than it looked yet he continued to try to organize and arrange his steps in the manner in which she was pushing and shoving him.

He was failing miserably. He knew a big part of his problem was the fact that his eyes kept wandering over to the small table at the side of the room and the wonderful man who sat there smiling and watching him.

He wanted to be rid of this silly woman and run back to his evening's companion but feared that

would look suspicious. So, on they went, turning, tripping and stepping in a rhythm that in no way resembled the beat of the music.

Finally, Yvette stopped moving and made sure she had his full attention. "Alexander! Look, just watch me. Relax and slowly start to sway. When we are in time to the music then take a step to the side. I'll step with you. Then take one to the rear then the other side. Count three steps then repeat them. We will start out slow. It will be fine."

Xander nodded. He was staring down at his feet and his dark hair flopped loosely into his face. The smile fell from Spike's lips. His boy was absolutely stunning and suddenly he felt very jealous. He craned his neck and had to strain in his chair first one way then the other to be able to see around the large number of couples that danced across the floor and cut off his line of sight.

It had been hilarious when Xander stomped the bitch's feet and Spike could see that even when she spoke to him, Xander only had eyes for Spike. But

now something was different. Now Xander was seriously trying to dance and Spike was no longer amused.

"Oh, Alexander, that is much better! Dancing is something that just takes a bit of practice. Once we get to New York we will have plenty of time. We can go to supper clubs, wonderful dance halls and even the silly juke joints. By the time we have to dance at Monique's wedding we will be so in tune with each other, we will be the best dancers there. Better even than Monique and Harrold, oui?"

"ONE, two, three. ONE, two three. Huh? What did you say?"

Xander had been watching his shoes as they step/slid across the floor but when her words tumbled from his ear to his brain, he again lost his balance and his body stumbled forward against Yvette's smaller frame. Unfortunately, his mind as well as his crotch remained focused on Spike and his cock was still half hard.

The instant the firm, tubular item pressed and poked against her hip, both dancers froze on the spot. A shared look of shock and horror passed between them and Xander leapt back immediately releasing her hand and breaking all physical contact with her.

"Um,...that is....I....Oh, God.....I"

Yvette blushed a fire engine red and dropped her eyes to the floor. "No, please, don't apologize. I am a modern woman of the world Alexander. I know what it means when a man is....." Quickly, she lifted her face and looked directly into his eyes, her voice was low and conspiratorial. "Don't be embarrassed. I feel the same. I have read the forbidden novels. I know that when a man and a woman are violently attracted to each other....."

Xander was aghast! His hands came up and he stepped back in a defensive stance that made it appear that Yvette was threatening his very existence. "NO! Please. Sorry. Yvette.....I....look, I gotta go. I need some air. I don't feel so good."

With that, Xander turned and ran from the dance floor leaving the ecstatically happy Yvette standing alone. She wasn't concerned. He would be back, drawn to her like a moth to a flame. She had him hooked. Wrapping her arms around herself, she grinned wildly as she watched him rush to his chair, grab his jacket and bolt from the room. Happily, Yvette returned to her sister and future brother-in-law while mentally picking out floral patterns for her own wedding dinner.

Spike sprang to his feet when he saw Xander hurrying toward him. He tried to ask what had happened but before he could, Xander was gone. Immediately, Spike grabbed up his coat and a bottle of whisky that sat on one of the tables by the entrance door. He followed, slapping the palm of his hand against the steel door and shoving it open. He hardly reacted to the drastic temperature change as it shifted from the warmth of the dance hall to the frigid, biting cold of the icy fog.

With the closed door to his back, Spike's head

snapped in all directions as he searched for his boy. Despite the horrendous weather conditions, and the fact that it was nearly midnight, the deck was a busy walkway of couples scurrying about on their way to various shipboard activities, hunched against the night.

They held tightly to each other as they giggled at their feet skating comically on the slick, ice covered wooden planks. The air seemed to freeze in their lungs and their eyeballs threatened to turn to ice cubes. Huddled, with their coats and shawls wrapped tightly around their bodies, the passengers made a beeline toward the warmth and comfort of the Titanic's many heated areas.

Their laughing conversations combined with the music that still drifted through the darkness made even his enhanced hearing unable to detect Xander's distinct heartbeat. Spike was becoming frantic. Finally, when a particularly fat couple passed by, Spike saw a single, solitary figure standing by the railing and with great relief, he sauntered over.

Resting his forearms on the frozen metal railing, Spike leaned over and looked down at the water rushing beneath them. "You o.k.?"

Xander snorted and tugged his very inadequate jacket around himself. "Yeah. It was just getting a little uncomfortable in there."

Spike nodded. "Want to tell me what happened? Looked like you two were getting on like a house on fire."

Xander shuddered violently. "Yeah. She thought so too. Seems I had this....little problem and she took it as a compliment. Things went downhill from there."

Spike glanced down and was unsurprised to see that the tent in the front of Xander's trousers that had been so prominent all evening was now nowhere to be seen and he burst out laughing. Despite himself, Xander's mouth twitched up before he too roared. Happily, Spike looped his arm

through Xander's and tugged.

"Come on. It's freezing out here. Why don't we go somewhere warmer and split this lovely bottle of expensive whisky."

Xander shivered. He could feel the sweat on his skin freeze and he knew he was probably on the verge of a severe case of frostbite yet the very thought of going off somewhere private with Spike shot a wave of heat down through his body, causing his shriveled pecker to wiggle and try to fill. When he didn't trust himself to speak through his chattering teeth, he nodded.

Spike grinned as the smell of arousal rekindled. He stepped close and spoke quietly and suggestively into Xander's ear. "Why don't you invite me to your cabin?"

Xander gasped and nodded again, this time so hard his brain rattled in his skull. "Oh, yeah, you are invited!"

Spike lifted his chin, stuck his hands in his coat pockets and smiled smugly.<

Part Twelve

Xander felt as though his entire body was frozen to the core. His skin burned from the sheen of frosty sweat that covered it, his eyes stung and watered and his toes and fingers were beginning to tingle ominously. His lips and face were so cold that he knew any attempt to speak would come out sounding like he had a mouthful of marbles.

Still, the huge grin that was plastered on his lips never wavered as the two men dashed across the deck to the doorway that led to the inner corridor and the second class cabins.

As soon as they stepped out of the night air and blasting wind, Xander stopped. He bent at the waist

with his hands on his knees and gasped to catch his breath as he laughed with exhilaration. "Boy, you must really be in great shape! You aren't even winded. Goddamn it's cold out there! Shit! I think the fucking blood in my veins is frozen solid. I'll bet if you cut me, little chunks of red ice would drop out."

Spike moaned silently at the thought and briefly considered testing the young man's theory before checking himself. He laughed casually and slapped the boy on the back as he waved the bottle of stolen whisky in the air. "Come on. Let's get to your cabin. A couple of swallows of this will thaw you out nicely."

Xander stood up straight and nodded. He sucked in a lungful of warm air and blew it out as his heartrate slowed and his body began to thaw. Leading the way, the men quickly came to a small doorway marked number 269 and Xander inserted his key.

"Come on in. It's small, but if you don't need to turn

around, we should be fine."

Spike laughed at the silly joke and felt the slight cosmic tingle in his spine as the boy's invitation was casually given. With a relaxed smile on his lips and the body language of ownership in his walk, Spike entered the cabin and closed the door behind him.

"Why, this is lovely, Pet. Cozy."

Xander blushed and shivered at the easily tossed nick name, then checked himself as he realized it was probably just one of those strange words that English people use. The Irish did that too and it had taken some getting used to. Xander thought he could get used to this man calling him 'Pet' very quickly.

"Is your cabin near here? Is it as cramped as this?"

Spike stripped off his long woolen overcoat and tossed it on the bottom of the bed then he sat down beside it as he appeared to look around and assess his answer. "No, I'm staying quite a ways

from here and this is much nicer. Your passage must have cost a pretty penny. It's just lovely to have the privacy."

Xander scowled. From Spike's description Xander concluded that his new friend must be staying in the cheap seats. The second class cabins that were bigger, but housed four or more men in bunk beds. Xander didn't like the thought of that. He didn't like that at all. "What kind of a cabin do you have? Are you sharing? Where is it?"

Spike popped the cork out of the bottle and took a big swallow then held it out for Xander. Xander paused. He really wasn't much of a hard drinker. Yeah, he like a beer or three, hell he lived in Ireland, it would have been unpatriotic if he hadn't gotten pissed a night or two, but he wasn't much for hard liquor.

Besides that, he was already half buzzed from the alcohol earlier AND floating on a cloud of sexual tension, he feared the whisky might just loosen his lips and lower his inhibitions.

Spike watched his boy intently, almost squealing with delight as he read the hesitation and fears in him. Oh, this one was going to be delicious. In more ways than one. He again waggled the bottle in Xander's face and lifted one scarred eyebrow in question. Finally, Xander shrugged his shoulders and clutched the bottle by the neck. He then lifted it to his lips and swallowed.

Instantly, the sharp burn of the whisky tore at his throat and caused him to gasp. Xander coughed and sputtered when it landed in his stomach and he feared, for a minute, that it might not stay there.

But it did, and within seconds, a wave of languid warmth flushed through him, bathing him in the most relaxed, pleasant feeling he had had in a long time. He took another fast gulp and handed it back. Spike accepted the bottle with a chuckle and a grin and he drank a third of it straight down.

"So, Pet, you're not much of a dancer, are you?"

Xander blinked and shook his head in an attempt to clear it of the fog that had everything coated in marshmallow cream. Had they been talking about dancing? Had he dozed off? "Wha? Dancing? Um, no. I don't dance. But then I suppose you saw that."

Spike set the bottle down on the floor by the small bed and he slowly rose to his feet. A move so graceful and predatory it reminded Xander of a panther he had seen once in a zoo in New York. He then stepped to the round porthole and he flipped the latch and pushed it slightly open.

The night air floated in, but not unpleasantly as it combated with the steam heat in the cabin to create a wonderful atmosphere. Piggybacking on the cold fog was just a faint sound of the far off orchestra as it continued to play and entertain the late night party goers. Spike stood there, with his face at the open window and he closed his eyes, taking it all in.

Xander watched. The man in his cabin was absolutely gorgeous. Small but solid. Firm with

strong arms to wrap tightly around a young eager boy unschooled in the ways of the world. Muscular thighs that could clamp around.....

'NO! Stop it!' Xander mentally reprimanded himself but knew it was too late. His damn erection was back and this time probably would not leave till he took it firmly in hand. Xander's eyes wandered to the bottle and he suddenly wanted another drink. He swayed on shaky legs and as he tried to reach for it he tripped. In a flash, Spike turned and caught him.

"Whoa, Pet. Steady as she goes."

Spike continued to hold Xander, presumably to steady him. If the extended embrace seemed odd to Xander, he didn't show it. Gradually, Spike began to sway, much in the same way Yvette had done earlier. "Dance with me, Pet. Let me show you how."

Surprisingly, Xander found no objection to the

strange request. In fact, at this point in time and place, dancing with Spike seemed the only logical thing to do.

Xander stood, his arms hanging limply at his sides and a goofy grin on his face and he nodded. "You gotta tell me what to do."

Spike shivered at the possibilities. He could picture himself instructing this boy in all manner of things to do to please him. But that was for later. A treat like Xander must be savored. It shouldn't be rushed. "Tell you what, Love. Since you're bigger, you take the lead. Place your left hand in the center of my back and hold my hand in your right. None of this nancy hand on arm shite.'

Xander did as he was told and both men quietly moaned. Spike at the feel of the incredible heat that soaked through him from the large hand that pressed against his spine and Xander at the amazing contrast of holding Yvette's spindly, mushy body versus Spike's perfect one.

Spike's other arm snaked up and around Xander's neck and the two men entwined their fingers. For Xander it was almost too much. The cold air and the hot room. The alcohol haze and the distant strains of music that bypassed his ears and coasted into his brain. The aching, rock hard cock in his pants and the overly dressed man in his arms.

Xander closed his eyes and feared it all may disappear till the soft, low voice spoke. "Xander?"

"Huh?"

"You all right, Love?"

"Yeah."

"Good. So, let's dance."

And they did. And this time there were no smashed toes or tripped left feet. This time the two bodies moved in perfect synchronicity to the music and to each other.

Finally, Xander knew exactly what he was doing. He had found his rhythm.

Part Thirteen

The night whispers secrets as yet untold

The orchestra that played the practiced tunes of Benny Goodman and Ollie Moore had secured their passage on the Titanic in exchange for their **employment**. They had competed with hundreds of other talented musicians and fought for the jobs that everyone coveted.

As payment, their entire salary was a cramped bunk room and all meals during the ship's Atlantic crossing and they were thrilled to have it. Well aware of the honor, they gave the job their best and continued to **play** till the last passenger stopped dancing.

They had no idea the pleasure they were giving the two men in the small stateroom down the hallway. The men who held each other **close** and slowly

moved and swayed to the soft, melodic sound of 'On Moonlight Bay.'

After the first initial shock, Xander had relaxed and pulled the smaller body tightly against him, giving in entirely to the wonderful sensations that enveloped him. He ran his hand up and down Spike's back in both an attempt to warm the cooler skin and to hold him as near as possible.

He slightly lowered his face and rubbed his cheeks against the side of Spike's hair, marveling at the soft blond curls lightly tinged with the scent of rose oil that tickled his nose and made him want to sniff the hell out of him. It seemed odd that something so feminine as rose oil could come across as masculine on Spike.

When they first bumped together, Xander was temporarily embarrassed that his erection was so blatantly obvious as it nudged Spike's leg, until he noticed that Spike was sporting a nice slab of wood himself. After that, it would have seemed bizarre to Xander if they weren't hard considering their

positions.

So, he did the only thing logical. He held Spike close, he closed his eyes and they danced.

Spike, too, was delighted. The vampire purred happily as he moved with the warmth of his human pressed against his perpetually cold body. The isolation and cramped quarters of the small cabin felt cavelike and infused him with the security of a wild animal snuggled with its mate.

He tipped his head slightly as Xander snuffled his hair and neck, snorting warm puffs of air against his ear and cheek, nearly driving him insane. He moaned softly as the human's strong arms drew him in tighter, touching his back, gripping his hand and, Oh, Sweet Jesus, rubbing his rigid cock against Spike's.

His mouth watered at the thought of tasting this boy. His salty sweat, his bitter hot cum, his warm, living blood. He wanted to throw him down and lick every inch of him till he screamed and squirmed,

begging for relief. Upon which time, Spike, generous vampire that he was, would of course, be willing to give it to him.

"Xander?"

They had been so long with no words passing between them, that the quiet gentle voice surprised the boy but he made no effort to stop dancing.

"Hmmm?"

"Xander, have you ever been with another man before?"

Xander hesitated before answering. He wondered what Spike technically considered as having been with? Touching? Quickly groping? A fast peck on the lips? He was cautious about admitting to what he and Daniel had been doing as he placed Spike's opinion of him in very high regard.

Paddy had been disappointed in him and barely concealed his disgust when he caught the two boys

in the barn. Xander knew that if he had been discovered in flagrante with Anya, it would have been a very different outcome. Backs would be patted. Beers would be bought and no one would have been put on the Titanic and shipped to America.

Spike's brow wrinkled. Why wasn't his boy answering? The silence that dragged on was ugly with implicit guilt, and vivid, colorful pictures of Xander and an army of humans grunting, grinding and fornicating together exploded in Spike's brain. His demon charged to the forefront, rattling the bars of its cage and screaming for revenge and retribution.

He would immediately return to Ireland and slaughter any man who carried even the faintest hint of Xander's scent on him. He would rip the offending cocks from their bodies and force the bleeding screaming owners to eat them before dying.

The vampire was quickly becoming overwhelmed

with a growing jealous rage and Spike could feel his fangs itch to grow as his face started to shift.

Xander sighed, totally unaware of the maelstrom that was churning within the man in his arms. He considered feigning outrage at such a preposterous accusation, but in light of the fact that he was slow dancing with a fat dick in his trousers and a man in his embrace, such denial would probably sound ridiculous.

"Sort of. There was a boy in the village. We used to work together and we talked a lot. I guess you could call it flirting. We were both afraid of saying or doing something that could get us a punch in the nose. Well, after a couple months of hop scotching around, he finally just shoved his hand down my trousers and touched my pecker. Scared me so bad my dick went limp. But, not for long. Long story short, we snuck off to the barn, got to pulling each other's rope and just as my bell was about to ring, Paddy walked in. I tried to stop but you know when you reach the point of no return, well, right there and then, with Paddy watchin', I messed all over

Daniel's stomach and hand."

Spike gasped. He had expected stories of wild debauchery. Orgies of three and four men using his boy for their drunken pleasures. He had imagined things that he himself had done. He had not expected this. This wonderful, innocent purity. Relief flooded his body and Spike stopped moving. When Xander reluctantly looked the older man in the eye, Spike caught his boy's face in his cool hands and pulled him down.

And he kissed him.

Even his sluggish, drunken brain didn't slow him down as Xander immediately responded with eager abandon. He clumsily pressed his mouth against the cool firm lips as he alternated between whimpers and moans. His arms encircled Spike's lighter frame and Xander scooped him up and nearly off his feet as he tried to get them as close as possible.

When Spike licked his tongue across the sealed seam, Xander's lips parted as if a genie from a

bottle had shouted ABRACADABRA and Spike dove into the cave of unlimited treasures. He tasted the whisky and the remnants of the evening's dinner. He tasted the uniqueness of the boy's saliva and as he delved deeper, he imagined he could taste the human's very soul. It was all he could do not to scream out his pleasure and shift to demon.

Xander felt the alcoholic fog retreat as the blood in his veins surged. His heart rate escalated and his skin begged to be free of the painful oppression of the clothes that covered it. The only thing on earth he wanted more than to be naked was to have Spike naked too.

Without breaking the kiss, Xander released his grip on the smaller man and began grabbing at the back of Spike's shirt, pulling and tugging it out of the waistband of his trousers.

Gently, Spike placed his palms on Xander's chest and pushed him backwards. The few inches that now separated them felt like miles and Xander whimpered his fears that he had gone too far.

With a soft, reassuring smile, Spike ran a fingertip over Xander's puffy bottom lip. "What say we get rid of some of these clothes and take this to bed, Love?"

Xander blinked twice. "O.k."

Part Fourteen

Xander stood, his mouth hanging open and his eyes bugging wide as Spike took a step back and slowly started unbuttoning his shirt. He was stunned as Spike's pale, perfectly sculpted chest eventually revealed itself. He stared at the muscles that flexed as Spike's left shoulder rolled back first, then his right copied, causing the shirt to slide off smoothly and tumble to the floor.

Then with a leer and one raised eyebrow, Spike

popped open the first two buttons on his trousers and let them sag open revealing a thick nest of dark blond curls.

Xander's lips formed the words 'Sweet Mother Mary' but no audible sound came out. He knew this was it. The moment of true sexual decision. The barn, with Daniel, had been relatively safe. They were two fumbling, inexperienced boys experimenting with each other's toys. The threat of being caught kept the situation light and the time available brief.

But not now. He was here. With this strange man in a small, private room that no one would seek out. Despite their conversation earlier, he really knew nothing about him and now they were together. Alone. Xander was at this man's mercy. He could do anything he wanted to Xander's body and no one would ever know.

Xander was both terrified and exhilarated. He didn't know if it was the fear, the alcohol, or the sexual electricity that ruled his body but thankfully, his

brain was not interfering.

Taking a step closer, Spike now reached for Xander's trousers. He placed his palm against the bulge and he pressed, feeling its long tubular shape and causing the young man to gasp at the sensations that rushed through him.

"Do you want this, Xander? Do you want me?"

Xander had no idea what Spike was offering but he was positive of the answer. "God, yes."

With a confident smile, Spike's hand left the warmth of the hidden prize and his fingers went to work on the boy's buttons. He started at the top of the shirt and worked his way down, not slowing or pausing as he moved on to the trousers.

After peeling Xander's shirt off he quickly started tugging on the pants but now Xander's trance broke and he grabbed Spike's wrists, stopping him.

Stuttering and unable to use the real, grownup words, Xander searched for an understandable

euphemism.

"Wait, Spike. I.....I, um.....I don't know how to, um...dance. I've never really danced before. I mean, yeah, Daniel and I listened to music for a while but we never actually.....danced."

Spike shuddered as the hot blush of embarrassment rushed through his boy bringing the tinge of pink to his dark, ruddy cheeks. If he had any doubts before, he was certain now that he would own this human. "Trust me, Xander. I don't want to hurt you. I just want us to enjoy each other's bodies. I really like you and I want us to spend some time together. Isn't that what you want too?"

Xander visibly relaxed and he nodded. Put like that, it sounded so simple and so simply wonderful. Wasting no more time, Spike again reached for Xander's trousers. This time, as he did so, Xander gingerly ran his fingertips up Spike's forearm and upper arm tracing the powerful corded muscles.

When Xander's trousers slid to the floor, the boy

stood stark naked and surprisingly unashamed as Spike openly assessed and evaluated him. He ran the backs of two fingers down the length of the human's twitching, aching erection then cupped his full, wrinkled sac. "Just perfect."

Xander smiled at the praise and it gave him the confidence to reach over and slip his hand down inside Spike's open trousers. The second his hot fingers wrapped around the long cool cock, Spike's hips jerked forward and both men moaned.

Spike's restraint was exhausted and he shoved off the rest of his clothes, kicking them into a pile on the side. As they now stood, face to face and cock to cock the room snapped and crackled with an electricity that both men could feel sizzling on their skin.

"Lay down on the bed with me, Xander."

Xander turned, never taking his eyes off the smaller man and he backed up the short distance to the bed. When his calves bumped the edge, he sat, then

hurried to scoot back and lay down to wait. His anxious cock dribbled a puddle on his belly in anticipation.

Spike climbed on with him. He straddled the young man and settled so that Xander's wiry pubic nest tickled the underside of his nuts and Xander's hot, throbbing cock laid against the crack of Spike's ass. With his hands on Xander's shoulders, Spike leaned down and kissed the full, bowed lips. It was a kiss that started out sweetly and rapidly flared to a bonfire of passionate, warring tongues and clacking teeth.

Xander's hips pumped upward, relishing the feel of his ready dick sliding in its own juices against the cool skin but frustrated that this just wasn't 'IT'. When the kiss broke, both men panted and Spike dove onto the human's neck, nibbling, sucking and raising purplish bruises. The scent of the blood so near, yet so far, was maddening.

Xander tipped his head and groaned. His arms were wrapped around the back of the man sitting on him

and he pulled him closer. At the same time he wished desperately that his arms were long enough to reach his own cock and bring himself relief.

After licking the marks he had created, Spike began kissing down Xander's chest. He snuffled the dark chest hair and listened to the strong, human heart as it beat the very blood that could sustain them both. In a frustrated urge, he snapped painfully at Xander's nipple causing the boy to lurch upwards.

"Oh, Jesus, fuck! Spike, I need to cum. My cock is so hard it hurts."

"Not yet, Pet. Wait. The longer you wait, the more it hurts, the better it will be."

There was so much more that Spike wanted to do to this hot, living body. He wanted to fuck it, bathe in its warmth, shove his cock deep inside and pound till his orgasm rocked him to the core, but for some odd reason, he didn't want to kill or even hurt him. Much. Not yet. "Stroke me, Xander. Pull on my dick like you do for yourself."

"Fuck, Spike, you're still so cold."

"Just keep stroking me. Your fucking hands are so hot. You make my prick feel so warm. So good."

Spike leaned back resting his weight on his hands as his cock jutted out for the boy to fondle and squeeze. He was startled to realize that he wanted Xander to enjoy this too. He wanted his boy to shudder and quake his release. He wanted the human to feel it so intensely that he would willingly give himself to the vampire. When the time came for Spike to claim ownership, he wanted the human to beg to belong. So, Spike went to work.

Xander was now writhing and squirming as Spike continued to pinch, stroke and massage the boy's body. He could feel the heavy, masculine thighs spread out behind him as Xander whined and Spike was beginning to think it was like riding a bronco at the rodeo as Xander's hips bucked up repeatedly.

Reluctantly, Spike removed Xander's hand from his

cock and he squatted, rearranging himself between the human's legs. Xander choked at the thought of what the man was about to do. It was unthinkable. It was magnificent!

Spike laid his cheek on the side of Xander's cock. His eyes rolled back when he felt the pulsing vein as the blood flowed and engorged it. He inhaled the musky male smell of hot, sweaty balls and the distinct blend that was all Xander. With his nose, he scooted the nut sack out of the way and he licked the juncture of thigh and crotch tasting the sweet perspiration.

Xander had no clue as to what to do with his hands but he knew what he needed. He was ashamed, but he just had to ask. "Please, Spike, put it in your mouth."

Spike looked up and grinned evilly. "Would you like that, Xander? Do you want me to suck on your cock?"

Xander groaned and nodded, wondering if this was

a trick question. Was Spike teasing him? Would he actually do such a despicably amazing thing?

When Spike was satisfied with the boy's nonanswer, he laid the flat of his tongue on the throbbing meat and wetly licked upward till he reached the fat, mushroomy head, then he stopped again. "I'll do that for you but we do it my way. I will open my lips and I want you to hold my head and just fuck my mouth as hard as you want. Can you do that Xander? Will you fuck my face?"

Xander was taken aback. That didn't sound right. Was he really the kind of man who would use someone like that for their own pleasure? The mental picture of what was being asked blocked out any other reservations he had and he immediately blew out a "YEAH" on a puff of hot air.

Spike opened his mouth. His blue eyes connected with brown and Xander grabbed his cock at the root. He shoved it all the way in the blond's mouth then entangled his fingers in the man's hair as his thighs clamped around Spike's ears. With no further

coaxing, Xander threw his head back and his hips took over, snapping up and down as he roughly fucked the cool, wet opening.

Within seconds, his balls grew heavy, his hard cock stiffened even more and he knew if he were to pull out before release, it had to be now. Instead, Xander painfully tightened his fists in Spike's hair, he squeezed Spike's head like a melon between his thighs and he threw his feet around and beat his heels on Spike's back as his cock erupted, pumping stringy blobs of hot, living seed down the vampire's throat and into his stomach.

The taste, so near blood, triggered the vampire's own orgasm and Spike's cold release shot out, pooling and spilling at the bottom of the small bed.

Part Fifteen

*Getting to know you. Getting to know all about you
Getting to like you. Getting to hope you like me.*

It had taken several minutes of gasping and shuddering before Xander's body began to regain some semblance of control and cognitive ability. The orgasm that slammed into him like a steam engine rattled his teeth and caused stars to explode behind his eyelids. He had never known anything like that before in his young life.

As the blood that rushed through his veins slowed, he cautiously opened his eyes and turned his head to the left to see the smiling, smirking face of the man who was responsible for said cockquake. The man who was lying on his side, stretched out on the small bed and running his cool hands up and down Xander's chest and stomach possessively.

With his brain cells again fed with fluid, Xander was horrified at what he had just done and felt even worse about the level of satisfaction he had achieved. He quickly flopped over on his side so that

they were face to face. "Fuck, Spike. Shit, I'm sorry. I never imagined doing anything like that. It was so harsh, so....."

Before he could go any further, Spike leaned forward and planted a chaste kiss on Xander's lips. The taste of his own semen on Spike's mouth should have repulsed and shamed him, but it had just the opposite effect. The cock that now lay relaxed and resting on his thigh, twitched as it considered plumping for another go.

"Don't you dare apologize. That was fucking brilliant! Sex between two men isn't the same as it is with a bird, Love. We don't need all the flowers, candy and sweet worded lies. With us, sometimes it's down and dirty. Sometimes I like a little of the rough and tumble and from what I just saw, so do you. See, Xan, I knew we were two of a kind."

Xander was very reassured, not only by Spike's words but by his demeanor. Apparently there wasn't to be any accusations, no indignation, and the best part, no leaving. Xander grinned and

snuggled down against the firm body of his lover. His arm circled Spike as his hand rubbed over the small of his back. "Damn, it feels like one hundred degrees in here and you're still cold as a corpse. Wonder what I can do to warm you up a bit?"

Xander waggled his eyebrows in what he hoped was a seductive manner while Spike laughed at the accuracy of Xander's description. The vampire squirmed as the wonderful heat of his human's hand moved and massaged between his shoulder blades down to the soft swell of his buttocks and then back up.

This was the happiest Spike could remember being in years and he had already begun devising a plan to keep the boy with him even after the grand ship docked in New York. Something subtle perhaps. Chains, ropes and a clunk on the noggin were tried and true, but this begged for better. Xander deserved better.

"Hey! you in there?"

Spike blinked to see Xander smiling and snapping his fingers in front of him and realized he had zoned out for a moment. Lunging forward, he grabbed the boy's fingers in his teeth and he play growled as he shook them fiercely. Xander squealed and tugged, laughing at the silliness of it all.

"Stop. Stop. Please, don't bite them off."

Spike released the digits and forcefully shoved his boy onto his back and he pounced, lying prone on top. Tipping his head back, the grin disappeared from Xander's lips as he groaned at the power of the passion that swept through him. The weight of another man pressing down on him was so erotic it caused his breath to hitch and the hair on his balls to curl.

"Oh, fuck, Spike, you feel so good. You make my poor, tired dick want to get hard and squirt again. Let's do stuff. Let's lay in bed all day and do wicked, sexy man stuff. Look, it's nearly morning already. I can see the sun starting to come up."

Xander stared over Spike's shoulder at the small port hole and marveled at the beautiful pink hue that was starting to color the sky. Spike's reaction was markedly different. He snarled and sat bolt upright as his head snapped first toward the coming light and then away from it. He quickly leapt to his feet and grabbed for his clothes.

Xander was stunned and scrambled to sit up also. Surely Spike wasn't going to just leave? That was unthinkable. A decent man would simply not come to your room, give you the best fucking of your young life and then rush away would he? It just wasn't done in polite society! "Hey! Wait, where are you going? What are you doing? You aren't leaving are you? Did I say something wrong? Did I do something? I thought we would spend the day together. I thought we....."

Spike cupped the human's cheek, careful to stay away from the stream of light that was already beginning to pierce the darkness of the small space. He could ask Xander to cover the window but that would require too many questions and right now,

Spike did not want to be trapped here all day, unable to hunt, unable to feed.

"No! No, love. You didn't do anything. You're wonderful and I can't wait to see you later. It's just that right now, I need to get back to my own cabin. I need to clean up and take care of some things. Besides, you are a bit stinky, my love and so am I. So, let's both get some sleep and tidy up, then later, I will come to you and we can spend all evening together. I promise."

Xander scowled. He didn't want to be separated from this man for even a minute but what he said did make sense. His body screamed for sleep and he smelled like a back alley whore house. An odor that was not entirely unpleasant. Still, the urgency with which Spike was attempting to leave brought another terrifying issue to torment his mind and he knew he couldn't sleep if he didn't ask. "Spike, you aren't, um, married or something are you? Is there someone else waiting for you?"

Spike had pulled on his pants, shirt and was now

tying up his shoes. He needed to go. He needed to go NOW, but he wouldn't do it if it meant leaving Xander confused and unhappy. Standing in the shadows with the door to his back, Spike held out his hand for Xander to come to him. Quickly, the boy complied and fell into the vampire's embrace.

"There is no one else, Xander. I promise you. There is no one more important to me than you but I have to go. Now, no more complaining. You get to bed and go to sleep. I expect you wide awake and your pecker hard and ready when I call for you. Do you understand me?"

Xander laughed at the false stern voice and he stood straight, snapped his bare heels together and saluted. "Yes Sir!"

When he turned, Spike cracked him sharply in the naked arse, leaving a lovely red hand mark and he darted out the door.

"Ouch! Hey!"

Xander rubbed his hand over his sore left cheek and had to chuckle. When he started to climb back in bed, his eye noticed the beam of sunlight that now filled the room, had settled on a foreign object in the corner and he squinted to discern what it was. Spike's coat. The long, black wool one that seemed to do very little in the way of keeping the man warm.

Xander grinned. It was his insurance policy. Spike would be back, if for no other reason than to get his coat. Yep, Spike would be back.

Part Sixteen

It was morning. The sun had crested and the sky was clear and blue. A heavy frosting of ice covered the round glass window in Xander's room and although the interior temperature was warm, he shivered as he stood, still naked by his bed.

Xander was almost too twittery to sleep. He went to the washpan and poured some water from the pitcher into the bowl. Like all of the table service in the dining room, the bowl and pitcher were

imprinted with the blue and white insignia of the Titanic. An elegant touch that impressed him greatly and Xander wondered if he had the nerve to swipe something small to keep as a souvenir.

He used his last fresh towel, dipped in the tepid water and cleaned himself off as he was in no position to stroll down the hallway for a real bath.

When he washed his privates, he moaned and twitched at the memory of the incredible things he had done and the handsome, wonderful man he had done them with. He never would have imagined the turn his life would take.

He wondered what he would do once they docked in New York. His family, and he seldom thought of them in that term any more, expected him to return to the small town south of the main city of New York. He would secure a position of [employment](#), marry and live the life of an everyman.

They would have no reason to expect anything else. He was certain that Paddy would not have confided

the real reason for his impromptu return, and he doubted they would care enough to ask.

Suddenly he stopped washing and his considerations took a different turn. Maybe he would not go with them. He was a grown man now. A man of infinite thought and design for his life. A man who wanted to find his own way to live and someone, some man, to live with. He didn't take that final step of naming that man. Even to himself, this was too presumptuous.

When he was as clean as he could get without making the trip down the carpeted walkway to the communal bath, Xander yawned and stretched. He really was exhausted and he giggled when he remembered why. Before climbing into bed, he retrieved the long black coat and he spread it out where Spike had lain.

Xander extended the scratchy, woolen arms and he sighed as he curled up on his bed with the only souvenir that really mattered. He tucked one coat arm underneath him and one folded over him.

When he was as surrounded by the embracing smell of cigar smoke, whisky and coal dust as he could get, Xander fell asleep.

For the next eight hours, Xander tossed and turned. The dreams had started out pleasantly enough with he and Spike holding hands, walking the deck, conversing with the other canoodling couples and dancing. Always dancing. Swept up in each others arms and swaying, dipping and gliding smoothly across the floor to the melodic strains of horns and strings.

But the dreams soon morphed. The wind on deck had turned cold and biting and Xander wanted to go in where it was warm so they could snuggle. He stood at the railing and looked out over the vast, seemingly endless ocean and a feeling of terror gripped him. When he turned to seek reassurance, Spike was gone. His black wool coat lay in a heap at Xander's feet but the deck was now empty. The Titanic looked like a ghost town with Xander as its last lone inhabitant.

When he awoke, it was with a start and he looked frantically around. The coat was a wrinkled mess at his side and the blanket was crumpled on the floor but Xander was relieved. It was a dream. A stupid dream that meant nothing. He did not subscribe to the old wives' tales of dreams being prophetic. Except, of course, when he dreamed of searching for an outhouse then waking to find he had to piss like a Russian racehorse.

Xander sat up in bed. He smiled and stretched. From the looks of the sky it was probably late afternoon and he had shamefully slept away the day. The Titanic was indeed a den of iniquity! Xander laughed at the thought as he scooped up the coat and clutched it to his naked body, raking the rough wool over his chest and between his thighs.

"Good morning, Spike's coat. Did you sleep well?"

Then his smile slipped and he tipped his head in an effort to assist his foggy memory. Spike said he

would come for him. Did he say when? Was he to wait here? Would they dine together? The last question was of great importance to Xander considering his stomach was growling loudly. He had no breakfast nor [lunch](#) and was not accustomed to missing a meal. Emma would not hear of it.

Xander wished he knew where Spike's cabin was. It now struck him as odd that he had no clue as to which hallway it was in or even the names of any of the lecherous, coveting men who slept in the room with him. It was very disquieting.

Xander resolved to rectify the situation this evening. He would insist that Spike take him to the evil hellhole so that Xander could personally assess the threat to Spike's safety and virtue. If it was deemed anything less than innocuous, Spike would be moved in with him posthaste.

With all that settled in his mind, Xander pulled on his funky clothes from the night before and with fresh clothes in hand, he headed for the bath.

Luckily, at this time of day, it was free and he took his time. He peed, he soaked in a luxurious long relaxing bath with the soap that the ship provided, and he washed out his dirty clothes to take back and hang in his room.

With all that completed, he sat on the end of his bed to wait and before long he began talking to himself.

"Soooo, Xander Harris on the Titanic. Who'd a thunk it. Nice room, fancy parties, big big ship and very sexy men. Yep, nice ship. Everything a body needs. Good food. GREAT food. Lot's of great food. Damn. I'm hungry as fuck. Where the fuck is he? Oh, maybe he is expecting me in the dining hall. Well, shit. I've been sitting here and poor Spike is waiting in the dining hall. Where all the food is. Damn."

Xander grabbed his shoes and his suit coat and rushed out the door. He barreled down the hallway and out onto the deck where he bundled against the stabbing cold wind and he darted into the vast space and clattering noise of the dining hall. It was

already packed with chattering pleasant conversation and laughter and Xander, too, had to smile at the camaraderie and the warm spicy smells.

He scanned the room but didn't see the blond and knew with the number of diners sitting and moving from table to table to visit, there was no way he could find one, lone, handsome man.

"ALEXANDER!! Mon Cher! Come."

Xander groaned and rolled his eyes as the small, delicate arm looped through his and he was dragged to his place at the table. If he hadn't been so hungry he would have considered an escape. Something daring and adventurous. Something along the lines of a jailbreak like Billy the Kid would have executed in the dime novels he read as a child. But his stomach bid him stay so he blocked out the prater and he followed meekly.

"They are just starting the service. The soup is tomato bisque and it looks wonderful. I have looked

for you on deck. Silly man, you have slept the day away. Last night must have exhausted you. It was incredible. I shall remember it all my life Alexander."

Xander frowned and looked at her blushing face wondering what the hell she was going on about. When they reached the table, he pulled out her chair as he was taught a gentleman always does, missing the smug smirk she gave her sister, and he sat down to eat.

Part Seventeen

"Isn't the salmon just delightful, Alexander? Harrold and I considered having it for our wedding dinner but settled on beef steaks instead. They are so much more, ah....how you say....elegant?"

Xander leaned forward, past the clinging Yvette to

answer her older sister. It was the first time he had given any effort to really taking a good look at her. Dark hair, buck teeth and a left eye that seemed to be wandering off on its own to enjoy the lovely stained glass ceiling. Xander casually wondered how much of a loser Harrold must be to have plucked this one from the garden.

Although his upbringing had taught him to never be rude to a lady, Xander truly couldn't give a rat's ass about the fucking fish or a slab of cow. "Beef steak, huh? Yeah, that sounds good."

He had been sitting here, picking at the food that had lost its appeal for nearly an hour and wondering where the hell Spike was. He had asked his tablemates for the time so often, he was hesitant to do so again. Finally when he was about to rush back out of concern that Spike might be waiting for him in the cabin hallway, a voice next to his ear caught his attention.

"Xander, I need a moment of your time."

Xander jumped and spun around. His thrill at Spike's arrival was suddenly doused at the sight of the man. He was paler than before. He looked a good ten years older and his eyes had an odd yellow tinge that Xander hoped was due to the sparkling chandeliers overhead. His lover looked sick. Sicker than sick. He appeared to be on death's door. Xander failed to note the stares of alarm from the others at his table who shared his assessment.

Quickly, Xander left his seat and stepped to the side where confidentiality of their conversation would be assured.

"Spike. Shit. Are you sick? What's wrong?"

Spike turned his head and refused to look the boy in the eye. "Xander, I think I left my coat in your cabin. I need it. Give me the key and I'll meet you to return it later."

Xander's hand plunged into his trouser pocket and he pulled out the small metal key which he held close to his body. "I'll go with you. Whatever is

wrong I can....."

"NO!"

Spike grabbed Xander by the wrist. His long thin fingers were ice cold and clutched the boy painfully in an iron grip. He leaned in so that no one else could hear. "Just give me the fucking key! Now! Then you sit your fucking arse back down and finish your fucking dinner!"

The man's fierce demeanor and frightening appearance caused Xander's fingers to immediately unfurl. Wasting no time on apologies or explanations, Spike snatched the key, leaving long red scratches on the palm of Xander's hand.

"Will I see you.....?"

Xander's question died in the air as Spike turned and rushed away.

Xander was sick with confusion. He wasn't sure if he should run after him, although his inner voices

screamed at him 'DON'T DO IT!' or if he should follow his lover's orders and sit back down. He decided on the latter since no other option presented itself.

Trembling and wearing a mask of false calm, Xander picked up his napkin and sat down, placing it carefully over his left knee. The other couples at the table were obviously concerned but hesitated to pry. Polite society avoided confrontational interference. Yvette was apparently not part of polite society.

"Xander. What was wrong with that man? What does he want from you? I don't like him. He frightens me. He is tres mauvais. Very bad. I don't know what sort of business you have with him but you should stay away. When we dock in New York, I don't want him hanging around us."

Xander turned to face her. He wanted to scream at her to shut the fuck up but found he couldn't. The huge, vast room was closing in on him and he couldn't conjure up enough oxygen to breathe let

alone vent his fury and fear. He needed to escape. He needed to get out. Now!

With as much dignity as he could muster, Xander stood and slammed his napkin down on his plate as a shudder ran from his head to his toes. "My friend is very sick. Is there a French translation for the word 'compassion', Yvette?"

Then he walked away on shaky legs, dismissing the sound of Yvette's gasp and fluttery explanations as well as her cooing sister's reassurances.

Spike stayed to the darkest spot under the overhang of the storage cabinet. He wrapped the security of concealment tightly around himself. The long black coat effectively covered the white of his shirt and the pale glow of his exposed skin. The matching dark hat covered his white blond hair and rendered him all but invisible.

The young woman he had selected earlier failed to show and now he was nearly starved. He was enraged that she had the nerve to stand him up. He

had lured her with his charms and promised her a world of delights and now the bitch had failed him. He would make her sorry. He would make her pay. But revenge was for later. Right now he needed blood!

Even in life, Spike had had a rampant metabolism and it was a curse he carried into death. Although some vampires could go days on the blood of a single victim, Spike needed nourishment daily to stave off the demon hunger that clawed at his belly constantly.

Crouching in the utility area, Spike knew that sooner or later one of the lesser crew members would arrive in search of some random cleaning supply or tool for a mechanical mishap. It was risky. Killing and eating a crew member that would be quickly missed was a gamble he had not intended to take, but drastic situations require drastic solutions.

"Here comes my baby, here comes my gal....."

Spike's body stiffened when he heard the happy

whistle/singing approach. His human face slipped away, replaced by the fangs, claws and distorted features of his true demon. He closed his eyes to prevent the yellow glow from being seen too soon and he followed the man's movement with his hearing. The second the man reached up to open the cupboard door, Spike pounced.

With one clawed hand over the struggling, terrified cabin boy's mouth and the other hand at the back of his head, Spike twisted and with one swift, sickening snap, the boy's neck was broken and dinner was served.

When the body had been drained, Spike knew he was too far from the deck to toss him overboard. Instead, he folded him up in a ball and shoved him into one of the storage areas then made a hasty retreat.

The night sky was clear and cold. The clouds had parted and the moon and stars sparkled in the blackness like diamonds. It was a poet's inspiration and a songwriter's bread and butter.

Silently, Spike walked down the deck till he found what he was looking for. Pausing, he stared at the back of the human that stood by the railing and he could feel the sadness and he quickly moved alongside.

"Xander?"

Xander spun around. He wanted to be furious. He wanted to read him the riot act, but he couldn't. The startling improvement in Spike's appearance was such a relief that Xander forgot everything else. The man's pale sickly face was now pink and glowed with health. When he laid a hand on Xander's arm, his fingers felt warm and soft and his eyes were again crystal clear, blue and smiling.

"Spike?"

Spike interlaced his fingers with Xander's and tugged. "Come on. The night is beautiful and I feel like a walk."

Part Eighteen

Spike seemed in exceptionally good spirits and Xander was almost tempted to ignore the ugliness of earlier. Almost. As Spike tugged him quickly across the slippery wooden flooring on the freezing cold deck, he laughed as they slipped and slid scrambling to keep their footing. When they reached the side of the ship where the lifeboats were tethered, Spike snatched him close. "Let's do it in the lifeboat. Come on, Xander. Live a little."

Despite himself, Xander had to chuckle. His companion's bubbly, effervescent mood was infectious and for a quick blink in time he considered the outrageous proposal. That is until a particularly cold blast of wind whipped around him, biting his nose and causing his dick to shrink to a size that he was certain would make any activities in

the lifeboat impossible. "No. You're crazy, do you know that?"

Spike suddenly jerked the boy by the front of his trouser belt and slammed their bodies together. "I'm crazy about you, Xander."

Xander's cold breath hitched in his chest as he stared into the incredibly blue eyes that shone with affection and honesty. No one had ever looked at him like this before. It was overwhelming. It was almost too much and he struggled not to look away. On a puff of hot, foggy air, he gave his answer.

"Spike."

The grin on Spike's face reached to the tiny wrinkles in the corners of his eyes and he leaned in, kissing the cold lips and letting the boy's warm breath fill his mouth like the transfer of life itself. Then, as if he too were becoming overwhelmed with the emotion of the moment, Spike stepped back and let the mood slip away.

"Are you a rich man, Xander?"

Xander blinked in confusion at the switch of topic.

"What? Rich? Um, no?"

"Good. That's what I thought. Come on, I think I can do something about that."

Engaging in the pointless act of wrapping his coat tightly around his perpetually cold body, Spike again grabbed the boy by the hand and they turned and rushed off into the night. Within minutes, they reached a section of the ship's second level deck that catered to the businessmen traveling in limited luxury, some with their families, some alone. But in this group of rooms, the policy was no women allowed.

They darted down the interior hallway and headed for the smoking rooms. Xander had peeked in here during one of his hallway explorations and knew that this was a place where older men went to discuss the stocks and bonds and the finances of the world markets. Things he knew nothing about.

These were not the giants of industry. The railroad masters and the shipbuilders and mine owners were all in the first class, living like royalty. No, these were the lesser players in the stage of the world's money. Men who had smaller playgrounds but were, in their own venues, just as important.

They were men of good whisky and fine wines. They smoked imported cigars and read the day's newspapers. For their recreation, they talked business, they bragged and belittled, and they played cards. Men of the world always fancied themselves skilled at cards.

When Spike grabbed for the door handle, Xander pulled back. "Wait, Spike, I can't go in there. That's for important men. We don't belong in there."

Spike laughed and ran his fingers through Xander's long, shaggy hair. "Bullshit! It's all in the attitude, Love. You can fit in anywhere you want to. Just march right in there with your head held high. Nod a greeting to the first man you see and gravitate to

where three or more men are talking. Listen to them for a while and when one of them says something outrageously stupid, you nod thoughtfully and say 'Well, that is a concept I had never considered. Thank you.' I guarantee you will be immediately accepted."

Xander chuckled and wondered if he could see himself doing anything so nerdy. It was a physical fact that he could attest to that Spike had bigger balls than him but maybe, just maybe, he could muster up the courage. Before the agreement to try could be voiced, the men faced another interruption.

"Alexander. Wait, Alexander."

Xander groaned and rolled his eyes. Spike quietly growled. The amusement that was Yvette was quickly losing its charm.

"Oh, Yvette, I'm sorry but I'm busy right now. We're going in the smoking room and, unfortunately, no women are allowed."

Yvette smiled and batted her eyes demurely. "Oui. Yes, of course. A woman, such as I, would never understand the things that men discuss in places such as this. I will let you go, I just wanted to apologize that we quarrelled earlier. I think you misunderstood. I was, of course very concerned for the health of your friend."

Yvette then turned to face Spike and the innocent sweetness in her face and tone soured noticeably. "But, I see that you are much improved, Monsieur, no?"

Gracefully, Spike took her small hand in his painfully cold one and he brought it to his lips, never taking his eyes from hers. "*Vous jouez un jeu dangereux, Yvette.*"

Yvette's eyes grew huge. She snatched her hand away and took a step back. When she was able to fake some shred of composure, she gave Xander a strained smile and hurried away, skittering like a mouse from a cat.

Xander's eyebrows shot up as he watched her go. "What on earth did you say to her?"

Spike shrugged and appeared clearly confused by her rapid departure. "I only thanked her for her concern for my well being. Oh well, bloody glad to see her go. So, are you ready?"

Xander had no idea why they were here or what this had to do with Spike talking about money, but any evening spent in the company of this crazy, wonderful man promised to be an adventure and he was in.

The moment they stepped over the threshold, Xander's doubts resurfaced. The room was richly appointed. Hardwoods polished to a sheen so deep you could see your reflection in them. A long bar stacked with glistening bottles of amber liquid and rows of crystal glasses stacked up clean and ready to be filled.

The seating arrangements were cozy and intimate.

Small round tables where two or three men sat speaking in low tones, drinking and smoking. At the far end of the room were four large tables where the conversation was louder and more jovial as the decks were shuffled and the cards dealt. That was the area Spike indicated with a tip of his head.

"Over there, Xan. Come on."

Xander was stunned. "What? Spike I don't know how to....."

But his companion was already gone.

Translation: "You are playing a dangerous game, Yvette"

Part Nineteen

Xander stepped into the room and tried to do as he had been told. He tipped his head up in an imitation of the haughty, uppity manner that he imagined men of this stature in life would assume. For all of thirty seconds, he was patting himself on the back for the perfectly executed snottiness. Then he realized he was standing alone.

His head snapped around and it didn't take long to recognize the slow, confident saunter of his companion's back as he moved toward the back of the lounge and the card tables. Xander hurried to follow, all pretense of aloofness forgotten.

There were four card tables at the rear of the lounge. Spike took his time selecting his target area. He leaned against the end of the bar and ordered a whiskey, neat. When it was handed to him, the tip he offered to the bartender was a smile and a wink. Xander slipped in beside him.

"Are you playing, Spike?"

Spike took his time to answer. His eyes scanned the four tables and he considered the other players. He instantly calculated the amount of money being bet and he examined the men who casually tossed the bills into a pile. These were men who fancied themselves as expert players. They had perfected their poker faces and took great pains to show no expression, twitch or movement that would give

away their position.

Spike snorted. They were fucking idiots and easier to read than a schoolboy's primer. He could smell the body shift when they had a losing hand they were bluffing with and he could see the minute lip movement and excessive blinking when they had a winner. It was a fucking piece of cake, but a mild amusement that he enjoyed immensely.

The only remaining question was which table offered the largest pot. If he was going to **win** his boy **a prize**, he wanted it to be worthy of his human. He wanted a big pot that would make the boy's pocket protrude out as far as the bulge of his fat, hard cock. Luckily, the pocket he had picked earlier on the deck had given him ample seed money.

"I'll see that and raise you another thousand."

That caught Spike's attention and he turned to the table at the left and the chubby, **older man** with the grey, muttonchop sideburns. He had a long round, unlit cigar that he was chewing and flipping from

side to side in his teeth and he apparently owned the table.

The thin nervous man who had a considerably smaller stack of paper money in front of him, twitched. His beady little eyes darted from side to side and Spike smirked, mentally urging him on. From his position at the bar, Spike could see that the challenger had a pair of kings and the fat man nothing more than a ten high and a set of balls the size of Mt. Everest.

The situation was simple. If Twitchy held on and called his bluff, he would end the night with the huge pile of money that lay waiting in the center of the table. If his nerve broke, his wallet would match.

The tension in the room was thick as the sweat beaded up on Twitchy's upper lip. Muttonchop caught the light as it twinkled on the perspiration on his opponent's face and he knew he had already won.

"Well?"

"Don't rush me, George."

George loudly and impatiently drummed his fingers on the top of the table as all the other players awaited the outcome. Holding his cards in one hand, Twitchy thumbed through the money he had left, mentally calculating it. Finally, when he appeared ready to call, Twitchy threw down his hand in disgrace and mumbled, "Fold."

George roared with laughter and in an unnecessary move designed to humiliate his opponent, he turned over his hand to reveal what the others already knew. He had bluffed. If Twitchy had stood and called, he would be a rich man rather than a shamed, poor one.

Everyone that had been watching the drama blew out the air they had been holding and the comments flew. It was a chorus of "Damn." "Did you see that?" "Shit!" And the ever present, "That fucking George can beat any man here."

While trying to maintain some shred of dignity, Twitchy picked up what little money he had left and he rose from the table. "Well, gentlemen, I believe that does it for me and I bid you all a good evening."

As the slumped shoulders of the defeated man slipped away, Spike tipped his glass, gulped the last of his whiskey and smiled to Xander. "I think I've found my game, Love."

Xander's eyes bugged as he silently watched Spike casually stroll over and when he reached the table, he pulled a wad of cash out of his coat pocket and fanned it out obscenely. "You blokes looking for a fourth?"

The others eyed him up and down assessing his worthiness to join their elite gathering. When their gaze locked on his money, he passed muster.

"Please, join us. Welcome, Mr., uh....."

"Spike. The name's Spike. Lovely to meet you lads."

What transpired over the next three hours was something that had the room enthralled. The players at the other tables abandoned their own games to stand on the sidelines and observe. The small pile of money in front of Spike and the mountain of paper bills in front of George slowly shifted and moved till their financial positions had reversed. Xander paced and wrung his hands.

Some in the room suspected Spike was a mind reader. He seemed to know instinctively when George was bluffing and when he genuinely had a winning hand. Most of the others had a pretty good idea that he was somehow cheating, but without concrete proof, accusations were unthinkable.

By the third hand, George himself was beginning to understand his situation but pride kept him playing. A gentleman simply didn't stay and play when they won then cash and dash when they lost. On the few hands he did take, Spike had bet the minimum. On the rare occasion he had a straight, a full house, or even trips, Spike had better.

He was receiving the same horrendous beating he took such pleasure in doling out. He considered faking a heart attack. *Hell, he thought, with my fucking luck there are probably a dozen physicians in the fucking room.* So, he played on and watched helplessly as Spike raked in pot after pot.

Finally, with only a few dollars left, George lifted his hand to his face and felt a shiver run down his spine. A STRAIGHT FLUSH! No way could he lose. This was it. He would win this hand and with his dignity bruised but intact, he would collect and walk. With a snort and a sigh that he hoped concealed his excitement, George pushed his remaining stack to the center of the table.

Spike groaned. He glanced again at his cards and he gave the impression that his world had just crashed down around his ears. Then, when everyone, Xander included, was certain he would fold, Spike winked and shoved in a matching amount. "Call!"

George leapt to his feet and slapped his hand down on the table, face up to show the world his

dominance. "HA! Straight flush! Jack high!"

Just as he reached for the mound of wealth on the table, Spike casually dropped down his. "Sorry, mate. Royal flush."

The room exploded. Whistles, shouts and a general uproar split the air in a total disregard of the unspoken rule of low tones and dignity that were the norm in rooms such as this. George's face was beet red with fury. He wished he had dropped his derringer in his vest pocket and could imagine himself putting a bullet between those blue eyes and tossing the cad overboard. Spike was in no way intimidated.

"Well, lads, I bid you adieu. Thanks, George. Maybe we'll play again."

With a relaxed air and a laugh, he scooped up his winnings and stuffed his pockets full. He then returned to the bar to collect his boy and together, arm in arm, they strolled from the smoking room.

Part Twenty

Commandment #8: Thou shall not steal.

Avoiding the blasting cold air of the outer deck, Spike and Xander blatantly held hands as they laughed and ran through the maze of interior corridors till they came to the hallway of the second class staterooms. When they came to number 269, Xander fell back against it, gasping to catch his breath as he fished around in his pockets for his room key.

"Looking for this, Pet?"

When Xander saw the key Spike held, he remembered how the other man had gotten it and it instantly deflated his good mood. Spike saw the change in his boy and was not about to have the

rest of their evening ruined, so he did the first thing that came to mind. He stepped in and kissed him.

It should have been unthinkable that two men would behave so outrageously. Right there. In the common hallway where any number of proper, perfect strangers could see them.

Xander gasped. He was so totally thrown off-kilter, that his sour mood of just a second ago was long forgotten. His brain screamed 'NO! NO! STOP THIS MADNESS!' In confusing contrast, his lips and body thought this was the best idea ever and challenged anyone to step up and interfere.

He leaned against the door and didn't care that the door handle was digging into the center of his back. In fact, the discomfort only added to the sizzling excitement. He scooped his arms around the smaller man and pulled him close, so close you couldn't have gotten a postcard between them and he opened his mouth, begging for the now familiar cold tongue to plunder and possess him. It did not disappoint.

After a few minutes, Spike pulled back. He gazed into the hooded brown eyes and the goofy smile of the kiss puffed lips. That was better. That was a much more attractive look on his boy than the annoyed scowl.

"Come on, Love, I think we better take this inside. The good passengers of the Titanic might not approve of our snogging in the hallway, but they would be downright shocked if they came upon us rolling naked and shagging like bunnies."

Xander watched as Spike turned the key and opened the door and he followed happily into his room. "Ha ha, yeah, I don't think....., um, I get that snogging must be kissing but what exactly would they see if they caught us shagging?"

Spike, master of diversion that he was, again changed the subject and, like a magician pulling a family of rabbits out of his hat, he began unloading huge fistfuls of cash from his coat and tossing them on the small cabin bed. Xander eyes bugged as the

supply seemed never ending.

"Hell's bells, Spike. How much is that?"

Spike shrugged in boredom and let his coat drop from his shoulders. "Don't know, do I? Really didn't keep track. Besides, I won it for you. You count it."

Xander was stunned. He sat on the edge of the bed and he ran his hands over the amazing amount of money. He knew this was probably more money than Paddy earned in two years and Spike had won it in a single night. He couldn't possibly accept such an outrageous gift. Could he? Before he could stop himself, Xander began thinking of all the things he could do in New York with this kind of money. It would pay the rent on a small apartment for months until he and Spike got jobs and earned their keep. It was freedom. No. It was Spike's. "Damn, Spike, I can't take this. It wouldn't be right. You won it fair and square. It's yours."

Spike snorted. He casually went about the business of kicking off his shoes and unbuttoning his shirt.

"Don't be daft, Pet. I won it because I have the quickest hands not the best cards. So take the damn money and I can get us more anytime we need it."

Xander sat with a blank look on his face. It took him all of three seconds to realize what Spike was saying. When he did, he squeaked, tumbling away from the bed and jumping to his feet, as far from the stack of evil, vile, stolen winnings as he was able to get considering the limited dimensions of the room. He then snapped an accusing finger at the contaminated cash.

"YOU CHEATED! That is ill gotten gains! You cheated at cards and took their money under false pretense. That's like stealing. You expect me to accept and spend, although it would really come in handy, that spoiled spoils? Never! Never I say! Well, I mean maybe if it was an emergency. You know, if I was dying and that paid the doctor bill or if you were starving and I needed some of it for food. Oh, or maybe if one of us was kidnapped and the ransom was, how much did you say was there?"

Spike was stumped as to what Xander's objection could be. It was money. It was free money. "How much? Who cares, Xander? Those fat bastards have more dosh than they could ever spend. This is nothing to them. Besides, do you know how they get their money? On the broken backs of men like you and your Paddy. Men that they work like pack mules till their bodies break and they're no good to them anymore. Then they toss them aside and hire more. They deserve to lose some of it to us. To the very men they cheat years of their life from."

Xander paused. All of that certainly made sense. He was still not fully convinced but Spike's side of the debate was going a long way toward swaying his opinion of black and white and shades of grey.

Spike paused in the work he was doing on his trouser buttons and rolled his eyes. He was now naked except for the pants that were all but dropping from his hips and he wanted Xander the same way. This silly nonsense and babble about honest vs dishonest was a philosophical discussion that he had no interest in continuing.

Slowly, in a walk best described as a slither, Spike circled his boy and stepped up behind him. Xander was still uncertain. He stood straight backed, his hands on his hips and his righteous indignation perched on his head like a crown of thorns.

Spike ran his hands up his boy's back, feeling the sharp outline of the shoulder blades and the wide, hard shoulders. He could feel the tension in the broad back muscles and he dug his bony fingers in at exactly the right spot to cause the knots to weaken and soften. Xander's hands slipped and swung limply at his sides.

Spike leaned in and spoke softly in the boy's ear.
"That feel good?"

Xander swayed on his feet as the amazing massage continued down his spine and back up to his shoulders, hitting every tight muscle and sore spot and turning him into a happy puddle of goo.

"Oh yeah. Oh, right there. Yeahhhhhh."

Spike's hands worked their way down to his waistband where he tugged and pulled till he had Xander's shirt freed. He then pressed his chest against the incredible warmth of Xander's back and he reached around to unbutton the restrictive clothes as he continued to speak in low, hypnotic tones. "Do you know what I want to do with all that money. Xander?"

Xander swayed and closed his eyes as the nimble fingers worked their magic. "Hmmm?"

"I want to spread it all out on your bed and shag you on it. I want to shove my cock deep in your arse and pound away while it crinkles and crackles underneath your sweet head."

Xander's mouth fell open and a small "Ack" tumbled out

Part Twenty-One

Xander offered no resistance as Spike's fingers flew about the task of undressing the silent human. He was too shocked. Spike's words had exploded in his brain, seeped into his bloodstream and affected every inch of his body.

His dick, which had slowly started to move and twitch, to fill and lengthen, now snapped to attention and strained to be released from its confines. When Xander suddenly shivered, he realized he was naked and it was now or never. He had to ask. "What you said.....I mean, people don't really do that, do they? It seems kinda wrong. Sounds unnatural."

Spike chuckled. He had forgotten how wonderful true innocence was. This was going to be a treat. One to be savored and enjoyed. Gently, he took both Xander's hands in his and coaxed him forward.

"We aren't the only men in the world who take pleasure with other men, Xander. What do you think they do? It feels good to take each other in hand and when you suck a cock till it fills your mouth with release it's amazing, but this, this down and dirty business of shagging is bloody brilliant. It's special. It's the two of us sharing one body. It's the same as what men do with women. It's no different."

Without thinking, Xander's hand drifted around to his backside to cover and protect and Spike stifled a snicker. With both men now naked, Spike took one long thin finger and starting on Xander's throat, he let it drift down the center of his chest where his sensitive fingertips could feel the boy's heart pounding, his lungs fill and expel and down to where his stomach muscles quivered at the cool touch.

His hand stopped when it reached the straining, drooling penis that both men now stared at. Xander wanted to be touched and he didn't care by whom .
"So, um, if I want to do that, um, thing.....which

one of us would poke and which one gets poked?"

Before answering, Spike swiped his thumb across the sticky substance that oozed out of the nearly purple head. He made sure he had Xander's full attention and then licked it off. Xander whimpered. "Don't be silly Love, the human is always on the bottom."

Xander frowned. "Human?"

Spike chuckled darkly. "How daft of me. I meant American, of course. I forget you aren't used to slang words we use on the other side. It's just general practice that Europeans always top."

Xander didn't think that sounded very fair but considering the situation he was about to put himself in, International Rights seemed a topic best kept for later conversations. "Doesn't that hurt? A lot?"

Spike reached over and pulled out the top drawer of Xander's small bed stand. He removed a small vial

of oil and handed it to the nervous boy. Xander popped off the cork and smelled the heady, rich scent of roses. It was the same smell he had come to know and love in Spike's hair.

"On my way back to get you, I dropped this off. Kinda hoped our evening would come to this. Do you want to try, Xander? Do you want me to fill your body and bring you pleasures that you've only dreamed of?"

Xander could hardly breathe. His dick was so hard and eager he would have agreed to hanging upside down naked on the first class deck if Spike would lead him to release. Unimagined pleasures was more than he hoped for. "Yeah, I want that. I want to try. Tell me what to do."

Spike grinned smugly. The hungry itch of anticipation flooded his body and made him want to howl at the moon and scream his excitement. The only thing that would make this better was if he could shed this silly human appearance and fuck the boy with his demon's unchecked abandon.

But that would come. After ownership had been established. For now, he would show restraint. Control. As much as he was able. "Spread the money out on the bed."

Spike's voice was low and growly as he watched the boy hurry to do as he was told. His nostrils flared and his fingers clenched and opened repeatedly as he watched Xander bend over to comply. His boy's arse tipped high and flexed as he reached and moved to toss handfuls of the paper money around like a second blanket.

Spike opened the bottle of oil in his hand and he dripped some on the head of his cock. Automatically, he jerked with the need to grip and strip his aching dick till relief spurted from the slit. But he didn't. This virgin was to be savored. So, slowly, gently, his hand lightly moved up and down, coating his flesh with the sweet, floral smell as he stared at his beautiful boy's backside.

His body was incredible. Long, thick thighs that

were covered with dark hair that grew more sparse as it reached upward, nearly dissipating when those legs turned into perfect, plump globes. Spike loved an arse with a little fat to it.

Xander's hands flew. He wasn't sure if he should do this by denomination or simply ensure that it was evenly distributed. The absurdity of the task was secondary to the thought of what they were planning to do next. Even though it scared the bejeebers out of him, he couldn't wait. Just the thought that men actually did these things with each other opened a whole new future up for him.

When he thought he had it almost right, Xander yipped as the cold hands gripped his ass cheeks and pulled them open. When Spike kicked the insides of his ankles, Xander took the hint and immediately widened his stance. What happened next caused a steady stream of low, whispered curses and muttered disjointed thoughts to leave his lips as Spike released one cheek and Xander felt the oil dribbled over his hot, musky hole.

"Shhhh. Relax, Xan. I'm going to get you all nice and ready for me, yeah? Gonna start with my fingers and open you up. Get that sweet little hole all loose and relaxed so when I lay down with you, I can slide all up in your body."

Xander dropped his head and tipped his ass higher. The thoughts were so dirty and the words were so enticing he was certain he would cum before Spike's dick got anywhere near him. His only hope was to refuse to touch himself or even look at the cock that was staring him in the eye and begging, "Please Xander. Please just touch me. I promise I won't cum. I promise I'll be good." Xander knew the little fucker was lying.

Spike closed his eyes and tipped back his head, reveling in his other senses as he worked the boy's opening. The feel of the slick as his fingers, first one, then two moved in and out, sliding and scissoring to relax the tight hole. The sound of the oil as it squished in rhythm to the human's moans and ragged breathing. The smell of roses mixed with the

enticing blood just a fraction of an inch under the surface. It was all nearly too much. It was all more than Spike had felt in years and he knew it could be dangerous for Xander if he didn't move quickly.

So he stopped. He withdrew his fingers, despite Xander's whine, and he smacked the boy's arse sharply.

"Lay down on your back and spread your legs for me."

Xander scrambled to comply. When he was in position, Spike took a moment to look and appreciate what was his. The boy was frightened, his eyes were wide and he resembled a carriage horse who had come upon a snake in the road. His long hair was disheveled and perspiration had tendrils of it stuck to his forehead. His feet were flat on the bed and his knees shook. Spike grinned. His pressie was perfect and he climbed on the bed. "Put your feet on my shoulders. It will help you brace yourself."

Xander wiggled down and did as he was told. The position had him bent nearly in half, his knees near his own shoulders and his cockhead brushing against his belly, leaving a slime trail that felt wet and chilly in the cool night air.

Spike fingered Xander's ass a little more to test it then placed his cock against the impossibly tight, wrinkled opening. "Relax, Xander. Don't hold your breath. I'm going to push it in and it will burn some. When I get it in, I'll stop and give you a chance to get used to it. You ready?"

It all sounded terrible and Xander was having second thoughts, but his dick did not share his concerns. His dick, and surprisingly, his hole were fully on board. So, with trepidation, Xander bit his lip and nodded. Spike wasted no time. He placed a thumb and forefinger under the crown of his cock and he pushed but it slipped away. On the second try, he was firmer and it popped through. Immediately, Xander flinched, squeezing Spike in a painful paradise.

Xander stiffened and whimpered quietly. It was music to Spike's ears and he plunged forward as Xander pressed his feet harder against the vampire's shoulders and cried out. "FUCK!"

"Do you want to stop?"

"No. No, just give me a minute."

"Tell me when. Christ, Xan, you feel so good. So warm. Like heaven."

After a moment that felt like a year, the grip around him eased marginally and Xander's voice was steadier. "Yeah, yeah, it's better. It feels better. Just...slow. Go easy."

Gently, Spike pulled back and, for Xander, the burn was now considerably less. As Spike picked up speed and depth, the all-consuming feel switched from uneasy to 'Oh my fucking God!'. Now, Xander rocked up. He thrashed around, squirming and gripping Spike's forearms as he tried to get more. More cock. More of the intrusive, glorious ache.

More of everything. More Spike.

"I'm close, Xan. Cum with me."

Xander blinked. He had been so lost in the feel of his ass he had almost forgotten about his own cock. Now that it had his attention, it was his whole world. Immediately, Xander reached between his legs and as Spike pulled back, Xander wrapped his hand around Spike's cock and coated his fingers with the rose oil.

He then gripped his own erection and both men lost themselves in the pleasures of the flesh. Within minutes, their murmurs, sighs and moans turned to curses and grunts as they chased and strained toward the inevitable. Spike felt it first. As the tingle started, he quickly dropped his face and kissed the boy's neck, squishing him in half. When Xander felt the sharp, piercing sting on his neck, he too snapped into an orgasm that exploded white lights and dancing stars behind his eyelids.

He spurted string after string of hot pearly blobs

that ran down his side and soaked the paper money beneath him and Xander Harris felt like a million bucks.

Part Twenty-Two

Spike showed no interest in removing himself from atop his boy where his cool, smaller body was draped over **the** hot, pliant human. Spike's hands framed Xander's face and he covered his boy's lips, eyelids, cheeks and forehead in small pecks and kisses.

Xander felt like a slug. His happy, sated cock was slowly deflating and his entire body hummed and purred with the flush of sexual and emotional satisfaction. Xander wondered if it was possible to fall in love in the course of just two days. It was a question he would not dare voice. Not yet.

Being Xander, though, he did want to talk. That had been an earth shaking, life altering experience and he wanted to talk about it. It was what Anya had called his 'girly side'.

"Wow, Spike. I mean....wow. Is it always like that?"

Spike paused in his hand and lip examination and exploration of the boy and he snuggled into the crook of his human's strong arm. "It can be. It depends on how you feel about the person you're with."

Xander threw his other arm around the still cool body and mildly wondered why Spike never warmed up. He pulled the smaller man even closer and kissed the top of the soft blond curls. He wanted his silent moves to say what his voice couldn't.

When he rolled over and tipped his head, the twinge of pain reminded him of what had sent him hurtling into a tsunami of an orgasm and he blushed. "Spike, did you bite me?"

Spike opened his eyes and looked at the red marks on the boy's neck. He was thrilled. The boy's blood had tasted like the finest wine, sweet, heady, rich and pure. It sang of love and devotion and Spike

was stunned to realize that the emotions he tasted were flowing for him. The demon crowed.

It freed him. He knew if he expressed affection, it would be returned. Even if Xander tried to deny how he felt, Spike would know the truth.

"Of course I did. Oh, sorry, Pet, I forget that you're new to this. Maybe I should have told you that it sometimes happens. You don't mind do you, Love?"

Xander's hand drifted to the wounds on his neck. He was amazed at how much he did NOT mind. When it had happened, it was as though there was a bolt of lightning that shot from that spot on his throat straight down to his cock. It was so erotic he wondered if Spike would bite him every time they had sex. Maybe if he asked very nicely.

First, there was something else that Xander had to ask. He cursed himself for risking the good mood that was floating in the air, but he couldn't help himself. He was Xander. "Spike? Please don't get mad, but, what happened earlier? You seemed so

different. So....mean."

Spike sighed and scooted up till he was face to face with his human. He pouted perfectly and his lower lip stuck out exactly the right amount. "I'm sorry, Xander. You see I get these terrible headaches. I had some packets of headache powder in my coat pocket and I really needed them. I hated for you to see me like that and I apologize for speaking harshly to you. Do you forgive me?"

Xander was overwhelmed with relief and shame at his suspicious misunderstanding. Clearly, Spike was the innocent in this situation and Xander was embarrassed that he came across as accusatory. "Shit, Spike, I'm so sorry. Of course I forgive you. Shit, there's nothing to forgive. Are you sick? Is it something serious? Have you seen a doctor?"

Spike blinked, batting his clear blue eyes innocently. "Oh, I have, Love. There's nothing they can do. Migraines, they call them. As long as I have my powders, I'm all right."

Xander frowned and petted his lover like a cat. His larger hands ran up and down the blond's spine, around his hip, tracing the sharply protruding bone and cupped the sweet bubble butt. "My poor Baby. Let me make you better."

Xander's huge hands then molded themselves around Spike's skull and his fingers began massaging the vampire's [scalp](#). He dug in almost painfully and pressed and rubbed, feeling the skin roll and move under his ministrations. Spike sighed. It was the most incredible feeling ever. Nearly competitive with sex. Nearly.

He arched his back, strained his neck and tipped his head slightly at different angles to assure that Xander didn't miss any spots. Xander grinned and continued. It reminded him of the old hound dog Paddy had when he first arrived. It used to bump his hands with its nose to encourage the same ear scratching.

Spike's body rippled and arched bonelessly as a slow moan left his lips. "Jesus, fuck, Xan that feels

incredible! If you even think about stopping, I'll rip your throat out and feed it to you with a fork."

Xander chuckled at the absurd mental image.

"Oooo. I'm so scared. Well, at the risk of certain death, I'm afraid I'm done. It's nearly daylight and I'm whipped. Why don't we get some sleep and when we wake up, I'll scratch your head; in exchange you can do that, um, thing we did earlier."

Spike laughed. "It's called sex, Love. Sex! Sex! Sex!!!!"

"AAAHHHH"

Xander squealed and clamped his hands over his ears as though he were mortified at the shocking statement. Truth was, he was delighted. He had never been happier and the only thing that would make it perfect was if Spike would stay and sleep with him, but he wasn't ready to ask. Sadly, he didn't need to. Spike climbed over him and began rummaging on the floor for his clothing.

"Spike.....can't you....."

"Now, I'm trusting you Xander. Don't you dare let me catch you flirting or snogging with the lovely Miss Yvette at dinner tonight."

"WHAT? I would NEVER.....Oh, ha ha, smart-ass. So, I'll see you after dinner? Promise?"

Spike was dressed and collecting his coat and hat. The sadness in his boy's voice bothered him but couldn't be helped. Hopefully, once they got to New York, he could be upfront and claim the boy properly, but these things had to be handled carefully. Moving too soon would spoil it. So, with a smile, he held out his hand and Xander jumped from the bed and rushed into his lover's arms.

"I promise, Xan. I'll come for you tonight and maybe we'll go dancing again. Would you like that?"

Xander nuzzled into Spike's neck and nodded silently, trying not to cry. He didn't care that he was standing stark naked, smelly, and had dollar bills

stuck to his back, his ass and a couple of tens between his legs. With a last peck on the lips, Spike slipped out the door. Despite his nudity, Xander stuck his head out the door to watch the blond move quickly away.

At the end of the hallway, Spike turned to the right and disappeared. Xander frowned slightly. All the remaining second class cabins were in the hallway to the left. As far as he knew, there were only service areas off to the right. Xander shrugged. He must have been mistaken.

Without peeling [the paper](#) money off himself, Xander flopped back into bed and fell asleep almost instantly

Part Twenty-Three

The Captain's quarters were elegant and richly appointed. Consisting of three separate rooms, they rivaled, if not surpassed, any of the luxury suites in the first class section of the ship.

He had his sleeping quarters which, unlike most ship's sleepers, contained a full sized bed with a soft mattress and duck down pillows. It had its own private bath with running hot water supplied by the boilers and a flush toilet.

His adjoining study contained a cabinet of bound books, a plush leather chair and a huge oversized desk where he sat with his maps and compasses and sailor's navigational tools. Although he had very competent officers who handled all of the day to day matters of guiding the magnificent ship toward port, he also liked to keep his hand in and be aware of all the particulars of the voyage.

Everything in the room was done in dark woods, polished like glass and accented with the warm glow of new, unmarred brass and steel. It was a man's room. Even more than the smoking or card

rooms this space was male punctuated with power and control.

The third room was a meeting room. It was large, open, and functional. Although it contained the matching wall sconce lights that adorned his other rooms, this space left no doubt that it was all business. Its only furnishings were a huge long table surrounded by severe wooden chairs. It was where the Captain held meetings that were for designated ears only.

It was where, this morning, he had summoned all of his top officers.

"I want you gentlemen to understand that it is critically important that there be no written record of any of this.....unfortunate situation."

The first mate jumped to his feet, his face flushed with anger. He had hoped that when the Captain called this meeting, they would be given real answers to this horrifying dilemma. "Captain, what you refer to as an unfortunate situation is murder.

Mass murder. There is a fiend loose on board the ship and the passengers are disappearing and the crew dying. I insist that we radio for....."

Captain Smith slammed his fist down on the table causing an echo that bounced from the walls and sealed the lips of any other officer that considered adding their two cents.

"NO! I'm still the Captain of this ship and I will make the decisions! There will be no contact with onshore authorities until I personally authorize it and that won't be done until we do our own investigating. Besides, what do we know? A few young girls in third have been reported missing. Ridiculous. They have no doubt met men and are committing acts of carnal knowledge while their friends and families fret. Pish-tosh. They will surface before we dock. Women of that status in life are notorious for low morals and weak minds. We can't get involved in such nonsense. As for Mr. Diamond, the purser, no determination can be made as to the cause of death until a doctor examines the body and issues his findings."

The other ship's officers in the room looked back and forth between themselves. They knew the bottom line was money. If there was even a whisper of this sort of danger on the Titanic, her subsequent sailings could financially suffer and, in turn, their jobs and reputations would go right down the drain. Most grudgingly came to the conclusion that the Captain was right.

There was no reason to jump the gun. The ship would dock in just a few days and they would be on solid ground where the police and the people who were knowledgeable about this sort of thing could handle it. The Captain watched their faces, heard their silence and could nearly pin-point by their expressions the exact moment that he knew he had won. No one here would say a thing.

"Furthermore, gentlemen, I suggest you meet with all of the crew members in your sector and advise them as to the situation without going into every detail. I want security measures tightened and the critical issue is, as always, the safety of all

passengers, especially the women and children on board. You will impress upon them that it is vital to keep this knowledge under their hats. You will then return to your posts and remember, keep an eye out for anyone matching the description of the suspicious party. It is our charged duty to make sure everyone is safe here on the Titanic, especially the first class passengers. Remember: discretion, Gentlemen. Always be discrete."

Reading a dismissal in the Captain's turned back, the officers and crew members placed their uniform caps back on their heads, rose from the table and silently filed from the room. All but one. Second Officer Lightoller held back, still hoping to convey his feelings of concern about the floating ice in the waters and the speed of the ship that Captain Smith still maintained.

Despite their differences in age and, more importantly, in rank, the two men had sailed together previously on other ships in the White Star Line and had developed a polite friendship and mutual respect. "Edward, a moment please?"

The Captain stood, his spine ramrod straight and his hands clasped behind his back. When his friend spoke, he knew they were alone. He never would have breached protocol by using the Captain's given name in the presence of the others. It was safe to turn around and allow the stress, exhaustion and concerns that lined his face to be seen. When he had spoken earlier, his voice was firm and unwavering, now it sounded tired and unsure. "Yes, what is it."

"Sir, I know you are under extreme pressure to bring the ship in ahead of schedule but I fear things may be getting perilous. There is increased floating ice in the water and the forecast is for dropping temperatures and no wind for the next two nights. Now, I too am shocked by the death of steward Diamond and concerned about the missing girls in third, but, Sir, I believe our priority as far as the crew should be....."

"I am well aware of what our priorities should be Mr. Lightoller."

"Of course, Sir, I never meant to....."

"No, no, it is I who must apologize. I know you only have the concerns of the ship and her passengers in mind. This is my final voyage, Mr. Lightoller. My last and the Titanic's first and I want people to remember us both. Trust me to do my job, and I will trust you to do yours."

Second Officer Lightoller nodded and smiled. He saluted the Captain, turned on his heel and left, returning to his post and his duties. The Captain paused for a moment, alone in the large meeting room and giving himself a minute of solitude before he returned to his bedroom.

He selected his most decorated uniform jacket and dressed as he prepared to join the passengers in the first class dining hall.

Part Twenty-Four

Sunday, April 14th 8 AM

The day had dawned bright and clear. Several of the passengers on their way to the main rooms and parlors for Sunday church services discussed happily amongst themselves as to how amazingly blue the sky was. Cloudless and calm, the weather had taken a turn for the better as the blasting winds of the previous days had finally subsided. It appeared that God himself was showing respect for the Sabbath.

As was their regular routine on land, the majority of the Titanic's passengers rose early to a light breakfast and gathered themselves together by language, denomination, and economic status as they prepared to worship their personal deities.

The full orchestra in first class played church hymns as the parishioners heartily sang Amazing Grace and Beloved Lord, dressed in their finest silks and suits.

The chapels were adorned with all the trappings and decorations that one would expect to find in the wealthy cathedrals, churches and mosques, depending on the individual belief of the passenger.

Religious representatives of all congregations had been hired to oversee the set up of the ship's separate church rooms to ensure no one religion or belief would be slighted or shortchanged over another. However, it did soon become apparent that due to the financial backing of certain interests in Rome, the Catholic chapel would be the most ornate.

Everyone who saw it noted that it was the most stunning thing they had ever seen. Open at all hours of the day and night, it had become a must-see for any wandering passenger touring the ship, and even the most stringent agnostic who claimed no interest in any form of worship, had to exclaim that it was breathtaking.

The room was vast. Wide and three times as long. The pews were solid, high backed wooden seats

with soft cushions. Each spot contained a brand new untouched Bible and hymn book. The carpeted runner that ran the length of the room and separated the two sides of the benches was rich, red and scrolled in gold thread.

A huge dome of stained glass capped the top of the massive cathedral and the pulpit was walnut carved in intricate detail to form palm fronds at the base. The backdrop for the Priest was a massive cross with a broken, bleeding Christ figure crying tears of blood for the sinners of the earth.

Although much more muted, the second class passengers also had their choice of services led by either a Catholic priest, a Protestant minister or Jewish rabbi. These services were held in the rooms that, just the night before, had seen the same passengers dancing, drinking and gambling that this morning now sang praises and knelt in prayer.

To these parishioners it was not hypocrisy. It was their way of life and they saw no conflict between raising hell on Saturday night and lifting their voices

in prayer on Sunday morning. In their minds and souls, the two meshed together perfectly.

The third class clustered together in the dining halls. They threw their hands in the air and they shouted their love and gratitude to the God who had safely and generously brought them to this amazing adventure and the promise of a new life in America. They sang the songs of the old country and they prayed God's love and protection would blanket the family and friends they had left behind.

It was the start of a perfect day.

It was as if the Holy Father had extended his loving arms and enveloped the entire ship in His embrace and showered her in His rapture.

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**1:00 PM** The Titanic receives a radioed ice warning from the Caronia. It is given to Second Officer Lightoller and subsequently posted.

**1:40 PM** The Titanic receives another ice warning,

this one from the Baltic. It reads: "MSG Captain Smith, Titanic. Have had variable winds and clear fine weather since leaving. Greek steamer Athinai reports passing icebergs and large quantity of field ice today in latitude 41.51N, longititde 49.52W. Last night we spoke to German oil tanker Deutschland, Stettin to Philadelphia, not under control; short of coal, latitude 40.42N longitiude 55.11W. Wishes to be reported to New York and other steamers. Wish you and Titanic success."

It is given to Captain Smith. Shortly thereafter, Smith passes it to J. Bruce Ismay, who places it in his pocket. It is not posted in the chartroom until that night.

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The mood around the ship had smoothly shifted from haughty reverence to relaxed recreation. Their stuffy, formal churchwear had been hung back up and the more casual, woolen garments that would allow invigorating strolls on the deck were donned as they hustled, in groups, couples and singles toward the dining halls, smoking rooms and game parlours.

The promises made to God just hours earlier to live chaste, pure and sin free lives were already forgotten as all decks and passenger levels burst into loud, excited activities.

Yvette was slightly concerned that she hadn't seen Xander for some time and she hurried toward lunch, hoping to catch him. She felt as though she had the fish on her hook but knew they can't be counted as caught till he was reeled into the boat. Sadly, he still did not make an appearance.

Xander groaned and rolled over. He squinted open one eye and peeked towards the port hole. Although the sky was still clear and blue, he could tell by the muted shade that it was late in the afternoon. Pulling himself fully awake, he glanced at the pocket watch on the night stand and saw that it was 4:18 in the afternoon. He grinned at the thought that he was becoming quite the night owl. He and Spike.

With that, he wondered what Spike was doing and if

he was already up and about. Their habit had become to meet after Xander had dinner so, with that in mind, Xander leapt to his feet, gathered together his clean clothes, a towel and headed for the bathroom to wash himself up. From the smell, it may take a little longer today. Realizing that, he blushed hotly.

Last night had been a revelation. It seemed appropriate that today was Sunday because sex with Spike had been a religious experience that had him praising God and singing hymns. The memory of the detailed intricacies of what Spike's talented fingers and cock had done to him squirmed in his balls and raised his dick to half a hard-on which he tried strategically covering with his hand as he bolted from his stateroom. Thirty seconds and a handful of soapy lather would solve that problem.

"HEY!"

"ACK!"

In his haste to rush for the washroom, Xander failed to look first and his quick lurch from his room caused him to run awkwardly into a small, redheaded deckhand who was hurrying down the hall. The collision caused seaman Osborn to be knocked off his feet and Xander's clothes to fly through the air.

Immediately, Osborn scrambled to stand and he straightened his uniform. "Sir, I'm sorry, Sir. I wasn't watching. I was....."

Xander hustled around grabbing up the discarded garments and glancing down at himself to make sure the tent was not too obvious. "No, no, it was my fault. I wasn't watching where I was going. Are you all right? You took a pretty good hit there. Where the hell were you going in such a fucking hurry?"

Osborn's eyes darted nervously in all directions. They had all been given strict orders, under threat of being fired, not to speak of any unpleasantness to any of the passengers. There was only one

problem with that order. Osborn just loved to gossip. "Well, I probably shouldn't tell you this, cause I have orders not to, but....."

Xander's eyebrows went up as diversion drove his erection down. "Orders? Is there something going on? The fucking ship isn't sinking is it?"

Xander laughed at the absurdity of his own question but his humor quickly cooled when it became obvious that the deckhand was not joining him in the chuckle. "If only it were that simple, Sir. Look, I really shouldn't tell you but you can keep a secret, right?"

Xander clutched his crumpled clothing to his chest and he stepped nearer, his voice low and conspiratorial. "Yeah, sure."

Daniel took a deep breath and let it all tumble out. "Well, it seems there is a murderer on board. A fiend! Several young women in third are missing and presumed dead and one of our shipmen's bodies was found. Dead. Drained of blood. It's

ghastly, Sir, just ghastly! Personally, I think it is Jack the Ripper himself come sailing for the Americas."

Xander shook his head. He had been entranced by the story that resembled a cheap penny novel but now just snorted in disbelief. "Jack the fucking Ripper? That was twenty five fucking years ago. He'd be an old man by now if he isn't already dead. Why the hell do you think it's him?"

Osborn straightened up and took great offence at being scoffed at. "Go ahead and laugh but I still stand by my opinion. Two of the girls were seen with a man just before they disappeared and his description matches the Ripper exactly. Short, trim, light hair and always wears a long black woolen overcoat. A friend of one of the girls said the man had a London accent. So, you mark my words, when he's caught, you'll see that I was right. The killer is the butcher, the Ripper."

With that, Osborn stuck his nose in the air and he marched off. Xander felt as though he had been punched in the gut. That description might match

the Ripper, but he knew someone else who also fit that to a tee

Part Twenty-Five

A hot bath before [dinner](#). It was a luxury that Xander had come to know and enjoy aboard the Titanic. A sampling of the good life and a small peek into what it must be like to be one of the rich and privileged. It was an illusion, and a short term one at that, but Xander reveled in it. Until today.

The horrendous news that was passed along in the form of gossip by the sailor earlier had hit him like a brick and taken all the joy out of his afternoon routine. His brain churned with facts that could support or refute his suspicions. He bathed quickly and efficiently letting his fingers methodically do their work with no thought of dawdling as they rolled and lifted the lightly haired sac or scrubbed clean the crevices at the juncture of thigh and crotch.

He barely noticed the tingle and wink of his wrinkled, tight hole as his soapy cloth scrubbed

between his firm cheeks. Part of him wanted to forget everything the stupid boy had said. He was clearly a busybody, an old woman who delighted in spinning tales and frightening the passengers. There probably weren't even any deaths on board the ship. After all, this wasn't an ordinary boat. This was the Titanic!

He rinsed his cloth, resoaped and started on his legs as his thoughts rolled on down their designated path. And what if there really were a murderer on the loose? The boy had said it was down in third. They were the lowest class anyway and there was no telling what sort of caliber of people they were. Xander paused, immediately ashamed of himself for the arrogance of his assumptions. He knew that if it weren't for Paddy and Emma's generosity, he couldn't have even afforded a broom closet in steerage.

As he stepped from [the tub](#), he climbed another rung of the mental ladder. His brain experimentally poked at the dangerous thought he had been avoiding actually thinking about. He cautiously

jabbed at it in the same way one picks at a sore, a cut or a bruise to see how painful it will be to touch. The thought that Spike might not be the man Xander thought he was. The possibility that Spike may be.....dangerous.

Before he was completely dry, Xander pulled on his clean clothes and hurried back to his cabin. He opened the door and tossed his towel and dirty clothes in where they landed in a heap on the floor and he pulled the door shut. One thing was certain and that was that his concerns and curiosity far outweighed his hunger. He needed some answers and he had a general idea of where [to start](#) looking.

Hurrying down the hallway, Xander slowed and glanced all around to assure that no one was about and he darted off to the right. As suspected, there was a steel door marked:

"AUTHORIZED PERSONNEL ONLY".

He was positive that Spike had come this way, so with no hesitation, he jerked the door open and

hurried through. Once inside, it was more than obvious that this was not an area of the ship intended to be seen by the passengers. There was no rich decor, no opulence and no luxury. It was stark, grey and functional. He was facing a long, narrow hallway flanked on both sides by matching doors and each had a curt stenciled sign that stated its business.

"MOP CLOSET"

"LINEN"

"MAINTENANCE"

"RECORDS ROOM"

All the door handles he tried were securely locked so he continued on. At the end of the hall was a stairway leading down into the very lowest levels of the ship and on the wall beside it was a painted arrow pointing down that carried the label "STORAGE".

Xander tried to ignore his misgivings about wandering into an area of the ship that was below sea level. He had always been slightly claustrophobic and it seemed as though he were gazing into the pits of hell, dark, dank and shadowy.

Standing at the top, he stared down into the unknown as his ears strained to pick up any indication of life, although he knew it was nearly impossible to hear anything over the ever constant sound of the roaring ship's boilers.

Gripping the cold iron banister, Xander placed one foot in front of the other and slowly, steadily lowered himself down into the bowels of the great Titanic. To prevent his brain from exploding in terror as he descended into the belly of the great metal fish, he focused on counting the steel steps beneath his feet. When he hit the last one, he shuddered. Thirteen. Thirteen stairs. That sounded unlucky.

He stood on the bottom landing with his hand still firmly holding onto the handrail and he stared off

into the space ahead. It was black. It was more than dark, it was a total lack of any form of illumination that seemed to reach out to him with ghostly, invisible tendrils that wanted to coax and draw him in.

He knew if he didn't move quickly, cowardice would drive him back up to the safety of the light, the warmth and the familiarity of his stateroom. But he would go with no answers to the questions that haunted him and that, more than the fear, forced him to take that next step. He released the handrail and moved forward, shuffling his shoes as he waved his hands in front of himself to feel for obstacles and hazards.

After a good fifteen minutes of gingerly easing forward and still being unable to see the feet in front of him, Xander was seriously considering turning around and finding his way back to the stairway. Part of him wished he had dropped bread crumbs like Hansel and Gretel but the fact was that he never would have been able to locate the fucking things again anyway.

So he stopped. His feet snapped together and he decided to give it one more listen before packing it in and chalking the whole thing up as a preposterous notion. He almost decided that he must have been mistaken. There was no way Spike had come down here.

That's when he heard it. A far off, muffled sound. Indiscernible and unclear, it was the intonation of some activity. Although he was unable to clearly identify what it was, Xander had a general idea of where and he was again on the move.

Within just a few minutes, he could hear the hiss and smell the faint odor of gas lights so he hurried off letting his nose lead the way like a beagle. He was overwhelmingly relieved to see a dim circle of light directly ahead and, impersonating a moth, hurried toward it.

Interspersed with the constant roar of the engines, Xander again heard the sound of activity and this time he paused, fearful of giving himself away and

being charged with trespass. As the pupils of his eyes expanded to collect the sparse available light particles, Xander could now see that the space he was in was vast and open.

It was stacked on both sides and in all corners with crates, boxes, steamer trunks and even, at the far side, a few horseless carriages, the kind Xander had heard were gaining popularity in the big cities. He would have loved to explore them further but right now, he had other concerns.

Ducking behind a row of boxes, he slowly wove in and out of the rows, continually moving in the direction of the noise yet careful to make no noise of his own. As he got closer, the sound he was focused on began to become clear. It was voices, but not what he expected. It wasn't the mundane conversation of the ship's employees discussing the business of the Titanic.

The only word his brain could conjure up was 'scuffle'.

It sounded like two people. A man's voice, low, growly and intimidating and a woman, high pitched, whining, struggling and pleading without specific words. It was the sound of feet scrambling, shuffling and not in a romantic dancing sort of way.

Crouching down, Xander picked up his pace and moved stealthily and silently through the aisles of crates, quickly closing the distance between himself and the suspicious activity.

Within seconds, he knew that whatever was happening was right on the other side of where he hid. He heard the sobbing struggles of the woman as her feet kicked across the floor and he jumped when something slammed against the very wooden box that concealed him.

As he vacillated, unsure what to do, the noise suddenly stopped.

Xander held his breath. The roar of the Titanic's boilers continued to ring in his ears and vibrate through his feet as he waited to see if the sounds

on the other side of his safe spot would start up again. They didn't and Xander was confused.

Cautiously he raised up.

What he saw sent ripples of fear and shock down his spine and settled like a cannonball in his gut. In the circle of the gas light, Xander could see the back of a man wearing a very familiar, long black coat. He was hunched over with his lips on the side of the neck of a woman who slumped limply in his arms.

Xander tried to convince himself that it was a lover's embrace that he was seeing. That he had intruded on the intimacies of a romantic tryst, or on the business deal of a woman who sells her attributes for a coin.

But Xander knew better. Her face could be seen at the side of the arm that held her upright and her open mouth, frozen in a silent scream, along with her bulging, cold dead eyes told the truth of the situation.

"OH, GOD!"

Realizing the words had slipped from his own lips, Xander slapped his hand over his mouth but it was too late. In a flash, the man dropped the body in his arms allowing it to tumble into a heap on the floor and he spun around locking eyes with the intruder.

Xander screamed. The snarling, distorted face was like nothing he had ever seen. The eyes were slitted and glowed yellow. The forehead was ridged and fierce with deformed bones protruding where eyebrows should have been. The ears were slightly pointed and the nostrils flared.

But the worst was the mouth. Snarling and blood smeared, the thin lips were stretched back to reveal a row of razor sharp teeth and two extended fangs that dripped as he hissed and growled.

Terror and revulsion turned Xander's blood to ice as the last functioning brain cell sent the order to his feet.

"RUN, YOU FUCKING MORON!"

When he turned to do so, Xander was tackled from behind.

Part Twenty-Six

Xander may have been down but he was far from out.

Stretched out flat on his stomach, Xander desperately tried to escape as he felt the deep resonating rumble of Titanic's massive boilers vibrate in the floor and up through his body to shudder in his bones.

His fingernails dug and splintered in the wooden floor planks as he screamed and kicked wildly against the fingers that circled his ankles like steel bands pulling and dragging him backwards.

His own voice, high pitched and frantic, filled his ears and brain and blocked out any other sound until finally, his throat was too raw and hoarse to continue and was replaced by his silent sobs and whispered pleas for mercy. It was only then, when he could no longer shout and yell, that he heard the other voice.

"XANDER! Xander, ouch, goddamn it. Stop kicking! XANDER!"

The grip on his ankles marginally lessened and Xander immediately flipped over onto his back and began scrambling crab-like away from his attacker. It was then, in the soft golden glow of the hissing gas light that he saw the man's face.

Clear, smooth, beautifully featured and very familiar. Xander swallowed his gasping sobs and swiped the back of his hand over his tear blurred eyes and snotty nose. Although he did recognize him, Xander continued to squiggle backward to keep a safe distance.

He was scared and confused. That wasn't the face he had seen just seconds earlier. That was a monster. A fiend of indescribable horror and disgust. Had he been wrong? A trick of the light? Just as he was about to convince himself, Xander's eyes darted down to the floor where the body of the young woman lay, lifeless, discarded and seemingly forgotten.

Spike crouched down, his knees bent and his butt bouncing slightly off the ground. He stayed back allowing Xander the distance that gave him the illusion of safety and he looked the boy in the eye. "Xander, let me explain....."

Xander was wild eyed. His lungs felt like they may burst from the overflow of oxygen he was sucking in and his head buzzed. "NO! You stay away from me! You killed that girl! You're a murderer! That deckhand was right! You're Jack the Ripper!"

Spike shook his head and chuckled lightly as though Xander had just told a silly joke or recited a naughty

limerick. "Is that who they say it is? Jack the Ripper? That's preposterous. He was nothing but a crazy fool. All that wonderful rich blood pooling on the streets and running rivulets into the gutters. Shame that. No, Love, I am not the Ripper."

Xander pointed an accusing finger at the crumpled mess on the floor. "But you did kill her."

Spike clasped his hands together and casually glanced back in the woman's direction.

"Yes, I did. A shame but regrettably, a necessity. You see, Love, it's the law of the jungle. The strong survive by feeding off the weak. A zoologist in New York called it 'the food chain'. Everything lives so that it can eventually be food for something else."

Xander closed his eyes and rubbed his fingertips roughly over his temples to try and alleviate the pounding headache that was beginning to form deep in his brain. "No. No that isn't true. Humans don't kill and eat each other. It's wrong. It's sick. It's a sin."

Slowly, Spike eased himself down to a crosslegged, sitting position, careful not to spook the boy and set him to scrambling again. "That's generally true, although there are tribes in New Guinea and other jungle places that still engage in cannibalism but that's not what we're talking about is it?"

When Xander gave no answer beyond a glare that shot daggers from his eyes, Spike smiled and continued. "I was once like you, Xander. Young, sweet and very very innocent. I knew nothing of the ways of the world beyond my mother's small Victorian parlor. I was her pride and joy and I lived in a romantic world of books and scholarly pursuits. I fancied myself a bit of a poet. Unfortunately, I never read Bram Stoker."

Xander sniffled but made no move to advance or retreat. "Who?"

"Bram Stoker. He wrote a little book in 1897 called Count Dracula. A fanciful, short story that tells of a man who is bitten by a bat and turns into a

monster. A creature he calls a vampire."

Xander pulled his knees up to his chest and wrapped his arms around them. He tried not to let his line of sight drift to the dead body that lay like a giant unmentioned elephant in the room while they casually discussed literature. The entire situation was too absurd to be real. "What are you talking about?"

"Life and death, Xander. I'm talking about life and death. So, as I was saying, I fancied myself a bit of a poet, unfortunately the lady that I penned my floral words of rhyme and reason for found them childish and unworthy of her attentions. She ridiculed me and my affections in front of several of her friends and I ran from her house in tears and shame. As I did, I rushed headlong into a dirty alley and the perfumed bosom of another. It was she who introduced me to my destiny and my future."

Despite himself, Xander was entranced by the story and waited anxiously as Spike continued to weave his strange tale of woe. "Your destiny?"

"Long story short, Xander, the woman in the alley was my darling Drusilla. She held me in her loving embrace, she bit into my throat and drained the blood and life from my body. You see, Xander, Love, my Drusilla is a vampire and now, because of that night in her arms, I too am a vampire."

Spike threw his arms out wide as though offering himself up for inspection and validation. Xander sat, mouth and eyes wide open and blinked. His brain searched for any information it contained regarding vampires and all he could come up with was one night when he had gone to the pub to get Paddy, the old men there took turns telling stories to try and scare him. It had worked. "That's a myth. Folklore. It's impossible. Vampires are dead bodies walking around and killing people by sucking their blood and biting....."

The word 'throats' died on his tongue as he again looked at the woman and the angry, red wounds on her neck.

Spike tipped his head to the side and his eyebrows rose in an expression that asked the question "Yes?"

"So you are saying that you have to kill to survive? That you are some sort of monster that slaughters people and drinks their blood? Bullshit, Spike. That's just bull....."

"What did you see when you first came in, Xander?"

Xander scooted around uncomfortably. "The light. It was a trick of the light. I thought you were..... Your face was....I didn't....."

All other words froze on his tongue as he watched Spike's features shift, slide and change into something too grotesque to be human.

Xander whimpered, a pitiful sound of fear and disbelief as he tried to pull back even more hoping to disappear, but then something odd happened. Spike smiled.

The vicious, bloodthirsty creature held out his hand and for some odd reason, Xander felt himself marginally relax.

"Take my hand, Xander."

Spike's voice was strange. It was lower and growly and as he spoke, Xander's body seemed to absorb the words like a sponge. Still, reason and common sense held him back.

"No. Don't touch me. You want to kill me too."

Spike chuckled. It was a deep throaty sound that skittered up Xander's spine and caused the hair on the back of his neck to rise. Unfortunately, it also warmed in his belly and had an equally elevating effect on his cock.

"Have I hurt you Xander? Have I ever given you anything but pleasure? It was not my choice to be what I am but I won't apologize for it. I am more alive now than I was before I died. It is a glorious existence. I go where I want and do whatever

pleases me. And you please me. You are the man I have been searching for. Come to me Xander. Come be with me."

Xander hesitated for only seconds as he stared hypnotically into the strange yellow eyes. He then unfolded his body and eased over onto his hands and knees, crawling forward and, with a sigh of relief, he settled into the monster's gentle embrace.

Part Twenty-Seven

Sunday, April 14th: 6:00 PM. Second Officer Lighttoller came on duty. He would remain on watch till 10:00 PM.

For nearly an hour and a half the two men sat together in the damp, dim cargo hold of the great ship Titanic. Spike's features had again softened and taken on a human appearance and Xander

surprisingly felt no fear as he remained wrapped in the strong, cold arms.

Curled up with the constant hum of the ship's engines vibrating up through his butt and legs, Xander listened quietly as Spike expounded on his life both past and present. He spoke in amused, wistful tones, painting a picture of a young man in Victorian England and of his beloved mother.

He touched just briefly on the night that Xander would have thought would have been a monumental turning point but which Spike seemed to think of as almost inconsequential.

The night of his 'turning' as Spike called it. Although curious, Xander was just as glad. Every time Drusilla's name would pour off Spike's tongue like hot butter, Xander would feel a tiny jab of jealousy prickle at his heart and squirm annoyingly just under his skin.

Except for the few times that Xander interrupted with questions or requests for clarification, he was

content to allow the narrative to continue. He hung on every word as Spike expounded on the points and properties of what Xander had come to think of as the blond's affliction. To him, it seemed apparent that this 'vampirism' was nothing more than a disease that his lover had contracted through no fault of his own. Much like the plague that had swept across Europe, decimating the population.

It was nothing, Spike was nothing like the silly old wives tales that Paddy and the other men at the pub told of ghosts, goblins and monsters. They should be ashamed of themselves for finding humor in the afflictions of the less fortunate.

As the time ticked by and Spike's low, soothing voice carried on, Xander's perception of the body that still remained cold and lifeless on the floor also began to shift and slide. At first he had looked on her with horror and revulsion and he tried not to allow his eyes to wander in her direction.

Later, the emotion had changed to sorrow and pity that it had been necessary that she give her life in

such a selfless manner. He was sure that she had friends and family that would miss her, but we can never predict the last of our days. Emma used to say that when a babe is born a certain number is stamped upon them by the Good Lord himself and when that number comes up, your end is nigh.

By the end of their talk, her presence in the room elicited only gratitude. Because she died, the love of his life could go on. It was a noble death that she could wear proudly. She was merely a casualty of circumstance. Was it any different than the steak he had enjoyed at dinner last night?

In fact, at this point, all his sympathies lay with Spike. An innocent man who had been cursed with this horrendous reverse-fatal disease. He was as much a victim as, if not more so than, any of the people who had unfortunately had to be sacrificed in order to sustain his artificial life.

"So what do we do now, Spike?"

Spike leaned over and kissed his boy on the top of

the head. If they had been able, he would have been content to stay right where they were, snuggled and alone together in the quiet cavelike setting. Spike knew that Xander still had no real grasp on the situation and his comprehension was limited but for now, that was probably the best way to go. Which is why his explanations had skillfully skirted the word 'demon'.

"Now, we go on as we were. I'm not contagious, Xander. You can't contract a case of what ails me simply by our close physical contact. I have been lonely for a long time and since we've been together, I've been happy. Will you stay with me Xander? You don't need to be afraid of catching what sickens me."

Quickly, Xander spun around in the vampire's embrace and threw his arms around Spike's neck. He was now far more frightened of losing the man he had fallen in love with than any of the fine points of his disease. "I don't care about that, Spike. I'll take care of you. When we get to New York we can find a place together. I'll work during the day and

make money to buy you any medicine that you need. At night, we can go out or stay in and make love. It will be wonderful."

Spike rubbed his face on the side of the boy's cheek. He inhaled, smelling the soft soaps and shampoos that he had used to wash himself with. He clutched the warm body tightly against his cold one and felt the heat seep through the layers of fabric to just slightly alter his own temperature. His fangs itched to drop and bite. His demon screamed at him to claim and ensure ownership of this prized pet.

The residual human in him wanted to cry with relief. The plans his boy laid out sounded like heaven. New York was huge, vast and filled with transients that would never be missed. A meat market that could fulfill any taste or need. Even a vampire's. "That sounds perfect, Love. We could be together forever. Just you and me."

Xander pulled back slightly as a wrinkle of concern formed on his brow. "Well, not exactly forever. You said a vampire is already dead, so does that mean

that you can't die again? Do you live for a million years?"

Spike appeared to give the question consideration. As though he, himself, had never really thought about it. "Well, there are ways to kill a vampire, but for the most part, yes, I will just go on and on."

That was an answer that didn't set well with Xander. He had envisioned them growing old together, smoking pipes, reading the newspaper and doing all the things married couples did. The idea that he would become an old man, fat, wrinkled and unattractive while Spike stayed young and vibrant was not at all an appealing concept.

That's when a startling idea came to him.

Spike stared into the deep brown eyes and he wondered what strange notions were swimming about in there. So far, despite the discovery of a dead body and the fact that his lover was a vicious monster, Xander seemed to be very calm and accepting. It was more than Spike had hoped for.

He already knew that he wanted to own Xander but his understanding of how that would play out was considerably different than this scenario. It would begin after they docked in America. He would stalk the streets at night, prowling and slinking about in the dark, following the boy and eventually pouncing. He would trick Xander into inviting him into his home where his boy would be fucked followed by bitten and finally turned.

He never imagined that Xander would want them to be together. Yet, it was true. Spike could tell by the calm, slow heartbeat and the steady respiration that Xander was not lying when he said he loved him. But now, just when he thought they were home free, his alarm bells went off. Something had the boy agitated. He was flushed, wide eyed and Spike half expected him to bolt like a horse from a burning stable. "What? What is it?"

Xander blinked, paused, and collected his thoughts and nerve. "O.k, before you say no, hear me out. You said that Drus...., that woman, was a vampire

and when she bit you, that made you sick with vampireitis too, right?"

Spike nearly snickered. Vampireitis. The boy was a gem and their life together was sounding better and better. "Yeah, right she did."

"So, bite me. We could be vampires together. For always."

This time it was Spike's turn to hyperventilate as he shoved the boy away and jumped to his feet. Although that had been his original plan, hearing Xander ask for it was just wrong. It was like a rabbit willingly leaping underneath a horse's pounding hooves. It was like a salmon flinging itself into the black bear's mouth. It contradicted the laws of the jungle that Spike fancied himself to live by.

With his hands clasped behind his back, the vampire paced back and forth, repeatedly passing by the head of the forgotten dead woman on the floor as Xander waited anxiously for an answer. Finally, Spike stopped. He calmed and he smiled as he

turned to face his human lover. The solution was simple. "I'll make a deal with you, Love. We still have several days before the ship docks in New York. Let's just leave it as it is for now and enjoy our time together. When we arrive on dry ground, we can sit at a small cafe and discuss this further. Is that an acceptable resolution?"

Xander rose up and extended his hand as though sealing a business deal. "That, Mr. Spike suits me fine, although I must warn you that I will not change my mind. Especially if you do that tongue thing again. So, suddenly I am just about starved and since you have already eaten....."

Xander's eyes darted quickly to the shell on the floor and back to the man whose hand he still clutched. "..... I'll see you up in the dining room in, oh, say an hour?"

Spike beamed, his smile reaching all the way up to crinkle at the corners of his eyes. He gave the boy's hand a firm shake and released it. "It's a date."

With that settled, Xander turned and walked away.

Part Twenty-Eight

Sunday April 14th: 7:40 PM Second Officer Lighttoller notes in his log that as the sun set, the temperature had begun to drop drastically. The sea was unusually calm and the sky was clear.

Xander rushed up the restricted stairway, back through the blindingly dark tunnels and passways in which he had come. Now the lack of light held no power over him. There was no fear in his heart or stumbling in his step. He knew what sort of creature lived in the world of the night and it was not something that left him trembling. At least not in a bad way.

The boy's smile only faltered briefly when he thought about what Spike was doing right now. The distasteful task of disposing of the remains of his [dinner](#). It was surely a very sad thing but one that was already done and regrettably necessary. There was no point in crying over spilled milk or, in this

case, blood.

It brought Xander's mind a sliver of consolation to know that when they reached New York, the problem of regular meals would be solved in the boroughs and corners where the criminals and the humans that needed removal from decent society lurked anyway. He and Spike would be doing the world a great service.

When he reached the outside doorway on his way to the dining hall, Xander had to stop. Despite the freezing cold air that immediately enveloped him and caused a stinging tingle in his fingers, cheeks and nose, Xander wrapped his arms around himself and he moved to the [railing](#) to look out over the amazing sight of the vast ocean.

He leaned dangerously far over the side and stared down, squinting to see the wake as it splashed up against the sides of the ship. He could just make out the shadows of the objects that floated on the surface, bouncing off the steel and tumbling away. It took him a minute to realize that they were

chunks of ice. When that knowledge hit him, a body wracking shudder ran through him and it felt like the blood in his veins was starting to turn sluggish and freeze.

Quickly he backed up and turned, hurrying as fast as his chilled legs would take him, toward the warmth and comfort of the dining hall. Within seconds, he jerked open the door and stuck his head in, relieved to see that most of the passengers, apparently Yvette included, had already partaken of the evening meal and moved on to other [activities](#).

He took his seat and for the next hour enjoyed a huge dinner, a pleasant bit of conversation with the others at his table, and he refused to allow his brain to visit anything unpleasant or that teetered on the edge of moral ambiguity. Not tonight. He was in love with Spike and Spike was in love with him. Nothing could spoil that. Not even a rare disease that, together, they could either find a cure for or learn to live with.

Nope. There was nothing on earth that could shatter his happiness tonight.

~*~*~*~*~

Spike, too was walking on air. Did he dare allow himself to hope? Was it really possible that he had found someone willing to stroll with him through this tangled thorn bush of time? It's true that his love was a lowly human but that was a condition that would be corrected later.

Once they got to New York, they would do all the silly tourist things. They would saunter through the streets, visit the diverse neighborhoods and spend their nights together. The days would be for them alone. Cocooned in a small apartment, Spike would teach the boy all the sweet mysteries of love and sex with another man.

There was no hurry to turn him. Spike craved the boy's heat as he buried himself balls deep in the hot, pulsing, living body. His mind's eye painted a

picture of the vampire looming over the pliant, submissive body of the smiling, sweating boy. He could imagine hooking his arm under his boy's heavy thigh as he slid in and out while he watched the vein in his neck throb, begging to be bitten.

Spike sighed happily before realizing that he had been standing in the middle of the cargo hold, with a goofy grin on his face and a dead body at his feet for the better part of an hour while he daydreamed like a smitten schoolboy.

He needed to get a move on. The night was full of promise and he had a lover waiting on him. By now, Xander should be finished with his dinner and Spike had his own table scraps to toss over for fish food. Wasting no more time, Spike heaved the body over his shoulder and he leapt up the steps from the storage area to the second deck level.

He whistled cheerfully as her swinging arms slapped against his back with each step almost in time with the tune on his lips and he headed directly for the service door at the end of the hallway. It was an

access entry used by ship personnel that went directly to a small spot on the outer deck. It was a shortcut of sorts that allowed the kitchen help to deliver room service trays as expeditiously as possible. It was a metal door not used by passengers. It was Spike's personal garbage disposal.

Generally, Spike took precautions. He would pretend that they were errant lovers cuddling on a forbidden area of the ship. He would wrap his coat protectively around her small, fragile body and hold her close to his, sometimes even leaning down and kissing her cold, slack lips. Then, when he had assured himself that there were no inquisitive stares or intrusive glances, he would, in a flash, snatch his overcoat away and slip the body over the railing. With the sound of the boiler engines and the ever present wake, the splash was completely inaudible even to him.

Tonight, however, he was distracted. His mind and thoughts were filled with the living instead of the dead and his careful considerations were ignored.

As he charged through the outside door, Spike tipped his head up and sniffed. The freezing night air crystallized in his nostrils and stung his eyes but carried no trace of danger. Anxious now to get this distasteful task over with, Spike flipped the body off his back. He was somewhat surprised to see that the stiffness of rigor mortis had already begun to creep throughout her small frame telling him that too much time had been wasted and she had probably been missed.

So, with no pomp or ceremony, no tearful words of goodbye and no bible verses with which to ensure the golden chariots would come to collect the soul, Spike nonchalantly flipped her over the rails and into the drink.

Deckhand Riley Finn felt his bowels churn. He had just come around from the kitchen with a mop to clean up a reported spill on deckside when he saw what his eyes refused to believe was true. A shadowy figure. A man in a dark overcoat that matched the description that they had been given

of a possible murderer. A man standing at the rail of the ship, tossing a bundle into the frigid waters.

As soon as the body left his hands, Spike could feel the warning tingle in his spine. He was being watched! His face morphed and his head snapped around in the direction of implied danger and their eyes locked.

The sight of the yellow, piercing eyes glowing through the dark night sent a terror ripping through Riley's body. His lips parted but no sound came out. Panic had a solid grip on him that prevented any sound or movement. In a blink of the eye, Spike closed the distance between them and he snarled, hissing and reaching for the worthless creature that would complicate his life.

Finally, Riley's voice came back to him, although it was low, shaky and unsure. "No! Nnnno. You get away from me."

He took two steps back and raised the mop in front of him. Reason told him he looked ridiculous,

instinct cried out for him to use whatever he had in his hands as a weapon.

A tingle of excitement skittered down Spike's spine. If the man had stood his ground, Spike would have simply tossed him overboard to his death but by retreating, it spurred the demon to crave a game of cat and mouse. His body crouched slightly as he eased closer, slower now, to give his victim the illusion of possible escape.

"Come here, boy. Come closer so I can kill you. Do you know how it will feel when I rip your skin from your body while you still breathe? Did you ever hear the squishy sound of a beating heart as it's torn from a chest?"

With an evil, maniacal grin on his face, Spike slinked forward while Riley matched him step for step backward, all the time waving the broom handle back and forth in front of him defensively. Each time the handle swung toward him, Spike would swat at it as though it were a yarn ball and he were a kitten. A feral kitten that was now showing a row

of razor sharp teeth and two strange fangs.

"Stop it. Get back! Stay away. Please, I won't tell, I promise."

Riley's firmly voiced orders slid into a pathetic whine as he begged for his life. It was a mistake. It is a move that fuels a predator's power and drives it to devour its prey. When Riley saw the twinkle in the monster's eye he knew the game was almost over. So, with all his might, he swung the mop once more, wildly and in a full arc. The icy night air had caused the wooden handle to become stiff and brittle and when it drew to the right, it struck the railing and splintered, cracking in half.

It was a sound that split the night like a gunshot and it caused Riley to stumble back. With only the short stub left, he now jabbed it forward. He had made up his mind. If he was going to die tonight, he was going to go down fighting.

Spike frowned and hesitated. The determined human in front of him now had a jagged wooden

stake aimed directly at his chest. He was fairly certain he could still step in and slaughter this pathetic lamb but his demon growled as a morsel of doubt crept in. Taking a step back, Spike snarled and hissed. "You are a dead man. Don't sleep, boy. There's nowhere you can hide. I will come to you when you least expect it and I will rip your throat out, bathe in your blood and fuck your still-warm corpse."

With that, Spike spun around, his long black coat billowed out around him causing him to blend in with the dark night, and in a flash he was gone.

Riley whimpered. His fingers continued to grip the piece of broken handle, and the urine that ran down his legs froze as it pooled on the deck.

Part Twenty-Nine

9:40 PM: After making his rounds of the ship, Captain Smith made one last visit to the bridge before retiring for the evening.

Xander sat back and rubbed his full belly. He was thoroughly content in body, mind and soul. He knew once they arrived in New York there would be issues to face. His family was to be waiting on the docks expecting to collect a confused boy that they would have to take home and help find his way in life. A young man who they prayed had left his deviant ways on the emerald shores.

But they would not find that. Xander wasn't a lost boy anymore. Now he was a man and he knew exactly what and who he wanted to be. He would thank them kindly for coming and attempt to help them see that this was the way for him but, if they didn't, the loss was theirs.

He would seek some sort of employment. New York was a huge city and somewhere there would be work. Maybe a shopkeeper, a dockworker or even laboring in one of the factories that built those new

horseless carriages. It didn't matter. The details of the task at hand were unimportant as long as there was a paycheck at the end of the week that afforded them an apartment and a meager life together. As long as he had Spike, he could survive.

Xander did feel a slight pang of regret at the thought of Paddy and Emma. In his heart, he wanted them to be proud of him, more so even than his own folks. Their love for him had been unrestrained and unconditional. For the first time in his life, he had known words of encouragement and the physical affection of a hug and a goodnight kiss on the forehead.

Xander was painfully aware that Paddy and Emma must have sacrificed a great deal to afford him this opportunity. Xander remembered the day of his sailing when Paddy had thrown his arm around Xander's shoulder, drawn him close and told him to be brave. He had said that the Titanic would take Xander to his destiny.

That memory made him smile. Paddy was right and

suddenly, Xander knew the old man would still be proud of him. Everything would be just fine.

Snapping back to the present, Xander leaned forward intending to ask Mr. Webster to consult the time piece he wore on his wrist. He had fully expected Spike to have joined him by now. "Excuse me, Sir, could you tell me....."

"ALEXANDER HARRIS. PAGING ALEXANDER HARRIS."

Xander spun around in confusion at hearing his name. When he saw the young page in the red cap and jacket, he hesitantly raised his hand. "Over here, boy. I'm Alexander Harris."

The young lad scrambled over quickly and handed Xander a neatly folded slip of paper then stood patiently with his palm extended. When Xander's quizzical expression continued, Mr. Webster subtly coughed into his napkin.

"*cough* tip."

Xander blushed at his ignorance and shoved his hand into his pocket, retrieving one of the bills he had sullied the day earlier and handed it over. Both the page's and Webster's eyes grew huge. After the boy hustled away, the older man leaned forward, hoping not to embarrass the young man. "That was too much, son. A simple coin would suffice."

Xander had already lost interest in the exchange and was totally focused on the note. Nothing good ever came in suspicious small notes. With trepidation, Xander lowered the paper below the table level and the view of his dinner mates and he unfolded it.

Xander,

Ran into a bit of a problem. Can't meet you on deck. Return to your cabin and I will see you there. Tell no one of our meeting.

S.

"Oh, dear me. What's this all about?"

Mrs. Webster's harsh, curious whisper caused

Xander's head to snap up and a million innocent responses to scatter and attempt to form on his tongue but then, when he saw her face, he realized her questions had nothing to do with him or his note. Following her line of sight, Xander saw the small army of ship's officers that poured into the dining hall and spread out in all directions.

In what had to have been a predetermined manner, the officers fanned out, each claiming and approaching a table of passengers. The constant din of cheerful conversation dropped off to a low hum and the silence was made more noticeable by the sudden cessation of the band. Immediately one of the officers approached the band leader and the music hesitantly started back up.

Xander and his table mates glanced at each other and waited as a handsome, somber looking man in a trim, neat uniform came to their table.

"Good evening. I am Second Officer Penn. We apologize for the interruption to your dinner. We are looking for a man and we are asking everyone's

cooperation. We don't have a name but we do have a description and would like to know if it sounds familiar to any of you. He is short, maybe 5'6 or 7". He is slim. Pale skin, blue eyes and blond hair. He generally wears a long black woolen overcoat. Sometimes a dark fedora. Does this sound like anyone you may know or might have seen?"

Mr. Webster glanced over at Xander before turning his attention to the shipman. "What has this man done? Is he someone we need to be wary of? Are we in danger?"

Immediately, the officer raised his hands and attempted to allay their fears. "No, no of course there is no danger. The Titanic is still the safest ship on the seas. This gentleman is a passenger who we believe to be a stowaway. We simply wish to find and confirm that he has paid his passage."

No one at Xander's table believed that bullshit for a second. The thought that a virtual army of ship's officers would converge to locate someone who had skipped out on the price of a ticket was absurd.

Patiently, Officer Penn looked from one to the other. Just when it seemed no answer or cooperation would be forthcoming, Mrs. Webster calmly laid her linen napkin by her place setting and tugged at the wrists of her white gloves.

"I'm sorry, young man, but none of us have any information that will help you. Your description doesn't sound like anyone that we have seen but if we do, we will certainly contact one of the ship's employees immediately. Isn't that right Dear?"

Her husband patted her hand and smiled. "You are, of course, correct, My Dear."

Second Officer Penn looked at all the faces at the table and an uncomfortable feeling that he could find no definitive name for crept across his skin. He knew challenging them was unthinkable which left him with no option but to accept their word and leave. Besides, he still had several other tables to consult and time was short.

"Yes, well, if you think of anything....."

"Of course, Mr. Penn. Good evening."

As soon as the ship's officer had walked on, Mrs. Webster, who had apparently appointed herself the table's spokesperson, turned to Xander with a stern, well practiced, motherly look. "The description of the man that they are seeking certainly sounds like the gentleman that you have been in the company of, Mr. Harris. I trust that you are not making a foolish decision that will visit trouble upon us or ruin this very pleasant crossing, are you?"

The others at the table gasped at the woman's brash, unfeminine nerve but quickly turned their disapproving, accusatory faces in Xander's direction. Xander sat back in his chair as a million panicky thoughts danced through his brain, none of which expressed concerns for the previously pleasant passengers who had now sided against him.

"No, ma'am. I believe you're mistaken. The business

associate of which you speak bears no resemblance to the description given. He is a taller man of stouter build and besides, I know him to be a paid, ticket holding passenger. I have seen his stub."

As soon as the last statement left his mouth, Xander blushed furiously and he quickly leapt to his feet, feigning insult.

"Now, if you will excuse me, I believe I will take a stroll in the moonlight before retiring."

Several of the others tossed insincere apologies at him as he retreated but he cared about none of them. The combination of the note and the interrogation left Xander terrified for the safety of his vampire.

Part Thirty

Sunday night. April 14th 9:30 PM: Officer Lighttoller instructs Sixth Officer Moody to telephone the crow's nest and ask the men to keep a sharp lookout for ice and to pass the word to subsequent watches. Shortly after, another ice warning from the Mesaba is received; it reads:

"Ice report. In latitude 42N to 41.25N, longitude 40W to 50.3W. Saw much heavy pack ice and a great number of large icebergs. Also field ice. Weather good. Clear."

The message which identifies a large ice field, and icebergs directly in Titanic's path is never delivered to the bridge. Philips, who believes that the ship already is aware of the other warnings, simply transmits:

"Received. Thanks."

Bride and Philips overlook the message due to their

preoccupation with passenger traffic. Altogether, the many ice warnings received this day warn of a huge ice field seventy-eight miles long and directly ahead of the Titanic.

Xander hastily excused himself and hurried from the dining hall. He tried to look unconcerned as he rushed out onto the deck and into the frigid night air. Unlike previous evenings, tonight the outer decks were alive with laughing, chatting passengers.

The freezing temperatures combined with the heavy fog that was beginning to settle in had caused a layer of ice to form over the wooden decking; and large numbers of couples and young, rambunctious children, up long past their bedtimes, were running and sliding, squealing and laughing as though skating on an ice pond.

Xander ducked and dodged his way around them trying to move as quickly as possible while maintaining a steady footing. When he reached the interior door, he jerked it open and hurried on.

He tried to appear calm and nonchalant as he darted down the corridor towards his cabin. His brain was spinning with dire thoughts of what might have happened. He seriously doubted that they had Spike in custody or they wouldn't be risking a passenger panic by asking after him.

Xander's brain cursed the ignorant ship's staff who failed to understand that this was a sick man and, instead, no doubt labeled his affliction with words like 'evil' 'murderer' and 'monster' as they sought to punish him rather than show sympathy and compassion. Would he be treated in such a manner if it were polio or the plague? Xander thought not.

The only thing that brought him a small shred of consolation was the fact that if they were hunting for Spike, then he was still safe and if Xander had any say in the matter, he would remain so till the ship's docking in less than a week.

When he arrived at his cabin, Xander fumbled with the lock and the second the key turned, he felt a

hand in the center of his back shove him through the open door, clamp around his mouth and he heard the door slam behind them.

Xander's scream for help was muffled as he squirmed to free himself.

"Shh. Xander. Stop it. It's me."

Immediately Xander stilled and Spike removed his grip on the boy. As soon as he did, Xander spun around in the strong arms and he pulled Spike into a tight, frantic embrace. "Oh, God, I was so worried. They're looking everywhere for you. They came to the dining hall and questioned all the passengers. Some, at my table, remembered you but for my sake, remained mum. Still, I fear that one of them will talk. What shall we do? What happened?"

Spike let the boy ramble as all his fears tumbled from his mouth. Surprisingly, his mood did not match his boy's as he calmly rolled and lit a cigarette. When he took the first puff and Xander

seemed to have run out of words, Spike leaned against the porthole wall. "Not to worry, Love. I ran into a bit of a problem during my cleanup and one of the silly ship boys saw me."

Immediately Xander began wringing his hands. Discovery. It was his worst fear come true. "Fuck! Did you have to.....? Is he.....? What will we do now?"

Spike opened the small round window and tossed out the red, glowing butt. He then scooped his love up in his arms, kissed his neck and rubbed circles on the boy's back soothingly as he whispered in his ear. "He's alive but listen to me Xander. I have not survived for more than fifty years by being weak and careless. I'm in no real danger but I am trapped on this ship for at least another week until we dock in New York so we need to make some adjustments. Now, you said yourself that some of the dinner mates have seen us together so it's only a matter of time till the ship's officers come to question you. When they do, you will tell them that we met and spoke briefly and you haven't seen me since. Do you

understand?"

Spike felt Xander's head slightly move up and down against the side of his face so he continued with what he knew would bring the greatest objections. "Good, now there's one other thing. From now on, until we arrive at port, we can't see each other."

As he expected, Spike felt Xander's body stiffen in his hold and the boy's shoulders slightly tremble as he cried. Xander knew it was the only way, for both of them, but it didn't mean he had to like it. "I'll never see you again, will I?"

Spike pushed Xander back and forced him to look him in the eye. "Don't you even think that! We are together, Xander. This is just a hiccup in our time together and there's nothing they can do to stop us. It's only for a few days. You'll go about your daily routine so that the ship's officers that will be watching you will see nothing. I'll stay out of sight. The Titanic is huge. There are a thousand places a vampire can conceal himself and never be found. After we dock, you will collect your belongings and

leave the ship. Take a room in a lodging house near the docks and when the sun drops on the first night, I'll come to you. I promise, Xander, I will come to you. If you change your mind and don't want me, forego the room and I'll not bother you further."

Xander clutched tightly to the smaller man trying to force both his love and body heat into the seemingly fragile body. He knew everything Spike had said was true. It was only for a short, but necessary, time and it simply would have been too dangerous for both of them to be seen together now. Still, the thought of the eternity of the next five days without Spike made Xander physically sick. He had his concerns whether he could survive and not shrivel and die if Spike weren't in his arms and in his bed.

But he was no longer a child. Xander was a young man now. He had physically made adult decisions and engaged in a man's sexual exploration. He would stand on two feet and stop whimpering like an infant at its mother's skirt hem. He would do what had to be done.

"You're right, Spike, about everything. You need to go and keep yourself safe. There is nothing they can pin on me or accuse me of. I'll mark the days and count the minutes till this long journey is over and we're secure on dry land. I promise you, Spike, I will find a room and I will wait for you. If you don't come the first night, I will wait the second. If you don't come the first year, I will wait forever. So, you see, you must keep yourself unharmed and come for me or carry the burden of my wretched life on your conscience as the years pass on."

Spike smiled sadly and wondered how, if his heart were truly dead and cold, could it ache so as it seemed to break and shatter under the gaze of these deep brown eyes.

"This is not the end for us Xander. It's only the beginning and as time goes on, we will look back fondly on our memorial days aboard the Titanic. Maybe on our fiftieth year on earth together, we'll come back and sail her again."

He then gently placed his hands on the human's warm cheeks and pulled his face down where their lips met one more time in a soft, loving kiss that would carry them through the lonely hardship of the next few days. When the kiss broke, Spike said nothing more. He turned and quickly walked out the door. The second it closed, Xander rushed over. He had forgotten to say I love you. He had wanted just one more goodbye.

When he jerked the door open and stuck his head into the hallway, he was saddened to see it empty. His vampire was already gone.

10:00 PM: At the end of his shift, Lighttoller turns his watch over to First Officer Murdoch. Elsewhere, Frederick Fleet and Reginald Lee replace George Symons and Archie Jewell in the crow's nest.

Part Thirty-One

10:55 p.m. Some 10-19 miles north of Titanic, the Californian is stopped in ice and sends out warnings to all ships in the area. Bride rebukes the Californian with the famous reply "Keep out! Shut up! You're

jamming my signal. I'm working Cape Race"
11:35 p.m. Californian's wireless operator Evans
turns off his set, and retires for the evening.

Spike angrily paced around the aisles of crates and boxes in the cargo hold. He fumed and cursed the worthless humans who had placed him in this position of inconvenience and deprivation. It wasn't that he was afraid. The entire staff of crew plus the thousands of passengers were nothing to him. He would cheerfully slaughter and rend them, one by one before walking away but that scenario lacked several doable provisions.

First, there was no walking away. He, by his own foolish choice, had trapped himself on the **open** ocean with no other **option** but to ride out the cruise till they reached dry land. When he had decided to visit the Colonies, the Titanic seemed the perfect choice. It was sort of a forest for the trees setting. With the huge number of edible passengers, one simple little vampire would never be noticed. Or so he thought.

Second was that he had backed off. It was an inexcusable fuck up. It was the sort of thing a fearful fledge would have done. He should have charged the man with the wooden weapon, snatched it from his hand and after eating him, shoved it soundly up his arse as a warning to others with similar minds.

His next mistake was his carelessness in discarding some of the bodies. The ship's mate was left where it could be found and the last wench was tossed over where he had been observed. Both of these ignorant miscalculations were beneath him. They were zombie-stupid fuckups and yet he understood why they had happened.

Xander.

The real reason that he was unsure, off balance and unguarded. It was what caused him to misstep and ignore the warning signs. It was what stirred fear in his dead heart. Not a fear for himself but for his boy. It was knowing that Xander had been seen with him and could, himself, be in danger. This was the concern that had Spike fuming and frantic.

He had never in all his years on earth wanted anyone like he wanted this boy. He wanted to fuck him, to bite him and to own him, but buried deep inside that want was the desire for the boy to have the same craving for him. Spike wanted to be wanted. When all of this became clear in his mind, Spike stopped walking and he beat his fists on a steamer trunk in frustration as his thoughts barreled on down the road of his mental anguish.

Xander had told him he loved him. His warm, human touch and caring eyes had **confirmed** it. And because of that, Spike had taken a giant leap of faith and told his boy everything. He knew Spike was a vampire and he had seen him kill, yet he still stood by, faithful and true. It was more than Spike had ever allowed himself to hope for.

Yet, here they were. Separated by a world of humans that, even now, could be arresting, torturing or threatening his lover. Or worse, they could be poisoning his mind. Convincing Xander that Spike was evil, although he was, telling him

that their being together was wrong. They could actually be hoisting that nasty viper Yvette into his arms and his bed.

Spike's face shifted. His fangs lengthened and his brow crinkled in its vampire distortion as the colorful mental picture flashed behind his eyelids of his Xander, naked and hard, rolling in their bed with the wet, sloppy crotched bitch, Yvette. The images drove him wild.

They would brainwash his boy, telling him that he needs a normal human life with a clinging wife, a position of employment and several snotty little children. They would prey on him while he was sad and lonely. And all the time, there would be Yvette. Pawing, poking and opening her legs for him to enter her and relieve himself.

"Yvette. The bitch!"

The very name burnt his tongue as though it were dipped in acid. He could just see her, dressed in her fine and frilly lace and satins. Flaunting herself as

though she were beautiful but Spike knew better. "Face like a spanked arse, she has! And a fat rump that needs no bustle! How dare she think she's good enough for the likes of my Xander!"

Finally, he could stand it no more and he stomped his feet like a toddler. "NOOOOO!!!!!!!"

Spike screamed his rage into the night. His roar matched that of the ever present rumble of the steam boilers and the grinding of the metal cogs beneath him. A violent shudder of fury wracked his body and he knew there was no way he could allow whatever the disgusting humans were doing to his lover to continue. He must have been mad to think that he could lurk about unseen for the next week, existing without the touch, the smell, the heat of his Xander.

Suddenly a new thought crept in. It was one that calmed and comforted him considerably. Why did it have to be one or the other? All feast or famine? Who was to say that he couldn't stay away from Xander and still know what was happening to the

boy?

Spike had years of experience in being little more than a shadow. He could keep to the dark corners of the ship, feed from a more carefully select menu in third and still slip up to the next level and keep an eye on the treachery that was being done to his boy. And he would keep notes. He would run a mental ledger where all of the names of those who would conspire against him would be duly noted. Then when they reached land, he would have years to hunt them down and rip them to shreds with his beloved by his side to witness the depth of Spike's love for him.

Spike felt enormously relieved. He had a plan. He knew what he would do and decided that there was no time like the present to implement such an excellent scheme. He knew that it was nearly midnight and Xander should be in his cabin. All he would do was slip up, press an ear to the cabin door and listen. If there was one heartbeat, he would return to his sleeping crate in the storage hold. If, God forbid, there were two hearts pumping blood,

he would rip the door from its hinges and bring a sudden and painful halt to a heart that would have no more need to exist once he drained all the blood from the intruder's body.

Spike's grin spread so wide, it nearly pained his face as he rubbed his hands together in glee. If he had been able to grow a handlebar moustache, he would, at this very minute be stroking it as he sniggered.

Quickly, he snatched his long coat from the top of the steamer trunk and he started for the stairway to the second class level. As he swung the heavy garment around to put it on, the unexpected occurred. The huge ship, the unsinkable Titanic, jolted with such force and power that it knocked him off his feet, tossing him to the floor where he ended up face-first on the cold steel.

Spike was stunned. He stayed where he had landed and listened. Although the boilers still fired, he could tell that the ship had stopped moving and that now, somewhere deep in the bottom of the

hull there had been a sick, metallic scraping sound. Spike slowly pushed himself up to a sitting position and tipped his head to the side.

There was something else.

Another sound that even to his enhanced hearing seemed faint and distant. It was, at first unidentifiable. It was foreign and like nothing he could compare it to. Suddenly and with a stunning and sickening clarity, the right word hit his brain like a sledge hammer.

WATER! RUSHING WATER!!

Holy Mother of God!

His brain screamed and rebelled at the inconceivable. Quickly he dropped back down and placed an ear to the cold floor, hoping against hope that he had been wrong. Within seconds he had located both the sound and it's origin and he knew it was far worse than he thought.

The unsinkable Titanic was taking on water! And from the sounds of it, a fucking LOT of water!

11:40 PM

In the crow's nest, Fleet sees a large iceberg dead ahead and signals the bridge. He quickly reaches above him and rings the bell three times. This is to signal that there is something out ahead. Fleet reaches for the telephone. When it is picked up below, Officer Moody asks, "What do you see?" "Iceberg right ahead" Fleet answers. Moody thanks him and hangs up the phone. He then relays the message to Murdoch who orders the ship hard a starboard and telegraphs the engine room to stop all engines, followed by full astern. He then orders that all watertight doors be closed. But it is too late.

The 300 foot gash has fully opened five compartments to the sea as well as flooding the coal bunker servicing the no.9 stokehold.

Part Thirty-Two

11:42 PM: Besides the men on the bridge, few others on board know they have been struck. George Symons who has just gone off duty, thinks the metallic sound is the anchor being dropped. First class passengers look out their windows and see large chunks of ice being playfully kicked around by people on deck. No one shows any signs of concern.

Spike was temporarily paralyzed by the implication. Within seconds, his well-honed sense of survival kicked in and he did the mental calculations of passenger numbers in contrast to the number of life boats he had seen strapped to the sides of the vast ship and came to the indisputable conclusion that they were fucked.

It wasn't that he was afraid to drown. Lord knows, a vampire can't drown, you simply swim for shore. If he knew where the fucking shore was! No, he couldn't drown but the thought of spending an

eternity trapped in this metal coffin at the bottom of the frigid Atlantic ocean was more horrifying than a simple death by water. Spike was having a hard time squelching the rising terror that was threatening to overwhelm him.

He again began to pace. "Maybe they can fix it. Maybe they've taken precautions in consideration of an event such as this. Probably at this very moment....."

"WHOOOMP"

The engines stopped. The constant hum of the boiler fired engines that had been an ever present body thumping noise suddenly ceased and the silence that surrounded him screamed louder than any of the previous mechanics had.

Spike's eyes grew huge as saucers and the sound that escaped his lips this time was a whimper. He knew the reality. The situation was all he had feared most. The knowledge that the Titanic was going to go down caused the fresh, stolen blood in his

stomach to churn and try to rise.

No, vampires can't drown but humans can.

"Xander!"

The instant the word left his mouth, Spike's feet were on the steps. He lurched up, two at a time and slammed open the steel utility door that led to the hallway of the second class cabins. He no longer cared if he was seen, and anyone who attempted to stop him or interfere would be dispatched posthaste.

He ran down the corridor, his footsteps muffled by the thick carpet till he reached the door of his beloved and he began pounding. It was a hammering so relentless that the portly couple in the next stateroom peeked out to see who was disturbing their sleep. Within seconds, Xander jerked it open. When he realized who it was he immediately grabbed the vampire's sleeve and tugged him in, slamming the door behind them.

"Spike! I thought you said....."

Before the boy could waste any time with pointless questions, Spike kissed him soundly on the mouth to shut him up. He then gripped him painfully by the shoulders and shook him. "Listen to me Xander. The ship is in trouble. I don't think any of the other passengers are aware of it yet but we need to get moving. There's no telling how far this may go, so you better get dressed. Put on as many clothes to hold in your body heat as you can and do it fast. If you have any valuables or mementos stick them in the pockets of your britches. If you have a hat or anything to pull over your ears....."

By now, Spike was aware that Xander was doing nothing besides standing where he was, hands on his hips and a frown of suspicion and confusion on his face. Spike threw his hands in the air and fought the urge to smack some sense into the boy.

"Now, Xander! Do it fucking NOW!"

Xander stepped back feeling safety in the space

between them. He had never seen his lover acting so irrationally before. Spike was always cool and mellow. "Spike. What the hell are you talking about? This is the Titanic. She's unsinkable. In fact, it's been said that God himself could not sink the Tit....."

His comment was cut off when Spike slapped his hand over the boy's mouth and his eyes darted about wildly afraid that some unseen specter may have overheard the blasphemy. "Don't say it! Fucking Christ, Xander. That is probably exactly why we're about to go to the bottom of the drink. This is a punishment your human race and its arrogance has earned."

Xander chuckled. "Why, Spike, I never would have pegged you for religious. Were you raised Catholic? Did your mamma dress you in short pants and take you to church....."

The humor died from his voice when he realized that Spike was not laughing. This was not a joke. Whatever had happened had put the very fear of

God in his vampire's heart. With a tug, he pulled his nightshirt over his head and he began to dress as instructed. "What happened? What do you know?"

Spike fumbled around, grabbing socks and tossing shirts at his boy. "I was down in the hold. I heard it. We've struck something and the ship is taking on water. The crew must already know it because they've shut down the engines."

Xander paused in his dressing and listened. Spike was right. The constant hum and rumble had stopped, replaced only by the sounds of the night. People shouting and laughing on deck and the soft whistle of the rare breeze that passed by his small round window. He snatched another pair of pants from his wall shelf and tugged them up. "I felt something a few minutes ago. A bump maybe. Was that it? What could it have been? Shit, Spike, we're out in the middle of the ocean, what the hell could we have hit?"

Spike was already scanning the room to see if there wasn't just one more article of fabric that he could

put on his boy. "Hell if I know. There's a ton of ice out there, maybe it was an iceberg. Don't much matter now. All I know is that we need to get up on deck. There aren't enough life boats and when the shit starts flying, I want us to be at the head of the line to climb in one."

Xander sat, a task made more difficult by the thick layers of clothing he wore, and he tied up the laces of his shoes. He wished now that he had also brought along the mud boots he wore and left behind at Paddy's. When there was nothing left to put on, he jumped to his feet. "Spike, I'm scared."

His voice was so small and quiet that Spike felt it wrench at his long-lost soul. Roughly he pulled his boy into his arms and he held the trembling body close. "You listen up, Xander. I'm scared too but there's no way in hell that you are going to die tonight. Do you hear me?"

When Spike felt the slight nod of Xander's head, he continued. "Now, I promise you that somehow we will survive. If I have to kill everyone on deck to

make sure you get in one of those fucking boats, I'll do it. Look at me, Xander."

Pulling away, Xander lifted his face and wet brown eyes met steely cold blue ones. "This is not the end of us. I promised you that we would have a long time together and I intend to keep that promise. Now, we can't waste any more time. When we get up there, I want you to look happy and calm and whatever happens, you do not leave my side. Wherever I go, you go. You understand? Are you ready?"

Xander straightened his two jackets and wiped the tears from his face. He put an obviously fake smile on his lips and he nodded. Surprisingly, it brought him enormous relief to know that Spike was here. Spike would take care of him.

"I'm ready. Let's go."

11:55 PM: The post office on "G" deck forward is already flooding. After a quick inspection of the damage, Captain Smith knows the worst. The

Titanic is sinking and the more than 2200 passengers on board are in extreme peril

Part Thirty-Three

Bruce Ismay, who has been asleep in his luxury suite on B-deck, is awakened by the strange noise caused by the iceberg. Without bothering to change out of his nightclothes, he goes to the bridge and asks Captain Smith what has happened. "Do you think the ship is seriously damaged?" Ismay asks, hoping that things aren't as bad as they might be. "I'm afraid she is," is Captain Smith's only reply.

Spike and Xander prepared to leave the cabin and head up on deck. Xander had taken one last look around and made certain that anything of value had been secured in one of the pockets on the underneath pair of britches to assure that nothing would fall out and be lost. During their discussions

of precautions, neither man spoke the fearful words, "if we should have to enter the water" although both clearly thought them.

At the last minute, before closing the door, Xander had a thought. "Wait. Leave your coat here in the cabin. They're looking for a man in a long black woolen overcoat. There's no need to draw unnecessary attention to us."

But Spike would hear none of it. "Fuck 'em. If the worst happens, this is another layer of warmth to wrap around you and I'll not discard it. If this is as I think, things are about to get ugly and the last thing on people's minds will be looking for me. The coat stays."

There was nothing else to discuss. The clock was ticking and the water was gushing in from the sea to fill the lower compartments. Holding tightly to each other's hands, the two men reached the outer deck doorway and shoved open the steel door.

As they stepped out and into the freezing night air, they felt the ship tip and veer slightly to the starboard side. It was a movement that, on any other night would have been giggled about and chalked up to a rough sea but now, on this night, it felt ominous.

Xander twitched uncomfortably. The layer upon layer of heavy clothing combined with the fear and running had his body feeling overheated and sweaty. A light sheen of perspiration speckled his forehead and when met with the icy night air, threatened to freeze on his face. He quickly dabbed it with his sleeve as he looked around at the passengers.

"I think they know, Spike."

The mood on the deck had sobered considerably. The laughing and game playing with the huge chunks of ice that lay at their feet had ended and the air of frivolity was now replaced with confusion and concern. It was apparent that the ship had stopped and that the engines were shut down. All

attempts to question the ship's staff were at first met with platitudes and later ignored altogether before they rushed away to parts unknown.

Unconcerned with their inappropriate appearance of affection, Spike continued to grip Xander's hand almost painfully, locking their fingers together as they advanced out onto the deck and amongst the passengers who were now milling about like cattle in a holding pen at the slaughter house.

The frightening sight of the mountain of ice that loomed in the darkness along the entire side of the ship no longer seemed funny.

Xander's eyes darted wildly in all directions as he looked for someone who might have a rational explanation. He, along with the others on deck, expected that at any time a Ship's Officer would announce that corrective measures were being taken and all would be as it was. When it was clear that such a proclamation was not forthcoming, Xander again started to hyperventilate. Spike's concern was more selfish. He wanted to get his boy

to the lifeboats before the others realized just how critical things were.

"Stay calm, Love. They know something is wrong but I'm fairly certain they don't....."

"CLANG CLANG CLANG CLANG CLANG"

The rest of Spike's answer was cut off and inaudible. Lost in the sound of the ship's distress bell that rang out, repeatedly splitting the night and sending a shock wave throughout the ship.

It was a harsh, loud metallic sound meant to wake those few still sleeping and also ring out into the darkness, like a sea siren, calling out to any sailor who may hear her begging them to come and help. It was an irritating sound that would carry them through the next hours and stay in the heads of the survivors till their deaths.

The sudden new sound caused a frenzied reaction in those on deck. Side doors flew open and passengers, some still in their flimsy nightclothes

charged out to demand answers and seek silence. Within seconds, their outrage turned to apprehension then fear as a vague understanding of the drastic state of affairs became clear.

Spike could feel the rising terror in his boy. He could smell the perspiration, hear the rapid fire heartbeat, and the shudders that ran through his body shook even in the fingers that Spike held so securely. Jerking on his hand to get his attention, Spike shouted to be heard.

"Stay calm Xander! Look at me! Come on. We need to get over to where the lifeboats are."

Xander nodded and together they began pushing and shoving their way through a mob of people that, by now had begun to grasp the gravity of the situation. It was a moving wave of humanity with no real direction. Some were trying to make their way back to their cabins to dress in warmer clothes, some were obstinate, refusing to believe this was anything more than a drill or an overly cautious Captain reacting to a slight misstep in the voyage.

Unbeknownst to the passengers in second class, the ship's officers and deck hands alike were already rushing through the first class corridors, waking and warning the rich and elite to prepare themselves to board the lifeboats. They coaxed them from their warm beds, often serving as their personal servants to help dress and organize them. They were given the first life jackets and they were sent out on deck.

Third class was, at this point, little more than a side thought. Like a family who moves from their home, third class passengers were the pets, the children's cats who are abandoned to survive on their own.

Outside, the sky was clear, nearly cloudless as the stars and moon shone brightly above. They twinkled like Christmas candles; cold, distant and uncaring, they sparkled, looking down on the growing chaos that filled the decks of the doomed ship.

Filled with determination and still moving forward, Spike took the lead and shoved people aside to make a path for his boy. He knew Xander wanted to

stop and help when a child lost from his mother cried for a comforting arm. He refused to slow when a young woman tugged Xander's sleeve praying he had an explanation for what was happening. Xander may have felt he was part of a suffering humanity but Spike was not. At this point he would have slapped babies and eaten their mothers to make way for his boy.

Next to the railing, two older businessmen calmly smoked their cigars, ignoring the crazed discord behind them as though it had nothing to do with them, and they continued their discussion of the stocks and railroads.

And still the damned bell rang on.

Finally, out of breath and overheated, they reached the area of the boats. Still covered in tarps and secured to the ship, they were guarded by ship's officers armed with hand guns discreetly pocketed and prepared for the madness they feared would soon ensue.

Before Spike had the chance to demand an explanation, a new wave of passengers flooded the deck as rapidly as the ocean was pouring into the ship. Led by a front line of ship's officers blowing whistles and jostling people aside, they led an onslaught from first class directly toward the life boats, shoving aside the second class women and children in favor of the rich and powerful men of commerce.

Knowing their place in the world, most of the passengers meekly stepped aside. Spike was not one of these. Still holding tightly to his lover's hand, he again worked his way through.

"What the fuck do you think you're doing! Uncover these boats and allow us to board! These pricks are no more important than we are. How dare you put them first."

Third Officer Maitland blew his whistle just inches from Spike's nose before placing his hand in the center of the vampire's chest and shoving him roughly back. Spike fought the urge to change and

rip the throat from the worthless dog in uniform. Xander quickly placed his other hand on Spike's arm and shouted to be heard.

"No, Spike, let it go. It's all right. We'll still get in a boat. It doesn't matter if it isn't first. We still have time."

The mood on board was at a high level of unease although full blown panic was not yet evident. The main fear they all shared was the inconceivable idea that they would actually have to evacuate into the small, unsteady boats and row out onto the open seas to await either another ship or until the repairs would make the Titanic again viable.

12:10 AM Captain Smith orders a radio call for assistance. Phillips taps out the regulation distress. CQD...MGY...CQD...MGY... The 13,600 ton Cunard ship Carpathia receives the message. Her Captain, Arthur Rostron, immediately turns his ship around and heads at full speed toward the Titanic's radioed position.

The squash court, 32 feet above keel, is awash. The majority of the boilers have been shut down. Huge clouds of steam roar out of the relief pipes secured to the sides of the funnels. Captain Smith orders that the lifeboats be uncovered and musters the crew and passengers.

Part Thirty-Four

*12:15 a.m. Wallace Hartley and his band begin to **play** lively ragtime tunes in the 1st Class lounge on "A" Deck. They will **continue** to almost the end, and every member of the band will be lost.*

12:25 a.m.

Smith gives the order to start loading lifeboats with women and children. 2nd Officer Lighttoller follows this order to the letter.

12:45 a.m.

Starboard lifeboat No. 7 is safely lowered away with only twenty-eight people, while it can carry sixty-five. At about this same time, the first distress rocket is fired by Quartermaster George Rowe,

under the direction of Boxhall, from the bridge rail socket on [the Boat Deck](#) by the #1 emergency cutter.

Now working quickly and efficiently, within fifteen minutes there are five lifeboats loaded and lowered into the waters.

When it became clear that the ship's deck hands were finally going to uncover and lower the lifeboats, the crowd again became agitated and surged forward as the officers continued to shout orders, blow their whistles and demand restraint.

Husbands and fathers tried shielding their wives and children from the pressing mobs and the freezing night air. Children cried in fear and pain as the icy air bit and clawed at every inch of exposed skin, while their mothers clung desperately to them.

It was obvious that no one on board had any practice with the dispatch of the small boats as the front end rope on the first one broke free and slammed against the side of the ship before nearly tumbling upside down into the frigid water. After

quickly getting it under control, the ship's Third Officer began waving his hand and leading a few of the women from first class toward the boat. Most argued, reluctant to leave their husbands and separate their families but the shouted order of "Women and children ONLY" gave no exceptions.

The first boat, at less than half full was launched.

The movement on the deck now was a constant shuffling and shifting of bodies in a disorganized organization. Morality and human decency had, at last, taken precedence over financial status or society class position and women and children, regardless of their paid passage, were hustled toward the boats as the men stepped away.

The entire situation was made more difficult by the onslaught of sensory overload. By now, the lights on deck had partially gone out and the small amount of illumination offered by the clear sky and the moon did little to assist in seeing the tragic jumble of activity that was playing out around them. Thinking was all but impossible. The nonstop clanging jangle

of the alarm bell combined with the fucking whistles the crew blew blended with the shouts and screams of the passengers. It created an overload of racket that couldn't be processed.

Topping it off was the burning cold of the freezing night air. It caused the skin to tingle, ache and finally, when the pain reached a warning of frostbite, fingers, toes and noses mercifully went numb. How much worse would it be in the small boats with no protection from the blowing air? Mothers did their best to use their bodies to shield their children.

Spike became more and more angry as he began to realize that his boy would receive no priority in placement. He had already threatened several of the ship's officers only to be rebuffed by them and scolded by the very human he endeavored to save.

"Stop it Spike. We'll wait our turn like the others."

Xander recognized several of the people who moved past him as others from his dining area. He

watched as the honeymooners, the Tinnners were pushed to the forefront. Evie Tinner paused before her turn to board. She quickly removed the St. Christopher medal from around her neck and she placed it over her husband's head. He had presented it to her the night of their wedding along with the tickets to the Titanic telling her the patron saint protected travelers. She then kissed his lips and turned away. She stepped in and moved to the side to allow the others their space. When she turned back, he pressed his lips to the medal, gave her a small wave and his bravest smile.

A squeeze of his fingers told him that Spike had seen too but before Xander could speak to him, a voice from behind him caught his attention.

"No, I'm telling you I won't go!"

Xander knew the voice to be Mrs. Webster. The elderly couple that shared his table argued close to his ear and could be heard even over the constant clanging of the incessant bell.

"Please Dorothy, be reasonable."

"No. We have weathered every storm side by side these nearly forty years, Henry, and I have no intention of leaving you now."

"Please, My Love, this is only for a short time. There are already other steamers on the way. They will pick up the lifeboats first and then pluck the rest of us from the deck. The ship is still basically sound. Even if she were taking on water, it would be hours before shewell, let's just say we have plenty of time."

The argument went on but by now Xander had lost interest. He knew in his heart that Dorothy would not leave and from the sound of the resignation in his voice, Henry knew it too.

Spike was struck by the bigger picture. As he stood back, still clutching Xander's hand, he looked around. Even ignoring the men, there were still hundreds of women and children shivering and huddled in the cold awaiting their turn to enter a

boat and the number of boats was dwindling quickly.

He couldn't just stand there any longer. He could tell that Xander, like most of the other humans on this doomed crawler were still too stunned to grasp the reality of how this night was going to end. He needed to make some decisions and he needed to do it fast.

Spike tightened his fingers around Xander's and he turned around. Suddenly, Spike jerked and began dragging the confused boy in the opposite direction, away from the desperate crowd and away from the starboard side of the ship. Away from the boats.

Once they found a spot where they could face each other, Spike shoved Xander back against the door to the inside deck and he shouted to make sure the boy heard him over the screams, the hollers and the damned clang of the disaster bell. "Xander. Stay here! I'm going to go get us a couple life jackets. **DON'T MOVE!** Don't leave this spot! I'll be right back!"

Xander's eyes grew huge and round. For the first time tonight he was really terrified. Spike had promised him that they would not be separated. He didn't want to be alone. "No! Please! Don't leave me. Don't....."

"Stay here!" Spike gave the order and darted off.

Xander watched in horror as Spike disappeared into the fringe of the mob. He blended into the group of husbands and fathers that had sent their women into the ocean. These were men who cared nothing about the small man fitting a murderer's description that now brushed by them. All they knew was that no matter how tonight ended, their lives would forever be changed.

"Alexander! Oh, Alexander my love!!"

Xander spun around just in time to find his arms filled with the lace and frills of Yvette as she threw her arms around his neck and pressed her body to his. No longer caring with the conventions of society

or the pretense of coquettishness, she hung on him like a second skin. Xander craned his neck to look past her huge mound of piled hair toward the direction Spike had moved, but the small blond man was gone.

By now, Xander could feel the woman being pulled away from him.

"Yvette, come. Come now!"

Xander watched as Monique tugged desperately to pry Yvette away. When he realized what was happening, he gently eased her loose and put her at arm's length. He tried to keep his voice firm but gentle. "You must go Yvette. Go with your sister and get into one of the boats."

Sobbing and frantic, Yvette again threw her arms around his neck.

"Oh, my Love, we have had so little time together. We never had the chance to make our wedding plans or consummate our passion. I will not be

separated from you my Love."

Xander was flabbergasted. If the whole scenario hadn't been so mind boggling this would definitely be the comic relief. But it wasn't and tonight, there was nothing remotely amusing. Monique continued to cry and pull on her sister.

"Viens avec moi! Depeche-toi!"

With a smile and a nod to Monique, Xander whispered into Yvette's ear. "Go with her, my Darling. All will be fine. If we are temporarily apart, I will meet up with you in New York."

Relief flooded Yvette and she stepped back to read the honesty in Xander's eyes. When she was convinced that it was true, she wiped her tears and allowed herself to be dragged away, shouting and waving as she went. "One week, my Alexander. Meet me at the Rochester Hotel in one week and we shall plan our lives together. Je t'aime, my Alexander! Je t'aime!"

Xander lifted his hand as they hurried off. "Yeah, jack tem to you too Yevtte. Whatever the fuck that means."

Part Thirty-Five

1:15 a.m. Water has reached Titanic's name on the bow, and she now lists to port. By this time, seven boats have been lowered, but with far fewer passengers and crew than rated capacity. The tilt of the deck grows steeper and boats now begin to be more loaded, with starboard #9 lowered with some fifty-six people aboard.

1:20 a.m A wireless from Cape Race, Newfoundland arrives at the offices of the New York Times, "Sunday night, April 14th (AP). At 10:25 o' clock tonight the White Star Line steamship Titanic called "CQD" to the Marconi station here, and reported

having struck an iceberg. The steamer said that immediate assistance was required."

In direct contrast to the growing panic and discord on the decks of the ship, the first class smoking rooms appeared as they had every night since the Titanic first launched. They were lit with the soft lights of the oil lamps that were kept in case of emergencies and they were filled to capacity with the same older, reserved men of business who had occupied them previously.

After putting their wives and families in life boats and assuring their safe launch from the doomed liner, these men chose dignity as their legacy. They drank their expensive bourbons and whisky, they played cards and they spoke in low, subtle tones of the commerce of Europe and North America. No mention of their present situation was allowed. To do so would have been an unforgivable sign of poor character.

At the far end of the starboard side of the ship, Spike spotted what he had been looking for. A

young deckhand with several life jackets looped over each arm was being jostled and manhandled by a cluster of passengers trying to take all he had to offer. Immediately, Spike grabbed the back of the first suit coat he could reach and he tossed the man aside. The next man was mugged in the face and the third took a fist to his ribcage. When the path was cleared, Spike snatched two of the life jackets and turned to rush away when the deckhand called after him.

"The deck chairs, Sir."

Spike spun around and frowned. "What? What did you say?"

The young sailor gave away the last of his wares and tipped his head. "The deck chairs. They are made of light wood and will float. If we go into the water, take one with you."

Spike swallowed hard. It had been years, not since he was human, that he had really known fear. He watched it shine in the eyes of his victims but it's

sensation had become just a distant memory. Now it was fresh and painful. He felt it from the sick nauseating wave that rolled from his stomach to his bowels and back again to the blinding urge to scream.

He cursed the day he snuck aboard this vile boat and he swore that if his feet ever again touched dry land he would take any future excursions by horse and carriage only.

Feeling himself lose control, Spike squeezed his eyes shut and lowered his head. He gripped the life jackets to his chest and he tried blocking out all the sounds that exploded around him and he chanted. "Get a grip. Get a grip. Bloody hell mate, get a grip."

"Hey! You! Stop!"

Spike's eyes popped open and his head turned in the direction of the voice that cut through the hundreds of others. Even without the broken broom handle, Spike instantly recognized the face. Ship's mate Finn

Grabbing him from behind in a headlock, Finn attempted to wrestle Spike to the ground. "I'm placing you under ship's arrest! You are a murderer, a fiend!"

Spike had no time for this foolishness. He easily tossed the human off his back and spun around to face him.

"We are sinking, you stupid fool! You have passengers to see to. Get the fuck away from me and go about your duty."

Surprisingly, Finn jumped back up and swung, striking Spike in the chin and causing him to drop the jackets in his hand. Furious now, Spike picked the puny human up in both hands and with no further ado, tossed him over the side of the rail. There was a slight satisfaction in the fading yell of fear and muffled splash but he had given this idiot enough of his time. He then snatched the jackets back up and took off at a run to return to Xander.

The ship was tilting further now making standing difficult and walking clumsy and awkward. Clinging to a handrail, Xander stared off into the darkness of the night. Spike had been gone way too long and the terror that they may not be together at the end filled him with more despair and horror than the circumstances they all faced. The irrefutable facts were clear. The ship was sinking and there was no room for them on the lifeboats. Apparently, like the captain and crew, they were to go down with the ship. He knew in his heart that he would never see another sunrise.

It was a realization that was dawning on everyone else left on the ship and the mood now was full blown panic. The hundreds of passengers still on deck shoved, screamed and sobbed, shouting out into the night for God himself to come and save them, but apparently God was looking the other way.

~*~*~*~*~

He wanted to go. He wanted to rush off in the direction his lover had gone and try to find him but he had promised. Spike had made him promise to stay put. Fear and frustration devoured him as he took one step away from the door and shouted into the darkness.

"SPIKE!"

None of the voices that rose around him was the answering voice he prayed for and he tried again, not knowing what else to do.

"SPIKE!"

To his left, a small boy of perhaps ten or twelve cried out as he was pushed aside. He had gotten separated from his father after being told he was too close to manhood to take a spot in the boats, too old to be clinging to his mother's skirts. Now he was lost and alone. Xander briefly considered trying to help, but he was only one tragedy in a tragic situation. He and Xander were alike, alone and

helpless and for now, all Xander wanted was.

"SPIKE!"

"XANDER!"

Xander's heart lurched at the familiar response and within seconds, the man he had all but given up hope on appeared; shoving his way through a cluster fuck of humanity, he ran to his lover's side. "Oh my God! Oh my God! I thought something happened to you. I thought you weren't coming back. I thought....."

Xander sobbed his relief as Spike went about the task of stuffing Xander's arms into the life jacket and tying it securely before putting on his own. When that was done, he scooped the boy up in his arms and buried his face in the soft brown hair. Together, a feeling of near calm passed between them and all their fears and terrors melted away.

Repeatedly they were bumped and jostled as passengers shoved past them in a frantic hurry to

get to nowhere. The clanging alarm bells persisted and the screaming voices of the doomed rose from the decks of the Titanic but for now, none of it mattered. For just a moment they allowed themselves the comfort of the other's embrace.

Suddenly the ship gave a violent shuddering jolt, knocking the men off their feet and landing them in a heap on the slippery deck. Accompanied by the loud noise of metal buckling and grinding against itself, the Titanic moaned as if in agony and the night filled with a new higher pitched wave of screams.

Scrambling to his feet, Spike pulled Xander up. He knew time was short and they had things to discuss. "Listen, Xander, you know what's going to happen don't you?"

Xander nodded dumbly so Spike continued.

"O.k, When we go into the water I want you to hold onto me. One of the boys said the deck chairs are floaters so....."

"I can't swim."

"What?"

Xander hung his head. "I said I can't swim. It's no use. I'm going to drown."

Part Thirty-Six

1:30 a.m. Signs of panic begin to appear as port No. 14 is lowered with sixty people, including 5th Officer Lowe. Lowe is forced to fire three warning shots along the ship's side to keep a group of unruly passengers from jumping into the already full boat.

1:40 a.m. Most of the forward boats have left and passengers begin to move to the stern area. Collapsible C is soon filled with women and children and as it is being lowered, two gentlemen step

onboard. One is William Carter, the other Bruce Ismay. With the Titanic close to sinking, Ismay decides to save himself in shame. The forward deck is now awash.

"What are you bloody talking about?"

Xander still couldn't look the man in the eye. He knew it was ludicrous that in the face of all this tragedy and suffering he should cling to one stupid fear above all, but it was what it was. "Swimming. I can't swim. I've tried to learn but I can't. My arms and legs just won't coordinate like that. I end up flapping and flopping like....."

"Bloody hell, mate. This has nothing to do with swimming. Where the hell are you going to swim to? This is all about just staying afloat till help comes. This is about praying that we're plucked from the great cold drink before the sun comes up and I am fried like an ash pan."

A small whimper slipped from Xander's lips as that reality hit home. It was one more danger that he

hadn't even considered. The fear of dying was ever present. The fear of drowning came next but the terror of surviving this ordeal and losing the man he loved was more than his heart could stand.

"No! No, we can't let that happen. Please Spike, you promised we would make it through this together. No matter what happens you said we would be together."

Spike suddenly turned his head to the side. His ears had shifted and prioritized the chaotic sounds around them and filtered past the alarm bells, the shouts and the storm of humanity that was exploding like a volcano. His hearing, instead, picked up the other.

The water. The sound of the water rushing faster now as it filled all of the lower compartments and washed over the deck behind them. He knew they no longer had hours and were down to a few precious minutes.

Other passengers knew it too. Even without enhanced vampire hearing, their human instincts for survival were driving them like lemurs to leap the railings into the frigid waters below and a whole new level of horror rose up around them.

Breaking the spell, Xander grabbed Spike by the chin and forced his face back around. Now, however, he wasn't looking into the terrified face of a young boy about to die. Now he was gazing into the determined brown eyes of a strong young man. "Spike! Look at me! I know what I want. If I am going to die anyway, I want it to be with you. You said you were alive, like me once until your Drusilla infected you with the vampireitis. Now you can't die. Do it. Do it to me and give us a chance. It's the only way, Spike. It's a long shot, I know, but if all goes right we may have a chance at a future together. If it doesn't, it won't matter. Let's be honest, I'm going to die tonight either way. I would rather it be for you. I want to die for you, Spike."

Spike wanted to argue the point. They had discussed it briefly and the fact was, Spike had

every intention of turning his boy eventually. After years together. After giving his Xander years to enjoy his life and the experiences that could only be relished in the sunshine.

But Xander was right. There was no way, thanks to the arrogance and incompetence of the human race that Xander would live through this hell on earth. Still, even if they did this, the odds were that they would greet the burning sun together in the water. Together. Together. It was the one word that was the deciding factor.

With his cold hands on Xander's frozen, numb cheeks, Spike kissed him fast and hard. It was the answer that Xander had hoped for. Immediately, Spike grabbed his boy's icy hand and he looked around for a corner, a cubby hole out of the way to do what he needed to do. It wasn't the privacy or protection of intimacy that concerned him, only that someone would bump or interrupt them.

When Xander realized what Spike was doing, he gripped the vampire's arm. "No, not out here. I

thought we could do this alone. It's special, like getting married. Can't we do this in our cabin? In our own bed?"

"Xander, Love. No. Our cabin is already awash and even if it weren't, this tin can is about to drop to the bottom of the ocean and I don't fancy the notion of being trapped in a small box for eternity eatin' fish blood as they happen to swim by. Besides, time's up, Love. It has to be now or never. Here and now. Are you with me?"

There was no pause or hesitation. No fear or wavering in his voice as Xander grabbed Spike's arm and pulled him toward a raised area underneath an outer stairway. The water was washing across the deck now sloshing on their feet, and the tilt of the bow made balance difficult but Xander was steady. "Here, this step up will give us another minute or two. Do it now, Spike."

Conditions were not ideal. Generally, a vampire likes to toy with his victim. A bit of sexual cat and mouse that would give both the life giver and the

life taker a moment of ecstasy before the big bang. At least that was what he had heard. He had never actually turned anyone before but he wouldn't admit that now. Why add the fear of performance inadequacies to the long list of uncertainties?

Leaning back against the cold steel wall, Xander balled up his fists and squeezed his eyes tightly shut as he waited for the shroud of death to descend over him. Spike had already shifted his face and allowed the demon to take over. His fangs elongated and his brow distorted.

He panted like a panther who had stalked and cornered a frightened gazelle and, in fact, that was what stopped him. He knew this was the only way and he had no doubt that Xander wanted it but this was wrong. Spike could feel the fear that rolled off his lover and it made him sick. So he stopped.

When Xander opened his eyes and saw that he was nose to nose with the bloodthirsty monster he had seen murder the girl in the cargo hold, all apprehension left him. This was still Spike.

He immediately threw his arms around the strange creature and he pulled him close. He tipped his head to the side and he blew puffs of slightly warm air against the side of the vampire's cheek. "You are so beautiful. Make me like that. Hurry Spike. I love you. No matter what, I will always love you."

Before Spike could answer, the ship took a violent jolt, knocking them off their feet as the bow tipped up. Water washed over their prone bodies and tried to tear them apart with its force.

Spike threw his head back and howled up into the night, cursing the Gods who took such pleasure in watching the suffering of mankind. He then jerked Xander up against him and grabbed a fistful of icy, wet hair. He pulled the head to the side and as Xander clung to the lapels of Spike's soaked overcoat, the vampire bit.

His skin was so numb from the long exposure to the cold night air, that Xander barely felt the piercing of the fangs as they split through his throat. When the

first mouthful of blood was drawn from his veins, his base instinct for survival awoke and despite attempts to stay rational, his legs jerked and kicked out wildly, splashing them both with the salt water that now covered the entire deck.

The terror was fast and just as quickly as it began, like the tides, it ebbed. As the life blood left his body, Xander relaxed. The sounds of the horror filled night faded away along with the ever present cold. His body felt warm. He was at peace and his limbs stilled as he seemed to float up like a cloud in the dark night sky, far above the surreal scene that was playing out below him.

A few seconds more and Xander's body went limp. The last breath sighed from his lungs and his eyes fluttered shut.

Spike's lips remained on the spot long after the last drop had been extracted. His boy was gone. The human's warmth and life now flowed through him filling him with strength and the sure knowledge that Xander had given his life in the hope of the

resurrection. Whatever happened beyond this, Xander, as he knew him, would exist no more.

Suddenly, he realized that his melancholy contemplation could cost them everything and he snapped out of it. He quickly sliced a fang over his wrist, drawing the very blood he had just received. Grabbing onto the base of the steps to prevent the water from flushing them from their hiding place, he pried the boy's dead lips open and watched the blood fill the unresponsive mouth.

"Swallow!"

Nothing.

A small trickle of blood ran from Xander's mouth and Spike felt his panic begin to rise. "SWALLOW! Damn you Xander. Swallow!!"

And he did.

Part Thirty-Seven

*2:10 AM The sea is pouring onto the end of "A" Deck and Titanic's tilt grows steeper. Captain Smith goes to the wireless cabin and releases Phillips and Bride telling them that they have "done their duty". On the way back to his **bridge**, Smith tells several crewmen that it's "every man for himself". At about this time, Hartley chooses the band's final piece, "Nearer My God To Thee". Hartley had always said it would be the hymn he would select for his own funeral.*

*I looked, and there before me was a pale horse! Its rider was named Death, and Hades was following **close** behind him.*

Revelations 6:8

The Titanic was in the last of the throes of life. Her extinguished stacks bellowed steam caused by the flood of water into the massive boiler rooms, and all forms of light disappeared. The irritating, constant clanging of the metal alarm bell had mercifully stopped and the only sounds that remained were the agonizing screams of a mass of doomed humanity. The tilt of her deck was now so severe

that, combined with the thick layer of ice and the sloshing water, walking was impossible. The hundreds of panicked passengers grabbed and clung to railings, stairways and door handles knowing that the inevitable was already nipping at their heels.

Many of the younger men chose the ocean's embrace instead of prolonging the inevitable. They scrambled to the sides of the ship, life jackets tied tightly around them and clutching anything in their hands that they hoped would be buoyant as they threw themselves overboard.

None of the items they would hold would help them. The instant their bodies hit the shock of the freezing water, their minds went numb with pain and their fingers released. If the item floated, it floated away.

As all of this suffering and horror played out around them, Spike saw none of it. He cradled the lifeless body of his precious boy in his arms and he rocked and cooed to him. Tears streamed down the

vampire's face. "Let him go, son. Your friend is gone."

Spike's head snapped up to see the old man who was apparently the only resigned and calm person still left on the face of the earth. The old man smiled, patted Spike kindly on the shoulder and nodded before turning and struggling to move away. It was just what Spike needed to bring him out of his fog and slap him with the reality of time and space.

The water no longer pooled around or even touched them as the bow was raised too far above the rest of the sinking ship and Spike knew if he let go of [the step](#) bracket that he held, they would slide backward and into the deep end.

Time was up. It was time to go.

Realizing that a human in this situation didn't stand a chance, Spike immediately shifted. He allowed not only his face, but his entire being, all his senses and every primal instinct to be one hundred percent

vampire. He quickly shed his wool overcoat. Peeling it from his body, he watched it drop and fall backward down the deck. With no body heat to hold in, it was pointless and, in fact, its weight in the water would only be a hindrance. Maybe, he thought, if he survived this, he would find a new coat. Possibly one of those leather ones they were making.

Next, he checked and double checked both of their life jackets to make certain they were as securely tied as possible. The coming moments would be hard and fast and he didn't want anything knocking them ajar.

Finally, when the ship took one more shuddering jolt, Spike leapt into action.

He lurched to his feet and steadied himself as best as he could. He then grabbed the front of his boy's limp body and he jerked him up, tossing him over his shoulder in a fireman's saving carry.

Spike threw his head back and let out an animalistic

screech that pierced the night and took off at a speed no human could match or believe. He raced, the muscles of his legs straining as he ran straight uphill to the point of the bow that now rose over one hundred feet out of the water.

He flew like a bat out of hell toward the peak. When he was within just a few inches, he sprang, jumping straight into the air, his left foot touched the top railing and he shoved with all his might. Spike knew the key was in getting as far from the sinking ship as possible, aware that when the boat went down, the extreme sucking action it stirred would take everything, people included, with it straight to the bottom.

For the next few moments, all time seemed to be suspended.

With Xander clutched tightly, Spike was a black figure framed against a dark night as he appeared to fly. A black raven soaring through the air. Powerful and free. And then.....

SPLASH!!

They hit the water like a ton of bricks.

Spike gasped! The air he didn't need was slammed from his body as the freezing water engulfed and assaulted him. It was like a million razor blades slicing and stabbing every inch of his body with a pain he had forgotten was possible. It was overwhelming. It was an all encompassing shock that, for a moment, stopped his brain from functioning.

He floundered. His hands and arms went numb and his grip on his beloved released as his body began to sink below the level of the water. Suddenly, like a second wind, he snorted, shooting the burning cold salt water from his sinuses and he kicked his legs. When he realized again where he was and what was happening, a new terror wrapped its icy fingers around his throat and his head snapped in all directions till he found what he sought.

Several feet off to his left, Xander floated slowly

away, held above water by the life jacket. Immediately, Spike swam to him, pulled him close and again began working his ineffectual legs. Soon, he found that the more he kicked, the stronger he got. Spurred on by the sobs and screams of the dying in the water, Spike heard the desperate voices as though they were spectators cheering him on.

Pausing once, Spike glanced back. The Titanic was standing almost on end. The bow stood straight in the air and the stern was completely submerged. There was no light and the passengers left alive still hung to the railings and life knowing their fate was only moments away.

The lucky ones were already dead.

Then something happened that caused Spike to stop swimming and stare incredulously.

The ship gave one last metallic death rattle and appeared to crack and break in half. The front half slid smoothly down below the surface while the back end bobbed, righted itself and gave the

appearance that it, as a separate entity, may float and give a reprieve of time. It was a lie. It was a false hope.

In less than two minutes, it tipped up and the propeller broke the surface of the water. It was nothing less than magnificent and awe inspiring. Like the tail fan of a huge grey whale, it rose, glistened in the moonlight and appeared to touch the sky before silently, gently, sliding down to the bed of the North Atlantic some 13,000 feet below.

Spike turned back and whimpered. He had gotten far enough away that unlike hundreds of others, they weren't taken down with her but he already felt the pull of the circumference of the suction and he again tugged the dead body to him and began to swim.

It was quieter now. The screams of terror and panic were done. The worst had happened and all that was left now were the tears of agony from the cold and the knowledge that husbands, brothers, fathers, and lovers were gone forever. Spike

blocked it all out and he pressed on.

Off in the distance, too far for any human ear to hear or eye to see, Spike could detect a ship. The Carpathia who had spotted the last of the Titanic's fired rockets was racing toward her. He knew if he could reach the area of the first of the lifeboats, they would be pulled out.

But, even a vampire has his limits. Spike's legs, nearly paralyzed by the frozen waters, were starting to tire. His left arm gripped his lover's body while his right arm alternated between paddling and shoving aside the ice chunks and dead, floating bodies that filled the waters around them.

Passing several of the small boats launched, it was too dark to see his distorted features, yet the passengers in the dingys shouted at him to stay away. Fear of being capsized prevented them from offering aid to anyone still alive in the water.

On he swam. No longer able to think, his body simply moved on its own. When the silhouette of

the Carpathia formed in the moonlight, Spike sighed.

His body gave up and he closed his eyes.

Part Thirty-Eight

3:30 AM The Carpathia's rockets are sighted by those in the lifeboats.

4:10 AM Titanic's #2 life boat is picked up.

No one slept. Every crew member on the Carpathia, from the captain to the lowliest deckhand were on top alert and had been since the incredulous news that the great Titanic was in dire peril. Although still some distance away, they rushed at full speed to the location they were given.

Everyone expected to see the ship possibly taking

on water but still afloat. The thought that she could actually sink was incomprehensible.

Second Officer Morbry rushed to the bridge to give the Carpathia's captain the most recent updates. He found the man standing with his face toward the open ocean and the black night sky.

"Sir, we are less than forty minutes from the site. We are unable to reestablish radio communication with the Titanic and I believe we are the closest ship to respond. We have already begun to fire the rockets, Sir, and will continue to do so."

The captain frowned slightly and turned around to face his officer. "We are the first? I understood the Californian was near."

Morbry raised an eyebrow fractionally in an uncharacteristically opinionated expression.

"We believed it to be so, Sir, however they claim to be elsewhere. They are also responding but are still, by their own estimation, several hours away."

The captain nodded and kept his own opinions to himself. Gossiping was both unprofessional and, in this case, unproductive. "You say there is no further radio response?"

"No, Sir. Our man is still sending constant call to them but we are getting no answers."

"I see. Please instruct the radio operator to continue until I give orders otherwise. Also, I want an extra set of eyes in the crow's nest and I am to be advised the second the Titanic, or whatever is left of her, is spotted. I also want all hands on deck watching for ice and advise the engine room to slow to thirty knots. We will do her no good to fall victim to the same fate as she."

"Aye Captain."

Morbry spun around and rushed off to do as ordered. He darted out into the frigid night air and said a prayer of thanks to his good wife who had given him that new set of long johns for Christmas

last. He then, after passing along the captain's instructions, went to the bow. He gripped the ice covered railings, leaning out and straining each time the sky exploded in the red light of one of the Carpathia's flares.

He felt the shudder of the ship's boilers as they reduced power and he knew that meant they must be close yet, still, he could see no sign of the Titanic. A ship that massive that it should have filled the seascape ahead. He did, however see that the ocean ahead was full of black, ominous objects littering and floating on the surface. Objects that he took to be chunks of the ice that they had been warned about.

When the next flare shot up and bathed the sky in a blood red illumination, the objects became crystal clear. Morbry's stomach lurched. He stepped back from the railing and he performed the sign of the cross on himself.

"Oh, sweet Jesus. Holy Mother of God."

He then instantly flew into action. At the same time, the alarm bell rang, signaling that the men in the crow's nest had seen the same thing. Having been previously instructed, the deckhands rushed around, uncovering their lifeboats and stacking blankets and cots on the starboard decks. Just before leaving the deck to inform the captain, Mowbry caught a trace of something faint on the wind. It was the first sound of the wailing voices calling out for them.

Within minutes the ship's crew was organized. As they were heading bow-first into the area of tragedy, per the captain's orders, the port side would be used to retrieve the lifeboats of survivors that were now paddling towards them. The starboard side would launch lifeboats of their own and go about the unthinkable task of retrieving the bodies of the dead that now floated aimlessly, bobbing and bumping into the deadly ice and each other.

It was overwhelming. It was quickly decided that with so many survivors, their first priority had to be

to the living and the rest of the cleanup could go to the Californian when she arrived. The one obvious fact no one mentioned was that although there seemed to be hundreds of survivors, the Titanic was known to carry over 2000 passengers and crew. It was mind boggling.

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Spike was exhausted. Even his vampire endurance had reached its limit in the freezing waters and he could do no more. They had safely cleared the point of the suction of the sinking and he swam until they reached the first lifeboat. He knew a rescue ship was on its way and their best hope was to be as close to the living as possible.

Clutching tightly to the dead body of his beloved, Spike rolled over in the black water and he closed his eyes and let his spent body float. Every once in a while he would glance up when the red illumination split through the darkness and he smiled at its beauty.

The night was quieter now. The majority of the screaming had stopped the second the ship dropped below the ocean's surface, sealing the fate of those who had remained aboard. It also left the wives and mothers in the boats, who had been watching the ship, sobbing quietly as the truth of their changed lives descended down on them.

Few of the others in the water were left alive. Most still clung to deck chairs, boxes and anything that would float. Their fingers were so frozen that they would have to be broken in order to force them open and release the objects that had been their last hope for life.

Finally, just before passing out, Spike heard the renewed shouts of the passengers in the first life boat and he knew help had arrived. The only question was, had it arrived in time for him and his boy?

"Careful! Shit, Cam! Here give it to me."

Seaman Ashton took the long whale hook from his partner's hand. He leaned out over the side of the small dingy and he snagged the life jacket of the first body. They had been assigned to the detail of the recovery of the dead. His friend, Cameron, saw it as a punishment. Ashton did not. He considered it an opportunity to serve God by showing respect to those who had suffered and died.

Carefully he worked till the end of the hook caught the laces of the life jacket and he strained as the body was slowly dragged towards them. When it was along side, both men leaned over and tugged, surprised to find two bodies. Unwilling to crack the fingers of the smaller one, together they were carefully rolled and wrestled into the boat together before moving on to the next.

When the men were frozen and the life boat was at it maximum capacity, they again returned to the Carpathia where their cargo would be unloaded and the next two sailors would go back out. It was a routine that would be repeated for hours to come.

The starboard side of the ship was already a flurry of activity. The Titanic's lifeboats were brought alongside and unloaded with passengers who were, themselves, near death from shock, grief and the unbearable elements. The crew's priority now was to see to their aid and comfort. Blankets were distributed, hot tea was poured by the gallon and questions about the fate of their loved ones were answered with shrugged shoulders and words of consolation.

Discreetly, Deckhand George Patrick tugged the captain's sleeve. "Sir, the first of the deceased has been brought aboard. Sir, it looks like hundreds are still out there. What are we to do with them?"

The captain gave it a moment's thought before quietly answering.

"We can't put them below deck. We need all the available room for the living. You will instruct that they are to be laid out in tight rows on the port deck. For each twenty bodies, I want a heavy canvas tarp to be placed over them. I want them concealed

completely. It would simply not do for one of the survivors to accidentally see the body of a loved one. When we have all the living collected, we leave for port. The Californian estimates her arrival time at 8:30 AM. We will radio her and apprise her of the situation and she will be charged with the collection of the remaining bodies."

The sailor nodded curtly and ran to convey the captain's orders. They were now just minutes from sunrise.

Part Thirty-Nine

Spike woke with a start. Self preservation kept him from moving as he eased one eye open and assessed the situation of his surroundings. It was mercifully dark although his instincts told him that the sun was high in the sky. When he tipped his head back, he was able to attribute the lack of

sunlight to the heavy tarp that covered him from head to toe.

The clothes he wore were ice covered and frozen, sticking to his body, telling him that he was still out in the elements, but the wooden decking beneath him indicated a ship. He was weak and tired but he was not dust.

Immediately, his head snapped to the left and relief washed over him as he came face to face with the blue, pale skin of his dead lover. All feeling was gone from his fingers and he was unaware till he glanced down that he still held tightly to Xander's hand.

They had been rescued. Although he was certain that the sailors responsible for dragging them on board did not consider their retrieval to be a rescue. A violent shudder wracked his thin frame as he thought about what would have become of them if they had been left there to float on the surface of the ocean till the hot rays of the sun broke the horizon.

It would have been almost a comic twist. Survive the sinking of the Titanic only to be turned to ash by the sunshine. Spike squeezed his eyes shut tight and a small tear ran from the corner of his eye and froze on his face. If he lived to be a thousand he would never forget this night. All the murder and mayhem he had wrought over the years could not compare to the death and horror he had witnessed.

It was too much. It was more than one small vampire should have to endure.

Spike knew he had decisions to make. They were a good three days from shore and if all went well, Xander would wake in another twelve hours or so. They would both need to feed and he was far too weak to hunt and risk being caught by preying on the crew or the surviving passengers.

Spike yawned and felt the ice crack and fall away from his jaw. He just couldn't think anymore. He just couldn't. So he didn't. He fell into a deep sleep.

The next time he woke, it was with a warning jolt of fear. His hearing was sharp and focused, seeking the direction of danger. He ignored the painful hunger that clawed at his belly and he laid motionless, waiting. Within seconds, it came again. This time the sound was accompanied by a slight vibration that he felt in the planking at his back.

Boots. Four. Two feet. Two men of size by the weight of their footfall. His features shifted as the danger moved even nearer and he prepared to attack and protect what was his.

"You looked under there?" The first voice was low, quiet and unsure. Spike waited for the response.

"You kiddin'? Fuck no. You know the cap'in said we ain't allowed to be messin' around back here. He says we best be showing the dead their respect. 'sides, what the fuck you want to look at? They's dead."

The second man sounded older. His voice was deeper as though coming from someone of greater

life and experience.

"Yeah, I know, it's just that they got a lot of stuff, ya know? Money in their pockets and rings on....."

The rest of the sentence was cut short as Spike heard a scuffle, fast and hard before the older man spoke again. "You take one thing or touch one hair on them and I swear to Christ I will tell the Captain personally. You is a shit head. You know that? Goddamn, man, that is just fucked up. Now we was sent over here to make sure that everything was tight and secure and nothin' else."

The first voice was now whiny. "Ah, come on, George, you know I was joking. Damn, this whole thing has been really hard on me. Being out in this cold and having to look at all these dead and dying folks. It just ain't fair George. Why these bad things always happenin' to me?"

Spike heard George snort his disgust as the two men, apparently satisfied with the conditions of the

makeshift morgue, quickly retreated and were gone.

'O.k, then, he thought. 'We need food. Where can.....? Well, hell. Why the fuck didn't I think of it before?'

Although less than tasty and ideal, Spike soon realized that they were lying in the middle of a frozen buffet. The bodies, by their condition, were perfectly preserved and would provide enough blood to sustain them until they arrived in New York and could find fresh and hot.

They also might just provide a bit more. Thanks to the suggestion by the deck hand, they would rummage through the pockets of their fellow corpses and hopefully accumulate enough cash and jewelry to set them up in New York for some time. Spike knew the first thing he would buy. A hot fucking bath!

But first, now that he was positive they were alone, Spike needed to move. His muscles were locked and

his extremities were numb and unfeeling. It took all his strength to raise his right arm and reach across his body to his left hand. He then carefully pried his fingers loose from Xander's, pleased that he hadn't had to break any bones as he did.

With a grunt, he heaved his upper body off the floor and reached down to briskly rub some circulation back into his legs but, with very little blood in his body, the task was nearly pointless. He sighed and flopped back.

Looking to the right, he saw that his other companion was an older gentleman, one that he remembered seeing in the card salon, smoking cigars and drinking fine whiskey. He was one of the suckers Spike had fleeced out of his cash.

"Well, well, fancy meeting you here. So how you been? Dead? Humph, that's a real shame, it is. So, since you are dead, you won't mind me having a nip or two would you? No? Well, that's mighty white of you old chap."

Spike's features shook off the human aspects and slipped quietly into vampire. He then rolled onto his side and almost as though he were cuddling up with a lover, he pressed his body intimately against the form of the drowned man.

His yellow eyes glowed in the darkness and his long, pointed tongue flicked out and across the unresponsive throat. Salt. He tasted the heavy salt of the ocean on the man's skin and his nose wrinkled. Before he could think too much about it, Spike sank his fangs in, splitting the dead, rubbery flesh.

The blood inside was cold. Colder than a cocktail in a glass clinking with ice. It was thick and sluggish and required a lot of suction to remove it from its veins. Without a pumping, beating heart to force it out, the blood was difficult to pull as the veins constantly collapsed, acting like a kink in a rubber hose.

And there wasn't enough. When a body drowns, the lungs will constantly expand, searching for precious

oxygen until they burst and fill with blood. It is that rupture of the vital organs that causes the death. Nearly half the body's blood supply rushes in and floods the chest cavity.

"Fucking waste!"

Spike considered ripping open the body and licking it clean, but that would cause an unnecessary complication if someone was to peek under the tarps. No, he would just slip from body to body, drinking what he could until he glutted himself. Then, when his boy awoke, he could feed his child. It was reassuring. It was a plan. Spike was almost stunned to realize that they might just make it after all.

When he had finished robbing his veins, Spike dipped next into the man's pockets. He found a leather wallet stuffed with wet, cold cash, a gold ring and a pocket watch that was inscribed to 'Harve, all my love, Pauline' Spike kissed Harve on the lips and tucked the bounty in his pockets.

Suddenly, the body of the boy on his left jerked. Spike twisted around in time to see the beautiful brown eyes pop open wide, the mouth stretch in a silent scream of agony and the body begin to convulse violently as it tried to work out the knots and constrictions of the rigor mortis that had claimed it.

Spike threw himself over his boy and tried to hold him still and quiet, praying that George and Whiny would not be making their appointed rounds any time soon.

Part Forty

PAIN

There was nothing in the universe but pain. There was no existence of consciousness or physicality. There was no Alexander Harris either past or present. There was nothing but the **ripping** agony of every atom in his body being split and exploding like a bomb as his cells reformed and remade him into the new creature he was becoming.

His face cracked and continually shifted from human to vampire and back again. His gums ached and bled as the brand new fangs cut through and grew to startling lengths causing him to slice his lips and tongue, and every muscle in his body tensed and convulsed as the magic spun its evil web throughout his being.

The instant Spike realized that his childe had awoken, he threw his body prone over top of the larger one in an attempt to still the violent thrashing. His own turning had been so long ago that he had all but forgotten about this moment of true torture and fear. On the plus side, Xander had not had to claw his way out of a dirt grave in a gothic church yard, hungry, frightened and alone because his sire had forgotten about him.

No, Xander would never know loneliness. Not if Spike could help it. Spike was thrilled to be his sire and would do his best for his young childe no matter what. Right now, Spike's best was to assure that they were not discovered.

Against all odds, they had made it this far and it would not do to have George or Whiny or any other crew member accidentally notice one of the corpses flailing about under the tarp that served as a death shroud. Spike needed to get his boy under control. Fast.

Lying flat on top of the young, crazed vampire, Spike clamped his fingers around the boy's wrists and held them high over his head. It got Xander's attention and the yellow cat eyes glowed in the dark and looked imploringly for help. Spike's own demon face stared down, silently answering, then, without hesitation, Spike's face dropped and he bit, sinking his fangs deep into the throat of the newly formed creature. Instantly, Xander mewled and stilled.

The feel of the powerful jaws clamped at his neck and the fangs in his throat flooded him with comfort and a feeling of home, safety and belonging. The waves of pain ebbed and slowly faded back. Xander relaxed. His legs eased down

and he sighed as the man at his neck seemed to suck all the hurt and terror out of him.

Spike knew there was very little blood in his boy's body so the suckling was simply more of a bonding than a feed. It told him he was loved and cared for. What came next was the cement that would bind them for their own private eternities.

Releasing one of his boy's lax arms, Spike quickly swiped his wrist over the brand new clawlike fingernails [opening](#) a gash that bled freely and he placed it at Xander's lips. He heard a small squeak as the lips latched on hungrily and the first sloppy feeding began. Xander had a hard time working around the new fangs and he slurped and snuffled messily, dribbling blood from the corners of his mouth. Even with his own fangs still deep in his boy's neck, Spike smiled proudly at his childe's attempts.

Knowing he still needed blood of his own, Spike released his bite and he pulled his wrist away. Immediately, Xander whimpered imploringly and

grabbed for Spike's arm trying to bring it back again. Spike spoke quietly but firmly. "No Xander. That's enough."

Xander did not agree and decided to take another tack. He made what he thought would be his best, scary face and he snarled, spitting and snorting. The left side of his lip curled up and down in a move that looked more like Elvis than monster. Spike chuckled. It was the cutest thing he had ever seen and his heart swelled with love and pride. Still, dominance had to be established.

"Now you stop that, boy. Do you hear me? I am the Master and you are the childe. You will do as I say and you will behave yourself. Now, I know you don't understand a lot just yet, but we're going to fix that. The most important thing is that you must be quiet. We're not safe here. Do you understand danger?"

Xander's eyes grew huge and he nodded, his hair flopping wildly and throwing small chunks of ice everywhere.

Spike continued, keeping his tone low and confident. "Good. Good. It will be alright if you just do as I say. Now, I know you're still hungry and we will feed but first we need to finish the bonding. For you to be whole, to be cognitive and not just a stupid fledge, we need to bond."

The entire time Spike was whispering to his boy, his hand was slowly unbuttoning the wet, ice crusted shirt and britches beneath him. He hated that this had to be done in such harsh inhospitable conditions but it couldn't be helped. The sooner a childe is bonded after he awakens, the sharper he will be.

When Spike's hand finally reached Xander's rigid cock, the new vampire eeped and squiggled, spreading his legs and offering himself up submissively. His flesh had been so cold and numb, he was unaware of his own erection until his master's fingers brushed the head. Now it was the only part of his body that he could feel.

Quickly, Spike rolled off him and laid back beside his

boy, struggling to remove his own frozen trousers, all the time trying to keep the movement of the tarp to a minimum. Xander laid flat, dressed only above the waist, staring at Spike's cock and wringing his claw hands in anxious anticipation.

He was overwhelmed with the need to be fucked. Everything inside him begged for that long, pale stake to pierce his anal cavity and bring him relief and satisfaction. He didn't want sweet talk, flowers or candy....well candy was always nice, but right now all he wanted was to be fucked.

By the time Spike had wrestled off the wet boots and trousers, Xander was panting, his butt bouncing off the wooden deck and licking his lips. Spike wrapped a hand around the boy's twitching hard-on and began to stroke.

"This isn't going to be the way I want it Xander. I wanted the first time to be warm, private and special. I wanted....."

"Fuck me!"

Spike just grinned. Xander always could cut to the chase. "Roll over!"

Immediately, Xander did as he was told and Spike wondered if he could get the same reaction from sit, stay or heel. He decided later on to give it a try. For now, he soundly smacked the raised bubble butt and gasped as the flesh rippled and reddened. He wanted to devour it, bite it, lick it and stick his tongue deep between those wonderful round pillows, and he would, later, when they were off this damn ocean.

Before going further, Spike gingerly lifted a corner of the tarp and was thrilled to see that it was still dark out, instinct told him probably an hour or so till sunrise. Odds were, no one would come around till then, still, their activity would have to be muted and controlled.

Xander was impatient. His hips humped up and down as his hole clenched and relaxed repeatedly waiting for an intruder to come knocking. Finally,

Spike climbed on. His weight pressing down on Xander's back was heavenly. It fed his need to be owned, possessed and controlled. Resting his face on the ice covered deck, Xander sighed as his ass raised a bit higher in offering.

Spike's hand slid down between them and his fingers worked apart the tight, muscular cheeks. He wished they had lube but knew that this time the pain and blood were what mattered. Only in that would they find true pleasure and satisfaction.

"Are you ready, Baby? Listen, Xander, this is going to hurt but you have to stay quiet. No matter what happens, don't scream."

The positioning was awkward. It didn't allow for the deep satisfying thrusts that would bounce his nuts off those wonderful butt cheeks but it would achieve penetration and for now, it was the best that they could hope for.

When he felt the head of his dick pressed at the tight, wrinkled opening, Spike pushed. The forced

entry tore the delicate tissues and Xander's blood allowed his Master's cock to shove in. The pain was agonizing and Xander fingernails clawed deep gouges in the ship's planking. He whined and squirmed, but somewhere, past the hurt and the need was another growing feeling.

It started faintly in the back of his head and spread down his spine. It was warmth. It was a heat that, despite their unbearable conditions, slowly moved and filled every inch of his body. Like a heart beat, each pump of Spike's cock in and out of his ass thrust the heat another inch further. It warmed his arms and legs and back. It melted his toes and caused a tingling in his fingers. It was the heat of love and acceptance.

It was a heat born of magic that caused all the ice to melt under the friction of his sliding cock and within minutes, they both felt their orgasms niggle in their nut sacs. This time it was Spike's turn to moan and grunt as his hips moved erratically. He jerked back and forth trying to get deeper, trying to screw himself in as far as he could.

Within seconds, all motion stopped as his dick spasmed and unloaded into his companion's welcoming vessel. When Xander felt it, it triggered his own body to react. The cum that spurted from both their cocks pooled in a wet, sticky puddle that again quickly froze around them.

Xander sighed as Spike pulled out and flopped off to the side. Xander laid still on his stomach. He turned his head to face his Master and smiled; his deep brown eyes were now clear and bright. Spike was thrilled. His boy was back. The fog that had glazed and hung over his childe was lifted and Spike was finally certain that everything was going to be all right

Part Forty-One

April 18th 1912

Late in the evening, the Carpathia and her cargo of 705 survivors along with 198 dead bodies, arrives port in New York City. They are met by masses of people on the docks. Crowds consisting of reporters, government officials, friends and families of the Titanic's passengers, all hoping for more information than the brief radio reports had supplied. Most are to be disappointed.

PEACE

The next two days passed surprisingly well with a pattern that established itself quickly and formed a routine that they comfortably rode out. The ocean had calmed and the waves beneath them quieted as though it had done its worst and by the claiming of over 1500 lives, it was sated. Because of that, the Carpathia was able to make good time in its onward trek to New York.

The continued suffering of the survivors who had

lost friends, families and a part of themselves that would never be recovered, was of no interest to the two vampires. Off in the distance they could hear the sobs and wailing. It was like a music to their ears. A nonstop sound, like the boilers and the ship's engines that served to remind them that, at least for them, all was normal and safe.

They relaxed. They were together and they had all they needed. Conditions that would have been insufferable and intolerable for humans, were actually very doable. At the first sign of light, they would lay silent while their caretaker, George made his rounds. They smiled while George spoke quietly and respectfully, telling them and the others with them, how sorry he was for their fate and how he prayed for their families. Spike and Xander liked George and vowed not to eat him.

During the daylight hours, when the sun rose high in the clear blue sky, the sunbeams would melt the ice from the tarps and the decks. Often they would leisurely suck or fondle each other to completion, anxious for the day when they could thrash about,

ride and fuck each other without restraint to movement or sound.

Spike would speak in low whispers, entertaining his beloved childe with stories of places he had seen and adventurous things he had done. They would make plans and Xander would elicit promises from his Master to teach him things a vampire must know. Then, it was their time to doze, curled in each other's arms as they absorbed the slight temperature change in the canvass blanket that concealed and protected them. Later, when the day retreated and the sky darkened, their eyes opened and stirred about.

They had a plan. An organized agenda. When fully awake, they would lie deathly still till George's footfalls were a distant echo. They then slipped quietly from beneath their tarp and moved to the next one. Two of the corpses would be slid over to take their place and they would slip into the spot the dead had occupied. From there, they would drain the cold, thick blood from the veins of the preserved human shells.

This continued and repeated all through the night. Although they had started out in the very first group, they were now nearly half way down the deck and like sausages in a butcher's window, they still had rows and rows to go.

They would ransack the pockets, wrists and fingers of the people who had no objections to the vampires removing their blood. After the third victim, Xander began making pirate jokes. Thievery on the high seas, he called it. He wished he had a patch and a parrot and he continually made "Aarrrrr" sounds as he bit and sucked their throats.

At first, it was cute and entertaining but Spike was a vampire of short nerve and Xander was quickly getting on his last one. By the time he was threatening to make Spike walk the plank for not giving him the second blow job he wanted, Spike had to smack the back of his head and threaten to kick his arse if he heard just one more reference to Jolly Roger. Xander scowled but complied. Although he didn't say so, he still thought it was funny.

Fortunately on the first day, Xander had found a woman's handbag tucked lovingly inside a gentleman's waist coat. Spike had rewarded his childe's brilliant find with a long, torturously slow fingered sphincter tease before he was allowed to cum.

The purse, though small, held the enormous bounty that overflowed their own pockets. It was puzzling to them that these men chose to die with all of their earthly belongings on them. Did they really believe they could take it with them? Did they plan to pay for a less painful death with their offerings to Poseidon? Either way, it became a running joke to kiss the donator on the lips and thank them for their generosity.

With hundreds of bodies laid out in rows and rows, Spike and Xander knew that they would easily survive on the limitless supply of the disgusting swill until they reached port two days hence. Upon arrival, they would find all the hot fresh blood they could hold.

It was an amusing turn of events. The sinking of the Titanic had become a makeshift honeymoon. A time of bonding, relaxation and a time that allowed a new child to gain strength and confidence in his altered body.

"It's Sunday, Love."

Xander turned his head and burped. He knew the dead blood in his stomach left him with terrible breath and he didn't want to inflict it on his Master. Even cold and frozen, both men realized the partial thawing and refreezing had the blood off and wouldn't sustain them any longer. It also had Xander cranky and slightly nauseous.

Besides that, the silence was killing him. He was certain he couldn't go another day without shouting, whooping and hearing the wonderful sound of his own voice. "Yeah, so what? You singin' in the church choir?"

Spike pretended to be stern but he was too excited.

The sun had just set and the late hours were falling upon them. Tonight, however was to be different.

"Don't be a brat. I just thought you might be interested in the fact that the ship docks tonight. New York harbor is only a few hours away and we will finally be off this fucking ocean. And I'll tell you something else, Boy. That is the last time we travel abroad! Someday, if they invent machines that fly like birds, we will go but until then, NEVER!"

Xander giggled in excitement. Spike could say the most outrageous things. Machines that fly like birds and carried men over the ocean. How absurd! But the comic mental picture was overshadowed by the thrill of the fact that they were almost there.

They had made it! Thanks to Spike, they had survived!!

Spike looked over and was shocked to see tears in his child's eyes. He rolled over on his side under the canvas and gently touched the boy's face.

"Xander? What is it? I thought you would be happy.

This fucking nightmare is almost over. Or is that it? Are you upset about returning to the world as a vampire and not a human? Do you regret our....."

"NO! Oh, God, Spike no! I was just thinking about Paddy and Emma grieving for me. They gave me this trip and now they believe that they sent me to my death when the truth couldn't be further away. They put me on that ship to find my destiny and that is exactly what happened. They gave me the chance at a new life and I will never be able to tell them that I found it."

Spike snuggled close and in a move of love and comfort, offered his wrist to his boy to bite and suckle. It eased both of their minds and strengthened their bond. As a diversion, Spike spoke of their arrival. "What's the first thing you want to do when we get there?"

Xander snorted and released the sore arm. "Get a room in a fancy hotel and take a hot, hot bath. Then I want to buy some new DRY clothes and hit the streets for a real meal."

Spike smiled, his teeth glistening ominously in the dark. "And what do you fancy, Love? A hobo? A drunk? Or maybe some innocent out for a stroll in the park unguarded and alone?"

Xander's eyes sparkled with an evil yellow glow. "Nope, I know just what I want first. In fact, it's already waiting on me at the Rochester Hotel. If you're good, I might just let you tag along. I believe she even has a sister you might like."

The two vampires cackled and giggled happily. They were almost home

The End